

ISSUE 32

RSL AUSTRALIA

RIO'S SURPRISING
MILITARY HISTORY

WENDY HARMER

THE ROAD TO PATAGONIA

JO GILBERT

PETER GOERS

THE LAST POST
VISITS VIETNAM

THE LAST POST

KEEPING THE ANZAC SPIRIT ALIVE FOR AUSTRALIA'S
VETERANS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS

The Last Post Story

Through bloodlines, The Last Post magazine started at Gallipoli. Its acorn then fought with the 2/10th in Milne Bay, Buna and Balikpapan and trekked the Kokoda in WW2. By the late-sixties, The Last Post magazine was ready to be born.

Raymond Thorsby Ross, who had fought in PNG and the son of Joseph Thorsby Ross, who had fought at Gallipoli, leased a small office in George Street, Sydney. Raymond had decided that a small magazine, designed to help RSLs and their members, should be introduced in New South Wales. To do this he would need advertising to help pay printing and distribution costs. Daily, Raymond would take the train from suburban Chatswood to the city and phone local businesses and sporting clubs, asking for their support. This ex-digger and RSL member worked long hours to get each edition out and was effectively the magazine's editor, graphic designer and distributor.

In 1974, Raymond and his partner moved to Scarborough in suburban Perth and continued The Last Post in Western Australia until his death in 1983.

Twenty-eight years later, Raymond's son and Joseph's grandson, Gregory Thorsby Ross brought his father's magazine back to life. Greg had lived with his father as a 15-year old, when he started working as a copy-boy and cadet journalist at The Sydney Morning Herald. The teenager became a first-hand observer of the early days of the ex-servicemen and women's publication. By 2011 he had put everything in place to re-introduce The Last Post to a public in desperate need of a modern, quality magazine to assist the veteran community. Only this time it would be a national. And this time, it would be for all Australians.

With this humble background, and from a history steeped in the Anzac tradition, the new national TLP was born and is now respected and read by not only Australian veterans but the wider global community.

Featuring profiles on contemporary and historical veteran issues as well as honourable Australians, organisations, institutions and companies, TLP has matured to be Australia's most recognised independent online and print veteran magazine.

Acclaimed for its quality and journalism The Last Post is unlike any veteran's magazine seen before.

The reason?

It speaks to all Australians as a reminder that the legacy of the Anzac Spirit is relevant to us all.

With editor Greg T Ross' up-close interviews with famous Australians, stunning layout and production and input from great writers covering relevant topics in history, music, arts, entertainment, sport, travel, gardening, this magazine is so well received by a wide audience that reaches far beyond the veteran community.

Pte Raymond Thorsby Ross, founder of the original The Last Post, left, during his time with the 2/10th in Papua New Guinea during WW2.



GREG T ROSS

Diary of an independent publisher

“No other day in our history contains the bitter sweet poignancy of looking back and ahead, than Anzac Day. A reminder that all we have, with the freedom to contribute and strive for better things, is the legacy of those who gave their time and life to defending the system of democracy that we live under.

With that, we give thanks again, in silent homage on Anzac Day, wherever you may be in the world.

It is always of primary importance, to get this edition right. To reflect the healthy diversity that engages us each day. And I think, with the contributions and support of all those included in this edition, that we've done it right.

During the Xmas break, during my time away in Vietnam, this edition, and the need to make it the best yet, was foremost in my mind.

There are too many to thank here, but you know who you are. It is this community involvement and the quality of input that helps us to keep growing.

And this year too, marks the birth of the magazine's sister/brother, The Last Post Radio Show Podcast. It is with this as an adjunct to what we've been doing for 13 brilliantly rewarding years that we bring new dimensions and depth to the subjects we've looked at in TLP.

#thelastpostmagazine
#diaryofanindependentpublisher

Greg T Ross



foreword

Greg Melick

AO RFD FANZCN SC

RSL Australia
National President

This ANZAC Day, I invite you to join the RSL in honouring all who have served our nation. There's no greater way to honour our ANZACs – and all who followed in their footsteps – than by attending an ANZAC Day service and keeping the ANZAC spirit alive.

The Returned & Services League is committed to leading the nation in commemoration, and ANZAC Day services and events will take place across the country. As a nation, we will remember all those who have served and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

Serving your country takes courage, commitment and selflessness, and those who have put their country first must be taken care of. A significant part of the RSL's work involves lobbying to protect the rights and benefits of past and present service members. We advocate for the needs of veterans and their families to ensure the government prioritises their wellbeing.

There are RSL sub-branches in over a thousand locations across Australia, offering a community of mateship and support and a place to connect with other veterans and veteran families. RSL State and Sub-Branched deliver a diverse range of services tailored to reflect the priorities and needs of veterans in their communities.

The RSL is working every day to improve the lives of veterans and their families. The RSL welcomes new members and invites all current and former serving ADF to join the RSL family.

Belonging to the RSL means someone always has your back. Join us and become a part of something bigger.

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The Last Post Magazine has been praised nationally and internationally since it was launched in 2011 and is designed by Kirstie Wyatt from Wyatt Creative. Kirstie is a freelance graphic and web designer and can enhance your marketing to get the results you want in your business.

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RSL ACTIVE

*Recreation, Events and
Activities for Veterans
and their Families*



City2Surf, NSW, 2023

Take part in programs and events created for the veteran community. Connect with other veterans, improve physical and mental well-being and enhance your support circle.

There are regular RSL Active events held through RSL Sub-branches across Australia.

You do not need to be an RSL member to be a part of RSL Active.



RSL Remembrance Ride, NSW, 2023



Kirra Klassic, QLD, 2023



Fort to Fort, SA, 2023



RSL
ACTIVE

Join the fun! rslaustralia.org/rsl-active

OPERATION BABYLIFT: MINH'S TRUE STORY

This is the true story of Van Nguyen (Minh), a Vietnamese orphan rescued by the Royal Australian Air Force during Operation Babylift in 1975. Minh will forever be grateful to Australia's servicemen and women who returned to help evacuate those in need.

Minh has not only embraced life as an Australian, but he has also given back to the Australian Defence Force, joining the Australian Navy Cadets and the Royal Australian Navy Junior Recruits and serving eight years in the Navy.

These days, Minh is retired, enjoying what life has to offer. He's an active member of the RSL Ex-Servicemen Club Orange and the Naval Association Orange branch. This is his incredible story.

In the final days of the Vietnam War, the Royal Australian Air Force played a significant role in humanitarian efforts.

Despite having taken its combat troops out of Vietnam several years before, Australia responded to an urgent call to fly out evacuees and refugees as the North Vietnamese offensive made rapid headway down the country.

There were significant risks, but RAAF personnel worked tirelessly to ensure as many people as possible were evacuated safely. They also flew emergency food, medical and other relief supplies to some 40,000 refugees. Over 200 people – air and ground crew, equipment and administration personnel, nurses and other medical staff – flew on operations during the RAAF's final involvement in the Vietnam War.

The population of South Vietnam was fleeing the approaching enemy, seeking safety in the south and hoping for a way out. Thousands of orphans were displaced in the chaos. Throughout the war, orphans had come to Australia for adoption. Suddenly, there was a need to accelerate the operation and get as many children as possible to safety.

Some had been chosen for adoption in Australia, while others had homes waiting for them in the United States. In early April 1975, the United States and Australia began evacuating the Vietnamese children in a series of

flights known as Operation Babylift. The notable operation successfully rescued 194 orphaned Vietnamese children and brought them to safety in Australia and other countries.

Minh was one of those orphaned children brought to Australia at the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

"I never met or knew my biological family. I was a refugee orphan with a disability (polio) from birth. I was evacuated from an orphanage with other orphans and put onboard a military Hercules evacuation flight out of Saigon in April 1975".

Despite a tough start in life, Van was one of the lucky ones.

On 4 April two Australian Hercules crews and an American Galaxy crew filled the planes with babies, children, their caregivers and medical staff. As the American Galaxy took off, disaster struck. The plane door blew off. The plane bounced over the Saigon river and exploded tragically killing most on board. The dead included 143 babies and 2 Australian women from Adelaide, Lee Makk and Margaret Moses, who had volunteered to help with the children.

The two Australian Hercules landed in Bangkok and disembarked 194 children, three doctors and 20 nurses. From there the children were taken to Australia.

"After arriving in Australia, all the orphans became care of the state ward in various orphanages in Sydney awaiting adoption or fostering. I was fostered for a short period of 4 years by an Australian family in the tiny country town of CARGO in the central west of NSW.

"At age 14, I joined the (NRC) Naval Reserve Cadets, nowadays known as the Australian Navy Cadets, for about 12 months. When I was 15, I left school with the permission [from another foster



parents in Sydney] and applied for the Royal Australian Navy Junior Recruits at HMAS Leeuwin in Western Australia (JRTE) Junior Recruits Training Establishment. I served in the Navy for eight years.

"Although I have Vietnamese heritage, I am Aussie by nature and proud to be an Australian. I call Australia home. I am so grateful for all the service men and women who went before and are currently working to protect this beautiful nation.

"To all Vietnam Veterans, I salute you and thank you for your service and sacrifice. What an amazing gift it is to enjoy my new life with such tranquillity.

"I am a member of the RSL Ex-Servicemen Club Orange in the central west of NSW and the Naval Association Orange branch. Getting involved in these organisations has been very important for my mental health well-being and has allowed me to reconnect with ex servicemen and servicewomen."





The Last Post visits Vietnam

TLP Editor Greg T Ross speaks with TLP Radio Show Co-Host Gary Mac about the magazine's recent visit to Vietnam.

PODCASTS: www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews

— INTERVIEW —

Gary Mac: Hello, this is Gary Mac.

For Australia, the Vietnam War began in a small way. It started in 1962 with the arrival in Saigon of 30 Australian army jungle warfare and counterinsurgency experts to help train the South Vietnamese. They were known as the Team. Three years later, as the situation worsened and the Americans began committing large ground forces, and Australian infantry battalion was sent there. Over 10 years, 60,000 Australians, Navy, Army, and Air Force were to see service in Vietnam, and a third of the troops were conscripts national servicemen. By mid-1966, two Australian infantry battalions were in Vietnam, along with the artillery, including New Zealand gunners, Armoured Corp, engineers, logistics, and an SAS unit operating from their own base in Nui Dat, southeast of Saigon, and responsible for the security of a major part of Phước Tuy province. It was a very small force to carry out major operations, constant patrols always within sight and even earshot of communist Viet Cong guerrillas.

Vietnam was unlike any war Australia had ever fought. There were no front lines or safe areas. The whole countryside was the front line, riddled with Viet Cong who fought with toughness and dedication. In mid-August 1966, just two months after the Australians were established in Nui Dat, a company of the 6th Battalion just 108 men made contact with the enemy only four kilometers east of the base in the Long Tan rubber plantation and fought an epic three-hour battle of survival, suffering more than 40 killed and wounded, but killing more than 200 of the enemy. This famous battle was fought with an earshot of the base at Nui Dat. Long Tan was a victory, but victories were few in Vietnam when it seemed the communists had been out-fought the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army launched the savage Tet Offensive early in 1968, showing that victory was still a long way off, if not impossible to achieve.

The Australians' war in Vietnam dragged on until 1972, a war of constant patrols and ambushes abortive attempts to bring an elusive enemy to battle. 523 soldiers died as a result of the war, and almost 2,400 were wounded. The war was the cause of the greatest social and political dissent in Australia since the conscription referendums of the First World War. Many draft resisters, conscientious objectors, and protestors were fined or jailed, while soldiers met a hostile reception upon their return home. Australia's participation in the war was formally declared at an end when the Governor General issued a proclamation on the 11th of January in 1973. The only

combat troops remaining in Vietnam were a platoon guarding the Australian Embassy in Saigon, which was withdrawn in June 1973.

Greg T Ross: Well, thank you very much, Gary Mac, and what a pleasure it is to speak with you and to listeners for The Last Post Radio Show and to speak about the recent trip to Vietnam.

GM: Yeah. It was four weeks in length, wasn't it?

GTR: It was Gary. It went from the beginning of February till, I think, the 1st of March from memory, and it all went by so quickly, but there was a hell of a lot that we got up to a hell of a lot that we'd learned, and a hell of a lot of nice people we met. So wonderful.

GM: That's fantastic. Well, I'm looking forward to hearing about the trip. Now, you took off, as you say, early February 2024. You arrived where?

GTR: Well, we flew to originally Singapore waited around there for a few hours, and then to Da Nang. We landed at Da Nang, and we were picked up there by a driver called Bin Bin.

GM: What did you say when you got off the aircraft at Da Nang?

GTR: Good morning, Vietnam.

And that's exactly what I said. And funnily enough, that movie was on the plane flying up to Vietnam, Gary, so I've got a good view of that.

GM: It was probably on the way back as well, because I know that they play that movie a lot in and out of Vietnam. Now, you were picked up by a delightful young driver by the name of Bin Bin in Da Nang, and he drove you then to Hội An. How long did that trip take?

GTR: Bin Bin took us to Hội An from Da Nang that went, I guess, for about 40 minutes. The first impressions I got of Vietnam from that was that there's a hell of a lot of motorbikes and scooters around, and somehow they seem to manage it. There's very few traffic lights, very few seemingly rules and regulations on the road, but somehow they seem to avoid collisions. I don't know if I'd have the strength or guts to go through that myself. But, yeah.

GM: It's quite extraordinary. I've seen a lot of video of those scooters, that's the chosen form of transport over there, everybody, and sometimes you see two or three people on a scooter as well.

GTR: Oh, well, I think actually, I took a photo of one scooter there, Gary, and there was the rider of

the scooter, then his three children plus the dog. So there seemed to be laneways everywhere, and just such an interesting thing to sit in the car there and observe it. But yeah, about 40 minutes and the warmth, of course, we'd arrived during the Tet celebrations more on that a bit later. But of course, very, very busy markets everywhere, it was incredible.

GM: Just to give us an idea of the costs involved, what sort of fare would you pay Bin Bin for his 40-minute trip?

GTR: Well, the dong is undervalued to compare to the Australian dollar. So it might be, say, 150,000 dong now before you take a deep breath and go, jeez, that probably works out to be about 17 or \$18. So, I was briefly a millionaire in Vietnam too, Gary, because of course, in my wallet I had millions of dollars worth of dong.

GM: Yes. All right. Back to Hội An. How did that city impress you? Obviously, you've spent a bit of time.

GTR: A beautiful city. It is a World Heritage Site has been since 1999, I think. And normally, it has about 120,000 people in it. However, Gary, during the Tet to celebrations that probably quadrupled, and it was a hustling, bustling city. So, all in all, a most beautiful area with beautiful rivers and markets, and I guess the old town that has the old Japanese bridge there too, which was built in the 16th or 17th century, so a most interesting city, but all the time, of course during Tet, people coming up and wanting to sell you things, so that you've got to be prepared for that. Hội An apparently translated, means a peaceful meeting place, and I imagine that during the off-tour season, it would be just that.

GM: Well, you must have met a lot of people and mixed with the local people there too. What were they really like?

GTR: Beautiful people, Gary. Just as a particular instance, we came across a little cafe, and look, most of the people that run these businesses do so from their own houses. So, their houses are open to the street, and you can see grandma watching television, a room down from the hallway, and they'll have their goods out the front of the shop. It may even be a cafe or a restaurant, but in the background, it's all very homely. We met a wonderful woman by the name of Flower, and her husband was Viet as in Vietnam. And Flower's food was absolutely marvelous, but Flower. I'll tell you what she did everything. She arranged the laundry. She arranged the tours. She even sold tickets to the local theater production. She was a busy woman. Flower was wonderful. And she did give me some mushroom wine, which

National Vietnam Veterans Museum

25 Veterans Drive Newhaven, Phillip Island

The National Vietnam Veterans Museum (NVVM) is situated 90 minutes' drive from Melbourne on the main tourist road, Newhaven, Phillip Island. Many of the guides who escort guests through this comprehensive museum are Vietnam veterans, each with his own story to add to those on display.



In addition to the helicopters, tank, and armoured personnel carrier that attract much attention from young guests, NVVM houses a unique collection of documents and smaller artefacts. Vital amongst them are those relating to the story of Private Errol Noack, the first conscripted soldier to die in Vietnam, and Private Peter Dennis O'Neill's *A Queer Place*: the pictorial representation of his struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

NVVM is proud to be able to display the Tattersall's Ballot Barrel used for the National Service draws and has an educational program in which students experience a mock conscription ballot, after which they can explore the exhibits to find out what would have happened to them if they were a Tunnel Rat, a gunner, a dust-off medic, nurse, Red Cross volunteer or infantryman.

For more information about the National Vietnam Veterans Museum and to organise your visit, call us 03 5956 6400 between 10am and 5pm Monday – Friday.

**Bring this tear off section to the museum for
ONE FREE ENTRY**

— INTERVIEW —

was an experience. I saw she had a bottle of gin there, a brand that I favor, and I said, "Can I have some of that?" She goes, "No, that's my husband. He'd kill me, but you can have the mushroom wine." I said, "Well, I'm in a brave mood. I want to try that." And we did. But yeah, just a lovely thing. So, all the businesses are houses, and they're very family-orientated people, Gary.

GM: Yeah. Yeah. I get that impression. I certainly do. Now, your first visit away from your base at Hôi An was to My Lai, which is an infamous part of the world for it having been the place where US troops massacred an entire village. What was your intent and impressions from that visit?

GTR: Look, I had no idea. I had to admit my ignorance. I had no idea. We were so close to My Lai, and once I found out that we were within two hours driving, I said, "Look. We have to go." Because, of course, growing up and obviously keeping an eye on the Vietnam War as a youngster, this was something that happened in March, I think it was 1968, but wasn't revealed for a year later involved the mass murder of unarmed civilians. Now, of course, both sides were responsible for the killing of people in horrendous ways, and that's tragedy of warfare. But it did leave a mark on the world and also help turn the tide against the Vietnamese war.

One of the things that was striking Gary Mac was that when the American troops arrived, the village had been going about its peaceful morning business, and it was quite muddy apparently. So there's footsteps, et cetera. That were put in the mud. So what they've done is they've cemented that over, so the footsteps, and these remain. What I saw was children's footprints, women's footprints, and US Marine footprints, and also a dog's footprints. And apparently, even the dogs were killed, but there was a push-bike there that had been going in one direction and then suddenly appeared to stop and do a U-turn, and maybe a kid had seen the American troops and tried to get away. But a very poignant, very moving, and I guess just once again, reiterating the tragedy of warfare and why we must do everything we can to stop it. But yeah, we drove back to Hôi An, very, very silent, very silent.

GM: Yes. I think you've put that very well. It's a poignant thing to be in an environment like that, and there must be an air of sadness about it all as well. I mean, okay, we've moved on from the Vietnam War, but there must be an air of sadness at all times. And I've spoken to a number of vets who saw action in Vietnam, and I understand perhaps why many of them don't really want to talk about it because it brings back those memories. But it was then

I know that the country has moved on. We've all moved on. I'm glad that you saw that because that's, as you say, was something that you heard about when you were growing up.

GTR: Indeed. And to stand there, the village, the foundations of the huts are still there. The footprints are still there. It looked like a beautiful village. But of course, I think there was about three US soldiers and officers who tried to stop it, but that's that. So, yeah, as I say, poignant important part of the war and did help to turn a public opinion against the war. But I will say this one thing, the Vietnamese are very, very embracing inclusive and forgiving people, and the warmth of their friendship and willingness and wish for us to understand what they'd been through was quite incredible. So bless them for that.

GM: Absolutely. Now, on a brighter side, of course, Hôi An is well known for its restaurants, and I know that you're well known for taking the munch at restaurants from time to time, pouring the odd martini. And did you find any good restaurants in Hôi An?

GTR: Well, I'll tell you what, this is one of the blessings. Gary, and listeners, I think if you're going to Vietnam, make sure you do go to Hôi An because if you like good food, you've come to the right spot. There was a place called Morning Glory, and we went there for the second time, and they said, "Oh, you get a 10% discount, you're a regular." And this was on the second visit, so I thought, "Oh, maybe I've been here longer than I realized." The food was glorious, and what we would do was go up in the first full balcony to avoid the street sellers coming in, trying to flog you off stuff, and have a lovely view of the whole area. And there was a place called the Spice Route. And look, we were walking down a laneway one night to Gary, and just by per chance a beautiful, authentic Indian restaurant, some of the best Indian food that we've ever had, and quite amazing, these alleyways, what you'll find.

GM: I've also spoken to a number of other friends who have done exactly that, and you can get lost, but it's a joy to be lost in that kind of environment.

GTR: Oh, aren't you so right? And it was so funny because walking back to the bridge to cross over, to go back to where we were staying, sometimes would get lost. And I'd say, look, I know the way, follow me. And sure enough, as Greg's had a habit of doing in the past, Greg was wrong.

GM: Well, it serves you right. You should just find another bar and pour in another martini. Now, obviously, you were there during what they call Tet,

which is the Lunar New Year in Asian countries. I guess it was pretty busy.

GTR: Well, yes, it was Gary and known as Tet. It's probably the most significant festival in Vietnam and their holidays. So basically, they shut down for four days, but in the lead-up and directly afterwards, it's go, go, go. It's a nationwide celebration marking on New Year, obviously, and the traditional lunar calendar. And the holiday dates, they change each year, but typically fall between I think, mid-January and late February. So, this obviously was during our time there. And the color, the noise, the singing, and the selling. Of course, everyone's trying to flog you off something, so you can hardly walk two steps without someone suggesting you should buy something, and just that you have to learn to either ignore it or say politely. No, thank you. So...

GM: You drove to Hue, which was the former capital of Vietnam for some time, and very much I understand the old Vietnam. I mean, obviously, the old Vietnam was a place, so totally different to the kind of world that we're living in now. And we understand that Hue was the imperial city.

GTR: Yes.

GM: Was there any reason why you went there?

GTR: It came about in a funny way, because met an American couple, Bruce and Rhoda, who were lovely. We went to Da Nang with them and also went to Hue with them. And they're well and truly back in Washington State now, but a lovely couple. They told us they were going to Hue and asked if we wanted to come. But we stopped at this restaurant or cafe for a coffee on the way. And this Vietnamese guy who was serving the coffee came up to me, and he said, "Are you Australian?" I said, "Yeah." And he looked like he was just about to collapse with happiness. He said, "My brother lives in Melbourne. I'm just trying to save up money to get there." But then we went to Hue and saw the Imperial City, which was a marble, dropped off Bruce and Rhoda, and we went to our hotel. But the unfortunate thing was there, Gary, we had planned to spend a couple of days there, but it's not deli belly, but there was some food poisoning involved, and I was quite okay, but my partner was quite ill, and so we had to request to go back the next time.

GM: Did that require medical attention? Did you have to go to a hospital or an emergency area?

GTR: No, just rest. And a lot of buckets and trips to the toilet.

GM: Don't go there. Look, I do know that you have to be careful. I mean,

the word, in fact, this is some of the instructions that people will find if they're planning on trips to Vietnam and elsewhere, that you don't use the local water. You don't drink the local water.

GTR: No. No. Don't drink the water. Always drink bottled water.

GM: And be careful. Just simply be careful. It's not quite like it is in Western countries.

GTR: No, that's right. Always go to busy places. And look, a lot of the times, the little cafes in the side alleys are probably the best bet because they're so busy and popular. But this instance was just bad luck in that sense. But my reaction was my stomach took some time about a week to get used to it. And then after that, I mean, I was okay, but yeah, after getting used to it, and the food is so beautiful, it's impossible to resist. We also went to Saigon. Part of the reason for the trip, obviously was apart from Hội An base, was to see some areas and events that were significant during the Vietnam War, Gary. And of course, Saigon, as it was known as Ho Chi Minh City now. But a lot of the locals, the South Vietnamese, still call it Saigon, and I say South Vietnamese because they made it very clear to us that they preferred Saigon. What they did is they said a lot of the North Vietnamese people considered the South Vietnamese people to be losers because they lost the Civil War. And they said that that feeling still continues, believe it or not, with some people. But they're all very well-educated and spoke to us about the war. But we went to Saigon, and I guess there's a lot of things. One of the points that we're doing in the Anzac edition of the last post, Gary, is to look at photojournalists, Tim Page was one of them. And of course, we went to the Continental Hotel, which is a beautiful, beautiful.

GM: Yeah, I understand. The Continental is really the place.

GTR: I could just see you there sitting back and having a beer or a wine mate, it's beautiful.

GM: Yes. Well, just pour a nice, just a nice friendly Johnny would be nice.

GTR: I know. Well, that's right. You'd get a ice there too. And the gardeners, where the US military would give their talks at the end of each day about the progress of the war to journalists. And then we went to the wrecks where The Five O'Clock Follies as they called them, because the US military also spoke at the Rex up at the garden. I think it's the fifth floor. We went up there for dinner and The Five O'Clock Follies where they would tell the press

about how they were winning the Vietnam War and everything. And amongst that, obviously, was Sean Flynn, the son of Errol.

GM: Yes. Well, I was going to say actually Sean Flynn obviously is related to His Royal Highness Errol, yes.

GTR: Yeah, that's right. He was his son and just as good-looking. And Sean was a friend of Tim Page's. And Tim obviously, they never found Sean's body, but it is believed he was kidnapped by the Khmer Rouge. And also amongst the press up, there were the Steinbeck Brothers, the sons of the great John Steinbeck, and they and Tim would go there, but they soon grew a bit tired, I think, of hearing the military saying how they were winning the war when they weren't. So, you could feel the whole atmosphere there. It was quite an amazing hotel. And that's another one that I'd recommend people visit when they go to Saigon is the Rex and the Continental. We also, we went to the War Remnants Museum in Saigon too, Gary.

GM: Now tell me about the War Remnants Museum. Is that a big place?

GTR: It is. It's quite imposing. Look, there was this chap there who approached, as he had both his arms blown off by a US landmine and one of his legs and one of his eyes, but he knew Tim Page. And when I told him that I had been friends with Tim, he became quite emotional. So that was a striking thing about going to the museum to find in Saigon, someone that knew Tim Page. It was quite incredible. But they've got all these tanks and things, and they've got demonstrations of the South Vietnamese government's torture chambers, et cetera, et cetera. But I think the most interesting thing was the Requiem, which was organized by Tim. Tim Page as a tribute to two missing and believed dead journalists and photographers during the war, Gary.

GM: Yes. Well, that happened quite often. Missing in action.

GTR: Yeah. Well, it was incredible. So they had their works on the Requiem, which I think was the second floor from memory, a beautiful thing. But out the front that we had the old Huey helicopters, an F-5A fighter, and Daisy Cutter bomb there. And I guess the message there was too, that some of these bombs that were made by the Viet Cong cost a dollar to put together but could destroy a \$1 million tank. So there was a tank at M48 Patton tank out the front there too, and a Dragonfly attack bomber, which incredible, they were still in remarkably condition.

But I would recommend that people go to the War Remnants Museum also, and up to the second floor to see the Requiem. It'll take you about three hours for a solid look. It's just an amazingly interesting place where you're immersed in history and the photographic display at the Requiem. It's just incredible, Gary, it would knock your socks off.

GM: Okay. I'll put that most certainly on the bucket list as part of the success, if you will, of the Viet Cong was their labyrinth or their warrens of tunnels, which were everywhere around Saigon or Ho Chi Minh City, as it's known now. And your visit to the Cu Chi, is it Cu Chi tunnels?

You actually climbed underground, and you went for a bit of a wander.

GTR: Yeah. I did go down and I felt claustrophobic. I lasted 30 meters. And I had to get out. Claire lasted 50 meters. But the scary thing is Gary, and to listeners, is that that actually widened these tunnels for Western people who are big like me.

GM: Yeah. Well, I was going to say, because most of the... Well, most Asian people are much smaller than their Western counterparts, blokes like you and I, I'd get stuck down a tunnel. Although I'm looking fairly trim-taught and terrific. I'll have you know.

GTR: There was a big American there. He looked like a footballer, and he could not get down the tunnel. So he just had his photo taken at the entrance. There's no way that he could get, and this is what the Viet Cong knew. They thought if they make them small enough to fit in, the Americans got no way of getting down there because they're bigger.

It was an immense network, really. And of course, being so close to Saigon was part of the way that it underlined much of the country. But the Cu Chi tunnels, I guess there were campaigns around that, including the Tet Offensive in 1968, where they actually came up in the US Embassy, which gave the Yanks a bit of a scare. But yeah, they're hiding spots during combat. They would just often wonder how the Americans ever thought they would win, because the Viet Cong in particular would design their sandals to appear as though they're walking backwards. It's very hard to explain. But they would also cook without smoke, speak without talking. I'm still in awe.

But underneath these tunnels, Gary, there were hospitals, food, and weapon, cachets, and living quarters for the fighters, and they ran onto a river, which is where they would escape when the Americans came.

— INTERVIEW —

Photo: Greg T Ross.



But the smoke also, they would cook, of course, underground, but smoke was directed so that it would come out in a hole, maybe, let's say, 50 or 60 meters away. So the Americans, until they tweaked, would start dropping bombs down the hole where the smoke was coming from. But that was nowhere near where the Viet Cong actually were. So...

GM: They were fairly cunning at warfare.

GTR: Oh, look, they are so ground street smart. Let's put it that way. It's probably the best way that Westerners can tweak that they are so smart and things that we don't think of, they just go about it as though it's second nature. Very, very smart people. There's a natural intellect there, which obviously helped them during the war. But the conditions of the tunnels, I mean, the American soldiers, I think Gary used the term black echo because the tunnels were so difficult to negotiate, and they're infested with ants and venomous, I think centipedes, we were told snakes and scorpions.

GM: Yeah. Yeah. Plus you'd be largely in the dark if you had a flashlight. Well, that's a little different, but you'd largely be in the dark the whole time.

GTR: Yes. I don't know how they did it, because, of course, claustrophobia affects a lot of Westerners, I think. But jeez, mate, I tell you what, it's funny because the guy that was there, he said, "You're here." He said, "You must go down. You'll regret it for the rest of your life if you don't." That's it.

GM: Now, part of your study, you as being editor-in-chief and publisher of The Last Post Magazine, and your involvement here with the podcast, part of your work and trip to Vietnam was to also visit a very well-known name, the Mekong Delta.

GTR: Oh, Gary, I'll tell you what? Look, I've fallen in love with the Mekong Delta and the people in it. Of course, a major part of the Vietnam War where the Viet Cong hid and often would use bamboo breathers to hide under the water to ambush the Americans. And I'll tell you what, Gary going down the Mekong Delta and its tributaries, which we did, I felt all these years later, I felt for the American troops, it would've been frightenin.

There was just boats, houses, markets floating on the amazing river, and we just, it's known as the Nine Dragon River Delta, which is actually the Mekong Delta is the Westernized version, but it's easier to say and shorter. But it's in southwestern Vietnam, and it's where the Mekong River approaches and empties into the sea. So there's a lot of just tributaries around there, but the people, the food, the villages that we walked through where they share and they grow food for each other. So let's say you might grow some corn and your next door neighbor's got some rice. There's no starving. He'll give you the rice, you give them the corn, and happy. So it's all this sharing, it's built on an understanding of sharing. But to go through the Mekong Delta and to experience this beautiful part of the country was, to me, it's just a treasure trove.

GM: I remember this is now going back several years, and I may have been maybe clouded by other movies that may have been made in that same area, but I recall it was either a documentary or it was a dramatized movie that was made of a man who was taken prisoner, a south Vietnamese man who was taken prisoner by the Viet Cong near the Mekong Delta the river. And his lady friend, who I think he was betrothed to, he was maybe engaged or about to be married when he was captured. And he made this remarkable swim across the currents of that river to the other side, where his lady was. And I believe that it was either a documentary. I'm going back now many years ago.

It would be something that I'd like to see if I could find and maybe have another look at it. It sounds like an incredible place.

GTR: Yeah. You'd love it. There's no doubt about it. You would love it. So you take off, and you're obviously on a boat. There's so many boats. And again, it's very much like the motorcycle law. It appears as though you're going to crash with these boats, but they always navigate around each other. It's beautiful. And of course, I also got to feed the crocodiles. It was just an amazing place. I know that you would love it. It's a low-lying coastal place. And we put on a show, Gary, and where traditional music was played, and these wonderfully beautiful women in traditional dresses came out and danced and sang. Claire actually even got up and joined them.

GM: This is your first trip to Vietnam, right?

GTR: Yes, it is Gary. And I think combined with the work for the coming edition and for our chat today, there was a lot of lovely moments of peacefulness and rest to wake up looking at over the rice fields in the river. It was certainly a beautiful place to be.

GM: You found a beautiful escape in Chàm Islands. Is that right?

GTR: Funny that we came about this quite serendipitously. Claire and I had taken a walk, a six kilometer walk from Hội An to An Bang Beach one day because we wanted to exercise. And along the way, I found a bunch of Norwegian tennis players playing tennis on a court. That's another story. But we got to An Bang Beach and had a swim and a beer, an ice-cold Tiger beer. And I noticed this island. I said to Claire, "Look, what is that? I wonder. It looks mysterious." So did some Googling and discovered it was actually Chàm Islands, which is

a group of eight islands. And so we organized to go out there. The first time we stayed for three nights and second time a week later for another two nights, looked after by Yong and his wife, me, and they would go to the market for us, get the latest fish.

Oh, you would love it, and the fish is falling off the bone. And they would cook it for us and present it to us. And I think the first time we stayed there three nights, including accommodation, food, and of course martinis and beers. We came to \$100 each. That's for accommodation for three nights. And it was beautiful, actually. It was very family feeling there because Yong and his wife, their granddaughter was staying with them, and she went to the local school, and one day, she came up to Claire and she said, "Can you walk me to school?" So, I walked with Claire and this young 8-year-old girl to school, and we went into the school, and we were so welcomed by the children there. It was such a beautiful, beautiful experience. There's idyllic beaches there, and one of them is only 300 meters from the main area. But it's up such a steep hill that by the time you get there, you think that's my cardiovascular of the day. But there was never anyone there snorkeling tours. We did walk a bit further up the beach up the coastline and found a disused resort where they'd run out of money. But the good thing was there was still all these beautiful buildings and umbrellas and seats, and everything. But again, no one there, it was like an empty, it was quite chilling. An abandoned resort.

We stayed there for a couple of hours, and the monkeys would come down and try and pinch our food and clothes, but you had to be on the lookout for the monkeys are very cheeky bastards.

GM: They are cheeky little buggers. They really are. And they'll take anything. They'll take your camera, they'll take your wallet.

GTR: Yes, that's right. If you go there, we were warned by French family first up, and they said, "Don't leave your clothes that far away from us." But also, the interesting thing was that Cham Island, we went to a temple there, a Buddhist temple, and there was a very big military presence in the sense of there was an army base there, and also the coastal protection mob with their boats, because apparently the South China Sea, there obviously is the scene of much intrusion by Chinese vessels.

This was evidenced by the number of patrol boats and military personnel on the island. It's a fishing village. It's almost like a Vietnamese version

of Doc Martin's village in England. Small but beautiful. And again, recommended if anyone's going to Vietnam, please take the time to go to Chàm Island. The fishing... There's a place called Coconut Beach we went to too, which is just beautiful.

GM: I know that I'd mentioned a couple of things that I would love to see. I've not been to Vietnam. The topography, as I call it, that is the landscape of Vietnam is really something to behold, especially those sawing sort of mountainous rocks that go up. They're all clustered together, and those that are by the beach in the seaways and so on, that is really quite spectacular. Did you get to see any of that?

GTR: One of the most romantically beautiful parts of the trip is course to Vietnam, is that the hills and the mountains that you so accurately described. And often, if the clouds low enough, it adds that air of mystique because it's all very misty. But the beauty of the country itself is one reason alone to visit. But of course, when you combine that with the history and the loveliness of the people, then that's also very good.

GM: Well, it makes it a very, very special place to consider if any of our readers and listeners are looking for somewhere different to go, it's Vietnam.

GTR: Yes, indeed. I would recommend that to anyone. When you combine the fact that it's amazingly affordable there's no reason not to go, Gary.

GM: Now tell me about your final note and we'll wrap it up on this point. You went to An Bang Beach.

GTR: An Bang is quite incredible, a lot of visitors and tourists there. But no, it's no wonder, Gary, because it was voted one of the, I believe, one of the, I think 25 most picturesque beaches in Asia. I think a few years ago now by Tripadvisor. And yes, there's surf there, so you can get your little bodyboard and have a surf, and then you go to the bar, have a drink or whatever, and some lovely restaurants too. So there's a combination of things there that make it a very attractive place. We spent our last night there, and there was a woman there outside her place just washing dogs. She wasn't accepting payment for it. She just wanted to see clean dogs, and the dogs were all lining up to be washed.

GM: I remember seeing your pictures of this lady and the dogs were kind of lining up there in the street.

GTR: Yes, they were. And look, the whole thing with Chàm Island and

An Bang Beach and all that, Chàm Islands is only five kilometers boat ride from Hội An takes about 20 minutes in the speedboat. It can be a bit hairy at times, but An Bang Beach is where you leave for Chàm Island. But the basket boats there at An Bang Beach were striking the traditional Vietnamese basket boats. So yeah, beach lounges and thatched umbrella along the beach there. And yeah, one of the best beach resorts in Vietnam, I'd say.

GM: Fantastic.

GTR: A lovely way to finish the journey.

GM: Yeah. And I think on that note too, that was a wonderful way to finish what we've been talking about here. It was almost like a bittersweet trip for you though, wasn't it? Because it's been a country that has seen war on more than one occasion and a very protracted war.

GTR: Look, I tell you what, striking and a sad note that so many young men and women lost their lives in a war that could have been avoided. One of the striking things, Gary, was that the South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese combined both spoke to me about the war as being a civil war. They said it wasn't the Vietnam War to us. It was our civil war.

And when you look at it that way, it was a needless loss of life and energy and money and beautiful people, beautiful countryside. Yes, they did have a dispute. And of course, there's still a regional differences, let's put it that way. But it is one country. The sadness involved with Australia and America and South Korea and New Zealand and Canada, I think too was the loss of life, Gary. The first Australian killed in Vietnam. It was killed only 24 hours or 48 hours after arriving there, and he was only 18 or 19 or something. It just shows you the tragedy.

Just a final word, Gary. Look here in Australia, we've got lots of, I guess, tributes, heritage, things to do with the Vietnam War, but one of the best things is the National Vietnam Veterans Museum down at Phillip Island in Victoria, It's fantastic. But obviously there, it's down at New Haven. It's just next to the airfield on the main Phillip Island Road. It's volunteer, run, and created to dedicate to the heritage and legacy of the vets. So, if you're interested in the Vietnam War and the legacy and history of the veterans, they get along to the National Veterans Museum down there in Phillip Island, and they'll look after a great mob down there and a great museum.

GM: Greg, welcome back. You take care and thanks for the chat. ■



Saigon -

On Dong Khoi Street, The Continental. Radio Catinat. With four-metre high ceilings, to avoid the tropical heat. Where, amongst sweet frangipani, Graham Greene wrote *The Quiet American*. The Continental Shelf on the Ground Floor.

Tim Page. French opium rooms.

The Caravelle. Hu Van Es taking photos for *Life* magazine. Daily briefings at The Rex Hotel and its Rooftop Bar. 5 O'Clock Follies in District 1.

47 Bui Thi Xuan. Swapping stories, smoking and supporting each other at Frankie's House.

The Sheraton Hotel. The Tu Do Flat. The Steinbeck's. Sean Flynn. The disappearance of.

The War Remnants Museum. Requiem. Huey, Daisy Cutter and Dragonfly. The guy in the grounds with no hands.

He loved Tim. We all loved Tim.

The Peace Island. The Coconut Monk and the floating temple.

Tim.

Flynn (the disappearance of)

Steinbeck. All praying for peace.

MARIANNE HARRIS / GREG T ROSS

In Hanoi Before

I've never taken that long, curious taxi ride from airport – in Hanoi before; never greeted strangers with optimism – in Hanoi before; never woken suddenly late afternoon, lifted head from pillow and wondered what the time was – in Hanoi before; never sat at the breakfast table, staring into space, thinking about nothing – in Hanoi before; never realised it is all nothing – in Hanoi before; never checked the state of my nasal hair, itched my balls – in Hanoi before; never not read the newspapers – in Hanoi before; never peered into my wallet and calculated cash – in Hanoi before; never stared into the sky and felt that weird cosmic unease – in Hanoi before; never glanced at my watch and felt the trick of time – in Hanoi before; never smelt the waft of cigarette smoke and been reminded of my grandfather's white-out haze – in Hanoi before; never been proud of myself for abandoning alcohol – in Hanoi before; never been talked into sucking on communal spliff and been disappointed at how weak the weed was – in Hanoi before; never heard Louis Armstrong sing Wonderful World – in Hanoi before; never felt content being on my own – in Hanoi before; never consumed 3am coffee and biscuits – in Hanoi before; never watched FASHION TV – in Hanoi before; never been liked by Facebook friends – in Hanoi before; never lain on the bed, nestling my skull in the crook of my elbow – in Hanoi before; never gazed across morning rooftops, feeling bird envy – in Hanoi before; never felt sun warming skin and memories – in Hanoi before; never walked streets, full of 20,000 and some days, heart beating, eyes still seeking – in Hanoi before.

JEREMY ROBERTS





OLD JOURNO'S NEVER DIE - THEY JUST BECOME THE STORY

They are still known as the most famous press corps in the world. The men and women who covered the Vietnam war for over a decade, their words and images creating a benchmark in reportage that is still recognised today.

Back then they were called Bao Chi, today they call themselves the Vietnam Old Hacks and they stay connected via their blog site, cat herded by Carl Robinson (ex-AP). It was clear from the first night at the rooftop bar of the Huong Sen hotel, that during this week of 40th anniversary celebrations of the end of the war, that the Old Hacks were to become the biggest show in town.

The rooftop was bathed in TV lights, cameras catching every hug and handshake as they ambled in, arriving from all over the world. They have been gathering here in Ho'ville every 5 years since 1995 holding their own reunions, re-connecting with old mates, re-living old memories and most importantly, remembering absent friends. This was the first time the Vietnamese government had invited them as special guests, all expenses paid and they were treated like old friends with VIP status. (Also invited were fraternal media from Cuba, Hungary, Russia & Algeria). At the official welcome they were thanked for their reporting during the war; that got an immediate response; "we just reported what we saw".

First on the agenda was a meeting with the Vietnam Veterans Association of HCMC. Hosted by Admiral Tran Thanh Huyen and a group of army officers, the room struggled to accommodate the Old Hacks and all the media crews. After long speeches and translations about that last day in Saigon, it was opened up to a Q&A session.

They might be Old Hacks but they've lost none of their edge - Jimmy Pringle (ex-Reuters) asked a question about the Spratley & Paracel Islands and Tim Page enquired if they could help with the missing media in Cambodia and could he have access to a particular file that he had learnt about.

MARIANNE HARRIS

Wife of the late Tim Page, legendary war photographer (1944-2022).

"I thought I am never going to get this opportunity again, we're all getting old and would just like to resolve their fates" Page said. The Admiral and the Generals conferred and gave Page what seemed a genuine promise to help. Jimmy Pringle's Q&A was sort of lost in translation.

At the Palace, there were more interviews on the steps and the unexpected arrival of many old veterans, men and women representing every unit that took part in the war, for their own photo opportunity. They were delighted to find themselves there with the Old Hacks.

A staple at all the reunions is a visit to the REQUIEM/HOI NHIEM exhibition at the War Remnants Museum to honour their old mates. Realising who they were, tourists tagged along behind the camera crews creating a logjam inside the exhibition. They had all lost friends whose photos were hanging on the walls. This is the only place that REQUIEM now hangs in perpetuity, albeit without the images from Cambodia.

After a week of visits to the people's achievements that included the Cu Chi tunnels, the Hi-Tech Agricultural Farm but not the promised container port or milk factory, the parade with over 600 accredited media on their own podiums, was almost an anti-climax.

The Old Hacks were herded into the scrum of iPhone coverage mirroring the true liberation of today's Vietnam - the new gods of capitalism, Honda and Apple.

Ho Chi Minh beaming down on the event might have been squirming in his mausoleum while the fourth estate, über interviewed held the high ground.



Vietnam Bucket List

for Tim Page

It was a good night in the Old Quarter – eating a bowl of Bún bò, listening to Sarah Vaughn and Louis Armstrong. Fresh off the plane, I had to start somewhere – even if I couldn't speak the lingo. It's remarkable how pointing, nodding, and smiling can get things moving – when you have a gigantic T-for-tourist carved into your forehead.

I wandered up the street, but turned back to my hotel when I came across a noisy crowd of Western backpackers.

I didn't mind that it was going to be impossible to chat with locals.

My head was already crammed with information – the ARVN, the VC, the NVA, Agent Orange, napalm, the Green Berets, Khe Sahn, My Lai, the battle for Hue ...

Yep – the bloody Vietnam War. The reason I came.

JEREMY ROBERTS



Tim Page. Photo by Troy Rogers.

Vietnam's truth-tellers renew bonds of friendship

THE blood-soaked Vietnam War made war correspondents famous, sent them mad, wounded them, and killed them. Reporters and photographers risked death and mutilation for a key photo, or an eyewitness account of a battle. They could see as much combat as they could endure, they could hitch helicopter rides to hot landing zones; they could go on patrols through rice paddies with the South Vietnamese army, they could lose themselves in a drug-filled haze. The adrenalin of the conflict bound them in bone-deep friendships that have lasted decades.

The veteran combat photographer, Tim Page, who was seriously wounded four times in the war, is one of more than 30 photographers and correspondents who returned to southern Vietnam to commune with journalist friends, and mark Friday's 35th anniversary of the fall of Saigon.

In the bar of the Majestic Hotel, looking over the Saigon River, Page puts it simply: "Outside of the fact that Vietnam was a war of so many firsts and lasts — the first television war, the first photo agencies war, the first war with no censorship, the first war the US lost — the war was changed by the media. We were feral.

And we told the truth." He gazed round at the men and women who covered the war, which lasted from 1955 to 1975 and claimed the lives of 63 foreign journalists and untold numbers of Vietnamese media professionals. "Friendships in conflict are stronger than family ties," says Page, who was born British but now lives in Brisbane. "We formed relationships that lasted. Four of the people who lived in Frankie's House are here tonight."

Frankie's House in Saigon was a confederacy of lunatics who lived with death, and kept working towards the next scoop. The story of the one-time brothel/flophouse was eventually made into a film, and Page had a legendary role. One of the Frankie's House friends is Martin Stuart-Fox, an Australian who worked for the once mighty United Press International wire service, first in Laos and then in Vietnam.

He began as a contributor in Laos in late 1963, moved on to a full-time job with UPI and moved to Vietnam in 1965. The war was raging, bombs were falling and the Vietnamese were proving to be a wary and wily foe. Like many of the more intrepid correspondents, Stuart-Fox went on combat operations. At one point he was with the US first air cavalry for six weeks at a stretch. "We went on various operations just to see what was going on," he says drily. "Obviously there was cross-fire at various times."

Now a respected historian and a professor emeritus at the University of Queensland, Stuart-Fox has written extensively about modern Indochina, including a book on the Khmer



Rouge. The Vietnam War was a few years of madness in a reflective and scholarly life.

"One operation I remember, was with the 101st Airborne on the Cambodian border, where a lot of the infiltration of the North Vietnamese were coming in," he says. "We had to go through the jungle, and creep up to their camp at dawn. But we got lost in the jungle, and finally stumbled into the camp, making enough noise to wake the dead."

He makes it sound almost comical, but there must be few things more frightening than trying to move soundlessly through an alien jungle to surprise battle-hardened troops. He remembers when a re-supply helicopter he was flying in crashed, again making light of a hair-raising episode. Stuart-Fox decided to leave Saigon in late 1966, take a year off to travel the world, and start work again in Paris in 1967 (just in time for the massive student uprising the following year).

He wanted to go to Cambodia before he left Asia, but journalists were most unwelcome at the time. Except Stuart-Fox. "I wrote a letter to Sihanouk," he says. "The prince said he trusted me enough to make an exception in my case." Once he arrived in Phnom Penh, he met Wilfred Burchett, the notorious Australian journalist, who had been branded a communist and a traitor by some in the Australian press, and who had come down the Ho Chi Minh trail. "Wilfred and I celebrated his birthday with some very bad Bulgarian red," Stuart-Fox remembers.

Tim Page is quick to say that Stuart-Fox introduced him to journalism in Laos in the early 60s. But neither of them talk about their scoop on the bloody Laos coup when Page allegedly rode his motorbike through an artillery barrage,

SIAN POWELL

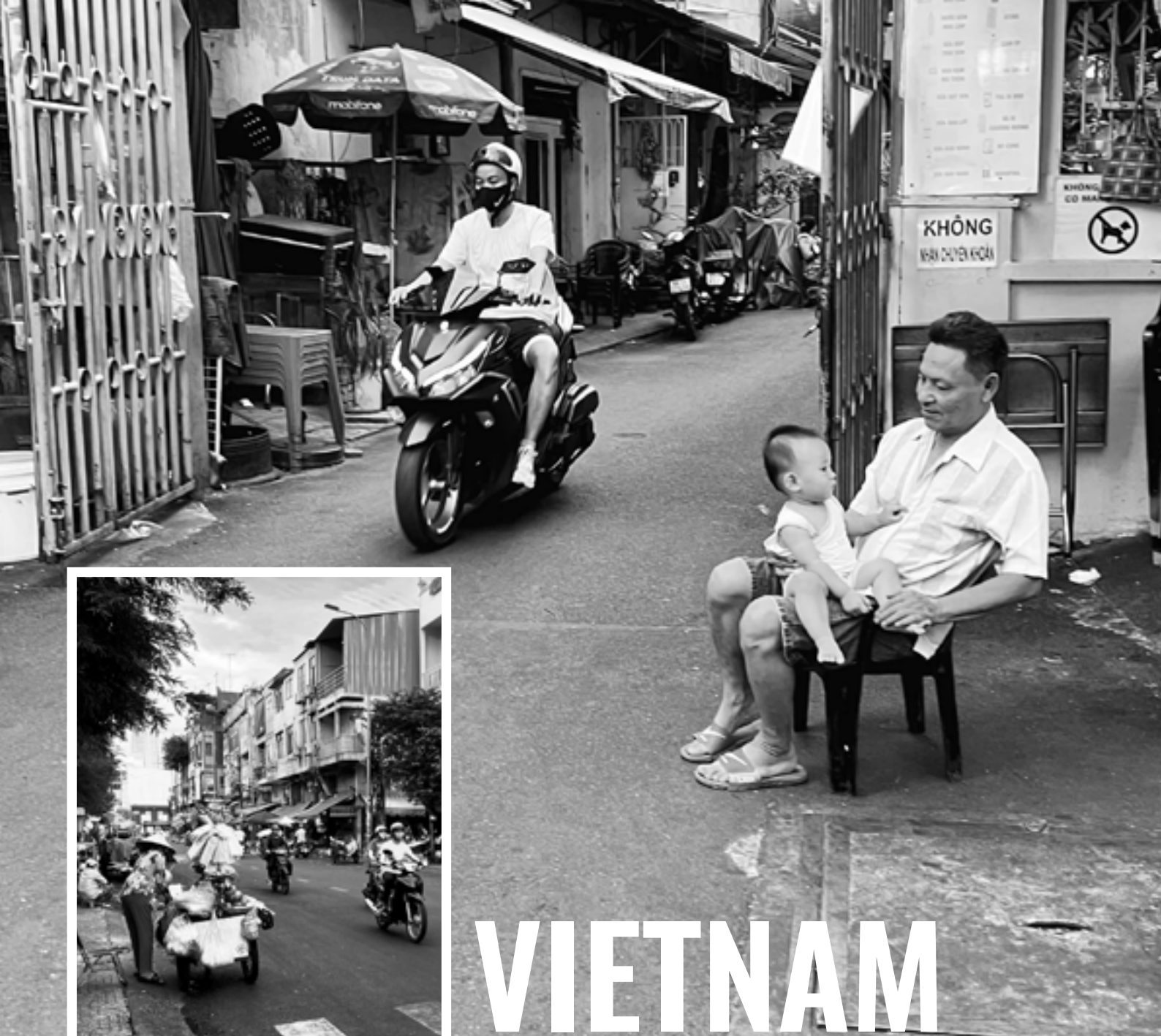
Published in The Australian 3 May 2010.

then hired a boat to get across the Mekong into Thailand, so he could deliver the film and the articles to a UPI office there. Carl Robinson, a Vietnam war correspondent now living in Brisbane, and a friend of Page and Stuart-Fox, worked for Associated Press during the conflict.

An American, he spent his first years in Indochina as an aid worker before moving on to journalism. He and his Vietnamese wife Kim were largely responsible for organising the Old Hacks Reunion in Ho Chi Minh City last week, even though the war scarred him and its essential uselessness upset him. "I really was traumatised by the war," he says. "Kim lost some of her family, and some were sent to a re-education camp. We came to Australia after the war, and we've been there ever since. I needed a new country to start my life over again."

Robinson and his wife opened the well-known Old Saigon restaurant in Sydney before moving to Brisbane several years ago. This will probably be the last Old Hacks Reunion — they are all getting older, and it is getting more difficult to make the trip. So it will be farewell to the scenes of their youth — the fright and the horror; the camaraderie and the adventure, and life with an ancient and alien culture. "I was never fascinated by the war so much as the country and the people," Robinson says.

Brought up as a missionaries' child in the Congo, he steamed up the Saigon river in 1964, an idealistic young man. He soon left aid work for journalism, but the glamour of combat never really appealed to him. "I was totally infatuated with the country," he says. "The war was a horrible intrusion on things. I hated what the war was doing to Vietnam. I guess I was a JFK idealist."



VIETNAM

On the back streets and lanes, in villages and obscure kitchens and with a little luck, you might find the soul of a nation.

I'd hired a scooter and missed the bit about how to open the seat to store the helmet.

Pulled over to what I thought was a scooter repair place. The sun was directly overhead when I arrived and it was deep in shadow on the inside.

I saw two guys off to one side (lunchbreak?) and with a series of gestures indicated my need. One guy left his lunch and showed me the seat opening trick. I thanked him and he gestured I come sit with them.

They offered me a red bull. I indicated with 'the shakes' that it wasn't for me. They laughed and yelled to a kitchen/office so went over and picked out an iced tea. Spent about 50 mins hanging with these guys (one spoke a little English) and eventually noticed the sun had moved and I could see inside, revealing myriad low thatch-roofed huts under a canopy of trees. Each of maybe ten open-sided huts had about 6 hammocks and table and chairs... I realised I was in some kind of worker's food and rest stop.

Turned out my two new friends delivered water. Bottled water. Large packs by hand. Hard work. Relentless.

When I went to the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, a memory of Army Green hammocks and incredibly hard-working men and women entered my mind and a thought formed into a revelation. How did the Americans ever think they could beat these people...?

Proud, strong, forgiving, an indomitable spirit, an enduring heart, and always survivors.

TERRENCE C SERIO

Photos: Terrence C Serio.





Rio's surprising military history

An obscure cemetery in the Rio downtown bairro where slaves were once landed and sold, is the last place you would expect to find the grave of a Gallipoli hero, but the *Cemitério dos Ingleses* in Gamboa is where Chief Stoker Veney, DSM, shares a small Commonwealth War Graves plot with 12 other British servicemen, 10 of whom were also Great War casualties. All died a long way from both home and the main theatres of the war.

But this seldom-visited cemetery is just one of a number of surprise finds that await the military historian or curious traveller searching for an alternative to the clichéd, if seductive, attractions of sun, sea, samba and soccer, especially on a cloudy day.

The marketers have made such a great job in developing Brazil's fun-seekers image that while 'Rio', 'armed police' and 'drug gangs' are words that might be found together in the news pages, few travellers would put the words Rio and 'Military' in the same sentence. Indeed, people are often astonished to learn that Brazil was involved in both World Wars (on the Allied side) in addition to bloody 'local' Latin American conflicts, including the bloodiest of all, the Paraguayan War of the 1860s. Over five centuries since colonisation, they have had a war of independence, at least a dozen assorted rebellions, insurrections and uprisings. There have been slave revolts and mutinies, putsches and had more revolutions than a vinyl record. Truthfully, modern Brazil is the child of its violent ancestors.

Throughout the city, hidden in plain sight, are numerous museums, monuments, forts, statues and even road names that evoke both the city and country's turbulent history. Free of the madding crowd, with a token entry charge if any, they add a unique and unexpected dimension to any visit to the '*Cidade Maravilhosa*' and are a real eye-opener for Australian visitors whose knowledge of Latin American history is perhaps understandably sparse.

The first and most easily accessible sites are the Copacabana forts, part of a string that guard Guanabara Bay. At one end of the great sweeping beach lies Copacabana Fort, built in the years before the Great War with its concrete cupolas housing 305 mm cannon. At the other end of the beach, on top of the Morro (hill) do Leme, is the Forte Duque de Caxias. Only opened to the public in 2010, a thigh-stretching walk up a 300 plus meter hill rewards you with some more monster Krupp 280 (11 inch) kanone. And there's a view to rival those from Sugar Loaf and the famed Christ the Redeemer statue. Not that any of these massive guns saw much action, other than in 1942 when some unfortunate whales were mistaken for German U-boats!

Brazil's involvement in the WW2 saw them engaged in fierce fights for the Italian Gothic Line, principally around Monte Castello. While the county's losses of approximately 470 infantry in the fighting doesn't compare with the losses of other allied units, or indeed Brazilian losses at sea, they were much feared by the Germans. Originally buried in Pistola cemetery, the bodies were repatriated in 1960 and the Monument to the Dead, *Monumento aos Pracinhas*, with

its 31 mm high tower, was constructed in Flamengo Park, five minutes' walk from the Cinelandia metro station.

There's another mausoleum for the FEB (Brazil Expeditionary Force) at the labyrinthine *Cemitério São João Batista* in the suburb of Botafogo, but the more interesting tombs are those of sailors from the Great War and a veritable officers mess full of individual commanders of land, sea and air forces passed over and on since the cemetery's foundation in 1852. In a 45-acre maze of architectural wonders, elaborate tombs commemorate long-forgotten heroes and villains (depending on one's politics) as well as Brazilian political, music and sports greats. Most intriguingly, there's a monument to those Brazilians who '*Morte pour le France*' in the Great War. A guidebook usefully identifies some of the tombs and their occupants' stories.

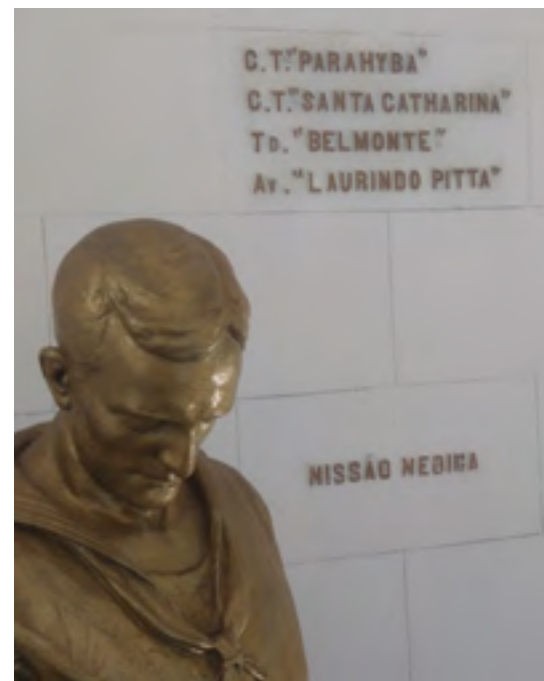
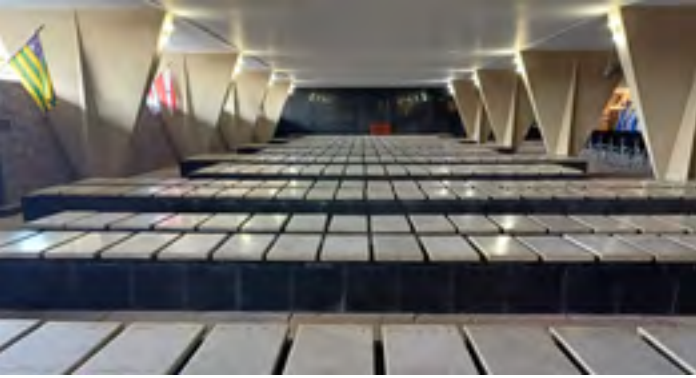
The smaller Protestant '*Cemitarío dos Ingleses*', where Chief Stoker Veney lies, contains tombstones telling of a couple of centuries of merchant seaman deaths by yellow fever, drowning and even accidental shooting! Poor Veney, who won his Distinguished Service Medal serving on the HMS *Amythest* under fire during mine clearing operations in the Dardanelles in the weeks before the April 25th landing, also probably died of disease contracted while his ship patrolled the Brazilian coast for U-boats.

One destination not to be missed by the military history enthusiast is the downtown, Castelo District. Here in the renovated dockside, and the nearby terminus for ferries that cross Guanabara Bay, are the National Historic Museum, Naval and submarine museums. In the first, you can submerge yourself in the rich if bloody history of revolt, rebellion and revolution, before cruising to the latter for a review of 400 years of Brazilian maritime history.

Pay attention as you skirmish past skateboarders, cold drink vendors and rough sleepers or you'll miss one of the more interesting military monuments; it commemorates the 'Revolt of the Lash', an early 20th century naval mutiny against colour prejudice and harsh naval discipline. It says something about the commonplace nature of the city's violent history that an event involving the successful 'capture' of two new Dreadnoughts by the mutineers, and the subsequent death of over a hundred of them in bizarre circumstances *after* their surrender and pardoning, remains largely unknown outside of Brazil.

Perhaps it's no wonder Rio's publicity team stick to sun, sea, soccer and samba.

BRUCE CHERRY





HIGH COUNTRY NSW & VIC MOTORCYCLE RIDE

Frank Sebastyan, with riding partners John White, Tim Bradshaw, Chris Pattichis and John Kaidonis.

This was truly one helluva ride for all of us. Being my first time in a mountainous region and being 80 years of age I was somewhat apprehensive whether I could do it. Sharp bends, rolling and sweeping long curves, steep climbs, very steep descents and hairpin bends - seemed like thousands of hairpins. It was a big challenge. But with consummate care we and I pulled it off. Total distance 3,491 kms home to home.

We took lots of wee breaks, coffee stops and rest breaks along the way. On 2 days we travelled 9 and 9 1/2 hours. It gave me a blister on my bum.

Destinations we passed through or visited included: Swan Hill, Wagga Wagga and Tumut which is a beautiful town with much heritage on display. Then the Snowy Mountain Highway to Cooma and the thrill-of-the-tour seeing

Mt. Kosciuszko from across a valley. Saw Smiggin and Perisher. Entered the Great Dividing Range and Thredbo, Jindabyne and entered the Kosciuszko National Park for \$7 entry each. Saw a number of Snowy Mountains Scheme installations and the Hume Lake and Dam.

Finally to ever-favourite skiing resort of Falls Creek which was staging a Mountain Bike Social Weekend for thousands of entrants.

REMINISCING

My visit to Falls Creek brought back wonderful personal memories. In 1970, Christine and I went for a skiing holiday at Falls Creek with our beautiful Dutch friends John and Tina VanGastel of Dernancourt where both couples then lived in Karingal Road. It was a great time in our lives. Hard to believe that it was 53 years ago. Sad that both John and Tina have both passed away.

It was tragic to see many of the bushfire ravaged areas of these mountains that we've witnessed on the the tele news in recent years.

In Victoria we rode through the birth town of Sir Reginald Ansett in Inglewood - best known for Ansett Airways. Then Bordertown as the birthplace of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke. A touch of important history.

I fitted a windscreen to my Harley for the trip which was a total success providing a comfortable cocoon for me from the powerful headwinds.

FRANK SEBASTYAN



PHOTOS: Frank Sebastyan.

THIS PAGE, ABOVE: Hume Lake rest stop.
BELOW: Alpine National Park Lookout.

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Waiting for my ride mates at the start of the Freeway.
Frank's Harley on a snowy Mountains ride.
Coffee shop mural St Arnaud.
Red Dot is Mount Kosciuszko.





ABOVE:
Frederick Buck.
Courtesy Goldfields War
Museum Collection

RIGHT:
Gravestone of Frederick
and John Buck.



Frederick and John Buck

When the Australian Imperial Force called for experienced miners to join a specialised mining unit in early 1916, among those who answered were two brothers from Boulder, Western Australia.

John (Jack) Nicholas Buck, 39 years old, was single and employed as a miner and was known to be involved in local football. His brother Frederick (Fred) Thomas Buck was 32 years old and worked on the Associated Mine prior to enlisting. After the death of their father, the brothers lived with (and presumably supported) their widowed mother, Elizabeth.

After undertaking basic training at Blackboy Hill, near Perth, the brothers embarked together from Fremantle in June 1916 and reached the Western Front in August.

Unbeknownst to the brothers, their most deadly foe would not be the Germans, but an enemy inside themselves which had already begun to take hold prior to their enlistment.

Silicosis or 'miner's lung' was endemic in Australia's mining districts in the first half of the 20th Century and many a miner's life was cruelly and painfully cut short by the deadly disease. Often too, women and young children were left to cope without a family breadwinner.

Poor conditions at the front aggravated the underlying disease in both men. For Fred, the damage already done to his lungs by silicosis was worsened by horrendous conditions at the front and being caught in a gas attack. Suffering through winter in the trenches in January 1917, Fred was admitted to hospital with bronchitis but was eventually diagnosed with tuberculosis. After spending some months in Harefield Hospital, England, Fred began the journey home to Australia on 4 May 1917.

Jack meanwhile was having struggles of his own. In April 1917 he was admitted to a casualty clearing station suffering from 'debility' and sent to England for further treatment. On 21 July 1917 he was returned to Australia in the hopes that his condition might be improved. On arrival in Australia, Jack was admitted to No. 8 Australian General Hospital, Fremantle and diagnosed with emphysema, bronchitis and an irregular heart.

Both brothers were discharged medically unfit in November 1917. Fred was admitted to Wooroloo Sanatorium, in the hills outside Perth. The clean country air was intended to ease the damage to his lungs and aid his recovery, however he died in Boulder on 30 October 1918, just a few weeks short of the end of the war.

Fred's funeral, at the Kalgoorlie Cemetery on 1 November 1918, was attended by a large section of the community, including Jack, Elizabeth and many other family members. The ceremony took on a military character, comrades from the 3rd Tunnelling Company acting as pallbearers, a volley was fired over the grave and the last post was sounded.

Suffering from silicosis and other illnesses brought on by his war service, Jack passed away aged 44 on 23 August 1920. He was buried in the same grave in the Kalgoorlie Cemetery as his beloved brother. To compound the tragedy, Elizabeth Buck herself died a week after her son.

Today, the Buck brother's shared grave in the Kalgoorlie Cemetery has an Australian War Graves headstone to mark the final resting place of two brothers who fought side by side and now rest eternally together.

The Goldfields War Museum in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Western Australia proudly collects, conserves and shares the stories of military veterans from our region.

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's Local History Archives occupies the former civic offices of the Boulder Town Hall. A wealth of exceptional records and an on-site archivist and military historian can help researchers (and the curious) to uncover all aspects of local and military history as well as family connections to the Goldfields region.

The best way to experience the Boulder Town Hall and the Goldfields War Museum is via guided tours taking place on Tuesday and Thursday at 10:30am and on Thursday at 1:30pm respectively or by arrangement.

The Boulder Town Hall is open Monday–Friday 10:00am–4:00pm and Saturday 9:00am–1:00pm.

City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder
Goldfields War Museum & Local History Archives



Showcasing fascinating stories of Goldfields residents in times of war and peace

Archivist available to assist with family and local history research

Town Hall tours
Monday to Thursday

Boulder Town Hall
116 Burt Street, Boulder WA

For more information on our services, opening hours and tours, please contact:

t: (08) 9021 9690
e: mailbag@ckb.wa.gov.au
www.ckb.wa.gov.au

 CKBHistoryandHeritage



Journey Through History at Albany's National Anzac Centre

Overlooking the spectacular vista of King George III Sound stands the National Anzac Centre in Albany, Western Australia.

From vantage points around the 260-hectare precinct you can observe the Sound, where the "Anzac Spirit" was first born.

As the first departures of troops bound for the First World War assembled and departed from the Sound more than 100 years ago in 1914, Albany cemented its place in history as the last sight of home before the horrors awaiting the 41,265 men and women aboard, and the 13,000 horses travelling with them.

The National Anzac Centre tells their stories as an interpretive journey through the Great War, with traditional museum displays, modern interpretive technologies and significant artefacts specifically curated within the state-of-the-art building.

On entry, visitors can select a character card which unlocks the interactive experience throughout the Centre.

These cards allow each guest to discover the unique journey of one of the 32 featured individuals by immersing themselves in their story.

The battlefields and beyond are explored through personal stories, and audio recordings in the words of those men and women who endured and documented their lives throughout the course of their service.

The Albany Heritage Park surrounding the National Anzac Centre offers natural, cultural, historical and adventure-based experiences free of charge to add depth to the stories presented in the Centre.

Taking in the views from the Padre White Lookout, paying a visit to the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial, or exploring the Barracks Building will enhance each visitor's understanding of the Anzac legend.

Albany has since become one of Australia's top heritage destinations, providing visitors with a deeper appreciation of the impact war has on society as well as at an individual level.

Book your visit today, by visiting www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au



IN 1914, MORE THAN 41,000 AUSTRALIANS AND NEW ZEALANDERS DEPARTED ALBANY, BOUND FOR THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

THIS IS THEIR STORY.

The **National Anzac Centre** is Australia's foremost museum dedicated to honouring the ANZACs of the First World War.

Follow the real life experience of one of 32 ANZAC characters using multimedia, unique artefacts, rare images and film, and audio commentary.

67 Forts Road, Albany, Western Australia | www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au



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ALL ABOARD THE TEMORA EXPRESS

CRUISE EXPRESS CHARTERS HERITAGE TRAIN FOR WARBIRDS AIRSHOW

Cruise Express has announced it will escort its first group to Temora for the iconic Warbirds Downunder Airshow as part of a new heritage rail journey from Sydney in October.

The four-day tour to Griffith, Temora and Hay includes VIP access to the largest warbirds airshow in the southern hemisphere, which sees dozens of vintage aircraft take to the sky in a dazzling display of Australian aviation history.

"The Warbirds Downunder Airshow is a huge event on the Australian calendar, an absolute must-see for aviation aficionados and history buffs.

The tiny town of Temora roars to life with the sound and sight of warbirds as the Temora Aviation Museum shows off its extraordinary collection of flying vintage warplanes and we will have front row seats to the sky-high spectacular. While the historic bucket list event is undoubtedly the highlight of this trip, we know our guests will also relish the chance to travel in their very own heritage train and explore the picturesque Riverina region," Cruise Express Managing Director Meg White. said.





For more information or to book visit cruiseexpress.com.au





For more information or to book visit cruiseexpress.com.au

Drinking stations to provide water for koalas



Wildlife drinkers which provide koalas and other native animals with a reliable source of water during droughts and after bushfires have been hoisted up into trees in Australia.



The initiative forms part of Koala Climate Corridors, a project spearheaded by the Great Eastern Ranges and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to help wildlife adapt and communities build resilience to climate change. Lockyer Uplands Catchment Inc (LUCI) is leading the project in the south-east of Queensland.

Landholders have installed 47 Tree Troff® water drinkers provided by WIRES across the first climate corridor, Bunyas to Border, which stretches from the Bunya Mountains to the Border Ranges.

IFAW Wildlife Campaigns Manager Josey Sharrad said landholders are the essence of this project.

“With koalas now endangered, it is critical communities lend a helping hand to this species on the brink. Landholders willing to make their properties more wildlife-friendly are an invaluable part of the solution. These water stations, along with the planting of trees, will provide a crucial lifeline for koalas and other wildlife,” Ms Sharrad said.

The drinkers will provide hydration for the corridor's other wildlife including tree-dwelling mammals and climbing reptiles. Landholders are also being engaged to reconnect and expand core habitats by planting native vegetation and installing nest boxes.

Cameras have been installed around some of the drinking stations and nest boxes to monitor what animals use them.

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Creating your Legacy is an important decision to ensure your loved ones and the charitable interests you care about are included.

Leaving a gift in your Will makes an immediate and lasting impact on animals.

ifaw
International
Fund for
Animal Welfare

Saving Koalas: Your Role

Angus, our seasoned Koala Keeper, remains fascinated by the sight of these iconic creatures in their natural habitat. He relishes the opportunity to observe their behaviour firsthand. Drawing from his experience, Angus offers insights on how you can contribute to wildlife preservation.

Koalas, beloved symbols of Australia, continue to capture hearts with their endearing demeanour. Despite their charm, encounters with these marsupials in the wild are becoming increasingly rare, particularly for younger generations. In our previous article in the Last Post Magazine, our discussion emphasised the critical need for conservation efforts spanning various domains, underlining the importance of protecting both wild populations and those housed in wildlife parks and zoos. However, our dedication to the welfare of not just koalas but also numerous other native species extends beyond mere conservation.

At Oakvale, we urge our visitors to participate in initiatives geared towards wildlife preservation actively:

Habitat Restoration:

Trees are koalas' lifeblood, offering sustenance, hydration, and shelter—essential elements for their survival. Engaging in habitat restoration endeavours is paramount. Whether it involves planting gum trees on your property or contributing to community projects focused on establishing wildlife corridors and reclaiming lost habitats, every action matters. Even simple gestures, like planting a bottlebrush tree in your yard, can provide sanctuary for a diverse array of wildlife, including koalas.

Vigilance and Action:

Swift action is essential if you encounter any wildlife in distress, especially koalas. Whether deceased, injured, disoriented, or facing threats from predators, including domestic pets, contacting your local wildlife rescue is the most important thing you can do. As each area has their own wildlife rescue group, jump online and look up the local rescue group in your area, keep their contact information readily accessible on your phone or on the fridge at home. They will come out and assess the animal and take measures to ensure that the right form of action is taken. Immediate contact with rescue groups is essential in cases of koalas involved in accidents, potentially saving the lives of joeys and other vulnerable individuals.

We all know accidents happen; should you ever hit a koala in your car, please do not panic. What you do next matters. Contact your local wildlife rescue group. They can assist in ensuring the koala receives medical attention if possible, or if it is a female koala, ensure that there are no young joeys in the pouch or nearby.

Rescue groups are always looking for new volunteers. If you have a passion for wildlife and want to learn more about the amazing wildlife in Australia, speak to your local wildlife rescue centre to find out how you can help.

Embracing Sustainability:

Embracing sustainable practices in our daily lives can return substantial positive outcomes. While individual actions may seem small, collectively, they carry significant influence. Consider the origins of the products you purchase, from electricity to household items. Choose sustainably sourced alternatives like purchasing wooden products that are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified (see logo), prioritise second-hand goods, and support recycling initiatives. By making conscientious choices, you not only reduce environmental strain but also contribute to the preservation of habitats threatened by resource extraction.

Additionally, if you desire to observe these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat and instill a love for wildlife in future generations, explore tall eucalypt forests during the summer, particularly at dawn or dusk. Listen for the distinctive growling snort—a telltale indication of a nearby koala; this sound can be heard up to a kilometre away. Should you see a koala in the wild, maintain a respectful distance and report your sightings for citizen science projects, facilitating research and conservation efforts. Scientists can track their numbers and understand their behaviours to assist our wildlife better. Look online under "Report a Koala Sighting" to find your local area citizen science project.

Those eager to delve deeper into the world of koalas can come and visit us at Oakvale Wildlife Park. Here, you can admire these remarkable creatures and cultivate a deeper appreciation for Australia's diverse biodiversity.

ANGUS HOBBS-HAIGH

SEE. TOUCH. FEEL

Established in 1979, Oakvale Wildlife Park is a premier destination for local and international visitors alike. We provide a hands-on experience with our Australian wildlife and our cuddly farm animals.

- Wildlife encounters - get up close and personal with some of our most popular animals
- Free tractor rides
- Under cover picnic area
- Splash Bay Water Zone
- Café and fully enclosed eating area
- Koala Country
- Corporate functions
- Farmyard feeding
- Birthday parties

The dedication to wildlife conservation has become a key focus at Oakvale Wildlife Park. In 2017, the 'Save our Wildlife' campaign was started to aid in the conservation of endangered species around the globe that are threatened or vulnerable.



TOGETHER WE CAN
'SAVE OUR WILDLIFE'.

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Port Stephens Koala Hospital upgrade

Responding to an increase in demand for the care and rehabilitation of wild koalas, the Port Stephens Koala Hospital is undergoing a significant \$2M upgrade and expansion to its existing facilities in 2024.

The expansion is driven by a commitment to address the evolving challenges faced by the local wild koala population and will also provide new extended care opportunities to a diverse range of other native Australian wildlife.

The new expansion will include, a world class cutting-edge research laboratory, aimed at conducting innovative research around koala reproductive technology, koala retrovirus testing and koala gut microbiome analysis.

Another planned addition to the hospital's expansion will be an onsite CT Scanning machine. Beyond its immediate impact on diagnostic outcomes for injured wildlife, the CT Scanner will play a significant role in advancing research contributing valuable insights to the broader scientific community.

The \$2M upgrades of Port Stephens Koala Hospital will be complete in late 2024/ early 2025 that will also include a new enhanced public viewing window allowing the opportunity to witness veterinary staff carry out examinations and administer treatment to wild koala inpatients.

About Port Stephens

The Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary is a partnership between Port Stephens Council, the NSW Government and volunteer care group Port Stephens Koala Hospital. Its focus is on the conservation and protection of local koala populations.

A decade ago koala population numbers in Port Stephens were in the thousands, but today, they've dwindled to the hundreds. Ongoing financial support is vitally important to support population growth for the threatened species.

The Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary is open daily from 9am to 5pm (except Christmas Day).

For more information about the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary visit: portstephenskoalas Sanctuary.com.au



koala sanctuary
PORT STEPHENS

Come and support *wild Koalas* and see them in their natural environment!

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Commonwealth Bank

Celebrating veteran and ADF family entrepreneurs

Driven, calm under pressure and expert problem-solvers – these are just a few of the qualities that Defence members and their families have that translate well into entrepreneurship.

Since 2015, The King's Trust Australia (formally known as Prince's Trust Australia) has supported Australian Defence Force (ADF) families and veterans to build the confidence, skills and networks they need to safely explore, start and grow a business.

They offer a range of free enterprise programmes from Launch Lab - which gives participants the chance to explore their business idea and to build networks – to the Enterprise Accelerator, a virtual programme that helps veteran and family entrepreneurs take their business to the next level.

Not only does The King's Trust Australia help ADF members integrate their military experience into the civilian community, but it also celebrates their success.

"To help someone to nurture their business dream is really very special," said Jasmine Cooper Sutton, Director of Defence Members and the Families, The King's Trust Australia.

"We've had the honour of working with the Defence community to turn their small business dreams into reality for the last eight years. For years, our serving and ex-serving members and their families have been applying their skills and experiences to local, national and sometimes international economies. We wanted to celebrate the success of veteran and Defence family entrepreneurs in Australia and so the Beyond Service Awards were born," she added.

The Beyond Service Awards recognise the skills and experience veterans and Defence Force families bring to Australia's small business landscape. Applicants come from all corners of Australia in industries as diverse as ecotourism, professional services, home care, graphic design and cake making.

For the third successive year, Commonwealth Bank of Australia is delighted to sponsor the awards.

"Our veterans play a critically important role in the life of our nation and CommBank is delighted to sponsor these awards as recognition of their past and ongoing service," said Julie Hall, Veteran Business Banker at Commonwealth Bank of Australia and current serving Australian Defence Force spouse and mother.

"Partnering with The King's Trust Australia to support the Beyond Service Awards is our way of honouring and celebrating the efforts of those veterans who, by establishing their own businesses, are creating new opportunities for themselves and their local communities," Julie added.

Last year, RAAF veteran Ian Rawson (pictured left) was named the 2023 Commonwealth Bank Business of the Year, and Community Impact sector winner. Ian is the Founder of Australian Warfighters Coffee, a social enterprise based in Queensland.

Ian was searching for purpose after being medically discharged from the Defence force when the idea of starting his own coffee business struck in 2016. He started with six bags of coffee and today Australian Warfighters Coffee produces 400-500kg of coffee a week.

Ian donates 100 per cent of the profits to veteran and first responder charities working in mental health. He also supports veterans to re-engage in employment through barista training.

**"TO HELP
SOMEONE TO
NURTURE THEIR
BUSINESS DREAM
IS REALLY VERY
SPECIAL"**

JASMINE COOPER SUTTON
DIRECTOR OF DEFENCE
MEMBERS AND THE
FAMILIES, THE KING'S
TRUST AUSTRALIA

Applications for The King's Trust Australia's 2024 Beyond Service Awards open on 24 May 2024.
Check out The King's Trust Australia's website for details: www.kingstrust.org.au



Wendy Harmer

Wendy Harmer has been a journalist, a playwright, a comedian and on TV and radio. As a comedian, Wendy has carved a name for herself as one of our finest. Here, TLP Editor Greg T Ross, speaks with Wendy about her recent book, 'Lies My Mirror Told Me' in which our latest Inspirational Australian Woman writes about her sometimes difficult but rewarding childhood, her career and life in the media.

Greg T Ross: Wendy Harmer, welcome to The Last Post. How are you?

Wendy Harmer: I'm very well, thank you. Nice to be with you.

GTR: We're here to talk about your recent book, 'Lies My Mirror Told Me'. You've been and done many things but the last time I heard from you on radio was with you and Robbie, on ABC Sydney, the breakfast show.

Did you enjoy that and what are your memories of that?

WH: That was great fun. I started out on mornings on ABC Sydney. I did that for a couple of years and then the powers that be decided that Robbie and I should do the breakfast show together. And I guess we were both pretty wary at the start, about how we were going to make it work. We'd never worked together before. Initially, listeners were underwhelmed,

"Why do we need two presenters?" and all of that. Anyhow, very shortly we found we had a great chemistry and the audience warmed to it. And when we left the program, we were on 15.9 which was the highest rating the breakfast show had ever garnered, since ratings began. So, that's pretty good going".

GTR: It was fantastic and a good piece of radio history. Wendy, the prologue to your book, 'Lies My Mirror

PODCASTS: www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews

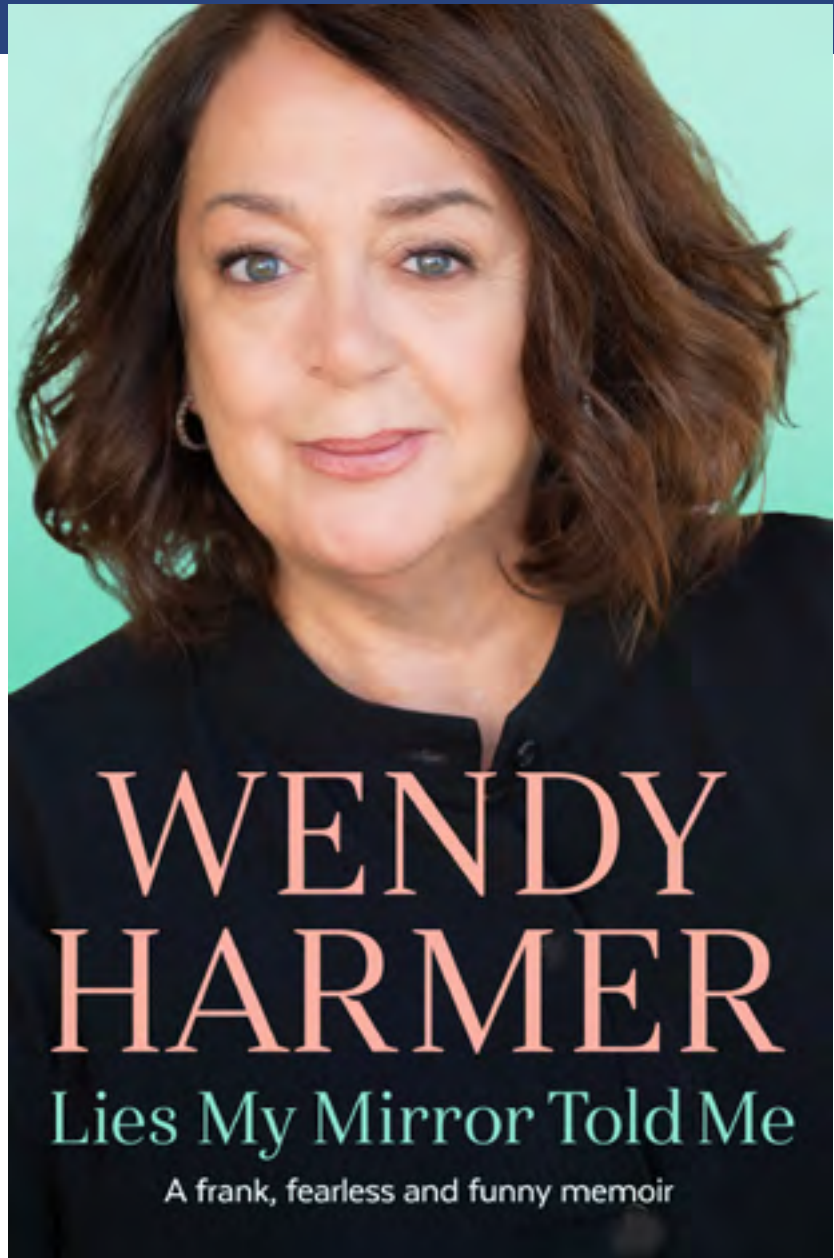
Told Me' explains the reasons behind the title of this release. Can you explain to readers and listeners, the story behind your relationship with the mirror, from an early age?

WH: Yes, well, I was born with a bi-lateral cleft-palate and, well, these days about one in eight-hundred babies are born with that and these days, at about 6 months, babies have their first operation. Microsurgery and so on and that's often the last operation they'll ever need. But, when I was born in 1955, plastic surgery was still an evolving area of surgery. And so, what happened to me was, I had my face patched up in a fairly rudimentary fashion. I had to wait until I was 14-years old before my final bit of surgery. The title comes from one day, home from school and the boys had been picking on me, calling me Eaglebeak, Flatface, Pancake Face, Wendy the Witch. I told my mother and she said, "Well, I want you to go and look in the mirror and when you can find something to complain about, you come out and tell me."

Well, Greg, there was a fair bit to complain about. My face was a lot more flat than it is now, my nose was broader and I had this top lip that was very wonky, just stitched up with just little stumps of upper teeth, going sideways. I could see there was a lot to complain about. But I decided to come out and tell my mother, "I've got nothing to be sorry for", and so, that's where the idea came from and what I've done in the book is, every chapter starts with me looking in the mirror, when I was little, when I had my operation, then when I went into stand up comedy, backstage at The Logies, getting ready to go to The Oscars, so that's the set up.

GTR: It's a brilliant way to do a book and I noticed that, reading it. Your parents, and this I found extremely interesting, a lot of people follow you and know your career and you to a certain extent, or feel they know you. And yet, like me, didn't know this, in such detail, about you. Your parents, as you note in the book, were 'Woodend's dream couple'. Your father with his motorbike and Oldsmobile Tourer and he was movie-star handsome and your Mum, years younger but with a striking independence, the two of them then got together, through all the trials and tribulations of the time. That's an incredible story. They were married in 1955. But, after the wedding, Margaret was asked if they were going to start a family and she said instead, that they were going to breed whippets.

WH: Yes, that's right. My mother was born in Tassie and she had been brought up by her grandmother, because her parents had separated.



So her grandmother didn't tell her anything about birth control. So, my mother actually believed the old wives tale that if you just grew parsley, you couldn't fall pregnant. She started going out with my father when she was 14-years old and he was 20. She was married at 16 and by the time she was 22, she'd had 4 children, a miscarriage and an ectopic pregnancy. After the ectopic pregnancy, the doctors came in and told her that they thought she'd been through enough and, without consultation, had tied her tubes. I guess that's when you mark her mental decline. Post-natal depression which led to attempted suicide by taking an overdose.

GTR: Yes, I read that in the book and I'll get back to that in just a moment but I think, when your mother was younger, do you think, when she was so taken with your father and the

motorbike, when she approached him. Do you think she followed him because she was looking for a way out?

WH: Oh yes, I very much think so. She was living with her mother by then and her mother, on the mainland in Woodend, had her taken out of high school and sent her to work in a factory selling underwear. So, yes, I very much think that she thought that she and Dad would find a way out of it, together. And they were both very well suited to each other. They both liked The Goons, they both were great readers, Dad being a school teacher and yes, I think that's what she thought would happen.

GTR: You go into detail so well. Your fathers teaching.

WH: Yes, a lot of his career, Dad was teaching at little country schools. He

did teach also, at Camp Hill, a huge school in the middle of Bendigo. Apart from that, he taught at and we lived in those tiny country schools. In residence.

GTR: I went to something similar in Coolool in Queensland, where all the students were in one classroom. You, with your brothers and sister, Helen, describe a yearning for what you call the 180-degree skies and for that part of your childhood in the country. It sounds beautiful and you loved the flatlands and all that sort of stuff. That must have been quite beautiful.

WH: Yes, when we were in Warnacourt, its Aboriginal name means 'Up and down like a bandicoot running'. Isn't that a fantastic description? And the flat plains in the Western District with their stony rises, up and down like a bandicoot running. And, of course, we had a whale of a time because not only were there paddocks as far as you could see and the cypress wind breaks, very typical landscape in the area but also, when all the other kids went home, we had the school all to ourselves. We had the monkey bars, the slides and the bats and balls and the lot. Although my childhood had a lot of travails, that growing up in the country was a wonderful thing and we were very close, the four of us.

GTR: That comes across in the book and something that serves as a credit to the positive sides of life. I know, we had relatives in Queensland and we would visit them occasionally and we would always look forward to that. It was the milking of the cows, the running the hills, the open air. You detailed before about the first 14 years of your life being endless trips to the specialists and operations and adjustments and you talk about guilt and shame, the revving two engines of your mothers life. Is this in relation to her feeling trapped? What were the reasons behind that, do you think?

WH: We'll, she had these four kids and Dad was off playing footy a lot of the time and wouldn't come home or he'd be off in the pub with his mates. When my mother tried to take her life, we were living in Bendigo, which she thought was very flat and dry and she'd just felt like she'd come to the end of the line and that she wanted it over and done with. What happened then was she went back to live in Tasmania on a permanent basis. I was about 10 or 11. She came home once and then left again. So, from when I was 11, it was Dad and the four kids and we muddled along, tried to make the best of it, with me being surrogate mother from that early age.

GTR: You describe that well. Your fathers love of poetry and his ability to

speak, I see that in you. What do you think of that? Is that the part of you from your father?

WH: We'll, my father was very determined that I would have no impediment to my speech. So, from an early age he would have me sit at the kitchen table and read aloud from the newspaper.

GTR: How beautiful.

WH: And, he'd also have me sing for visitors but I'd only do it if I could stand behind the door. So yes, I was Dads special project and yes, he was a beautiful speaker. He could give the most magnificent speeches, wonderfully well spoken. So yes, I guess that I get that from him. The funny thing is, on the night, the first night I hosted The Big Gig, I rang my Dad and he said, "I thought your diction was quite good".

GTR: How wonderful. And you were quite in your element, reading from the papers because you had The Sun in the morning and The Herald at night.

WH: Yes, I started working at The Geelong Advertiser. I started as a copy-girl there. From there, I went to the mighty Sun-Pictorial newspaper in Melbourne.

GTR: That's right, the building in Flinders Street. I was a copy-boy at the Sydney Morning Herald so I identified with that part of your book, also. Old days indeed. I was blessed once to be asked into the Sub-Editors meeting and to watch them in action. You must've got the same buzz?

WH: Yes, I was on the Sub-Editors desk for a while. Most of us at that time had a go on the Subs desk. And yes, just watching that newspaper being put to bed every night. There were four editions and the final one wouldn't go out until about 3am. With the Herald-Sun being in the building and the printing press underneath on-site and the whole building would hum and vibrate with the news. Very exciting times. A time that is long gone. I consulted a lot of my Journalo mates and I really enjoyed putting that time down as a memory.

GTR: And there was a pub nearby too!

WH: Yes, well, isn't there always a pub nearby. Where was yours at Sydney Morning Herald?

GTR: Yes, there was a pub on Broadway. You'd tend to find a lot of the Journos in the front bar, often with my father.

WH: For us, it was The Phoenix, just across the road. You'd go up these

flights of stairs from which I saw a number of journos fall down. You'd go up there, to the top bar, where all the blokes were. I tried to keep myself nice for a long time but I remember once, I went across the road to the pub. After a few hours, I rang back to the Chief-Of-Staff and I said, "I'm too drunk to come back and finish my story", and he said, "Hooray, you're one of us, we wondered when that'd happen."

They were hard drinking times.

GTR: Yes, a lot of stories originated from the front bars of pubs around the country. What was it like working with Paulie Stewart and Mark Trevorrow?

WH: There we were, the three of us, banging away on our old Remington typewriters and tearing off sheets of copy paper. We sat at adjoining tables and we would laugh ourselves silly. We had no idea we'd all end up in showbiz. They're both great friends of mine, to this day.

GTR: You use the word resilience in your book and you write about whether or not you're born with resilience. Is it something you find along the way?

WH: Babies are not born with resilience. It's not a generic trait. I do remember one comment on social media, directed at me and it said, "Oh, good on you Wendy, you're lucky you've got resilience". And I'm thinking, "Luck?" Lucks got nothing to do with it.

GTR: If you believe that resilience is luck, I don't know where that comes from.

WH: Yes, it was an odd statement to make. I mean, I was really lucky, although we moved around a lot and I was often the funny looking kid in the wrong-coloured school uniform at the schools I went to but the thing I did have, those schoolrooms for me often provided a safe haven, with rules and orders and you when the bell was going to go. Starting a 9, finishing at 3. That provided a lot of stability. I almost substituted the classroom for family life.

GTR: Yes, we travelled a lot, also. If we stayed in one place for 3 years, that seemed a lifetime. On to comedy, Le Joke. You first appeared there, tell us about that.

WH: How did I get into comedy is a weird story. I was at The Sun-News by this time and I'd done all the rounds you could think of. One day, I was asked to go out and do a story on what the Features Editor called the new wave of comedy, this "alternative comedy cabaret". And I went away to report on it and there I was, I ran away and joined the circus. ■

The Road to Patagonia



IN CINEMAS MAY 2, 2024

Garage is proud to announce the upcoming release of the celebrated film, **THE ROAD TO PATAGONIA**, slated to hit Australian cinemas on May 2, 2024.

Garnering multiple accolades including the prestigious Audience Choice Award at the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival and Florida Surf Film Festival, **THE ROAD TO PATAGONIA** is a stunning, intimate and unflinching series of love letters within a documentary – firstly a love between two people, and secondly between humanity and the Earth.



Directed by filmmaker Matty Hannon, the film follows Hannon on an incredible solo adventure, to surf the west coast of the Americas by motorbike, from the top of Alaska to the tip of Patagonia. But deep in the wilderness - alone with the wolves and the bears - the journeyer's plans unexpectedly fall to pieces. After losing everything, and on the cusp of quitting he meets the girl of his dreams, a permaculture farmer named Heather Hillier who throws caution to the wind and sells her urban-farm to buy a bike of her own. Together riding south, the duo meet with Zapatista rebels, Amazonian shamans and Mapuche leaders whose salient words crack the adventurers' cultural veneer, leaving them with existential questions.

The 50,000km surfing odyssey becomes beautifully complicated by their decision to downshift from motorcycles to horseback, presenting a relational approach to the breathtaking landscapes and a host of challenges that ultimately become extremely rewarding. Hannon and Hillier succeed in beautifully capturing deeply human moments during the world-first expedition, and the noticeable lack of camera-crew becomes the film's strength. Shot over 16 years, the result is an adventurous exposé on the more-than-human world, offering a physical and spiritual odyssey to better understand our place in Nature.

Don't miss the opportunity to experience the heartfelt journey of *The Road to Patagonia* when it arrives in cinemas.





XMAS CONCERT FOR THE TROOPS!

“Tour of Duty – Xmas Concert For The Troops” was a benefit concert held on December 21, 1999 in Dili, East Timor, for the Australian troops serving with the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET).

It was meant as a thank-you to the troops whose duties kept them away from their families in Australia during Christmas celebrations.

The show, to 4,000 troops and local civilians, featured John Farnham, Doc Neeson, Kylie Minogue, Gina Jeffreys and her record producer husband Rod McCormack, James Blundell, The Living End, Dili Allstars and the RMC Band, and hosted by Roy Slaven and H. G. Nelson (John Doyle and Greig Pickhaver).

It was televised by the Seven and Nine networks.

John Farnham said shortly after arriving in Dili: “I’ll never be able to explain to my family and friends how I felt being transported in a green truck accompanied by a soldier brandishing arms, and looking at children and women on the streets in what’s been a horrendous situation.”

Added Kylie Minogue: “Even if it takes people’s minds off this situation, even for an hour, I’m fully honoured to be part of it.”

Defence Forces

For the desk tape release of Tour of Duty, ARCA worked closely with the Defence Forces. The two share a synergy going back years with several ARCA crew members serving in Vietnam or did their national service.

Both associations work tirelessly with members on mental wellbeing and suicide prevention programs, and share ideas.

ARCA co-founder Ian “Piggy” Peel recalls how he was contacted by Colin Taggart, a board member of Pro Patria, an innovative multidisciplinary facility in Wagga Wagga which works with veterans and their families.

“Colin asked, ‘How do you stop suicides?’ Piggy told them, ‘We put people back together and in touch with each other. They understood that they could talk with their mates about things that happened during their time away, that they could

not talk to their families about. Being able to do that takes a great weight off your shoulders. It helps to heal the heart and helps the family bond grow stronger’ It made sense for everybody concerned, and it worked.

This is a huge honour for ARCA to be able to release this live show to say thanx to all the troops who keep us safe.” For the Tour of Duty release, ARCA worked closely with Luke Gosling OAM, who served in East Timor and is MP for Solomon in the Northern Territory.

The Tour of Duty audio was supplied by Rev. Darren Hewitt, a chaplain with returned veterans in South Australia, spiritually dealing with their depression and anxiety. Twenty years before, Rev. Hewitt planned to set up audio-visual museum Fields of Remembrance in Queensland to commemorate Australia’s involvement in conflicts and wars.

He reached out to Glenn Wheatley about getting an audio recording of Tour of Duty. “Glenn sent me a double CD of AV files.” Soon after Rev. Hewitt moved to South Australia and the museum plan was put on hold. The files were forgotten for two decades until he discovered them in a portable MP3 player.

While searching for Archie Roach music on the internet he came across the ARCA website and its splendid star-studded collection of releases.

“I learned more about ARCA and was in awe of what they were doing for crews in crisis.” With approval from Gaynor Wheatley, Rev. Hewitt offered ARCA the tapes.

“There was such great support for what Australian troops were doing in East Timor, and that was reflected in how the acts were choosing their songs to be directed at them.

“It was a different story for older vets who had served in Vietnam.” Called “baby killers” by protesters and cold-shouldered by the nation and even the RSL, “you can see why there is so much hardship and mental health problems with them.”

The Tour of Duty Xmas Concert for the Troops, LIVE in Dili, East Timor 21-12-1999 live tape and all the ARCA Desk Tape Series recordings are available on Spotify, Amazon, Apple Music / iTunes etc as well as at ARCA australianroadcrew.com.au



'Tour Of Duty Xmas Concert for the Troops – Live In Dili East Timor 1999' is the Australian Road Crew Association's (ARCA) latest 'Desk Tape' album to be released on Anzac Day 2024.

The star-studded International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) Tour of Duty Xmas Concert for the Troops, LIVE in Dili, East Timor 1999 is the 40th release of the Australian Road Crew Association's (ARCA) Desk Tape Series.

The Series was created by ARCA to raise badly-needed finances for Support Act's Roadies Fund to provide financial, health, counselling and well-being services for roadies and crew in crisis.

Over 40+ artists have now thrown their hats in the ring to help support those in need.

The Desk Tape Series recordings are made off the sound desk by a crew or production member – in this case front of house sound was mixed by sound engineer Grant Walsh – recorded by Doug Brady - and released on ARCA's Black Box Records through MGM Distribution and on all major streaming services.

Thanx to Talentworks and Gaynor Wheatley for the photos and VHS tapes of the concert, Nprint for the artwork, Rev. Darren Hewitt for the copy of the recording, Phil Dracoulis for the mastering, and especially all the artists for their support of roadies and crew, and all Australian defense force veterans. Legends.

Idea for the Concert

The idea of Tour of Duty started with Doc Neeson, and put together by successful entrepreneur Glenn Wheatley through his company Talentworks.

"Having done my national service in New Guinea and being an army brat myself, I knew how the troops would have felt at that time of the year," Neeson said at that time.

"They would have been homesick, felt disconnected and wanted some real entertainment."

Neeson's father Bernard Sr had served in the British army in five countries before he brought the family to Australia in April 1960.

Doc was in his last year of teachers' college in Adelaide when he was drafted into the army. He was about to be sent to Vietnam as a private when the army realised his teaching background would be better served posting him to Papua New Guinea instead to teach the Pacific Island Regiment, and promoted him to sergeant.

When he returned to Australia, he studied theatre and helped form The Angels. At the Dili show he brought the place down by appearing in his regiment uniform.

Although all the musicians and production crews donated their fees, Glenn Wheatley still had to find \$1 million for production costs.

"The entire infrastructure in Dili has collapsed," Wheatley revealed. "There is no electricity, running water, cables, generators, roofing or staging.

"Everything has to be taken from Australia." The stage and camera equipment required eight transport planes. Australian companies including Westfield Holdings, Compaq Computer, Qantas, Arnotts and Solo donated cash and in kind.

Wheatley reported at the time: "The response from companies has been extraordinary.

"Their December budgets had been allocated but I was banging on their doors saying 'I need an answer now'. Most responded within a day."

Compaq Computer provided computers for troops to contact their families and friends by email through the Christmas period, and a dedicated website so cricket fans could check scores, and had their staff on the ground in Dili to help troops have access to the internet.

Booths were set up in Westfield's shopping centres, where consumers could sponsor, for \$25-\$35, "Dili bags" of food, drinks, magazines, and other items for the troops. Calls were made to the artists. Wheatley's star client, John Farnham, agreed on the spot.

Kylie Minogue, then living in London, was going through an upswing in popularity in Australia, with the Impossible Princess/ Kylie Minogue album spending 35 weeks in the charts and her Intimate And Live tour having to be extended a number of times.

Queensland sheep farmer James Blundell was back in the charts with his sixth studio album Amsterdam Breakfast, was on TV singing the Qantas ad "I Still Call Australia Home", and had just returned from time off driving around Europe in a van, earning money by busking.

Blundell had military roots too, as the grandson of Captain Peter Blundell of the 2/25th Battalion, who served in the Second World War. After the Dili Stadium show, he stayed on in East Timor to play unplugged shows with members of the Royal Military College Band. During breaks Blundell also assisted with serving drinks and dedicated "Blundell's Bar" to his grandfather.

At the time, country singer songwriter Gina Jeffreys was heavily touring, playing six shows a week, every six weeks, with country music loving girls taking up her "Girls Night Out" as an anthem. When she got her invitation, she cancelled some Australian shows to make the trip.

"I knew what an important event it was going to be," Jeffreys recalls. "It was exciting but I was also nervous, partly



because I seldom go out of my comfort zone, and partly because we were going into a war zone.

"If somebody wanted to make a statement by blowing up an area where thousands of troops and some high-profile Australians were gathered, that would have been the place!"

In 1999, The Living End were the hottest new band. After breaking into the US and UK charts with their "Prisoner of Society", their first album went to Number One, was certified 4 x platinum, yielded six hits and won two ARIA awards.

"It was definitely surreal to be asked," remembers singer and guitarist Chris Cheney. "Eighteen months before we were still trying to get our feet in the door, and people like Doc Neeson and Angry Anderson of Rose Tattoo were in the music press about how we were channelling the rock spirit of what they'd done, and that wasn't lost on us because we'd grown up listening to those bands."

"Suddenly a heavy hitter like Glenn Wheatley was calling our manager, asking us to go to East Timor and the show was going to be televised, and going to be on that concert were people like John Farnham and Kylie Minogue whom we didn't know and only seen on TV."

It got more surreal. The phone rang and the voice on the other end was Neeson asking if they would do The Angels' "No Secrets" with him. A few days later another message: Kylie wants to do a song with you.

For the reggae/ska band Dili Allstars – formed in 1992 and made up of Australian and Timorese expatriates – it was a time for healing.

It was the first time the Timorese members returned to their homeland in 25 years.

For co-founder Paul Stewart, also with the Melbourne band Painters & Dockers, it was where his brother Tony was among five Australian journalists were said to have been shot by Indonesian military forces in Balibo, East Timor, in 1975.

The band came together after Stewart and Gil Santos met each other at a political rally protesting Indonesia's invasion of East Timor.

Stewart would say, "I lost one brother there but Gil is my brother now."

Their song "Libertade" became an anthem for Timorese resistance forces, and the band played at East Timor's Independence Concert in 2002.

Rehearsals

After inoculations, the cast and crew met in a Melbourne arena for rehearsals and a final run-through.

Cheney: "The Living End played twice as fast as we should have, it was 100 mph or not at all.

"Doc was like, 'Whoah, whoah, guys, just bring it back a bit!'. He was a lovely man, a real gentle giant, so kind and with a real presence."

At this point of time, none of the others knew that Neeson was in terrible pain.

Three weeks before he'd been involved in a car crash on the Sydney M4 motorway. A car in front slammed on its brakes, forcing the lanky singer to do the same.

A truck drove right into him, causing severe whiplash and spinal damage that affected his walk for the next few years. He left The Angels after his doctor warned that future physical performances would see him end up in a wheelchair.

The Undercover website's Paul Cashmere reported that he "still performed for the troops under a lot of pain and upon his return became a regular patient trying to overcome chronic back and neck pain as well as blurred vision".

On December 19, Qantas flew the entourage to Darwin. The next morning, it was a rough and noisy ride to Dili in an army plane.

Jeffreys: "It was so hot when we got out of the plane! I was born in Queensland, and still had not felt that sort of heat.

"When you took a shower, by the time you were towelled yourself off, you were sweating again.

"We all sweated ... all except Kylie, who never once sweated or had one hair out of place!"

Chris Cheney: "It was a different world. Military escorts, jumping into green trucks, all the guys were armed. This was no holiday destination!"

Farnham, Neeson and Minogue went to visit other units while the others prepared themselves for the show.

Jeffreys: "Each of us was assigned a high-level soldier. They were never more than a metre and a half from us, always, even in the shower and the toilet.

"They took turns to protect us, even when we were sleeping. The boys slept in one tent, and Kylie and I were in another.



"Throughout the night, tanks were circling the tents. They never stopped protecting us, they made us feel safe in an unsafe environment."

As to be expected, it was an emotional show, both for the performers and for the audience.

John Farnham stole the show, in top voice throughout, causing tears during "You're The Voice" and "You'll Never Walk Alone".

Chris Cheney: "When John hit that really high note at the end, it was spine-tingling. Twenty-five years later, I am still transported back to that moment. "That voice, the way he hit the note, and the whole atmosphere. You felt very lucky to be there. Seeing the look of joy on the faces of the troops, they were having the time of their lives."

Roy and HG harangued the crowd to get Farnham to sing his "Sadie (The Cleaning Lady)", which he reluctantly but cheerfully did.

Gina Jeffreys: "I remember distinctly standing on the stage and looking at the sea of soldiers. "This one lady looked up at me and she just had tears streaming down her face and she mouthed 'Thank you.' "They were so thankful that we would be there, and thinking of them at that time of the year, and with TV coverage as well. It was massive and they felt seen and appreciated.

"I came off the stage afterwards and spoke to her, and she made me cry because she was over there protecting someone else's children while her children were at home during Christmas.

"I bawled my eyes out, that really moved me."

Chris Cheney: "Years later I still meet people who tell me they were in the audience, and how magical it was. "We were a lot more raw and more aggressive than the other acts, and I think we were chosen to appeal to the younger crowd.

"It worked, they were singing along to all our songs and even threw in a couple of 'Aussie Aussie Aussie Oi! Oi! Oi!' in for us!"

The chant that set everyone off was on the group singalong of the Doc-penned Angels hit "Am I Ever Gonna See Your Face Again?". It started out as a sad song about a friend who lost his girlfriend in a motorbike accident, and would be played at farewell parties, 21st bashes and funerals.

But in wild sweaty pubs, when Doc sang the title, the crowds would unanimously sing back "No way, get f*****, f*** off!"

As the performers and audience cheerfully led the chant as loudly as they could, Roman Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo reached over and, puzzled, asked Major General Peter Cosgrove, "Mr General, what are they singing?"

Embarrassed, the respected army man replied, "Lord Bishop, I really can't quite make it out".

Then Ramos Horta (face of Timor's resistance and later its Nobel-winning prime minister and president) looked at the Major General.

"I could tell that he could make it out!" ■



Greg speaks with Stuart about his book, Shake Some Action.

Stuart's made a living by doing what he enjoys most and knowing more about it and its characters, than most.

A 3am catch-up with Bruce Springsteen. A Hindley St meeting with Debbie Harry. A meeting with Michael Gudinski, when Michael was in a mood...



STUART COUPE

PODCASTS: www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews

Greg T Ross: Welcome to The Last Post, Stuart Coupe. We're here to discuss your book, *Shake Some Action*, by Penguin. Actually released last year, but like all good things remains perpetual, and a bit of a watershed in the recollections and recordings of a music writer, but you're much more than that, and we'll go into that in the interview.

Let's go back to, I think you were 25, it's 3:00 AM, it's a chilly morning in Paris, and you're sitting at a table with Bruce Springsteen on your first overseas trip. Tell us about that?

Stuart Coupe: It was pretty astonishing. I mean, at the time, I guess I didn't, it was, yes, I'm in Paris and I'm watching Bruce Springsteen, and now I'm sitting chatting with him, as you mentioned Greg, at three o'clock in the morning.

Look, yeah, Bruce Springsteen was one of my heroes, and it was more when I was writing *Shake Some Action*, that I started to have reason to reflect on how significant that was. I'd heard Bruce Springsteen's first album, *Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey*, when a school teacher had brought it back from England for me, and I was still in high school. I fell in love with it. I also heard Chris Winter on *Room To Move* on the ABC, playing *Mary Queen of Arkansas* from that record.

I had cause to think that, golly, it was nine years later and I've gone from a kid sitting in front of the family radiogram in Launceston, listening to records, trying to teach myself how to write about music by reading lots of other people who did it really, really well.

Then I found myself suddenly in this situation where I'm writing for the Sun Herald newspaper, which was then the biggest selling newspaper in Australia, and a vastly different publication from what it is these days, and as you said, I'm on my first trip overseas.

I'd been to New York City, I've interviewed Garland Jeffreys and David Johansen and lots of people there, and now I'm in Paris, I've seen Bruce Springsteen play the River Tour twice and now, yeah, I'm sitting having a bit of a yarn.

It was interesting because, yeah, at one point I said to him, "Is there any Australian song that you would ever have liked to have played?" He didn't miss a beat, he said, "Friday On My Mind by the Easybeats." He said, "It's too hard. I can't get the guitar parts right."

It was funny, because that was the first record I ever bought. That dovetailed, again, through my life experiences. I remember distinctly thinking front of my mind, "That's not a really complicated song, and yet I've got Bruce Springsteen telling me that he has trouble playing it."

I came back to Australia and I talked to a few music friends of mine, musician friends, and I said, "Friday On My mind, it's not that complicated, is it?" They went, "That shows us once again that you don't know very much about music at all." Apparently it's a really, really complex song, to get the guitar lines right.

GTR: It sounds so simple actually, it's very deceiving.

SC: Oh, that was what I thought, and then I did smile to myself, when a few years back on his last tour of Australia with the E Street Band, the Sydney show, they started with Friday On My Mind. I thought that over 40 years he and Miami Steve, and I think Nils Lofgren was in the band at that stage, they'd had ample time to practice those rather complicated chords.

GTR: Actually, yeah, well, going through this book, we seem to have similar musical taste. Garland Jeffreys is a favorite also, but do you recall the effects that Friday On My Mind had on you as a child?

I suppose we've basically covered that now, but I suppose it's that deceptive simplicity and easy to listen to jangle that the song attracts. An amazing song, so that really kick-started your interest in music Stuart?

SC: Yeah, so look, I didn't, realize, at the time, there was a little bit more going on in Friday On My Mind. It's about the drudgery of the working week and working for somebody else, and spending most of every day during the week waiting for Friday. You start the week wanting it to be over, you've got Friday On My Mind.

There was a little bit more going on that I realized later on, but yeah, no, that was the first song that really captured me. Yeah, I was lucky, of course, growing up, I was born in 1956, and so my radio listening was mid-1960's initially, and I was lucky, radio, even in Launceston, in Tasmania where I grew up, I'd hear Jimi Hendrix and I'd hear The Who and I'd hear Motown Records and I'd hear a lot of pretty incredible stuff.

Look, yeah, there was something about Friday On My Mind. I mean, the local record bar in Launceston had a lot of options, but when I saved up the dollar and five, from doing my paper rounds and everything else that I did to accrue that money back in those days, it was Friday On My Mind.

It's interesting, Greg, because when I was doing a previous discussion about Shake Some Action, someone put it on the radio while we were talking, and I still got chills. I've heard that song hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and

hundreds of times, but it was a Saturday afternoon radio chat, and it came on the radio while we were talking, and I went, whoa, it's still this exhilarating thing.

I guess the fact, it pleases me that I can get to 67 years of age and still have that response to not only Friday On My Mind, but I'm a card carrying believer that there is as much exciting music around in 2023-2024, as there has ever been in music history, so, and I-

GTR: Yes, that's so true. Yeah, you just have to look for it, I find.

SC: Yeah, look, you have to look, but it's there. I turn into the grumpy old man that I never wanted to become, whenever someone says, and unfortunately there are too many people of my age who go, "Oh, well, all the good music made, it was in the '60s." "Oh, there hasn't been anything good since the '70s."

I go, "No, no, no, no, no, no, you've just stop listening."

GTR: We're the same age, so I understand.

SC: Yeah, and now, if I want to listen to, and I've got the triple album, and I was listening to it the other day, psychedelic punk rock made in Indonesia between 1967 and 1969, I can. Because all that stuff is now, either because of re-issues or just by the internet, yeah, all of the stuff that was going on when you and I were growing up, that we didn't know about, we were listening to great things, Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix and Roxy Music and Slade and Rob Stewart and all that sort of stuff, all of which are still fantastic, but of course now we realize that that was just the tip of the ice being created globally.

I was listening to an African psychedelic rock record yesterday from 1974, and I'm going, "Wow, how would that have blown my mind if I'd heard it back then?"

GTR: That's amazing too. Or you can ask Siri if you're at a bar or a hotel, and you hear a song and you say, "What is this song, Siri?" I mean, it's just the access is incredible.

Yeah, you're right, there was so much good music, and I stopped going to parties when people played music from the '70s or '60s seventies as the soundtrack, because of course it's good stuff and many happy memories, but time does go on, and that's what I say to people, "There is good music out there, but you just have to listen or search for it."

You're a bit of a sportsman too, Stuart. Now, I know that you played a bit of cricket, but tennis and squash, what happened to your squash career?

SC: It's dormant at the moment, Greg. I suspect that if I seriously attempted to play squash, which is considered along with rowing, to be the most strenuous sport known to humans, that I'm not sure my heart would take it.

I mean, I played cricket. I was a terrible Aussie Rules footballer, I was just scared, and I was an okay tennis player, but I was a pretty, I mean, I represented Tasmania in the Australian Championships for a couple of years, and I loved that.

To me, it always struck me as being like human chess. It is such a precise game to play at the ... I mean, I wasn't at the top level, I mean, I was lucky enough to be around, watching the Khans from Pakistan. I once had a hit with Heather McKay, the greatest ever women's squash player. I got to see Jonah Barrington, Ken Hiscoe, Jeff Hunt play.

The skill level and the physical exertion that was required to play squash at that level, and I still completely love watching those players, you can still find games on YouTube and

things like that. I still have my squash rackets, but I don't know whether I'll ever venture.

I mean, the other thing, squash courts, you've got to search long and hard to find them these days. I mean, they were ... You and I remember times when squash courts-

GTR: We used to play at lunchtime, yeah, yeah, yeah, it made it simpler then.

SC: Yeah, and then everyone discovered jogging, and so they could show off outside. Then they also realized that squash courts were very valuable real estate.

GTR: That's right, it is. That's the sad fact of it, there's so many things we know about too, Stuart. Look, I guess, you decided to make your career as a music writer. You were primarily focused on doing a lot of good things, we'll talk about Adelaide in just a sec, but what music writers did you look up to?

I know you mention them in the book, but if you could just let listeners and readers know, because it's a gamut of quality writers that you mentioned in those. Raul Marques is one of them, and-

SC: Yeah, look, as a kid, there was one person, and he was an Australian, Rob Smyth, who wrote the Nation Review. Rob Smyth, I have an enormous debt to, for the first couple of years I was really, plagiarism is the word that they would use these days for my music writing, compared to what he was doing, I was really trying to be him.

He shaped an aesthetic, which he would write in Nation Review every week. It could be about Jimmy Buffett, it could be about Keith Jarrett, it could be about The Band, The Lovin' Spoonful. I owe him a lot for my ongoing love of very, very traditional Scottish, English and Irish folk music. He had an eloquence, he was not complicated in the way he wrote about music. He wrote from the heart, with a great deal of passion about records.

Rob Smyth definitely, and then later, I read as widely as I could, Nick Kent from New Musical Express, Charles Shaar Murray, Dave Marsh at Rolling Stone, Greil Marcus. Yeah, but those people really came later, by the time I'd moved to Adelaide and to Sydney, and I had much more access to that stuff.

The thing about Rob Smyth, I just went to my local newsagent in Launceston every Thursday, and bought a Nation Review. We didn't have to wait as we did in those days, three months for NME to arrive in Australia. Rolling Stone in those days was very, very difficult to get, full stop. There wasn't a local edition of Rolling Stone.

It was Rob Smyth, some other people writing in Australia, David N. Pepperell, I used to really like. Colin Talbot, he didn't write a lot of music stuff, but he was a great, great writer who shaped a lot ... I mean, look, I did what I still advise any younger person, which is most of the population these days for you and I, Greg, to just read and read and read and read. You can never read too much.

I'm gobsmacked by the quality of writing about music, again on a daily basis, and I go, "Stuart, you're all right, but these people, they're really, really, really good."

GTR: That's right, that's right. We're always comparing, and I guess one of the things, you spoke about a melancholy in the book, and I guess it's something that's attached to a lot of artists.

You would be an artist in many senses. I guess the fact that you didn't play guitar or anything like that, but your association and love of music has taken you into that area



of artistry, and you've reflected it so well with your writings, you would have to be considered an artist in your own right, I think, Stuart. I mean, that's from a lot of people that enjoy your writing.

SC: Look, I guess, I mean, this is my 14th book, and when I talk to artists, and I do a lot of independent publicity work, and they're all frightfully insecure, and they're worried about whether they've done good work, whether people are going to respond well to it. They have the usual responses when people don't respond or respond negatively and all that.

I go, "Do you know what? I know what it's like. Every time a book comes out, I'm like you releasing a CD or a record or going on stage, it's a very similar experience." I go, "I know what it's like to be pacing around a room before you go on stage, because I've done 21 years of radio now, and I still, my stomach churns before I walk into the studio to do a show, I feel like I'm nauseous."

"After 21 years I still write down my name, the name of the radio station, the name of the show, what time it finishes, the call sign, in case I forget." I'm scared, like an artist who goes on stage and they think, "I've sung this song 2,000 times," but they're going, "Golly, maybe tonight's the night I'm going

to forget the words." Yeah, we're all in some way the same, I think.

GTR: Also, you make note of the fact that you're not a musical snob, and I'm glad to hear that, because very similar, I guess you like a particularly cross-section of artists. What does not being a musical snob mean to you?

SC: I mean, not being a musical snob just means that you are open to listening to and embracing any music. Long ago I stopped thinking that there was anything called bad music. People say, "Oh, that's terrible, that's bad." I go, "That's really, really patronizing and condescending. Because that's someone's art, and just because it doesn't resonate with you doesn't make it bad, it just makes it music that you don't relate to, and someone's put their heart and soul into that music."

I also think that, and one of my favorite sayings, which I no doubt pinched from someone else, is that there's nothing wrong with loving Abba and Hank Williams at the same time. I am blessed with, I guess a psyche, that it's a constant adventure, I'm constantly wanting to be moved and invigorated by music, and I have an endless thirst for listening to it.

Snobbishness is, "Oh, I don't listen to the Bee Gees." We had a prime example of it the other day in Australia, a whole lot of particularly middle-aged men, "I don't get Taylor Swift, she's terrible. She's awful." Stop showing your age guys.

Taylor Swift, I mean, you only have to look at the joy that she's brought to so many people through her art, and people forget that they were the wide-eyed screaming kids that went to see the Beatles, who were the pop phenomena of their time. Now Taylor Swift is the pop phenomena of our time, and she's not playing for middle-aged men, she's playing as the Bee Gees did, they played for teenagers.

I talk in the book, how tastes can change too, and people. I never used to have much interest in Steely Dan, and now I'm a card carrying Steely Dan, and Cold Chisel was another band, and so I think musical snobbery is just, it's about not going, "Oh, it's not cool to like this." It's about just being honest.

If you like Taylor Swift, I remember saying to some kids recently, who were carrying on about how cool they thought Fleetwood Mac were, young kids, and I said, "God, I grew up in an era where if you listened to Fleetwood Mac and liked them, you did not tell anybody."

Now that's musical snobbery. If you liked Fleetwood Mac then and now, you should just put your hand up and go, "Hey, have you got a problem here. I like Fleetwood Mac."

GTR: Yeah, I mean, Fleetwood Mac, back in the day when I first heard Fleetwood Mac was through the single, Oh Well. That was the first time, with Jeremy Spencer and all those in it, but a great group and of course, yeah, that's right about snobbery, I'm mind blown with the number of people that seem to want to get into an argument about Taylor Swift.

Just let it be. She's doing well, she brings joy and happiness as you so rightfully say, Stuart, to a lot of people, just let it be and just let's get on with living your own life, so yeah, totally with you on that.

Flinders University, politics, Adelaide, what was that period like for you, to go to Adelaide and find, I guess, as compared to Launceston, a big city?

SC: Going to Adelaide was like going to live in New York City. It completely messed with my mind, because Launceston in those days had a population of about 50,000. Adelaide was mindbogglingly big. I didn't have the greatest

matric stroke HSC marks, they were okay, I could have gone to Hobart Uni, but that was going south, I think instinctively I wanted to go north.

Flinders at the time had a reputation as been the most radical university in Australia. I heard that, I went to the ... Again, these are the days when you could go into the local library in Launceston and read the handbooks for all of the universities in Australia, and see what they were teaching and what their texts were.

There was something about Flinders. Flinders was 10 years old at the time, and I went, "Okay, I'm going to Flinders." Look, I enjoyed it very, very much. I look back now and I go, "Right, did we really think that Stalin was a great intellectual thinker? Okay."

GTR: Well, you wore his T-shirt, you wore his T-shirt.

SC: I did, I had a Stalin T-shirt. I still don't know how I got that, because by the time I moved to Sydney, I'd clearly revised my opinion of Stalin.

GTR: Yeah, because Martin Armiger was there.

SC: Martin was a little bit before me. Doc Neeson went to Flinders, a lot of people came through Flinders University, and it was a good university to be around, with a great book shop, I remember. Some of my lecturers and tutors from those days, I'm still friends with.

Because they really encouraged me in the sort of things that I wanted to do.

GTR: Adelaide was an amazing place at the time.

SC: Having said that, I was quite glad to-

GTR: Don Dunstan. I think there was a general feeling South Australia was ahead of its times, or at least leading the way in many social issues, so you probably latched onto that too, Stuart.

SC: Yeah. Look, I saw Don Dunstan speak once, and I thought he was just spine-chillingly amazing, Greg. Yeah, Adelaide in the mid-'70s, I mean, I left in August, 1978 to move to Sydney, but Adelaide in those days was a pretty incredibly hip and switched on city, especially if you came from Launceston.

GTR: I think, yeah, it's an amazing place. I mean, even the Liberals at that time were more left wing than they'd ever been before, with Steele Hall and Robin Millhouse and everything.

Tell us about that photo, that famous photo, Stuart, of you and Deborah Harry in Hindley Street? Now, that sticks in my mind, knowing Adelaide as well as I do too. How did that come about, that photo?

SC: Simply, Greg, that I became one of the editors of Empire Times, which was Flinders University's magazine, and Deborah Harry was in Australia, about six months before Blondie toured, and she had a press conference early in the morning at a hotel in Hindley Street, and I went along to that.

It was typical of the time, that there was only one woman at the press conference, and her name was Deborah Harry. Then I walked outside into the street, and my friend, another Launcestonian, Vicki Wilkinson, was there with her camera, and she asked Debbie if she would pose for some photos, and me in my sleeveless jumper, thongs, red beard, and wearing, with my Sex Pistols badge on, was standing there.

I'm in this photo which appears on a ridiculously regular basis on social media, and always garners millions of

likes and, "Is that really Stuart Coupe?" There's that, and everyone is still wondering what was in what seems to be a bag of potatoes that Deborah Harry is carrying in that photo.

Yeah, it was just one of those, I mean, look, it's what we now call photo-bombing. I think that expression didn't exist in 1977.

GTR: Oh, geez. Actually, it's very interesting too, I suppose, as you said, that photo brings to light and appears very often. You've met some wonderful people, of course, a lot of people that you've interviewed and connected with, that a lot of people would long to be in that situation yourself.

I mean, the meeting with The Stranglers, getting the Japanese massage, a near death experience you probably thought at the time. Peter Garrett, Midnight Oil, all that sort of stuff. I mean, and The Clash, that really changed a lot of things for you I guess, too, Stuart, that you're actually in publicity with The Clash in '82.

SC: Yeah, I mean, look, it was The Clash, and it was in that incredible era when The Clash were probably one of the most exciting bands on the planet. Punk rock was the first musical revolution that I was really cognizant of, I was too young for Beatlemania, and so I was right there in the trenches.

To get to work peripherally with The Clash, and be a part of the team for that tour, was incredible. You could trade out on that for the rest of your life. Yeah, and so I guess it was a nascent introduction to the world of publicity, and as you know Greg, I do an enormous amount of independent artist publicity these days, it's the main thing I do when I'm not doing radio shows and writing books.

It was just, again, it's more in hindsight. I mean, it was lovely and exciting to be around The Clash. I mean, I remember most just going to the shows and thinking, "Golly, I'm getting paid to go and see The Clash play at the Capitol Theater. This is isn't right, I get paid for his."

It's only when you look back and go, because The Clash in that era was so mythologized, the magnificent seven and everything, and you go, "Golly, I was lucky enough."

I've always considered, Greg, my life to be incredibly lucky. I grew up, I've worked phenomenally hard, okay, but I grew up in an era when it was possible to make a living writing about music. I grew up at a time when there was this incredible musical upheaval. I grew up in a time when record labels would send you around the world to interview people in person, they wouldn't just sit you at the end of a Zoom call.

Artists were more accessible, I think. There were a lot of things, and early on I wanted to learn as much about all the different facets of the music industry. I was inspired by John Lander, who has been Bruce Springsteen's manager for the last 10 gazillion years. John Landau was prior to that, a record producer and a journalist, and people said one of his strengths as a manager was that he knew all facets of the music industry.

I've had independent labels, I've managed artists, I've done publicity work, I've done, outside of performing, and I've done a lot of radio, and all of that suits my very short attention span, and it's added up to some, at times incredibly precarious means of survival.

Of course, I'm lucky, you look at those polls of the greatest Australian records of all time, and almost every time there is one, it's the Hoodoo Gurus, Stoneage Romeos, and I go, "Guess what? I was their manager then."

GTR: Yeah, that's right, you went to America and got a desk at A&M Records, I think, is that right?

SC: Yeah, and then I used to work in an office with Bob Garcia, who would regale me with stories of Graham Parsons riding his motorbike into the lot, and I got to meet Herb Alpert at A&M Records and Jerry Moss.

Then, again, I finished working up with the Hoodoo Gurus, and lo and behold I'm managing Paul Kelly throughout the '80s and that terrific run of, Post, Gossip, So Much Water So Close To Home, and Under The Sun, yeah, who was also signed to A&M Records. Yeah, of course, I have to pinch myself and go, "Okay, wow, pretty incredible."

GTR: Yeah, it reminds me actually, when you speak of Paul, you're meeting with Gudinski, when you proposed the double album. He was a pretty empowering type of figure to put that idea to. What happened when you went to Michael Gudinski with the idea of producing, or at least having him support a double album from Paul, after his previous records of course?

SC: Yeah, meetings were combative sport for Michael, combined with performance pieces. He basically issued an endless number of very loudly expressed expletives, which basically told me to F-off and get out of the office, and you've got to be effing joking, and you've got to be effing kidding and no, and what the F are you talking about?

As I edged my way out of the office, and I got out of him enough money for a publishing advance. I mean, he wasn't committed to, they'd released three albums by Paul Kelly, that had not worked in a commercial sense, and so he wasn't interested in any way in doing it at all.

That was really the beginnings of my relationship with Michael. He scared me, and he knew it, and he scared everybody, they all knew it. It was only when I was about halfway through writing the book about him, that he stopped ... I really grew to love him phenomenally over the years, but he stopped frightening me.

I realized that I needed to just talk back to him, and it was like if you took it back to him and went, "No, Michael," he would respect. If he sensed early on that he had you up against the ropes, he would just keep verbally pummeling you.

Because it was, a lot of, Michael was performance. He knew acutely who he was, what he represented, and underneath it he was not nearly as confident and so forth as he appeared, but he was Michael Gudinski.


We developed a very good and close relationship during the time that I worked on the book. Look, and I think he respected me, because again, he knew that amongst an industry which is actually full of a lot of people that for the most part don't really like music all that much, I was one of the people that genuinely, like he did, we were there first and foremost because we were unashamed music nerds, and everything that came from that.

GTR: Yeah. Look, we thank Rob Smyth for his writing and inspiring you to become what you've been now for some time, continuing to educate, entertain and inform the Australian music public.

You've done a lot of things, you've been a publicist, founder of magazines, record labels, and teller of a darn good story with some amazingly well-known people, Stuart, so thank you so much for being part of this, and we look forward to our next chat.

Thank you once again, your book is Shake Some Action, out on Penguin. Get it. ■





Wishing for lives to be loving and kind and humble

There's this thing, of looking into
peoples lives, a literary voyeur,

and of wishing for those lives to be
loving and kind and humble,

yet also real and interesting.

With angst and bite and satisfaction
and

the realisation of poetic beauty

found in the small. Of porch lights on,
of bedroom lights on,

of attics and cellars and places of
refuse in domesticity.

Of great pieces of literature being
written from the everyday.

Of lovemaking in the evening and after

walking to the local strip

to buy fish 'n chips.

Of bringing the washing in before the
rain.

Of preparing dinner, un-rushed,
wearing clothing designed to please
only you. Sweet music playing with the
television on

in the lounge room.

Your favourite program, starting soon.

Of being attracted to a person

because of their appearance

but falling in love not because of that,
but with the recognition

of having found

a kindred soul.

GREG T ROSS



JOHN BOIS THE COAL MINER'S DIAMONDS

John Bois's fourth album, *The Coal Miner's Diamonds*, continues the irresistible eclecticism that informed 2022's *Work Of Art*.



Broad in scope and diverse in style, *The Coal Miner's Diamonds* is an eight track opus of narrative driven songs with a keen eye for detail. John favours a spare, uncluttered soundscape that's, nonetheless, full of atmosphere. The production and arrangements are all about serving the songs in the best way - the music speaks as eloquently as the lyrics.

The opening track, *MIA*, a detail-rich vignette of a conscript lost somewhere in the battlefields of Vietnam, is a contemporary Folk offering riding on John's lean, nuanced croon and accentuated by the soulful Hammond organ of New York's Kenny White and the crackling electric guitar of Australia's Paulie Bignell. Subtle fills of banjo and mandolin add some extra feel.

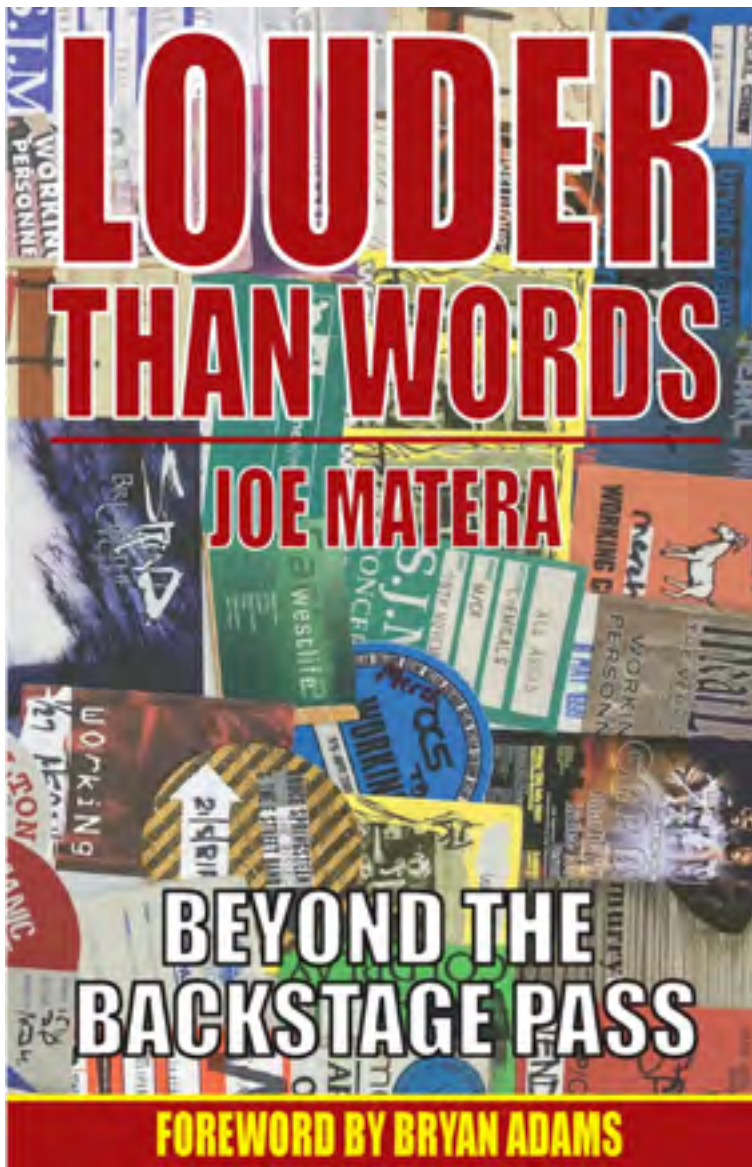
The stark piano balladry of *Clear Skies* may have echoes of Randy Newman or Jimmy Webb but John's flair for storytelling makes it all his own. The palm court nostalgia of *Under A Moonless Sky* has a certain charm - think of a tuxedo clad Al Bowly. However, John brings it all home with a warm accomplished vocal framed around piano, acoustic guitar and a string section.

John goes into full Country Rock mode on *Warrigal Road*, a childhood reminiscence of a bus trip to Mordialloc beach. Sounding much like a lost track from *The Dingoes* debut album, John reinforces the connection by inviting former Dingo cohort Kerryn Tolhurst to guest on complementary lead guitar. The bluesy title track gets its lyrical inspiration from Appalachian murder ballads and houses a narrative sweep that could be a blueprint for a revisionist Western waiting to happen. The high lonesome harmonica of Scott Harper, Kenny White's mournful organ and the piercing electric guitars of Alex Bois and Paulie Bignell all come with a sinister purpose but leave enough space for John's doom laden vocal.

The moody heartbreak saga of *I Found The Blues* sits on a minimalist groove that mashes R&B, Country and twangy Pop into an appealing hybrid. John's vocal, hushed and unassuming, blends in perfectly with Paulie Bignell's clipped guitar while the plainspoken lyrics add hurt upon hurt. Willie Dixon's *Seventh Son*, the album's sole non-original, goes all Southern Rock. Introduced by Floridian Buster Cousins' Allmanesque slide guitar, *Seventh Son* then hits full throttle as the twin lead guitars of John and son Alex threaten to blow the roof off the roadhouse but never once trample all over all John's arch vocal. Rinky dink piano, a string section and guitars that spit jagged shards of metal drive the track deep into the mystic.

The Coal-Miner's Diamonds closes with *Jessica's Wedding*, an ambitious piano themed instrumental that sounds like the best soundtrack to a movie that never was. The ghost of Burt Bacharach hovers over *Jessica's Wedding* - all muted shades and tones with a hint of Bossa Nova before accordion and bajosexto head south of the border. An impeccable closer to an album that likes to blur genres or, perhaps, ignore them altogether. As a whole, *The Coal-Miner's Daughter* represents the peak of adult music from artist who's not afraid to push the boundaries and what's wrong with that one may ask.

MICHAEL MACDONALD



Joe Matera holds a unique position as a music journalist who is also a professional musician. This insight has allowed him to carve out a career as both a performer and a critic. It has also allowed him access to areas where music journos are not permitted while musicians themselves open up more readily to 'one of their own'.

In this, his second book, Joe traces his childhood influences and meets the musicians who changed his life from heroes such as Janne Schaffer, who played on ABBA's studio albums, to Gerry Rafferty (the genius behind 'Baker Street') and international superstar Bryan Adams and his song writing partner Jim Vallance.

Louder Than Words also delves into the often tortuous touring life of a musician, with life on the road often leading to band break-ups or mental breakdown. Joe also examines the impact of MTV on a generation of musicians, focusing particularly on one video by rising rock star Billy Squier that is said to have ruined his career.

About the author

In addition to his solo music career as a singer/songwriter/guitarist, JOE MATERA also has a career as a music journalist writing for international music magazines such as *Guitar Player*, *Guitar World*, *Record Collector*, and *Goldmine*. He also writes a popular newspaper music column for the Shepparton News. His list of interviewees includes Metallica, Queen, Blondie, Bon Jovi, KISS and Black Sabbath, to name just a few.

Joe lives in Melbourne with his wife Liz.

Available to buy on [amazon.com.au](https://www.amazon.com.au)



"WITH LOUDER THAN WORDS JOE MATERA HAS GONE BEYOND THE USUAL "DEEP DIVE" INTO THE HISTORY OF ROCK MUSIC TO SOMETHING MORE AKIN TO AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG. HIS PASSION AND PATIENCE ARE TRULY A GIFT TO US ALL."
GERRY BECKLEY (AMERICA)

"JOE MATERA IS A ROCK 'N' ROLL LIFER - WHEN HE'S NOT PLAYING MUSIC, HE'S WRITING ABOUT IT. HE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT WHAT HE DOES, AND MUSIC IS NOTHING WITHOUT PASSION."
BILLY SQUIER

"JOE MATERA TELLS HIS TALES FROM BEHIND THE SCENES... INCLUDING THE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THE RECORD STORE LOCATED ONLY A FEW DOORS DOWN FROM THE ORIGINAL SITE OF POLAR STUDIOS, ABBA'S RECORDING STUDIO IN STOCKHOLM ..."
JANNE SCHAFFER, LEGENDARY ABBA GUITARIST

Australian Icons:

The Bushwackers, Celebrate Decades of Folk and Country Music

The Bushwackers, a name synonymous with Australian Folk and Country music, have left an indelible mark on the nation's cultural landscape for over five decades. Formed in 1973 as a university group, the band has evolved, adapted, and endured, entertaining their audiences with their infectious melodies, spirited performances, and timeless tales.

With a repertoire spanning over 25 albums and five book publications, The Bushwackers have become a fixture at major festivals, captivating generations of fans with their distinctive sound. Their contribution to the music industry has been duly recognized, with three Golden Guitar awards and a prestigious induction into the Roll of Renown in Tamworth, alongside legends such as Slim Dusty and Troy Cassar Daley.

Led by the charismatic duo of Dobe Newton on Lagerphone and vocals, and guitarist-songwriter Roger Corbett, The Bushwackers continue to enthral audiences across Australia. Backed by a stellar ensemble of musicians, including virtuosos on fiddle, guitars, bass, and drums, their performances are nothing short of electrifying.

Recently, The Bushwackers unveiled their latest album, *The Great Australian Lap*, a testament to their enduring creativity and passion for storytelling through music. Among the collection of singles is "Friend for Life," a heartwarming song penned by Roger Corbett, celebrating the joys of companionship with a new puppy.

Looking ahead, the band is set to release another single, *Our Last Drink*, in April—a poignant tribute to the Anzacs, co-written by the talented 15-year-old Angus Kitt and Sarah

Buckley. Reflecting on the significance of the song, Dobe Newton remarked, "Some of the youngsters who went off to fight in the great war were only teenagers themselves. So it seemed only fitting to record this song in collaboration with Angus."

The Bushwackers' connection to the Anzac legacy runs deep, with classics like "And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda" and the poignant "April 25" resonating with audiences, particularly in the lead-up to Anzac Day.

In 2023, The Bushwackers made a memorable appearance on *The Voice*, reigniting interest in their music and reigniting the passion of their loyal fanbase. Reflecting on the experience, Roger Corbett fondly recalls, "It was a wild and crazy ride. But we had the best time, and it was so great to reconnect with the many fans who'd seen us but who'd forgotten we were still alive and performing."

As they prepare to launch their album on streaming platforms on July 1st, The Bushwackers remain committed to their craft, delivering unforgettable performances that blend storytelling, music, and humor. With physical CDs available through their website and at their live shows, the band continues to enchant audiences, ensuring that the legacy of The Bushwackers lives on for years to come.





Winds of change

Winds of Change is a 2023 arrangement of the commemorative ceremonial piece, which holds deep significance to those who have fought for this country, their families, and all Australian citizens. Performed by acclaimed didgeridoo player Mark Atkins and jazz virtuoso James Morrison, this version represents the first time the song has been performed with a didgeridoo alongside the bugle.

Production of the piece began in early 2020, and alongside Mark Atkins, the rendition was arranged and produced by Chelsy Atkins (Garrjimanha) and Ricky Bloomfield (Bear Mountain Productions). Atkins organised extensive consultation with relevant community groups and received endorsement letters from numerous individuals and organisations including; RSL & Services Clubs Association, RSL NSW, Australian War Memorial, Archie Roach AM, Shane Howard AM, John Schumann, Ernie Dingo, Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP and Hon. Kevin Rudd AC.

A film clip accompanying the new piece was created in collaboration with the Sydney Opera House in 2022, which features both artists performing the arrangement atop the Opera House sails with the magnificent Sydney Harbour as the backdrop.





Photos: Daniel Boud and GARUWA.

To listen or watch the new arrangement go to stream.sydneyoperahouse.com/the-last-post-winds-of-change



FIONA MAYNARD

Australian Singer songwriter Fiona Lee Maynard has released a “wonderfully constructed, acoustic-based album” called Junction, “full of gorgeous melodies, inspiring instrumentation and stunning harmonies” (Greg Phillips - Australian Musician).

Fiona has produced numerous songs, bands and recordings since 1984, including Mushroom act; Have A Nice Day, Birdcage Records (USA) act; In Vivo, and 6-piece Alt-Soul group, Dalicados, formed with accomplished guitarist, singer songwriter James Lomas. Fiona and James have always shared a special bond with their music over decades, marriage and parenthood, but a recent event saw them take their relationship much further.

Fiona, once described by music critic Jeff Jenkins as “one of Melbourne’s greatest rock chicks” gave her left kidney to husband, James on July 27, 2023.

The formidable frontwoman explained “James had sudden onset kidney failure in late January 2021 when a rare auto immune condition was triggered out of the blue and destroyed his kidneys in ten days.

“James was on dialysis for two and a half years, waiting for a deceased donor kidney and having a hard time maintaining social connections, worse of all he couldn’t perform music.”

Fiona’s folk influences beckoned during musical visits to her mother (in care for dementia), Covid, the passing of both parents and her husband’s illness.

Painting with words and music, during James’ dialysis sessions, Fiona wrote songs to process the trauma and bring meaning to the many challenges of grief she faced. Many of these surprisingly optimistic songs appear on Junction.

Junction was recorded while Fiona prepared to donate a kidney to James - with James recording his parts between dialysis sessions. The album was completed after recovering from the donation/transplant surgery.

Junction is available for download on Bandcamp at fionaleemaynard.bandcamp.com and streaming on all platforms.

Since the transplant, Fiona and James are back to performing live music again.

“I want to use the opportunity of releasing a new record to raise awareness for organ donation, kidney health and advocate for mental wellness through creative processes, in particular music and storytelling songwriting.

“As Australians we are so lucky to have the health system that we do and thankfully organ donation is covered.”

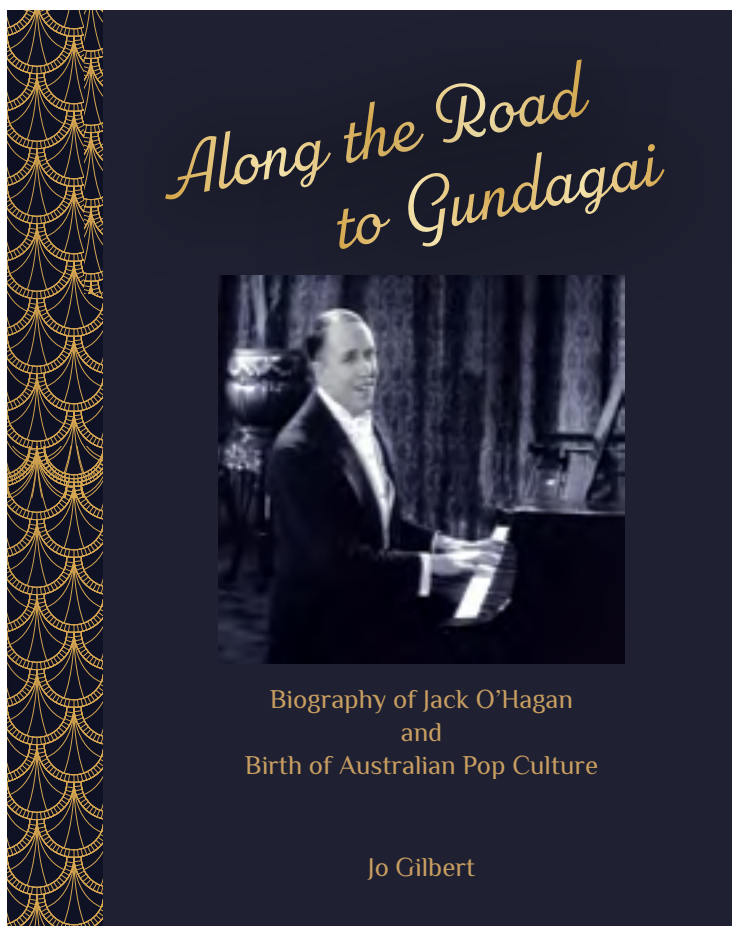
Add Junction to your music library and file under; Singer Songwriter, Acoustic, Alternative, Folk, World.

Photos: Tameika Brumby.



THE FATHER OF AUSTRALIAN POPULAR MUSIC

Australian pop music didn't start in the 1950s or 60s. It was born in the early 1900s. The biography of famous Australian songwriter and radio celebrity Jack O'Hagan MBE tells the story.



Comedian BARRY HUMPHRIES said:

'Were he an American, [he] would have been honoured in some Hall of Fame and celebrated at The Lincoln Center'.

Along the Road to Gundagai, Biography of Jack O'Hagan and Birth of Australian Pop Culture by Jo Gilbert (Jack's granddaughter) was launched 9 April at Readings St Kilda by David Hunt, The Art Hunter and host of Sunday Arts JOY 94.9, at the Gundagai Library NSW 17 April. It will also be launched at the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra in late June /early July in conjunction with the 2024 Sounds of Australia Collection announcement.

Bert Newton said:

'...people like Barry Humphries, Graham Kennedy and Jack O'Hagan ... there's no one quite like them ... no one quite like Jack in my belief. He might have had his contemporaries, but he shone, and they tinkled.'

Nick Henderson, Curator of People Culture Education Team at the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), Canberra said:

'The NFSA is very excited that Jack O'Hagan, prolific singer-songwriter and radio personality, is finally getting his story told so richly by his grand-daughter Jo Gilbert. O'Hagan is one of Australia's most significant composers of the first half of the twentieth century, and his iconic tunes are instantly recognisable to most Australians. O'Hagan's importance as a composer and lyricist is underlined by his multiple inclusions in NFSA's Sounds of Australia national sound recordings registry, more than any other individual, including 'Along the Road to Gundagai' (1922), 'Wrap Me Up In My Stockwhip and Blanket', also known as 'The Dying Stockman' (1931), 'Our Don Bradman' (1930), 'After the Dawn' (1926) and 'Where the Dog Sits on the Tuckerbox' (1938).'



About the author:

Jo Gilbert has worked as a business management consultant for creative services since 2007 and spent five years as a lecturer in Bachelor of Communication and Bachelor of Design courses for renowned Melbourne universities RMIT and Swinburne. She created the Jack O'Hagan website and writes 'Jack's Track' newsletter. 'Along the Road to Gundagai, Biography of Jack O'Hagan and Birth of Australian Pop Culture' is the first comprehensive history of Jack O'Hagan and Jo's first book.

Conductor Guy Noble said,

'Teddy Tahu Rhodes has been including a few of Jack's songs in our performances – Along the Road to Gundagai, and the wonderful and now completely inappropriate jingle for Gilbey's Gin – "Gin is really good for you!". When we ask the audience if they know the music of Jack O'Hagan, there is a distinct murmur of approval, so the work of this Australian song-writing legend definitely lives on.'

The LIMITED EDITION biography is a big story – a 504-page hard cover, with around 780 images of bands and orchestras, sheet music, theatre programs, places and, most importantly, of people.

It's a Melbourne story of national significance, especially to the NSW town of Gundagai and is available online at www.jackohagan.com.au/shop and at Readings, Avenue Bookstore and Mary Martin Bookshop in Melbourne.



Chapter 18

Flame of Desire

Raising the Curtain (1935–1939)

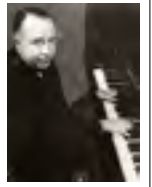
Jack writes the entire score for a visually gorgeous musical comedy, the Ruritanian romance *Flame of Desire*, an extravagant operetta with three American stars. It is a phenomenal success but, because of the Depression and the cost, runs for only seven weeks. He contributes songs to several more revues, but copyright is usually held by the producer, so very few are recorded.

In America there were plenty of backers ready to invest in theatre but the practice was almost unheard of in Australia. The Firm wasn't interested in supporting local shows from the 1930s to 1950s and instead bought hits from New York or London – certain winners – rather than bank on unknown quantities. This included adaptations of two European operettas with books by Alfred Grunwald and Dr Fritz Lohner-Beda and music by Paul Abraham – the English version of the Hungarian musical comedy *Viktorina and Her Hussar* (English book and lyrics by Harry Graham, music Paul Abraham), a romantic journey with exotic scenes set in Japan, Russia and Hungary, and *Ball at the Savoy* (English version by Oscar Hammerstein) – both featuring Europe's famous comedy star, Oskar Denes, and both of which the O'Hagans saw at His Majesty's in 1935.

Rolls, on the other hand, created opportunities for local writers and composers, despite his great appreciation for American theatre. He reunited the *Dick Whittington* and *Tout Paris* team for an ambitious 'all-Australian musical comedy', a romantic light operetta of two acts and 17 scenes, a huge production with a cast of 200 and budget of £20,000 (\$2.2 million). *Song of Songs*, developed by John L. Gray and Jack O'Hagan in 1931, was reimaged as *Flame of Desire*. Jack wrote a robust and fine 24-song score and a 10 to 15-minute grand finale, with arrangements by musical director Maurice Guttridge. Costumes were designed by Erika Huppert and Joan Scardon, who also designed the souvenir program cover. The show premiered on 19 October 1935 and was tremendously popular, closing seven weeks later, on 7 December, a reasonably long run for the time. Rolls wrote the program introduction, which Jack felt was undoubtedly correct:

With the production of 'Flame of Desire' Ernest C. Rolls enhances his claim to the title of Australia's greatest producing genius. When he came to Australia 10 years ago he was already recognised as one of London's truly great producers. Many artists who have since risen to world-wide fame owe their place in the theatre to the training which he gave them.

Mr Rolls has given the Australian musical stage many of its outstanding productions, including – to mention only a few – 'Rio Rita', 'Whoopee', 'Sunny', 'Good News', 'The Merry Malones', and those unforgettable triumphs, the 'Rhapsodies of 1935' and the 'Vogues of 1935'.



Jack O'Hagan, c. 1935 (SLV)

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Chapter 16

Our Don Bradman

Emerging as an entrepreneur (1930–1934)

Jack writes 'Our Don Bradman' for 3DB's Leeds Test Cricket broadcast. Bradman scores a record 334 runs and Jack scores a huge hit. A transfer to 3AW doesn't work out. He sets up Jack O'Hagan Music Publishing, becomes an agent for Decca Records and re-opens Vocalion studios. Decca mysteriously burns to the ground. By 1935, Jack's national and international sales reach two million but one-third of Melbourne's workforce is unemployed. He is flat broke.

What Lady Luck gives, she also takes away. The Depression hit Melbourne hard, major businesses were destroyed by the circumstances of the times and unemployment soared. The Depression presented some golden opportunities but Jack was to find his own fortunes at risk, and his personal demons began to take their toll.

Radio and music were so readily available people no longer needed pianos, player rolls, records or sheets. For an annual £1 (\$93) licence, Melbourne listeners could have music from the Australian Broadcasting Company (3AR, 3LO) and new commercial stations – 3UZ (1925), 3DB (1927), 3KZ (1930), 3AK (1931) and 3AW (1932) – a boon for poor communities. In 1932, 3LO, 3AR and 10 stations throughout the nation were taken over by the government's Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), which competed with 43 commercial stations, most operating, as Jack put it, 'from 6 am to unconscious'. His royalties dropped by 70 per cent to £128 (\$11,910) for a four-month period in 1930. He explained to Peter Game in *The Music Sellers*:

The music business had slowed down to a walk. No one bought it, and as for the artists, they starved. In the streets of Melbourne you would come across some of our best musicians playing the fiddle or singing, trying to earn a crust. There were parades of unemployed marching up Bourke Street trying to attract attention to their plight.²⁷⁰

3KZ opened on 8 December 1930. Louis Dahlberg, managing director, later wrote for *Radioprogram*:

When, after three months' heart-breaking labour, we were ready to put 3KZ on air, I gave much thought to our opening program. The building of the transmitter, etc., had left us with very little of our comparatively small capital and the amount earmarked for programs left much to be desired. Even so, nothing but the best would do us and we were ambitious enough to draw up a program, which included Gladys Moncrieff, the Sisserman Quartet, Reg Bradley, Vic Thorpe and Jack O'Hagan. Miss Moncrieff, though sympathetic, could not oblige as she was under contract and we signed up other artists with the exception of Jack O'Hagan whom, we were informed unofficially, was under contract also. Reluctantly we dismissed Jack from our minds.

We opened up fairly well and meeting Jack in the street about a week later I was pleased to receive his congratulations. By this time, the 'first night' rush was over and we were feeding our listeners

National Library of Australia

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Willy had a beautiful garden

As children in Adelaide, my brothers and I lived with our mother on Victoria Terrace, nearly opposite the famous Vogue Cinema.

Our property, like those around us, was a big one. Big enough to have a side garden and, attached to that, a disused bungalow that contained an old extendable dining table. My brothers and I had contemplated turning that extendable table into a torture rack for dissenters and opponents of our then boy gang, Freedom and Justice Club Association (understandably shortened to FJCA).

Out the back were two sheds. A large shed that we never quite worked out what to do with and, against the back fence, the smaller shed. I remember taking shelter in the smaller shed one afternoon when my brothers and I were having a scratch-match training battle with our homemade cracker guns. Truth is, I had little to do with the construction of the cracker guns. My twin brother had built them. He was good at that sort of thing.

In the large backyard was also an apricot tree and a peach tree and a peppercorn tree.

We fashioned a bike-track in that backyard for when we couldn't be bothered cycling to Brownhill Creek. With shovels and bare hands we cleared weeds and even dug a large pit which we filled with water to make a pond.

We built a bridge over that pond, for our bikes to travel. We even held a Sports Day for our club in that backyard but that's another story, except to say that it ended with us tying down our younger brother.

It was a very hot day and we left him there for a couple of hours.

Next door was 94-year old Willy Wakelin. Willy had lost his wife, to cancer, 20 years earlier.

I would visit Willy for conversations over tea and biscuits and to hear his stories of life in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Willy had a beautiful garden and tennis court which he told us, he had once opened to the public. He told us that people would sometimes become lost amongst the maze of paths, that's how big it was.

Two doors down, towards the city, was the Marshall's Cake Shop.

The Marshall family had what we considered to be the best vanilla slices in Adelaide. And, as a bonus, their Berliner buns were also peerless. Sometimes, if you were lucky enough, you'd get a Berliner so freshly made the jam on the inside of the bun would still be hot and you'd run the risk of burning your mouth as you bit into the sweet delight.

And, as previously mentioned, we had the Vogue Cinema where Saturday afternoons were often spent buying fantails and watching westerns.

Out the front, we had a cellar.

But that, also, is another story.

JACK P KELLERMAN

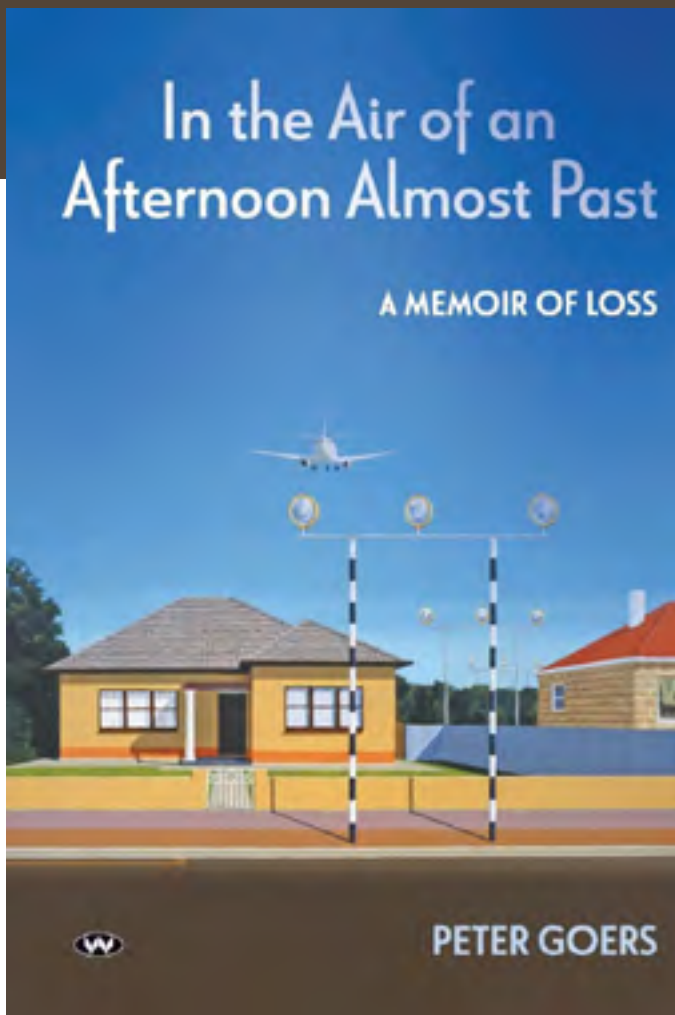


Peter Goers



PODCASTS: www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews

Peter is a well-known and respected character amongst the South Australian arts and veteran community. The former ABC radio announcer has released a book, *In the Air of an Afternoon Almost Past*. In the book, Peter speaks of the loss of his parents, in an airplane crash, in the USA, forty odd years ago. As Peter explains in his chat with Greg, this poetic book is his long goodbye to his parents.



Greg T Ross: Peter Goers, welcome to The Last Post Magazine. You were many, many things over the years, actor, director, designer, art critic, author, broadcaster, journalist. But we're here mainly to discuss your beautiful new book, *In the Air of an Afternoon Almost Past: A memoir of loss. The story of both your parents' death in an airplane crash in New Orleans. That's Brian and Margaret in 1982, Pan Am flight 759. Some may feel they know you, Peter, but any connection to you would be less if one had not read this book. You open up beautifully, honestly, poetically. And you go back to a Saturday morning in July 1982, Peter, you, a bit hungover from the night before, the ringing of the phone wakens you. You answer it begrudgingly. What was that phone call all about?*

Peter Goers: Greg, I just want to say too, before I answer that first question, how much I appreciate your Last Post. Over how many years is it now?

GTR: 13 now.

PG: It's a beautiful magazine.

GTR: Time's gone by so quickly.

PG: Beautiful magazine. I love it. I've learned so much from that magazine, it is such a respectful bonanza for veterans. Bonanza is the wrong word, it's such a validation of veterans. It's beautifully produced. Every issue is a pleasure to read. I even like the ads. I've learned more about bidets, home bidets and urinary matters, because you get to a certain age, I'll be 48 soon.

You get to a certain age and I pee in Morse code, dot, dot, dot, dash, dot, dot, dot. And there's always a little bit you miss. Because your readers will respond to this.

And I'm glad the veteran community and other people who purvey to the veteran community are supporting you with ads. I even have a signed, the cover of Noelene Brown.

She signed it for me. It's beautiful. Glorious magazines. I'm particularly taken with the photographer, Tim Page... and his relationship with Sean Flynn, who died as a photographer. So many photographers and journalists died during the Vietnam War.

GTR: Well, their great friendship, and Tim, God bless him now departed-

PG: I know.. You were good to him-

GTR: Yeah, we were good friends.

PG: ... and him to you.

GTR: Yeah. He wanted to find Sean's body.

PG: There's a movie in Sean Flynn. I'd like to know a lot more about Sean Flynn because I'm obsessed by Errol Flynn and ditto Sean Flynn. Errol Flynn, his father, played a lot of heroic parts, but- Sean Flynn was heroic.

GTR: That's right. He wasn't just there in Hollywood, he did it in real life. It was incredible.

PG: I interviewed Errol Flynn's daughter and one of Sean Flynn's half-sisters, Rory her name was.

And she said her father wanted to call his autobiography, *In Like Me* by Errol Flynn. Anyway, yes.

GTR: So then the phone call.

PG: Yeah, the phone call, which was my grandmother saying, who was then about 85. And because both my parents were only children, they were Methodists.

And their parents as Methodists had tried sex once and didn't like it. And I loved, particularly my maternal grandmother who was on the phone saying that, "There's been terrible air crash in America, it corresponds with your mum and dad's itinerary." And at this moment, something in you knows and then you hope against hope. And I said to reassure her, I said, "Oh, for heaven's sake, Nana, there's thousands of planes going off, coming in all the time in America." She said, "Come round," so I did. And then I sat with her for the next essentially five hours. I rang Pan American in Sydney, in New York, in New Orleans. I rang the hotel they'd left in New Orleans, if they'd left. I rang the hotel they were supposed to arrive at in Las Vegas. They hadn't arrived. Pan Am all the time would take my details. And eventually they rang at four o'clock that afternoon and said, "Your parents have been killed in this airplane accident," with, I think, 154 people and including eight people on the ground because the plane... Is that right? I always get it wrong, which is terrible. You can correct that.

The plane only got 100 feet off the air at the end of the runway, and it hit wind shear during a tropical storm and it just dropped into a suburb and it killed eight people on the ground, including children and caused a cataclysm.

GTR: Incredible. And thus began a conveyor belt of phone calls and discussions with different people from Pan Am How helpful were Pan Am?

PG: Well, it became a very corporate experience, and the more it went on, the worse it got. I was told, "We will ring you back," having given me this terrible news. And I hugged my grandmother, we recited the 23rd Psalm, and I had to then tell my sister. And then the worst part was to go around to my other grandmother, who lived several streets away, whom I knew would have no knowledge of this because she didn't really listen to the radio or watch the television much and have to tell her that her only son was now dead, her only child. That was a terrible moment.

Hardest thing I've ever had to do, I think. She really never recovered.

But Pan Am said, "We'll ring you back in 20 minutes." They rang me back and they said, "We need you to come to New Orleans immediately to identify the bodies." I said, "Well, of course." They only offered me the one ticket. I couldn't bring my sister and she had to stay home and look after the grandmothers and deal with everything else. Off I went. I'd never left the country, I was 25, and it was a terrible experience. Imagine getting on a plane after you've just lost your two parents on a plane-

GTR: Oh, my God.

PG: Getting on a plane or planes to fly from Adelaide to Melbourne. I didn't even have a passport. We had to get an emergency passport in Melbourne, then go from Melbourne to Sydney. Then Sydney/Hawaii, Hawaii/Los Angeles, Los Angeles/Houston, Houston/New Orleans. And once there, I discovered, to my absolute horror, that there was no need to identify the bodies because when that happens the identification is forensic, it's mainly dental. They're piecing together bits of body and it's dental charts that are needed and that it was all about compensation.

And my first meeting with the Pan Am lawyers-.. was not even we're sorry. It was, "Well, no, there's no need. We don't require you to identify your parents' bodies," even though that's the reason I was taken there, "But here's a check for \$10,000 and if you sign this, you can go home." And so it went and it was pretty awful.

GTR: Yes, there's a detail of that in the book, and-

PG: And you'd never meet the same lawyers twice. Every day you'd meet with lawyers and every day I'd say, "I'm signing nothing," because I'd been advised to. And every day there'd be a different amount. The next day it was 20,000, and then it went back to 10,000. "What happened to the 20,000?" "Oh, we didn't tell you that." On and on it went.

GTR: And were they annoyed at your resilience?

PG: Well, it becomes a corporate response. It's not about grief, it's not about people, it's about what is it going to cost them? And that went on for some time. That makes no difference because the money, it's blood money so it makes no difference, really.

GTR: That's right. Well, it's not going to bring back anyone. What did it mean to you, Peter, not to have the chance to say goodbye to your parents?

PG: Terrible, because I was living only one street away from my parents, and I didn't even know they'd left the country. I was so caught up with what I was doing, directing a play so I never had the chance to say goodbye. In a way, the book, which is a slim book, 82 pages, is a chance to say a last long goodbye, I suppose.

GTR: And that explains or helps explain to me, at least, the flowing lyrical nature of the prose almost. It's just something that is a delight to read, whether it's at the end of the day with a martini or in the middle. It's just beautiful. What was it like living in Woodville in the '80s?

PG: Well, I knew nothing else. Yes. See, I don't like writing. You do, I think, Greg. You see, you're a poet as well and a Collingwood fan, I'll give you that. See, I don't like writing, which is odd because I've earned at least some of my income as a writer, Sunday Mail columnist for 33 years and The Advertiser before that. But I don't like writing. As Dorothy Parker said, "I don't like writing, but I like having written." I love finishing something, but I envy writers such as yourself who actually enjoy sitting down and writing something, I don't. I suppose-

GTR: Was this easier though, to write?

PG: Well, no writing is easy for me, but it-

GTR: It seems to flow to me. It's like a flow of consciousness.

PG: Well, thank you. Yes. It's a very personal piece and I think it's- You asked a question, I've forgotten the question.

GTR: What was it like living in Woodville in the '80s?

PG: Well, we'll come to that. It was interesting to remember, and I suppose I was exercising a certain grief. I think the book has done well because I think, and I hadn't thought about this when I was writing it, but I think we live in a time of grief. Everybody grieves. Grief used to be very private. Not in the 19th century, the Victorians, and I don't mean where you come from, but the Queen Victorians were very dishonest about sex, but very honest about grief.

They grieved very publicly. I think as a society in the 20th century, we grief became very private.

Even in my time, women didn't go to funerals, I remember. Men went to funerals, women stayed home and wept into their lace handkerchief. I think since, is it Princess Diana's death? I think it opened up grief. Now, for example you have so many eulogies at funerals, perhaps too many.

GTR: And it's even on social media.

PG: Exactly. And I think because of all this grief, I think this book is locked into that, because grief is a human condition that we all experience but we don't share.

You and I could lose a friend, a mutual friend, and we would both grieve differently. We're grieving, but we're grieving personally. And what was it like in Woodville in the...? Well, it was-

GTR: But just back to the grief briefly. That's so true. And for me, I don't know if I'm a fan of the public, at least on social media, where you have people you don't know saying they've lost someone. I don't know if they expect... I don't know.

PG: Different cultures grieve in different ways. I think the huge cry, the way the Irish keen, the way... I lived in Turkey for three years and I got off a bus one day and I went to a very public square about to get a ferry with thousands of people.

And as I got off the bus, I noticed everybody was standing still, and most people were standing still in their spot weeping. And I thought, what's going on? And a very famous singer called Zeki Z-E-K-I, Muren M-U-R-E-N, who was beloved by the nation, a kind of Liberace figure, had died. And there was this enormous outpouring. I think we saw it with Barry Humphries-

GTR: Yes.

PG: ... and we see it with Shane Warne, where the nation stops and thinks, well, this was a great person. Not Shane Warne, in my opinion, but certainly Humphries. This was a great person who gave us so much for 60 years and we will stop and think about him and remember him. And that, I think, is healthy.

GTR: Well said. And the grieving is particularly beautiful when shared honestly.

PG: I think because we live in such a time of enormous change, everything is changing all the time so we're grieving what didn't change. We're grieving the past, basically.

GTR: That's right. And beholden to the memory because that can't be changed, I guess. And Woodville in the '80s was probably the same as it was in the '70s and '60s.

PG: Well, we were a bit above working class people. My father had started life on the assembly line of Phillips. My grandfather had worked for 47 years at GMH, at Woodville. I grew up at Woodville Primary school, Findon High. The GMH all ran our lives.

GTR: That's right, my grandmother lived in Beverley and we actually lived with Nana Ross for a while after mum and dad split up. We were there for about six months and went to school in the area too so I understand the area. You detail your family well in the book, Peter, your family's characters and their impact on you. Brian, your father, did he teach you to love movies like the Marx Brothers?

PG: Yes he did. That's my greatest memory of him or really anything. He loved the Marx Brothers, my father. And I remember being woken up, perhaps I was seven or eight, in the middle of the night, what seemed like the middle of the night, it might have been 11 o'clock. I was wearing my little flannelette pajamas, he put me in my dressing gown and my Hush Puppie slippers and propped me up in front of the television, the black and white television, to watch the Marx Brothers in Duck Soup, which is a classic movie.

GTR: That's right. It's one of the best.

PG: And we sat there, my father and I, rolling around with laughter, and it was a wonderful moment shared.

GTR: Yeah. I guess your mother Margaret was bright and played sport, and sensitive, but a lousy cook. Do you share any of those traits?

PG: Terrible cook.

GTR: Was she?

PG: Well, I'm no cook at all. She hated cooking, so didn't teach my sister and I how to cook and so we're both hopeless. But she was a very loving woman and an intelligent woman. I always felt rather bitter about that, that there was many generations of men, and especially women, who were intelligent enough to go to a university but weren't intelligent enough to get a Commonwealth Scholarship, and their parents couldn't afford for them to go.

And I'll never forget a key memory with my mother in '71, so I was 15, I was 14 or 15, saying, "You've got to work harder at school because we want you to go to university. You've got to get a Commonwealth Scholarship. If you don't, I'll have to work another job to get you to go. That's what we want you to do." And also the pressure was to go to university because that kept you out of the draft for the conscription, which should never have happened and must never happen in our nation again. But then of course, miraculously, the great Whitlam was elected and we could all go for free, which was the greatest, I think, apart from the pension, the age pension, I think the greatest social initiative in the history of this nation.

GTR: I believe so. I think if you think about it, Peter, the value of education. And so it may be free, but it gives so much back to the community.

PG: Yeah, exactly. Absolutely. And it gave opportunity to all, freely.

GTR: That's right. Of all your grandparents, you were closest to Ellie. What impact did Ellie have on you and did you share her fear of the ocean and how did that fear of the ocean come about for Ellie?

PG: She was raised in Stockport in the mid-north, and they didn't swim and she couldn't swim, she had a fear of the ocean. She didn't see the ocean until she was 12, they came down in a buggy or in a bullock train probably and she saw the beach at Kirkcaldy, which doesn't even exist anymore, between Henley and Grange. Took one look at it and burst into tears.

But she was a good woman. We were very close. She was 60 years and two days older than me, and we were very similar people and we were very close. She was a very good woman, very strong Christian woman. And I admired her faith. I don't necessarily share it, but I admired it enormously. It was very sustaining for her in her great time of need.

GTR: That's right. Yes. You detail that in the book too. And I guess also in the book, one of the things I guess about In the Air of an Afternoon Almost Past is the memories. And for those of a similar age group, what about the brick of AMSCOL ice cream, Neapolitan?

Tell us your memories of that, because of course a lot of people around the same age share that. That was beautiful.

PG: Well, on payday, on Friday night, we'd have a brick of AMSCOL ice cream. Now it was either, I think, vanilla or Neapolitan.

And the Neapolitan was more popular with the chocolate swirl.

GTR: Always sold out.

PG: Yes. And they came, it was like a brick and it was in cardboard.

GTR: That's right. Beautiful memories.

PG: That was a payday treat. A brick of AMSCOL ice cream.

GTR: And your first TV, a Kreisler black and white. That sounds pretty...

PG: K-R-E-I-S-L-E-R, Kreisler with a K. Yes. I remember when it came into the house with great excitement. "Don't sit too close."

GTR: No, that's right. We were told the same thing.

PG: "Radiation."

GTR: That's right. But it didn't stop you having chocolates. Your father would get a block of chocolate or something?

PG: On a Sunday night with the Sunday night movie, he'd go down to Mickens Deli and come back with a family size block of Cadbury chocolate. That was a big deal.

GTR: One of the things about your going to New Orleans to "identify" the remains of your parents, you open one thing there with the pungent sweet magnolias were everywhere. And this is in the French... "How beautiful the French Quarter," and Rob was there to help you too. Can you explain it just a little bit, because you paint such a beautiful vivid picture in the book about your experience in New Orleans and your gravitating towards the arts there. Can you tell us a bit about Rob's help and what...?

PG: Rob Cusenza was an actor I was working with. We were great friends, he was my best friend and still is. And he was on a delayed honeymoon with his wife when this happened to me. And he was contacted by a mutual friend. And when I got to New Orleans, the Pan Am people said, "Well, why didn't you bring anyone with you?" And I said, "Well, that wasn't offered." And they said, "Well, was there anyone who you'd like to bring with you?" And I said, "Well, what about my friend Rob Cusenza?" He was contacted in Zurich and they flew him to New Orleans. He interrupted his honeymoon, and later they tried to charge us for his airfares.

He stayed with me for a couple of days, and he was the one who said, "Wait a minute, we're sitting here, you have to meet with the lawyers once a day. You're waiting to identify the body," which I wasn't, I was just waiting to claim remains, and he said, "Here we are, we've always wanted to come here and we're in a great city, let's go and investigate the French Quarter." And we did. Later, I was criticized for this by the Pan Am lawyers. There was a piece run about all the next of kin who'd come from all around the world in the Times-Picayune, the famous New Orleans newspaper-

GTR: A photo of you or something.

PG: ... and a photo, and it said that I worked in the theater. And here's the kindness of strangers, every theater and cinema management in New Orleans contacted me because by then the community knew in which

hotel we were staying, at the Sheraton Airport Hotel, and they left messages saying, "You're welcome to come to any of our shows or sessions or movies." And I did. At night I would go and see plays and films because sitting in a cinema or a theater, I felt safe. And I was criticized. They would follow me and report where I was going. It was dreadful.

But the worst of it was I was in the Sheraton Airport Hotel with the other next of kin with whom I was not allowed to speak.

GTR: You detail that.

PG: Yes. Ridiculously. And I could see the crash site a couple of K's away from my window, and I knew where it was, I could see it, but Pan Am wouldn't allow me to go there. And then one day the phone rang and I answered it in the hotel room, and this man said, "I'm the secretary of the Archbishop of New Orleans. He wishes to speak with you." And I said, "Oh, okay." And I thought, what do you call an archbishop? And then I remembered, oh, you're Grace, because I'm... Anyway.

His Grace came on and he said he was terribly sorry and would I understand how grieved the entire city was? I said, "Thank you." And he said, "How can I help you?" And I said, "But I'm not a Catholic, you're Grace." And he said, "I didn't ask you that." He said, "How can I help you?" And I said, "Well, I'd love to go to the crash site," because anyone who's lost anyone violently in a car crash or that sort of thing, you're don't really believe it until you see the instrument of death. And I knew that people had been killed on the ground, and I wanted to see the crash site. I wanted to see the emergency service workers and thank them. And I said, "Pan Am won't let me go there." He said, "What?" He said, "Just a minute, I'll ring you back." 10 minutes later, he said, "Pan Am's sending a car for you, it will be downstairs in 10 minutes."

GTR: Such is the power.

PG: I said, "What did you do?" He said, "Easy, I rang my contact in Pan Am and I said, we've got a grieving Australian next of kin and you won't take him to the crash site." He said, "Unless you do so," he said, "I will now ring ABC, CBS, NBC and the Times-Picayune, and every radio station in New Orleans. It was a lesson in media.

And so I was able to go there and see the houses that had been damaged, talk to people who'd lost children and loved ones on the ground, talk to the emergency service workers, see the bits of the plane.

GTR: That must've been an incredible experience.

PG: It was horrifying, but it was also cathartic because it made it final. And I was able to thank those emergency service workers and that was a good experience, really.

GTR: Yeah. That would've been something else. I imagine it would've been quite a stunning experience to actually see the crash and where your parents' lives had ended, I guess, Peter.

PG: Yes, exactly. Exactly.

GTR: I'll mention the names Verna and Leo. How do you pronounce it?

PG: Weisgerber.

GTR: I thought so. I thought so. And their love of Mintiesu. Now what's about that?

PG: Word gets round and whilst I was en route, which took two days to get to New Orleans and five different flights, a connection was established with a cousin of mine in Perth. And someone in the family... I don't know. Someone he knew called Verna had married an American sailor in the Second World War. The way they did, it was a war bride. She'd married Leo Weisgerber and she found me, incredibly, and was very helpful to me. However, when Rob and I said, "We're going into the French Quarter," she panicked and said, "Oh, it's dangerous, don't go." And we thought, how dangerous can it be?

She was a panic merchant, tiny little woman with flaming red hair, with a southern accent, even though she'd come from Perth. We thought, well, it's one of the most touristy places in the world. How unsafe can it be?

In we went in a taxi. We get out into the French Quarter for the first time, Rob and I, it's in the middle of the day, and we get out of the taxi and we're crossing Bourbon Street, I think, on a zebra crossing, and we're halfway across the road and someone grabs me and spins me around. And I'm thinking, I'm being mugged. On top of everything else, I'm being mugged.

GTR: Verna was right.

PG: Three steps into my visit to the French Quarter I'm being mugged. Verna was right. And this woman said, "Peter Goers." And it was Leona Gay who was an actress I knew in Adelaide who'd just married the former, they were 60, but she'd married the former manager of Channel 9 in Adelaide, Bill Davies, and they were on a world tour honeymoon. And they'd read about me being there, but didn't know how to contact me. There you are, small world.

GTR: Yeah. How beautiful those experiences do happen. Now, talking

of small things, but perhaps important things, Snowy the dog, your parents' dog. What was your relationship with Snowy prior to your parents' death and then after?

PG: Oh, well, Snowy. Now, we had various dogs growing up and we'd had a Corgi/Kelpie cross called Sarge that had been run over. We had a Kelpie that turned. Kelpies can turn. Turned on each of us, and finally turned on my mother. She was the last he turned on because she was feeding him. But then, anyway, I wasn't living at home at that point, but my mother saw an ad in the paper for people giving away a Samoyed/Kelpie cross. And she went to see this dog, and it was then five, and it had been raised by this young couple from Tasmania who had been touring around Australia in a caravan. And they'd had four children in five years, and they had four children under five, and a beautiful dog in a caravan. And they said, "We just can't keep the dog." And with tears rolling down their face and the faces of the children, they gave this dog to my mother. And the dog was called Snowy, Snowy the Wonder Dog. It was the most divine dog in the history of dogs. And because it had been raised in a caravan and a car, it was obsessed by going in cars. It loved going in cars the whole time and it rode perfectly. Gorgeous dog. A Samoyed is a smiling dog, it smiles. And my mother loved that dog. Well, of course, when she died, I inherited this dog. And on my return from New Orleans, the dog was grieving as dogs do grieve. And I loved that dog.

GTR: How long did Snowy grieve for?

PG: Oh, weeks. And then that dog was mine and it was like... Anyway, because it loved the car, it'd go with me wherever I went. I was working at the Festival Centre, it would come and sit under my desk. I'd be rehearsing plays, it'd sit there in the theater. Everybody loved Snowy. Then years later, Snowy was about 11, and Snowy had kidney cancer, and Snowy would sleep on the bed, wet the bed every night.

I loved that dog. You'd get up and just change all the bedding every night. And then one night, the dog fortunately wasn't in much pain and was still wanting to go in the car, this dear, wonderful, smiling dog. And I went to visit a friend of mine in Rose Park, and he'd keep the front door open, the dog would just come in and out at will. And after about 20 minutes, we said, "Where's Snowy?" Never saw that dog again. It vaporized.

GTR: What?

PG: It vaporized. You know how they go away to die. It had obviously just

wandered off and gone into a culvert or something and died, never saw it again. And then flash forward-

GTR: Goodness.

PG: ... many years, and I was visiting Istanbul in Turkey for the first time. And I had a bath, a Turkish bath at Çemberlitaş, which is a famous Turkish bath, on the Saturday night. I came back to my hotel down the Hippodrome, and there's a lot of cafes down the Hippodrome. And it was about nine o'clock at night and this young Turkish man sang out to me as I walked past, "Hey, infidel, would you like an ice cream?" Which I thought was very funny. And that was the only English he had, I think. And I laughed and I said, "Yes, this infidel would like an ice cream and you can have one with me."

We sat there because his cafe was closing and we had an ice cream, and then we cafe hopped down the strip as each cafe closed, and we ended up down by the Bosphorus with all these Turkish waiters, his mates. We might've been smoking hashish. And at dawn I went back to the Hippodrome, and I'm sitting in the Hippodrome after this wonderful

night, and I'm looking across at the beautiful Blue Mosque and the actual crescent moon was superimposed exactly behind one of the crescent moons on one of the minarets of the Blue Mosque. And at that moment, the Azan sounded Allah Akbin. And then all these people, men and boys mainly, started to emerge out of the back streets onto the Hippodrome to go for the first prayer of the day at the Blue Mosque. And as they passed and went in, at that moment a dog trotted across the Hippodrome, a Samoyed dog. And it was Snowy. And I sang out, I said, "Snowy." And the dog turned to me and smiled and trotted off. And I thought, I'm meant to be here. And a couple of years later, I returned to Istanbul and stayed there for some years.

GTR: That's absolutely beautiful, Peter. And certainly memories of Snowy and of your parents and the loss and the grieving so honestly and articulately spelled out, and once again, how poetically beautiful it is as a book. In the Air of an Afternoon Almost Past, Peter, A memoir of loss. We thank you for your time at the ABC, we thank you for being the voice of Adelaide for so many years and speaking up on matters that a lot of people won't

speak. You're quite the most unique broadcaster in the country, I feel.

PG: I'm an acquired taste, or I was, because I've now retired from the ABC. Graham Cornes, the footballer, if you interviewed him, you should, and Vietnam veteran. He said to me early on in my 20 stint with the ABC, he said, "I think it's marvelous the way you invite people into the studio to interview you." I suppose that's my style. But listen, you know this Greg T. Ross, that as Australians we should be judged by our treatment of veterans, of veterans, also Aboriginal people, also all kinds of minorities, but particularly veterans. Because what we did to the Vietnam veterans, the way we blamed them for the war must never happen again and will not happen again. But that was a huge sacrifice that they made for that whole thing.

GTR: A lot of Australians didn't agree with that war. And of course, Peter, as you so rightfully put it, that frustration misappropriately directed at the veterans.

PG: Exactly. And that must never happen again. But good onto you, Greg T. Ross and The Last Post, which I hope never sounds. ■



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Bushfire

On an early 2005 summer's morning in the Adelaide foot hills Mabel stood a solitary figure amid the smouldering ruins of what had once been their family home. In the dawn light the blackened landscape, now eerily silent without the usual chorus of bird sounds that greeted the break of day there, had an eerie dystopian quality.

She had arrived there early because she wanted to enjoy the cool of the morning before the blazing heat of the day to come – and to be alone with her thoughts.

They'd lost everything. It was the loss of irreplaceables that was the worst. Family photographs. Sporting trophies. School reports. All those happy family memories up in smoke.

Not that her children were around much these days. They were adults now. Their two daughters were married with children of their own and were living in Adelaide while the other - the eldest boy Jim - had remained doggedly single – and continued a footloose life back packing around the world while he 'found himself'.

They'd all been in touch for the Christmas just before the fire. Nice to make the contact though family life did seem such a mess these days. One of her married children was in the middle of acrimonious divorce proceedings. And the other marriage, too, was showing ominous signs of failing.

'Not like it was in my day', she thought. 'Something's gone badly wrong somewhere. Maybe Jim has got it right after all. Better to steer clear of marriage and kids all together and avoid the aggro'.

She felt a slight pang of guilt. If only she'd had got around to clearing those leaves from the guttering. Harold, her late husband, would have seen to it.

She could see the entry he would have placed in one of the little note books he used to keep organized: 'Clean gutters - asap - by not later than December 1'.

Sometimes he'd seemed a bit too organized she thought. A place for everything and everything in its place was Harold. The study where he hid away for much of their lives was always super organized. And he was always checking to see that things had been done. That doors were locked, or lights switched off. Certainly he was well suited to his vocation as an accountant she had always thought. But yes, he was indeed a bit too organized. A bit neurotic about it all.

What was that neurosis again? Ah, yes: OCD they called it. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. She had long wondered whether that's what he had. But nothing had ever been diagnosed.

She stood in a state of shocked numbness surveying the damage. While the general impression was one of total charred destruction the fire had been uneven in its effect. The roof of the house had collapsed but the walls and other solid structures were still standing. Within the main structure here and there things had survived. An item of furniture.

A painting only partially destroyed. The washing machine blackened but still serviceable.

From their elevated position they had always been able to see part of the city by looking down on its southern suburbs. Now the city was shrouded by a dirty haze. Dust and smoke mixed. The dust top soil from the state's northern hinterland.

Armageddon, she thought. She and Harold were devout Catholics and the scene of destruction on that day had a nightmarish biblical feel to it in her mind.

It was somehow linked in her mind with the gloomy aspects of Australian life and the world situation that had been looming for some time. The 9/11 attacks, Asylum seekers, the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, the Bali bombing. To her it seemed a kaleidoscope of trouble after the settled stability and security of the first couple of post World War 11 decades she had become accustomed to and was more or less comfortable with.

For her in 2005 the whole world seemed at sixes and sevens and her bushfire catastrophe seemed part of that.

She looked around at the smoking remains of what was once her husband's study. A plaster grill in the upper wall had shattered with the heat. Something - she couldn't quite make it out - was just visible lodged in the ventilation gap. She could see one corner of what appeared to be some sort of metal box.

Her curiosity was aroused. A metal box lodged in a ventilation gap? What was going on there?

She stood on a metal chair which was only slightly buckled by the heat and able to take her weight and reached up to the grill. The box was still very warm but not so much that she couldn't handle it.

With some difficulty she forced the box open. Inside were about a dozen letters still in their opened envelopes. They were all yellowing with age but untouched by the fire. A brown mark around the centre of the outer envelopes suggested that they had once been held together by a rubber band. She quickly thumbed through them. They were addressed to her husband at his work address in the same thin elegant handwriting. All bore a 1965 date stamp.

She opened one of the letters. Initially the letter stuck to the palm of her hands. The day was already warming up and she was starting to perspire.

It began: 'My dearest Harry, I cannot begin to tell you how much I miss you. I'm still nuts about you. Do you still feel the same way about me ...'

On reading those first couple of sentences she was taken aback and stopped reading. She averted her eyes from the letters – afraid to read on. But she was too incredulous to be shocked. Her husband had been a quiet and cautious character who had worked all his working life with one of the

A SHORT STORY BY TERRY HEWTON

state's pastoral companies. It was back in the days when such institutions were rock solid. To those around him he had appeared conservative to the point of dullness not only in his work but in his personal and family life as well.

Despite the distress it was causing her she was compelled to continue. She read on until she had read (and in some cases re-read) all of them.

They were all in similar vein: chatty, romantic, frivolous - and above all intimate - in their tone.

In one letter: 'Thanks for the chocolate creams. I ate them all in one night. It was the nicest birthday present of all. Won't do much for my figure though. I'll get fat and won't fit into those black silk stockings you gave me for Christmas. ...'

And in another: 'Can you get away to the Semaphore Palais at around 7 in the evening next Saturday? We could have a drink together before doing some dancing. It'll be a hot night and still light then so maybe even a sea swim first if you're game for that. We should be safe there. None of my crowd will be there on that night though I will double check with Dorothy to make sure. If you can't make the Palais what say we go and see that Dr Zhivago film at the Regent Theatre during the week - say on Wednesday? ...'

Here and there the letters had a slightly guilty tone: 'Knowing how much you love me I do so worry about the awful effect it would have on your wife and kids if they ever found out ...'

Mabel breathed in deeply. Mid-morning and the summer heat was rising.

So, they'd obviously met somewhere and had struck up a relationship. It was clear from the letters that that she was from interstate and the letters were filling the gap between visits to Adelaide that summer.

Silly bugger, she thought. He could never throw anything out. He should have thought of the possibility of snuffing it suddenly before he had the chance of tying up loose ends such as this. Maybe he just couldn't bear to destroy the one bit of colour in his life she thought resentfully.

I suppose he thought what I didn't know wouldn't hurt me. Who was she anyway - this trollop? Some floozy he met at an office party? Not that the pastoral company for which he worked had such parties.

She was mystified. He kept this under his hat alright she reflected bitterly. There were no outward signs.

Or were there?

Come to think of it there was that time when he was behaving oddly. She had vaguely assumed it was triggered by the fact that he had been passed over for promotion. He had taken that badly. All those years of slavish duty and loyalty only to be pipped at the post by someone younger. Someone with more drive and initiative they said.

Now she wondered whether it was also linked with his longer term disappointment at missing out on war service as well.

Medically unfit. She knew he had felt it badly at a time when a heroic perception of Australia's wars was in full flight. While up to a point he enjoyed the post war movies they went as a family to see in the 1950s and 60s she was aware they also struck a deeply jarring note with him.

She knew what his brooding silences meant and she, too, kept it to herself. For his sake.

Her surmise was correct. The promotion failure, occurring as that did in 1965, had only compounded a deep seated feeling of failure that had started in 1941 when he failed the army medical and which dogged him all his life.

She double checked the dates of the clandestine letters. All of them in the late summer of 1965. Yes, about the time of the promotion thing. Poor bloke, she thought again. So he had his bit of adventure after all.

The letters spanned a period of just a couple of months or so. In the summer/early autumn of that year. If the relationship ended with the last of those letter it was just a fling.

With this thought her jealousy began to subside.

She sat down at the unburnt edge of the kitchen table and laid out the letters in chronological order. (They were all day dated.)

God it was hot. The late morning summer sun bore down on her through the smoke haze. She re-read the letters again and felt slightly better about them despite the discomfort of the summer heat. The letters were still sticking to her sweaty hands.

'It was all froth and bubble' she said aloud addressing the letters. 'I was his intellectual companion' she reassured herself silently. 'And by that time he wouldn't have been able to get it up anyway', she mused to herself. 'It would have had to have been a platonic relationship.'

Harold was a decade older than Mabel and by then was in his mid-fifties.

The thought eased her pain even further.

'Still, the novelty could have given that erectile problem an aphrodisiac shot in the arm', she thought bitterly, and the jealousy flared up again.

But not for long. As she gazed out over the charred landscape in the foreground and middle distance - and the murky haze to the west over the city in the far distance, it began to subside again.

It was now just after midday - the hottest part of the day - but despite this she drove herself forward in contemplation of Harold's letters.

Certainly Harold and Mabel had long ceased physical love making by then though they continued to share the marital bed with plenty of mostly platonic, very affectionate, physical contact right up until his demise. And that had been tinged, she recalled, with more than a touch of mutual eroticism from time to time.

Years earlier she and Harold had enjoyed their youthful sexuality together messy and inept though that had been.

'Our sex life was buggered up by our puritanical Catholic upbringing Mabel darling' he had joked with her at the time.

'All that guilt and sin they dished up to us. We never stood much chance of the full box and dice sexually did we my dear'.

Despite his outward moral rectitude religious sexual repression had given Harold a puckish, devilish, sexual sense of humour. And Mabel, too, although she maintained a facade of outrage at what she called 'off colour' humour, secretly enjoyed it as long as it didn't go too far.

She smiled at the memory.

Over the years, gradually, carnal sexual desire had transformed itself into a very close ongoing mainly non-sexual physical intimacy and that, and their strong intellectual and temperamental compatibility, had made for a very happy marriage for over half century up until the time of Harold's death.

They had a strong, enduring, affection for one another and well understood each other's needs and desires.

She remembered fondly how, when he was agitated, she used to twirl his hair into a single strand and continue twirling it to relax him.

Tears welled up in her eyes at the memory.

'We had the best of it, Harold dear – you and I'. Again, she spoke aloud addressing Harold's spiritual presence in the Heavenly afterlife. (They both believed in the existence of Heaven and fully expected to meet each other there 'on the other side'.)

She continued the train of thought in her own mind. 'What we had was absolutely the real thing. Sure, there were ragged edges to it all. Our whole generation had their lives turned upside down by the Great Depression in the 1930s and then World War 11 and our family was no different'.

For Mabel and her contemporaries outwardly things were tidy and respectable. But she knew that in reality every family had their hidden scandals - their warts-and-all blemishes. Closet infidelities, extra marital pregnancies, venereal disease. No family escaped such embarrassments though they pretended otherwise.

And their family – like all families – kept these unsavoury aspects under wraps. In line with the custom of the times they chose not to dwell on life's shortcomings and to just 'get on with it'.

After the trauma of World War 11 there was an overwhelming need for stability in family life and wider society and, in line with this, she and Harold had brought their three children up in a loving, caring, way without letting uncomfortable truths get in the way.

In a flash memories of her childhood during the depression and young adulthood during the war started to come back to her. And with it a better, less stressful, perspective on the newly found letters.

'And, of course, I have my own little secret', she said aloud in a furtive whisper.

Just before she met Harold she had a brief and passionate fling with a married Australian soldier just before he deployed to Singapore and the ill-fated Malayan Campaign. That relationship ended when he died in a POW camp in Japan.

She had never spoken of this to her family. She knew in her heart that Harold was her true love –but she also knew there was a risk that he might think himself second best if her extra marital affair had come to light.

When she fell in love with and married Harold she was strongly aware that Bill's Malayan deployment was the kind of war adventure that Harold had yearned for and had missed all his life with her. Knowledge of the affair would have been doubly hurtful for him she knew.

And there was the impropriety of having an affair with a married man.

For these reasons she kept her extra marital affair a secret for the rest of her life.

She had kept the letters he had sent her from Malaya though. As a 20 year old she had been swept off her feet by this soldier – his name was Bill - and had got to know him in an ecstatic succession of romantic assignations in the weeks leading up to his departure for overseas service. Bill was then 25 and full of excitement for his forthcoming military adventure 'somewhere overseas'. Where he was going, and when, was very hush hush then – something which added a degree of frisson to their infatuation with one another.

She was shocked and saddened when the news of his death in Japan reached her by a circuitous route in Australia. But it was a superficial grief she knew. She hadn't been with Bill long enough for anything more. Her grief was relatively mild because she had already realized that her fatuous liaison with him in those few, heady, pre-embarkation weeks was just that – a fun time but little more than this.

She gazed westward in the dying summer light and sighed. A murky sunset was visible in the far distance marking the horizon beyond the western beach side suburbs

'It's not such a big deal in the scheme of things', she told herself aloud.

A flock of brightly coloured parrots broke the silence in a frenzy of screeching. They were in a gum tree beside the house. The tree had miraculously escaped the fire. The natural setting was already starting to regenerate.

It was much cooler now and with that she experienced a curious sense of renaissance. She'd been there the whole day alone with her memories.

The waning light – and a cooling gully breeze – at last gave her some relief from the heat.

A calming reverie come over her. The letters – the reflections they had prompted – were a sort of epiphany enabling her to see aspects of her past life in a new light.

She picked up Harold's letters tenderly as though handling a sacred object of some kind, and, under her breath, as if speaking the last rites, said:

'Well, all water under the bridge now. Sleeping dogs and all that. What the family doesn't know won't hurt it.

She dropped the dozen letters onto some smouldering embers and watched them burn. ■



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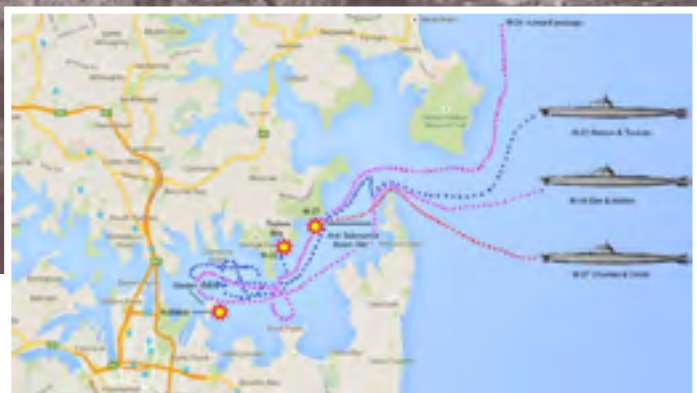
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Lest we forget

On the night of the 31st of May, and the morning of the 1st of June, 1942 war once again came to Sydney Australia, in particular Sydney Harbour.

This was not the first time we, Australia had felt the threat of an invader, the Japanese airforce had earlier in that year, February 1942 bombed the towns of Darwin and Broome, causing massive damage and loss of life. The attack on Sydney Harbour came in the form of a Japanese midget submarine assault.

Three midget submarines were released from a large mother submarine to then courageously make their way into our (we thought) protected harbour.

Within hours our peaceful serene harbour exploded in a naval battle. The prize the Japanese submarines were after, was the American heavy destroyer USS Chicago. Two of our naval ships were also to be targeted, these were the HMAS Canberra and Adelaide, all at mooring.

We should have possibly been more prepared, as a similar attack by them, during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, a few months earlier was successful.

The Sydney harbour campaign started at 6.30PM with the three midget subs entering the harbour at 20 minute intervals. Sub (1) travelled in the wake of the 7.30PM Manly ferry heading from Manly to the city, then moved into another channel where it was caught in a security net. Around 9.50PM the navy discovered its whereabouts and gave it hell.

By 10.30PM this sub was unable to escape, the Japanese submariners then blew their sub up, just off Clifton Gardens, courageous men.

TONY BONNER AM

Sub (2) around 10.30PM made its way from the heads into the main harbour. This sub submerged then surfaced, to submerge once again, being fired on by the USS Chicago. The sub also survived depth charging, and was able to fire off two of its torpedoes, one of these hitting HMAS Kuttabul, hitting this ship at the waterline tragically killing 21 Australian Naval personal. War had certainly come to our shores.

This number (2) sub then escaped Sydney Harbour around 2AM heading north.

Damaged by canon or depth charges this sub made it to a watery grave approximately 30 kms north of the harbour entrance, being discovered on the seabed in 2006. The grave site is an honoured war grave.

Sub (3) received the harshest of the action, chased all over the inner harbour, finally being trapped, and destroyed in Taylors Bay, near Bradley Head just after 5AM. This raid by the Japanese, and the loss of Australian Naval personal was not widely reported at the time. This was possibly done not to alarm the people of Sydney. This raid could have been far worse, the submarines had a total of six torpedoes, only two managed to be fired, one hitting the HMAS Kuttabul. Several homes and apartments in the Rose Bay area suffered damage by the deck cannons that the subs fired, these locations damaged by war are noted. This is a chapter of our country's history that is remembered each year at the North Head Memorial site. This remembrance ceremony reminds us yearly of the service our military forces stand, a post of protection to our country.

Lest we forget.



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Empowering Women: Shaping the Future

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The GEWO emerged in response to the critical needs of women facing oppression, poverty, and homelessness across both developed and developing regions globally. GEWO's mandate encompasses advocacy, education, innovation, and leadership. We are committed to generating funds and devising educational programs that instigate enduring change and catalyse a significant shift in societal attitudes towards women's treatment. Our holistic approach extends to providing comprehensive charitable services.

The GEWO includes men and women who share a fervent commitment to advancing women's empowerment and bettering humanity. GEWO offers a suite of services, including educational programs and advocacy initiatives, aimed at fostering a more inclusive

world. We strive to amplify women's voices and achieve empowerment outcomes spanning economic, health, and relational domains.

Our mission is visionary, harbouring aspirations for a brighter future for women who have been, or are currently, confronting challenges such as oppression, poverty, and homelessness. We recognise the complexity of oppression and are resolute in our goal to eradicate violence against women and femicide, focusing on generating positive outcomes for all, and steering the future towards a more equitable world.

Aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is our fervent hope that this vision will profoundly impact the lives of millions of women. This, in turn, benefits men and children, fostering a more balanced and just society.

The GEWO aims to produce GEWO TV and GEWO Magazine as free resources for women. You can see at the website www.gewoleadership.org the trailer to the TV Show and first edition of the magazine while additionally the

GEWO official launch and inaugural Symposium is being held on the 25th of November 2024 at Queensland Parliament House.

In a world striving for equality and justice, the role of empowerment, particularly for women, has never been more critical. As GEWO embarks on its ambitious journey, we stand at a pivotal crossroads. Our goals are clear, our mission is bold, and our commitment is unwavering.

Yet, the path to change is a collective journey — one that requires the unity of individuals, communities, and organisations worldwide.

This article is not just a call to action; it is an invitation to be part of a transformative movement that seeks to redefine the global landscape for women's empowerment, rights, and leadership.

My vision, fuelled by passion, conviction, and a steadfast commitment, is to witness significant progress towards equality within my lifetime — a world that every individual rightfully deserves.

ANNA MARIA LANG, FOUNDER

To support this cause through a donation or sponsorship you can visit our website at www.gewoleadership.org/donate



Brotherly Bonds

Twins Grant and Chris Wharton are thought to be the only twins to have served together on deployment with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Iraq. The Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC) is famous for the plume of emu feathers worn on their slouch hats.

Growing up in Gatton, QLD, twins Grant and Chris Wharton had a carefree childhood, keeping fit with early morning runs, playing sport, and exploring the surrounding bush with good mates.

Their games were typical of young men; lots of pretend soldier scenarios where the good blokes were courageous and much better shots than the weaker enemy who gave up all too quickly at the mere sight of an Aussie Digger.

Grant and Chris grew up knowing their maternal Grandfather, Lance Corporal Leonard Wicks of the 7th Division AIF, had survived as a Prisoner of War, and their paternal Grandfather, British Army Veteran, Vincent Wharton, awarded a British Empire Medal, and who had been part of the force which liberated Bergen-Belsen Concentration camp in 1945. The boys swimming coach, Kevin, had two Sons, Tim and Luke; Kevin had served for a while in the Royal Australian Navy.

Boyhood games became a reality when Tim joined the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) and Luke joined the Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC). Returning home on leave, Grant and Chris were impressed by the Andersen brother's fitness and confidence. Luke reckoned the Cavalry was the one to go for, and two weeks after completing Year 12 in 2000, aged 17, Grant and Chris joined up.

Sitting together on the bus to Kapooka for Recruit Training, they felt excitement mixed with nerves, and before alighting turned to each other, shook hands, and said, 'let's do this!' Rarely apart prior to joining, they were placed into different Platoons, with only the occasional opportunity to catch up and check how they were coping. The march-out parade was a proud moment, attended by their Parents Bob and Julie, Grandmother, Vera, and big Sister, Trisha.

Whilst completing their Initial Employment Training (IET's) at Puckapunyal, Victoria, they decided to 'mark' the occasion by getting tattoos. Unfortunately, the tattooist was not much of an artist. Fortunately, the decision to get back tattoos meant they were mostly spared from seeing the reminders of their youthful impulsiveness.

In July 2001, after completing IET's, they were posted to the 2nd Cavalry Regiment (2 CAV REGT). Before everyone got to know they were twins, they were often mistakenly told they should be somewhere else. Following a brief encounter with Luke, by then a senior soldier, they quickly learnt brotherhood bonds did not carry any privileges when one was a post trainee – you had to earn your place in the Regiment.

The next few years were all about hard training with time spent at Mount Bunday Training Area in Darwin

learning to cope with the extreme heat and the importance of safe, hard training. The training meant they were ready to deploy with Security Detachment 3 (SECDET 3), Baghdad, Iraq; Grant with 2 CAV in 2004.

Grant remembers a mixture of nerves, excitement and adrenaline whilst driving a 13-ton armoured vehicle through the packed streets of Baghdad to Mosul, and being under constant attack by rockets, RPGs, and mortars when living in the SECDET accommodation. Also, the first time an ASLAV had used its 25 mm main gun in combat, and engaging a mortar team that was consistently harassing the Green Zone. Chris also deployed in 2004 and remembers a fierce attack on the Al Kasik base in Northern Iraq when his Troop were under fire by rockets and mortar fire.

They managed to catch up when Chris' Troop arrived at Baghdad International Airport for a handover with Grant's Troop. They were placed in separate vehicles on Route Irish, then considered the most dangerous road in the world, so in the event of an attack one of them would have chance of surviving. They carried out induction training over the next few days and the twins celebrated their 21st Birthday together in the SECDET accommodation in the red zone; the locals arranged a cake and they drank fake beers. When the handover was complete, they shared a vehicle to Baghdad International Airport, and



Chris asked Grant if he wanted to be the 'operator', who stood up at the rear of the vehicle providing security with an F89 Machine Gun. Grant looked at him and grinned – what do you think? Grant completed three more deployments and Chris a total of three – between 2004 and 2008, with Chris qualifying as an ASLAV Crew Commander.

Chris was on deployment when their Mother, who was suffering from cancer, was in hospital and gravely ill. A telephone link was arranged, and he had the opportunity to tell her how much she was loved before she passed away; Grant was by her side to the end. Having met Vicki the love of his life by then, this was the catalyst for Chris deciding to leave the Army in 2008. Grant continues to serve and in December 2022 was promoted to Warrant Officer Class One. Chris is currently working for Translink, and according to Grant successfully organizes the work of his team along Army lines and is very popular with his 'troops'.

Grant and Chris presented their Dad, Bob, with a plaque, which included a photo of each of them and a list of their deployments. The plaque included an Australian Flag patch worn on operations, the Afghanistan Patch Grant wore on operations, a set of emu plums, the Rising Sun Badge, and the badge of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment with the motto 'Courage'.

The caption on the plaque reads 'Brothers in Arms'.

As for the Andersen brothers, Luke was Grant's Troop Sergeant in 2008 in Baghdad and Tim served with distinction within the RAA, prior to discharge.

Grant attributes family support - his wife Arina, his sister, Psychologist, Dr Trish Groth, and brother-in-law, Joel, with helping the twins adjust following each deployment, which takes its toll physically and mentally. Now that Grant and Chris are parents, they often reflect on how hard it must have been for their Dad to have both his boys deployed, occasionally at the same time.

Recently Grant has been working on developing policy to provide ongoing support for deployed personnel and policy to minimize, where possible, multiple operational rotations in quick succession. He is looking forward to his next posting as a Regimental Sergeant Major and training soldiers on the new Boxer platform, which will replace the ASLAV. He is extremely proud of the ADF's efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan and would recommend a career in the Army, particularly the Cavalry, to any young person.

Having acquired a few more tattoos since his first one in 2001, Grant also recommends finding a skilled artist before being permanently inked.



OPPOSITE PAGE: Chris and Grant celebrate their 21st Birthday in the SECDET Accommodation, Baghdad in 2004.

THIS PAGE: TOP: Then Warrant Officer Class 2 Grant Wharton, receiving the award for best Warrant Officer during his tenure at the 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) in 2020.

BOTTOM: The twins with their Father, Bob, who is wearing his Fathers British medals for his service in WW2.

MARY WHITING & GRANT WHARTON

Chris Gray

Greg speaks with Vasey RSL Care's Executive General Manager Veteran Services Chris Gray about the new V Centre. The V Centre Veteran Empowerment program combines a safe place to live with personalised wraparound support. It is a unique initiative in Australia providing transitional accommodation for up to 12 months combined with a tailored support program to enable you to address challenges and set you up for an independent life you value.

Greg T Ross: Chris Gray, general manager of Vasey RSL Care, welcome to The Last Post podcast, the magazine, the radio show, all of these things. And we're so pleased to have you and welcome you to the team. And thanks for being here, mate.

Chris Gray: Good on you, Greg. Yeah, no, it's a pleasure. Pleasure. I'm looking forward to it.

GTR: Yeah. Chris, The Last Post and Vasey RSL Care have a working relationship that goes back nearly a decade now, and we've both produced some good things over that time. It seems only natural to speak with you and find out some things not only about your life, but of course, what's happening at Vasey. But you have an interesting background: ADF, of course, what, around 17 years service or something? And then the regulars and reserves and peacekeeping. Tell us a bit about what you actually did, and where you come from, and some of the stories that you have for the broadcast.

CG: Yeah, no worries, Greg. I'm happy to share. Happy to share. Yeah, look, I did spend, it was just on 17 years in the regs, engineer. Started as a combat engineer. So as I explained to my civilian friends, it's a little bit like a battlefield laborer, or a bit of jack of all trades, if you like, as a combat engineer. So I'm building bridges, explosives, that sort of stuff.

At some point, I think three or four years into that, I applied to go and do my trade in the Army. So I went off down to Albury-Wodonga. I did my trade as a carpenter and joiner. And from there, it just ticked along. And for the next 12 or 13 years as a carpenter and joiner in the Army, towards the late '90s, we were quite busy. So there were quite a few trips here and there. Obviously, Timor and the Middle East, and a couple of peacekeeping trips. Well, back into Timor and where else? Actually, after the tsunami, which in 2005 was another interesting trip. But yeah, look, for those 17 years, I wouldn't have changed a thing. I loved every minute of it.

GTR: Isn't that fantastic? And a carpenter and a joiner, a wonderful blue-collar class thing that you've taken into the Army, and made the world a better place by your helping people. I think there was one story, Chris, and I heard this through the little birdie, that you'd actually helped to build a bridge in Papua New Guinea. Is that right? And what was the story behind that? I believe there'd been people losing their lives, trying to cross this river or something.

CG: Yeah, that's spot on, Greg. And I don't know where you're getting these little birdies from. They're good. They're good sources, too. Yeah, look, that was actually before I did my trade. I was part of the Resources Troop in 3 CER in Townsville. And being the early '90s, there wasn't a lot of action. There wasn't much happening, and there was a fair bit of training going on. And so anything to break the monotony of going to Shoalwater Bay, and to High Range for those people who have spent a bit of time in Townsville, I'd understand. But yeah, look, we were lucky enough to get a trip over to New Guinea up into the Highlands, around Lae, the Narobi River. The feedback was there were a number of local villages, the kids and parents, I suppose, losing their lives crossing this river when it was in flood.

For anyone who knows the wet season in New Guinea, it gets pretty heavy rain. So yeah, we had the opportunity to go over there and build this bridge as part of the support squadron and working with the trades. I think they actually cemented my decision to go and do my trade certificate within the Army. It was a fantastic job, a little suspension bridge. I think it was about 130, 140 meters long across this river. Fantastic job, just up working with the local PNGDF as well. There was, I think, a troop plus of those guys giving us a hand, and engaging with the local villages for ceremonies and openings, and lunches and dinners and all those different things.

GTR: Yeah. What was that like, Chris? Mixing with the locals and being able

to engage on that level, to feel part of that? And what was that like?

CG: For a young bloke from the country, what an eye-opener. I'd been in the Army for half a dozen years or something, not even. And to be shipped off over to New Guinea, and then up into the Highlands to see the way that these guys were still living, it was just amazing. And the joy, I think, just a simple bridge, putting it across this river. The joy and I guess, the difference that you can just make by doing such. I mean, it was a great project. It was a small project in the big scheme of things, but the difference those things make. And it was just amazing just to be a part of it, honestly. Over the journey, I think I really look back at that one and just think, "That was a fantastic opportunity for a young soldier to be involved in," and it shaped who I am, I reckon.

GTR: So how long did it take you to build the bridge, and were you engaging with the locals all the time you were doing this?

CG: We set up a little bit of a camp, so I guess they were pretty inquisitive, the locals. They would always be around. But generally speaking, no, it was a Sunday thing is where we went and engaged with those locals if we could. It was around the clock, 10 and 12-hour days, seven days a week. But we rotated and made sure everyone got an opportunity to go and engage. But no, I think that the whole project was about a five or six-week, I guess, project. It took us about that long. There was a little bit of a gap in the middle, where we got away for a couple of days whilst the concrete was curing, as they say. We were able to shoot down to Madang for a couple of days' R&R. That was quite good. A little bit of swimming, a little bit of diving, fantastic. But just a beautiful country, really nice people. Unbelievable. Unbelievable.

GTR: Wonderful experiences, Chris. And yes, well, it reinforces what many have said about the country itself and the people there. So these memories, these things that you've been through,

— INTERVIEW —



I must say that tradies and doing what you do are admired by a lot of people. I have this mate who's been in the public service, he just retired after about 40 years. And he said to me after a couple of beers one night, I said, "What are you happy with?"

"I just wish I'd been a tradie. I wish I'd been able to do something practical to help people, instead of pushing—"

CG: Well, yeah, and I guess being the son of a carpenter, it was destined, I think, supposedly, to go and do something like that.

But yeah, look, it does give you, I guess, a good feeling, being able to help. But I mean, yeah, look, you can help in a lot of different ways, too, so don't worry about that. You don't have to be a tradie to help out.

GTR: That's true, too. That's true, too. What about your experiences in East Timor and also, I guess, the Middle East? What about those experiences? Were they similar in character building? Just a brief, what were they like?

CG: Yeah, so INTERFET '99, I got called up as a Reo to go and reinforce. I was posted to 1 CER, and it was 3 CER who were in country, and they called up and needed an extra set of hands. So yeah, I was lucky enough to get a gig, and went over and was part of, again, the old unit, 25 Support Squadron 3 CER, and under Kev Vannon as the RSM. He was a fantastic fellow. But anyway, yeah, look, we did some really, really important work there. We provided some, I guess, low-level accommodation for our infantry guys.

On their return back out from out bush, they'd come back into the towns, and rest up and get ready to go again on their patrol. So we provided them with, I guess, basic creature comforts: a little bit of running water if we could, and a bit of shelter.

One of the big projects over there for the unit was to rebuild a bridge down at, I think it was Little Memo. It was right on the river, right on the border between East and West. And again, it was just an awesome job to be a part of rebuilding a church all the way through. It was completely destroyed. Well, all but completely destroyed. We had to re-roof, and all of the pews and everything that we had to rebuild. And again, a fantastic ceremony towards the end of that, well, towards the end of our deployment, but also the end of that project. Whole

community, unbelievable. The joy and the difference you can just make by simply just providing a gathering point. That church. They were quite, I guess, religious, generally speaking, the Timorese. To bring that church back to life and to see the joy that it brought the community, again, simple things, but fantastic. Life-changing.

GTR: Yeah, marvelous stuff, and being able to contribute to their needs in such a way. Also, obviously, leaving you with a good feeling. What a time to be over there, too. '99, you said?

CG: Yeah. Yes, under Sir Peter's guidance.

GTR: Yes, I tell you what, that would've been an experience and a half. Now, of course, with the peacekeeping itself, do you think it's something that's sometimes overlooked? Chris, do you think peacekeeping itself is overlooked? Because it is a great role that is played in peacekeeping.

CG: Yeah, look, I think for mine, I have it up there. I didn't go to Afghanistan. I was in Iraq, and I guess it's a completely different role as part of that. But I had two trips into Timor in '99, and then back as a reservist, actually, in 2011. And I think, look, they are important. I think that without getting too political or anything like that, I guess just for me personally, I mean, I had a lot of growth as a person to go away and actually, I guess, assist those communities.

And I guess being the carpenter, you're not infantry, you're not out on any sort of front line. You're not patrolling or anything like that. You're there to provide, I guess, assistance either to the force or to the community. The hearts and minds stuff, as we hear about when they talk about those sorts of things, winning the hearts and minds. And I guess that was part of our role, particularly in Timor. Towards the end, I think that they probably were looking for us to move on and let them manage their own affairs. But towards the end, we were doing some fantastic jobs, and there was a lot of good come out of that. And as I said, personally, I mean, I look back at it, and it shapes the person who I've become, I think.

GTR: No, well said, Chris. And indeed, experiences of such magnitude would help to shape you, and it's a marvelous thing that you speak about. Look, of course, your role obviously is a complex one. Now we talk about, I guess, what happens when a person leaves the force, Chris? I know that like everyone in this country, we are going through a bit of a crisis with housing and homelessness, et cetera. But as part of that, but also away from

that, generally, what does happen to people when they leave the force? Is it satisfactory? What's going on at the moment?

CG: I think, again, in my experience, Greg, I had a fantastic transition. I can't fault it. Fantastic bosses. I think for some, there is a struggle, and there is a need for additional support. We know that just hearing the stories coming out of the Royal Commission around that transition piece, we know that there's some that do struggle, I guess, for a variety of reasons. Some being medically discharged and not necessarily having the time to, I guess, prepare for that discharge. Others, for whatever reason, have not necessarily prepared well enough, be it their own or other factors.

We know that there's, what, around 6,000 leave the ADF each year is the figures that I have. And out of that, there's quite a few that struggle. And in particular, there's even a smaller cohort, but an increasing cohort around those veterans who become homeless or need some additional housing support. So I guess we can always do better. It's not good to sit back and rest on our laurels. As I said, I had a great transition, but others don't, and I guess I'm in now in a fantastic position to be able to assist those who, I guess, need some additional support.

GTR: That's right. And that's a sign of strength, too, obviously, when one doesn't have a significantly bad experience, and yet it's spoken about and known that some people do have experiences that could be more favorable in transition, then of course, it's good to be able to reach out and talk to these people. What can be done to help? I mean, we've been covering the housing and homelessness thing for some time, but what do we do to look after this group, Chris?

CG: Well, I guess for us at Vasey for a long time, I guess we've considered ourselves looking after our more senior veterans within our residential aged care, and more recently our home care, I guess, side of things. And that's obviously supported by the federal government through My Aged Care. So we have that in place. And I think for Victorian veterans, our senior veterans, we do provide a pretty good service there around home care and our residential aged care.

It's the other pieces that I guess we can always strive to do better. And that's the affordable accommodation for some of our veterans who, again, for whatever reason, find themselves in a spot of bother, and need a little additional support to maybe get themselves back on their feet at any point in their time post-service. We've

got, I think our numbers ran out about 295 units across the state now, where we provide that accommodation, independent living, one and two-bedroom units.

GTR: That's right. I had heard about that.

CG: So we've got, I guess, a number of little villages through, if you want to call them villages, units through metropolitan Melbourne. And more recently, we've expanded into Wodonga with a couple, and down into Warrnambool with-half a dozen units as well. Noting that not all veterans are living in metropolitan Melbourne, we need to try and support, I guess, our regional area is a little bit more. And we've being mindful of that. There's another supporter or another provider of accommodation, Carry On, and they're probably more regional-based. We've worked with those guys, just to not overlap our services at this stage, and try and provide us best and as most units as we can. Yeah.

GTR: Yeah. We deal with Carry On, and some of the great work they're doing, too. So it's wonderful to hear that you're in a partnership, if you like, with Carry On, at least doing similar work there. Much needed. The V Centre, as it's known to Vasey RSL Care, the V Centre, is it a circuit breaker, do you think, Chris?

CG: Yeah, it's exactly that, Greg. I think it's spot on with that, I guess, analogy or that description. A few years back, we identified, I guess a bit of a gap, if you like, around that, and how do we stop those veterans re-entering, whether it be a mental health service or an AOD service or that, the homelessness services? How can we just stop that, I guess, veterans coming back into those, and well, assist, let's say?

And I think it was probably three years ago, we looked at it and said, "Okay, we need to do better. We need to have something there that's going to be somewhere between independent living and that higher clinical care." And so we undertook some research. We spoke to the ex-service community, the veterans. We went interstate, international. We spoke Veterans Aid in the UK and Erskine in Scotland, and they were fantastic with some of their insights into what's worked for them. And in particular, the guy's Hugh Milroy from Veterans Aid in the UK, his service at New Belvedere House is really closely aligned with what we're trying to do at the V Centre.

So the V Centre came about after all of that research. And as I said, we spoke and we had a number of workshops. We engaged with anyone and everyone. I think anyone who

wanted to listen and anyone to be able to be a part of it, we were quite happy to hear their point of view. And I think we've got a fairly robust service that we think is going to make a difference in that space around, it's not just homelessness. It's around those veterans who just need, like you say, a circuit breaker. Just need a little bit more support before they reenter, I guess, living independently.

GTR: Well said. And that's right. I mean, there are various reasons, including homelessness, obviously, that they're in need of some support. And I think there's various things being done. I know the Jamie Larcombe Centre in Adelaide, I think that's doing something similar there. I did go to there and have a look at what they were doing, and I must get down to Vasey RSL Care to see what you are doing as a face-to-face thing. I guess with these various reasons, including homelessness, Chris, that veterans are in need of some practical assistance, I mean, they would leave Vasey with some skills to cope, obviously. You can tell us about that in a minute. What's the normal stay? Is it three months, six months, nine months? What's the average, do you think?

CG: Look, as I said, with some of that research that we did, we looked at, I guess, the typical person or veteran who might partake in the V Centre and the length of time. And we think that it's around that six months. So what we've said is, "Let's go out to a 12-month. Let's look at 12 months as the maximum stay." But then at the same point, if it does need to push out by a month or two here or there, we've got the flexibility within the program to overly extend that.

But we really want the veterans to come in, feel welcome, feel settled, get in. And then it's all about their journey. And that's what makes this, I guess, this program, the Veterans Empowerment program at the V Centre, I guess, a little unique, in that we look at what it is each individual veteran needs and their wants, in order to live that independent life that I guess they really want to do. So we go back and we work with the individuals. We get a support network around each of the individual veterans. We develop, I guess, all of the different things that will help them, I guess, reach those goals of being able to live. And if that's return to work, or if it's a volunteer or it's a hobby, let's look at it, basic life skills. If there's some of those missing within the veteran's life, that's a-

GTR: I mean, that would give them great confidence. That would give them a great confidence, too, Chris. And that's important, I suppose, when trying to reinstate yourself into a

position that comes easy to some, but not to others. That confidence is what you give.

CG: Confidence and a sense of purpose, too, Greg. I think having that sense of purpose, whether it be volunteering, or return to work or whatever it might be for the individuals, just having a sense of purpose, establishing routines. As much as I struggled this morning when my wife said, "We've got to go for a walk." It was after a long weekend, up and at them, and off we go. But you establish those routines, and I think they're healthy for most of us.

GTR: I tell you what, that is absolutely a mental health guide to most people, to establish routines that are positive and productive and that you can feel good coming from. And of course, sometimes it can be a journey that is not completed after one or two steps. Sometimes you must keep putting in before you see any results. But that's an example. And I guess with the V Centre, too, and veterans needing assistance, Chris, they would then be in a position to leave and offer peer support. Is that right?

CG: Yeah, absolutely. It is about, I guess, making sure that they, the number one, them, that they're in a really, really good spot. And then we would love for them to come back and provide that lived experience and peer support. Would be fantastic. I'm really, really big on, I guess, making sure that they're in a really, really good spot before they come back. But we would welcome them back with open arms. And anyone with those lived experiences, I think, that are in a position to provide support and guidance and assistance. Happy and would welcome them at any stage. It's really important that, I guess, veterans see veterans doing well.

And I'm following a little group out of the UK at the moment, Veterans Can. Of course we can. It's just going back and taking a bit of a breather, having a bit of a spell, and resetting. Again, you mentioned, Greg, that confidence, the sense of purpose. Regaining all of that, and then whatever it is that they want to do, they can do. And I think it's about establishing those routines. Yeah.

GTR: Very good. And Chris, finally, what's the connection with Ward 17 at Heidelberg Hospital? Is that something that's-

CG: Yeah, I guess it's, as I spoke about earlier around the mental health facilities and the AOD, or the alcohol and other drug clinics, that sometimes our veterans find themselves needing that support. It's that step down from there. The V Centre itself, it shares a

boundary with Ward 17, so it couldn't be any better located.

Personally, I think it's a fantastic precinct that we're starting to build there with Rob Winther and his team at Austin Health, amazing work that they do with the ward, and other supports that they've got within the Austin group. We've got the V Centre there. Straight across the road, we've got 27 brand new apartments, which is part of our long-term affordable accommodation program. One of those units, we've allocated off to family members of V Centre participants. So if we've got, I guess, a participant that's in the V Centre, a veteran in the V Centre, and their family are maybe in the country, and they want to come and, I guess, spend some quality time, we've got an apartment there that we've allocated off, and we'll get support into that.

So we think we've thought of everything, but we know that we are going to have our ups and downs. We know we're going to have to be agile enough to adjust and move, I guess, the program itself. And I think it'd be remiss if I didn't mention the whole collaboration piece. It's not going to work unless we can get the support of all of the ex-service community on board, and just let the ESOs, let those groups do what they do well in supporting veterans. We'll put the roof over their head and let all those other networks do what they do well. And I think that's the key to making this thing work, is that we all work together for the greater good. And that would be just to see a veteran transition, come through that on the other side, and then enter the community, and then be a part of their own community. I think that would bring a smile on my face if we can make that happen, absolutely.

GTR: Yeah, fantastic stuff, Chris. And of course, all going towards as being part thereof of the general community. Making the veteran community happier, healthier, and of course, then making the general community likewise. So that's a beautiful thing that you're doing. Chris Gray, general manager of Vasey RSL Care, talking about the V Centre and your personal journey, which has been bloody interesting. If we need any work done at The Last Post headquarters with some carpentry, I'll know who to call now.

CG: I've been off the tools way too long, Greg. I wouldn't even know which end of the hammer to hold, mate.

GTR: Thank you so much for being part of this, Chris.

CG: Absolute pleasure. Thanks very much, Greg. Thanks for having me. ■

Think more hotel, less hostel

The potential silver lining for a user-pays aged care model.

There has been much discussion about the recommendations from the final report of the Aged Care Taskforce who were tasked with reviewing the current funding arrangements for aged care and proposing the best way to sustainably fund aged care into the future.

There is universal acceptance that something needs to change if we are going to continue to be able to provide a viable aged care support system. The number of older people is growing fast, while the taxpayer base is shrinking.

However rather than introducing a levy on all taxpayers, as suggested by the Royal Commission into Aged Care, the Taskforce is recommending more of a user-pays model, where those who can afford it would contribute more to some parts of their care.

Understandably, there has been a mixed response from older people. Some would agree that this is a better option and are comfortable contributing more, and others see it as unfair to ask for more given they have worked hard, saved all of their lives and built the society we have today.

As aged care advocates we also have some concerns.

What we don't want to see is a two-tier system of the 'haves' and 'have nots' when it comes to aged care. Any funding model has to include a substantial safety net and a guarantee that older people who can't afford to contribute more to their aged care are still able to access good quality care that respects their human rights.

As advocates we are regularly contacted by people who are having difficulty accessing the services they need because they are unable to pay, and we help them to find solutions. If user-pays becomes the focus, then the last thing we need to see is more people joining that queue.

The government also has to consider the additional challenges of providing aged care services in rural and remote areas, and how they might need to contribute to the costs of these services.

However, we are yet to see the details of how the proposed user-pays model would operate, and critically, how the line of affordability would be determined.

But what we do know is that this approach calls for the aged care

sector to be a lot more transparent in how it uses funding and fees. If we are moving towards a user-pays model, I would hope that this is the catalyst for the aged care sector to start seeing and treating older people as customers not clients. The silver lining if you will.

What's the difference? Too often in aged care we see that older people become passengers in their life. Things are done to them and for them, without their consultation, and their preferences don't seem to inform the services delivered.

But if we look at 'customer' and the adage of 'the customer is always right', what this really means is that the customer is valued, the customer's views are respected, and services will put their best foot forward in order to keep you as a customer. Think about your experience when you book and stay at a hotel for example.

How aged care will be funded is a final piece pending for the new Aged Care Act. The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) has consulted extensively with older people to put forward feedback on the draft of the new Act. There are many elements but the main focus for advocates is ensuring that we have an aged care system that articulates, enables, protects and enforces the human rights of older people.



Article by Geoff Rowe

Geoff Rowe is the CEO for Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia, the Queensland aged care advocacy provider for OPAN. Geoff's career in the human services sector spans 40 years, including senior and executive positions in the Queensland Government, and in the not-for-profit sector. Geoff has a strong interest in social justice, human rights and inclusion.

The ADAA Australia logo features a stylized sunburst icon to the left of the text 'ADAAustralia' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, the tagline 'Your aged and disability advocates' is written in a smaller, lighter font. The main promotional text 'Your side, your say' is in a large, white, bold font. Below it, the text 'Free, confidential, independent support to help you access and get the most from aged care services' is in a smaller white font. At the bottom, the contact information 'Freecall: 1800 700 600' and 'www.adaustralia.com.au' is displayed in white. The background of the graphic is a blue gradient with a pattern of colorful silhouettes of people's heads at the bottom. To the right of the graphic is a photograph of an elderly man with glasses, wearing a blue sweater, sitting in a chair and petting a dog.

If you are currently experiencing financial difficulties regarding your aged care services, contact us on **1800 700 600** to talk to one of our financial advocates for free information and support.

OPEN DOOR NEEDS TO HEAR YOUR STORIES AS VETERANS, FAMILY & FRIENDS



**PARTICIPANTS
WANTED**

How has Veteran's trauma been understood in society & how does trauma contribute to Veteran suicidal thoughts & behaviours?

ABOUT THE PROJECT

We want to hear from Veterans, their families and their friends regarding how Veteran life experiences and circumstances from **1914 to the present day** are associated with suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

We are taking a **life course approach** to better understand the many life experiences that may lead a person to consider taking their life.

This means asking about you/your loved one's life from birth, through early childhood, to enlistment, service, transition and life after service. It includes researching how service affects Veterans and their families; along with the ways the ADF, Defence, and DVA supports serving members, Veterans, and their families (or not) over time.

PARTICIPATION INVOLVES

1:1 interview

Answering some questions about your experiences of Veteran welfare

1-3 hours of your time

For more information about project participation			
VETERANS	Ben Wadham	ben.wadham@flinders.edu.au	0447 947 880
FAMILIES	Karen Bird	karen.bird@flinders.edu.au	0419 526 743
ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VETERANS & FAMILIES	Barry Riddiford	barry.riddiford@flinders.edu.au	0467 894 181



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We all want to leave behind a legacy of positivity. Leaving a gift in your Will to Australian Red Cross can help transform lives for the better.

Val knows the difference that support can make in the tough times. She has formed a beautiful friendship with Allie, her Red Cross visitor. In a world where people feel lonelier than ever before, our generous supporters are helping ensure thousands of older people don't feel so alone. These days, Val knows she is loved and cared for, thanks to her friend Allie.

Everybody deserves the warmth of kindness and friendship, and your Will can help us share that with people for generations to come.

Ready to create your Will and don't know where to start? We can help with our **guide to Wills and Bequests**.

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with diabetes

Check your glucose levels anytime, anywhere, with zero finger pricks.*

Get real-time glucose
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Find out more at [FreeStyleLibre.com.au](https://www.FreestyleLibre.com.au)

This product is indicated for measuring interstitial fluid glucose levels in people (age 4 and older) with insulin-requiring diabetes.

*Glucose readings are automatically displayed in the FreeStyle LibreLink app when the sensor has been started with the app, and the smartphone and sensor are connected and in range. Finger pricks are required if glucose readings and alarms do not match symptoms or expectations. ^The FreeStyle LibreLink app is only compatible with certain mobile devices and operating systems. Please check www.freestylelibre.com.au/compatibility for more information about device compatibility before using the app. Use of FreeStyle LibreLink requires registration with LibreView ±At HbA1c ~7% or higher. †The FreeStyle Libre 2 '\$15 Trial Offer' is a special offer and is only valid in Australia for a limited time. Limit of one \$15 sensor per customer. Only available to new FreeStyle Libre 2 customers. Users must be registered and logged into their [FreeStyleLibre.com.au](https://www.FreestyleLibre.com.au) account. For full T&Cs, visit www.freestylelibre.com.au/freestylelibre2-trial-terms-and-conditions.

See how these FreeStyle Libre 2 users #WearItProud!



Meet Michael, who is enjoying retirement on a small beef cattle farm. He says, *“since using FreeStyle Libre 2, my glucose management has been so much better... my wife no longer has to get up and feed me glucose at night. The alarm goes off, I have something to eat and go back to sleep.”*

Michael, NSW



Yoga teacher Rachel calls FreeStyle Libre 2 *“a game changer. I love the system, it’s discreet... it’s extremely accurate. I love sharing my glucose data with my husband who can check on me while I am teaching a class... and how easy it is to share what’s happening with my healthcare team to get their feedback.”*

Rachel, NSW

FreeStyle Libre 2 is fully subsidised for eligible Veterans through the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

Trial your first sensor for \$15.[†]

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1. Evans M. et al. Diabetes Ther. 2022; 13(6): 1175-85.

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RESOLUTE READY



ONE STOP. ONE CALL. ONE LIFE.

Resolute Ready: Celebrating One Year of Empowering Resilience

Supporting our Military, Public Safety Officers (First Responders) and connected families. You are not alone.

Early intervention is prevention

In the dynamic landscape of global challenges, Resolute Ready shines as a beacon of hope and resilience, marking its inaugural year with a tapestry of achievements that resonate worldwide. As the world faces natural disasters, public health emergencies, and socio-economic shifts, Resolute Ready stands at the forefront, offering support to military, public safety officers (First Responders), and their families, alongside communities worldwide. In just one year, Resolute Ready has emerged as a transformative force in the realm of resilience-building, leaving an indelible mark on communities worldwide.

Acknowledging Sacrifice and Prioritising Support

Resolute Ready International One Stop. One Call. One Life. extends its heartfelt thanks to all service members on ANZAC Day. We honor your sacrifices and dedication to our nation. As we commemorate this important day, we urge everyone to prioritise self-care and look out for their mates. Together, let us honour the spirit of ANZAC by supporting one another and fostering resilience within our community. Lest we forget..

Empowerment through Collaboration:

At the heart of Resolute Ready's success lies its collaborative ethos. By bringing together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, Resolute Ready International has fostered a culture of cooperation and collective action. Whether through global webinars, accessing service providers who offer connection to further support, workshops, training sessions, or community engagement initiatives, Resolute Ready empowers individuals to take charge of their own resilience journey, driving meaningful change from the ground up. Our serving community travels the world we continue to partner with other countries such as with the US and the UK Government agencies, service providers and business networks, the initiative has expanded its reach and impact. Our data illustrates 20 countries have engaged with the Resolute Ready Virtual Hub One Stop. One Call. One Life. Resolute Ready has amplified its message of resilience, reaching audiences far and wide.

Moreover, Resolute Ready has actively participated in round table discussions aimed at informing policy and legislation to improve outcomes for both serving and non-serving veterans and their families. By advocating for systemic change, Resolute Ready demonstrates its unwavering commitment to addressing the unique challenges faced by

these communities and driving positive transformation on a broader scale.

Through its collaborative ethos and dedication to collective action, Resolute Ready has amplified its message of resilience, resonating with audiences far and wide. This inclusive approach not only fosters greater support for military, first responders, and their families but also underscores the universal importance of resilience-building efforts in addressing global challenges.

Innovation, Adaptability, and Technology:

In a rapidly evolving world, innovation is key to resilience. Resolute Ready has embraced this principle wholeheartedly, leveraging cutting-edge technology and creative solutions to address emerging challenges. Harnessing the power of innovation and technology, Resolute Ready has brought together a list of services linking you to disaster preparedness and response. Resolute Ready initiative has embraced digital solutions to empower communities and enhance resilience.

Resolute Ready is in the process of developing an Education Backpack initiative aimed at bridging the gap between schools, families, teachers, and school health providers, while also integrating support services tailored to the unique challenges faced by Military and First Responder families. This initiative will utilize the Virtual Hub as a central platform to facilitate access to resources, information, and assistance. By fostering collaboration and understanding among stakeholders, Resolute Ready aims to enhance support networks and provide holistic care to these communities. Through the Education Backpack initiative, Resolute Ready is committed to empowering resilience and promoting well-being among Military and First Responder families within educational settings.

We acknowledge the support from our South Australian Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Blair Boyer MP, for the implementation of a digital enrolment form identifying ADF families ... a significant step in supporting the health and well-being of Defence Families...

We would like to encourage all Education Ministers, Education Leaders to follow Blair Boyer MP's implementation of identifying current and ex-serving Defence Force families and children by adding a box on all school enrolment forms. Children are impacted by service trauma and transition.

Addressing Service Trauma Impact:

We would like to acknowledge the War Memorial, Canberra Australia Advisory Committee on the documentary directed by Max Uechtritz. *'Tears of Hope' shares the stories of Australian veterans and their families, and follows the making of a new sculpture at the Australian War Memorial that recognises the ongoing trauma suffered by many as a result of their service.'*

The sculpture, For Every Drop Shed in Anguish by Alex Seton, provides a place in the Memorial's Sculpture Garden for visitors to grieve, to reflect on service experiences, and to remember the long-term cost of war and service.

Families now have a place to come together and shed a tear or share memorable stories of their loved ones. Never forgotten, always in our hearts. Lest We Forget.

Global Engagement:

Resolute Ready's impact knows no boundaries, engaging with communities worldwide to foster resilience. Supported by global partners, the initiative has made a tangible difference as it continues to reach the lives of millions, demonstrating the power of support and collective action. Through strategic partnerships and innovative initiatives, Resolute Ready fosters resilience in the face of adversity. Its commitment to inclusivity and diversity ensures that no community is left behind, underscoring the universal nature of resilience-building efforts. Thank you to Jim Chancellor from The American Collection for sharing his story 'Why am I always angry- presentation on war,' who works tirelessly supporting Veterans, Connie Karras Resolute Ready Chicago Community Engagement Liaison, Congressman Frank Mrvan, and Judge Julie Cantrell for their involvement in the USA and Resolute Ready Webinar.

Present were members of the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of our government as well as medical, veterans and spouses and families, professionals, government and corporate, and international entities, nonprofit organizations, and ordinary citizens; simply everyday people were represented. This is our hope. We have all we need to fight and conquer the enemy of suicide. LTCOL (retired) Arthurine Jones.

Recognition and Outreach:

Resolute Ready has made significant strides in its presence at conferences and events, earning nominations and recognition from various esteemed organisations. These accolades include the Global Recognition Awards, Finalist Andamooka Community Awards, Finalist Carers SA - Community Achievement Award, and acknowledgment as a finalist in the 2024 SA Woman of the Year - Champion Community category. Additionally, Resolute Ready's advocacy for First Responders is evident through its participation in submissions to governmental bodies such as the Legislative Council of South Australia, reflecting the initiative's commitment to advocating for support and mental health services for police personnel.

Resolute Ready continues to provide ongoing support to homeless veterans, recognising the unique challenges they face and the importance of assisting them in rebuilding their lives. Through our Resolute Ready Virtual Hub, Resolute Ready - with 20 countries engaged - connects you to vital resources, including access to a variety of services that offer educational programs, healthcare services, mental health support, and employment opportunities. The initiative remains dedicated to ensuring that homeless veterans receive the assistance they need to reintegrate into society and thrive. By collaborating with government agencies, nonprofit organisations, service providers and community groups, Resolute Ready works tirelessly to address the underlying issues contributing to veteran homelessness and advocates for sustainable solutions to support this vulnerable population.

Acknowledgments and Looking Ahead:

As Resolute Ready commemorates its first anniversary, it is crucial to recognise the milestones achieved and the lives positively impacted. However, the journey forward is equally important. We extend our gratitude to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, including Chair Nick Kaldas, Dr. Peggy Brown, and the Hon. James Douglas, for their unwavering dedication over the past three years in compiling vital information from hearings and investigations. Nick Kaldas, in an interview with Saturday Extra, expresses hope that the inquiry will catalyze the necessary changes to address the national tragedy of Defence and Veteran suicide. Similar issues are emerging among First Responders, albeit on a different battlefield, and Resolute Ready stands in solidarity with them.

First responders and their families often experience PTSD and similar symptoms to military who undergo service trauma, highlighting the need for comprehensive support services. Resolute Ready initiated round table discussions to commence discussions on how we can better support both the military and first responders with Ministers. Resolute Ready submitted issues and recommendations to the committee of the legislative council of South Australia into support and mental health services for police.

Our network of supporters continues to grow, and we appreciate those who have been with us since the beginning. Special thanks to The Last Post Magazine, Mercy Me Marketing and Advertising, The Film Volt Magazine UK, Mark Busby, Partners of Veterans Association, and SA Legacy, Lite FM for their invaluable support. We also acknowledge our local, national and global sponsors, Ambassadors and Community Engagement Liaisons for their dedication in uniting our community. To our team, whose commitment to excellence has shaped Resolute Ready into what it is today, we extend our heartfelt thanks. Additionally, we appreciate the support of government dignitaries, service providers, academics, and businesses. Thank you to Kris Pantovic and Namecorp for their business endorsement: businessaustralianews.com.au/blog/community/resolute-ready

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Resolute Ready's first year has been nothing short of remarkable. With its global reach, collaborative spirit, innovative approach, and unwavering support for our heroes, Resolute Ready International has proven itself to be a beacon of hope in uncertain times. As we look to the future, one thing is certain: Resolute Ready will continue to inspire, empower, and transform lives, leaving a lasting legacy of resilience and strength. As Resolute Ready embarks on its second year, it does so with gratitude for the past and determination for the future. We will continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and networks across systemic issues collectively. We all deserve to live a well-lived life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging. United in purpose and fueled by passion and a highly competent skillful team, the initiative remains steadfast in its mission to build a more resilient world by our solution-based approach for generations to come.

I recently used several resources, including the Resolute Ready Virtual Hub, to assist NSW and WA Corrections in finding service providers for their pilot programs. The Resolute Ready Virtual Hub allowed quick and easy resource finding which was used to demonstrate service availability to veterans and families. I also used the Resolute Ready Virtual Hub to locate services for an inter-state transfer. This enabled me to demonstrate that the veteran would be well supported and contributed to informed decision-making. Chris Tilley

LIDIA FARANDA-HALL,

GEO and Founder, Resolute Ready International

Submit your service for free to the Resolute Ready Global Hub to make it accessible worldwide and help First Responders, Military Veterans, their Families, and Connected Communities heal from service-related trauma. Encourage mental health providers, academic researchers, and businesses to add their organisations to the hub to support these communities. Collaboration is crucial.

SUBMIT YOUR SERVICE: resoluteready.com/submit-your-service

If you would like to partner with Resolute Ready International email: support@resoluteready.com

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT BREAST CANCER

1 in 7 Australian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

Support the National Breast Cancer Foundation and help save thousands of lives each year.

A charitable gift in your Will to fund innovative research can improve survival rates, transform detection, treatment and care.

With your support we can stop breast cancer taking the lives of those we love.

For information please contact our Gift in Wills Manager on **02 8098 4848** or **bequests@nbcf.org.au**



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF NBCF-FUNDED RESEARCH

This year the National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF), the largest not-for-profit funder of breast cancer research in Australia committed to ending deaths from cancer, is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Since 1994, NBCF has invested over \$200 million raised into more than 600 projects and has funded more than 1,800 Australian researchers from 120 institutes throughout Australia. In this time, the death rate from breast cancer in Australia has reduced by over 40%.

NBCF has instrumental in helping build careers and retain the brightest research minds, enabling breast cancer research to thrive in Australia. In the last ten years alone, NBCF-funded researchers have published more than 2,300 science discoveries in science and medical journals and research funded by NBCF has influenced policy and practice on 50 occasions both locally and internationally.

While all the progress that has been made and the significant reduction

in deaths from breast cancer is to be celebrated, the number of Australians diagnosed with breast cancer continues to increase at a rate greater than our population growth. A staggering nine people a day still die from breast cancer in Australia. Every death is one too many.

For NBCF these statistics reveal the significant impact of this disease and highlights the need for continued investment that matches the boldness of their vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer.

Building on its strong research foundations, NBCF recently launched its Pink Horizon Research Strategy to accelerate progress of breast cancer research. This focus and investment of up to \$125 million over the next five years is intended to bring NBCF closer to achieving its ambitious vision and

help reduce the 16,000 deaths from breast cancer in Australia that are otherwise expected in this time.

Every one of us has the power to ignite and create extraordinary change. To fund research. To support a future with Zero Deaths from breast cancer.

As a completely community funded organisation, NBCF relies on the generosity of the Australian community – people like you. There are many ways you can support NBCF. For example, you can sign up to a fundraiser, become a donor or ask your loved ones to give a donation in lieu of a gift for your next special occasion. Another meaningful way you can help is by adding a gift in your Will to NBCF. A gift of even 1% in your will, can help achieve a future where no Australian loses a loved one to breast cancer.

For more information visit nbcf.org.au



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Aged care support service

Chat with us – free and confidential

Do you need advice about your government-funded aged care services, either in your own home or in residential care?

Our experienced aged care advocates can help you with the following, and other aged care issues:


- Aged care provider services or fees.
- Assistance with visits or services.
- Supported decision-making.
- How to speak up for better aged care
- Concern that you may not be treated respectfully, fairly, or appropriately.

If you ticked any box above or you simply want advice regarding your government-funded aged care services:

Chat with us 1800 700 600



To find out more
visit opan.org.au
or scan the QR code.



**"WHY WOULD WE KNOWINGLY
ADD TO THEIR PAIN AND SUFFERING?"**

DR LINDA SWAN, CEO, GO GENTLE AUSTRALIA

Care for our most vulnerable

Telehealth has been a game changer for people who are too sick to travel, or living in the bush. Since the pandemic, it's a service we've all taken for granted.

But there is one group of people who are denied Telehealth - those who are terminally ill and lawfully seeking access to voluntary assisted dying.

*Lorraine, from Victoria, had advanced breast cancer, and doctors advised she did not have much time left.

She decided to apply for voluntary assisted dying, which has been legal in that state since 2019.

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) allows patients with a terminal illness relief from intolerable suffering and a more peaceful and dignified death, usually at home surrounded by loved ones.

By the time Lorraine was applying for VAD, her cancer had spread to her abdomen, and she could not sit up without extreme discomfort.

However, because of a ban on using Telehealth in any aspect of VAD, there was no option for her to have an assessment appointment with her specialist over a video call from the comfort of her own home.

Patient comfort essential

Lorraine was driven to her first VAD appointment lying down in the boot space of a four-wheel drive car, with the back seats down and no seat belt on.

Dr Cam McLaren, President of the peak body for voluntary assisted dying health professionals VADANZ (Voluntary Assisted Dying Australia and New Zealand), has never forgotten the experience.

"I didn't know she was in that much discomfort before she attended," he said.

"If I was able to have a preliminary Telehealth discussion with her, then I could have assessed her without her having to leave her couch. Even if I couldn't determine her eligibility, I would have been able to arrange a home visit for her so she was safe and comfortable."

Long distance medicine

The situation is even worse for patients in rural and remote areas, as the specialists needed to make VAD assessments are mostly in cities.

*Tom, a 79-year-old with end-stage lung disease in Far North Queensland was too unwell to travel for in-person

VAD assessments. A doctor in Ipswich made a 3000 km roundtrip to assess his eligibility.

A week later, a second independent doctor travelled 2500 km to provide his second assessment. Finally, the first doctor had to return (another 3000 km) to witness and accept Tom's final request.

By the time the pharmacy received the VAD prescription (which the Telehealth ban also requires had to be hand-delivered) it was too late - Tom had died without having his final wishes carried out.

"I always prefer to see my patients face-to-face," Dr McLaren says. "However, there are circumstances where Telehealth is appropriate. That should be decided by the person and their health practitioner - not parliamentarians."

Quality care

Five years of evidence shows that VAD is operating safely, and with great care and compassion. It is now legal in all six Australian states, with the ACT expected to pass laws this year and the NT undertaking community consultation.

Dr Linda Swan, the Chief Executive of VAD advocacy group Go Gentle Australia, said there was a need for urgent law reform to ensure quality and timely VAD care, no matter where a person lives.

Dr Swan supported a private member's bill in the House of Representatives introduced by Independent MP Kate Chaney in February, that seeks to allow the use of Telehealth in VAD.

"Health professionals working in VAD have made it clear that their preference is in-person care wherever possible," she said.

"However we should not be forcing terminally ill people or their carers to travel long distances to appointments when an alternative exists in the form of Telehealth.

"Anyone who has cared for a dying person knows that even basic tasks can be a struggle. Why would we knowingly add to their pain and suffering?"



Has the Telehealth ban for voluntary assisted dying consultations affected you?

Email us at contact@gogentleaustralia.org.au and tell us your story.

*Names have been changed for privacy reasons.

We need equal access to VAD laws

Voluntary assisted dying is now legal in all six states, with the ACT and NT soon to follow.

However, the fight is not over.

The ban on using Telehealth in VAD consults is discriminatory and outdated.

Please email your federal MP and ask them to remove the ban.

Use the QR Code or the link below

<https://telehealth.good.do/supportkatechaneysbill/Email-your-MPs>



Attend a Transition Seminar in 2024

You don't have to be thinking about transition to attend an ADF Member and Family Transition Seminar.

Transition isn't just about when you leave the ADF. In fact, your transition journey starts from the day you join. Engaging with transition support early will ensure you have all the information you need to consider the best career options for you and your family.

Transition can be a period of significant change to ADF personnel and to their families. ADF Member and Family Transition Seminars are one of the wide range of supports and programs that Defence provides to help guide ADF personnel, their families or support persons through the transition journey.

AIRCDRE Kaarin Kooij, Director General Joint Transition Authority said that attendance at a Transition Seminar is mandatory in the twelve months prior to transition.

However, transition is something that all ADF personnel will experience at some point, so you need to plan and prepare early.

"It's important to know what current transition support services are available to yourself and your family members. I recommend attending a Seminar every 3-4 years to ensure you have the most up to date information. It's also useful for supervisors so they can better support our sailors, soldiers and aviators as they transition from service life.

"It is important to consider the differences in cost of living expenses between military and civilian life. It is also important to understand how to access services in the civilian community. Seminars provide you with that information through targeted presentations as well as access to stakeholders to chat one on one with," said AIRCDRE Kooij.

The 2024 ADF Member and Family Transition Seminar schedule is out now. Transition Seminars are accessible throughout the year delivered in – face-to-face; virtual-live day interactive and virtual non-interactive (available 24/7) formats. Family members, support persons and guests are also encouraged to register and attend.

BY WING COMMANDER SHARYN BOLITHO, JOINT TRANSITION AUTHORITY

To view more information on the 2024 ADF Member and Family Transition Seminars, visit the Defence Transition website: www.defence.gov.au/transition.

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Army Engineer Work Experience

ADCO has been working with the 19th Chief Engineer Works and the Australian Defence Force Academy since 2022 to support student engineers from the Australian Army to gain engineer work experience prior to entering the 4th year of their engineering degree.

In 2024, ADCO supported six students on our sites across Australia.



Veteran Support

ADCO made a commitment to the Prime Minister's Veterans Employment program employing 11 military veterans and searching for more through the Federal Government's 'jobactive' Portal.

ADCO and our trade partners recently donated approximately \$20k worth of labour and materials to support the Moss Vale Legacy Holiday House renovation project.

ADCO proudly supports the work Brisbane Legacy undertakes through participation in the Canungra Combat Challenge and sponsorship of both the annual Gala and Golf Day.

ADCO supported Veterans Housing Australia through participation in their annual golf day as well as Solider On and will continue to do so.



Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Centre, VIC

Indigenous Engagement

ADCO is committed to a construction industry that builds more meaningful relationships, opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At the recently completed Puckapunyal Health and Wellbeing Centre ADCO achieved a peak of 22% Indigenous employment and 3% Indigenous spend.

ADCO is privileged to appear in this ANZAC Day edition of The Last Post. We commemorate the loss of Australian lives from all wars and conflicts. We extend our gratitude to all veterans and currently serving members of the Australian Defence Force for all they have done, and continue to do, to keep Australia safe and prosperous.



PODCASTS: www.thelastpostmagazine.com/tlp-interviews

Jeff Richardson

Jeff Richardson and The Coodabeen Champions have been entertaining Australians for 43 years. Their cheeky, fresh radio show captured the heart of a public wanting a different take on football and it's importance to the fabric of who we are"

Greg T Ross: Jeff Richardson, welcome to The Last Post magazine and podcast. It's a pleasure having you on and being able to talk about football. I know it's not the football season yet, but be able to chat about football and your history and also the Coodabeens. How are you?

Jeff Richardson: I'm very well, thank you, Greg. And yeah, talking about, it's not the football season, but we had a family gathering just yesterday. And now some of my younger relatives have already started training. I know that the Fitzroy women's team had their first hit out the other night, so they're training already.

GTR: Well, that's right, and football news is already working its way into the Melbourne papers at least through, they had the story the other day about Hawthorne's training and all that sort of stuff. That will start appearing more and more as we make our way towards the start of the season.

If we go back, and I know it seems long, you've been gracing the airwaves now for over 40 years, and that's to the blessing of us all to be able to participate in that. But how did this all happen? I mean, there's been a host of you, if you just don't mind me going through the names, Ian Cove, Greg Champion, Billy Baxter, Torch McGee, Simon Whelan, Young Andy, Andy Les, and of course Tony Leonard in the past. Apologies if I've missed anyone out there, but how did this all happen?

JR: Okay. I can answer that very, very clearly. It was actual, it was Anzac Day

1981, and it was back then, remember they used to do the [inaudible 00:01:49] for all the current Anzac commemorations that happened around footy, it was much less formal back then. And there would always be the split round. There'd be some games, three games would be played on Anzac Day and three games would be played on the Saturdays or something like that. And depending on whichever day Anzac Day fell and there'd probably be a marching band on the ground at halftime. And the last post and that was it.

Anyway, Simon Whelan and myself were going to the football that day. And you know what? I've forgotten who was playing. And we were talking about it over Christmas, Simon and I. And we went and looked it up and saw who it was that was playing. And I've now completely forgotten. And it's interesting because he voted for St. Kilda. It wasn't St. Kilda playing and I vote for Richmond, it wasn't Richmond playing. But whoever it was, we were walking over the hill in Yarra Park to the game. And we'd had the radio on in the car before because it was back in the days, you park your car on the grass at Yarra Park and walk over to the ground.

And we were listening to the coverage as you do in the car. There was all the pre-game panels on and we were listening to them. And we were just rolling our eyes a bit because back then it was humorless. Of course we all listened to it, everyone loved it and it was all legends of the game doing it. But it was all, it tended to be a little bit cliché written and it tended to be utterly humorous.

And we were reflecting on the fact that in a couple of minutes time, we'll walk through the gates of the MCG and we'll be standing in the outer behind the goals. And we will hear commentary on what's going on just from the people standing around us that will be more informed and more entertaining than what we've just listened to on the radio. And that voice of the people of football wasn't present in football media back in the day. And we were young then. And as you tended to say, "Well, let's do our own show."

And it was 1981 so the broadcasting landscape was very different than TV broadcasting. I think one of the very last pieces of legislation that went through the 1975 parliament was the legislation that enabled opening up the broadcast spectrum to beyond just the big corporate owners of licenses, which led to all of these community radio stations that are now the length and breadth of the country. But back then it was very... 3CR in Melbourne was one of the very, very first of... Oh, what was the one in Brisbane? I think it was one of them called 4ZZ or something like that. They started up and what became in Melbourne 3RRR had started in RMIT and it was then called 3RMT before it became 3RRR.

And these stations were all just popping up and no one had really written the rule book for how it should work. I rang the manager of 3RMT, Bruce Lampsherd on the next working day. I can't remember whether it was a Monday or not. And I said, "Oh, hello, blah, blah. We want to do, come on and try doing a footy show." And he said, "Well, do you want to come



in next Saturday morning? We said, "All right." And we've been going and coming in every Saturday morning since.

GTR: Well, that's amazing. You got the thumbs up straight away and into it you go. I do know. And so the voice, I guess the democracy of voice that you speak about when you go to the footy and you listen to comments from those around you. And a lot of it's humor, isn't it, Jeff? A lot of it's more humorous than you said you get on the radio. Classic and-

JR: But also it's very well informed. People are very knowledgeable and yeah, we certainly felt back then the level of discussion of footy didn't really give credit to the intelligence of the audience.

GTR: Yeah. Well look, I suppose, forgive me for being a Collingwood supporter, but I've obviously always taken Grand Finals very seriously. And what you speak about, I know back in Melbourne in those days, there was some talk and some whisperings in our group about you guys, the Coodabeens, and you got to listen to the Coodabeens, you go down 3RRR. And anyhow, so silly on me. I was still infatuated with the serious aspect of football. And when someone suggested changing the 1985 Grand Final to listen to you guys commentary on it, I think we were watching Channel 7 or something. And I said, "No, no, no, it's not as serious."

But it was about that time. God bless me, I tell you what. It was about that time that I started to investigate you. And so much so that you become a staple diet of my listening habits, particularly during winter and the football season. And even now

on 3MP when you're on Saturday mornings on Friday afternoons, I leave the podcast to play until Saturday mornings because that's the old feel that I have for you guys on a Saturday.

The characters. Jeff, one of the things that keeps the Coodabeens going is the characters. You have so many wonderful characters. And if you could just perhaps give us a bit of a hint as to how these guys came about, these characters, Guru Bob, and I guess there's a whole lot of other then, Nige, Pearl, Tibby, Sauce and all that stuff, these they came about from the guys involved, I suppose.

JR: Yeah, look, I can also remember exactly the day that all that started because again, the media landscape has changed so much. We were on RRR. And as I just told you, we basically walked in off the street and started, which doesn't happen anymore. And back then, the late Brian White had come down from Sydney and was running 3AW and the Macquarie Network in Melbourne. And he was very tuned into what was going on in the media, Brian. And he listened to everything. And he knew about us and he liked us.

And he asked us to come and try out and just see how we go. And he put us on Saturday nights. He says, "It doesn't matter what you do, there's nobody listening." That was really how we got across into commercial radio because he just liked what we did and wanted to see what would happen as an experiment. We would come on at six o'clock on a Saturday night just when everyone's turning their radios off. Because you've had your radio on, as you were just saying, Greg listening to the game. And listening and it's a very serious business.

And then after the game, you'd listen to the analysis and the votes. And then of course there would be talk back. And of course, a talk back would be all the people ringing up and wanting to talk about why their team lost and how unfair that was. And so, Harry Beitzel and the team would be doing that. And we'd be listening to the calls and we're on air in a couple of minutes time after they sign off. And at that point, most of the listeners would switch the radio off.

And then at the end of it, there'd be still this very full board of talk back calls, people who hadn't got on. And of course, it was being done out of the... They were all at the MCG, but we were in the studio where it was happening and actually controlling the phone. That was when we first did it. The first characters actually, instead of putting a real person to air, we'd put one of our characters on. And no one noticed the difference.

Then what we would do, we'd come on say, "Oh look, there's quite a few callers didn't get through talking to Harry. Look, we're just going to give people a chance to continue." We would just keep going for half an hour. But it was actually us. And a lot of the things that the characters would say were based on things that we'd heard 10 or 15 minutes earlier that real people saying and just tweaking it and amplifying. All of it was very grounded in reality, but just adding up a little bit. That's how it began. And here we are, we're still doing it.

GTR: Well, thank heavens for that because it's a highlight of each listen. And whoever's at my home at the time, we'll gather around and listen to the radio to hear the talk back because it's a classic. What I was going to say,

Guru Bob once said, what he'd say? It's harder to win a premiership than to put a needle into the eye of a camel?

JR: Yes, yes. You can... There's a whole book of those things that he published.

GTR: Do you have a favorite character?

JR: Oh no, I don't really. It's like asking a parent who have their favorite child. No, no, I like them all. You're allowed to have a favorite one, Greg.

GTR: Thanks, mate. I'll just announce a couple, Pearl, Timmy, Nige. And also the kid, the guy from WA. What's his name? The Claremont, the South African.

JR: Christophe from Claremont, the Eagles supporter. Yeah. He's good.

GTR: That's right. That's right. And Christophe doesn't seem to like Torch.

JR: No, no, he doesn't really like anyone, least of Perth. But when Torch finished playing at South Melbourne, he went over to Perth and he played for South Fremantle. That's part of that animus between Torch and Christophe is that he just sees Torch as a Fremantle person. And for the viewers over on this side of the country, it's not immediately obvious how the animus between the Fremantle and the Eagles operates, but that's what's going on there.

GTR: That's right, that's right. Yeah. He was most vindictive towards Torch on the 2018 Grand Final talk back. That was incredible. The feeling of inclusiveness and welcoming that comes about through turning on the radio or the podcast to listen to you guys each week. And is something that is in the old-fashioned way parlance, it's a warm feeling. You know what you're going to get. You're going to get some good stuff. How did that come about? Is it just because of the comradeship that exists between you guys? Yeah. Tell us about that because it seems to be a great friendship.

JR: Look, that's very hard for me to comment on, Greg, because I'm in it, so I'll put... None of it was planned. I can tell you that. As I said, right in the start, we said, "Well, let's do our own show." And we thought, let's just go on air and try to talk on the radio the way we took when we were at the football and somehow capture that.

And over time, I think we picked up the craft. Who knows how rough and ready we were when we started, but because we've been doing it for such a long time, we picked up broadcast craft. We picked up the skills of

broadcasting, especially working for all that time at the ABC and being in the same studios of some absolute legends of Australian broadcasting, especially radio and seeing how they operated. And some of those men and women who just absolutely were the backbone of ABC's broadcasting both metropolitan and rural for decades, working in the same building as them, getting to know them, seeing how they worked, you couldn't help but pick up their skills and their way of doing it.

I'm pleased that, Greg, that you say that it still sounds spontaneous and friendly and inclusive, but that doesn't mean there's not an element of structure there. And that's inevitably there's a performative element to it. And over the years we've somehow, without any planning, got a balance between being able to present it as a reasonable piece of craftsmanship in the broadcasting world, but somehow preserve that element.

And also, the nature of it's changed. Media and the broadcasting used to be much, much more formal a generation or so ago. What passes as being normal on radio and TV, it's very different now to what it was back then.

The amount of structure, the amount of spontaneity, the amount of improvisation, all of that has changed as well. And it's happened around us while we were doing it. Yeah. It's not just us. We're part of a bigger creative industry. And yeah, we've been very fortunate to be able to be part of it.

GTR: Yeah, I suppose it's like writing a song. You must have a structure, you have a backbone. And then creativity takes over and blossoms through that. But you almost must have a starting point, I guess.

JR: Yeah, I think that's a really good way of putting it, Greg. Every show, although they might sound very spontaneous that they sit over a structure. But that I'd have to really sit down and think about how that works because it's very intuitive, but it's there.

GTR: And that is what keeps people listening. Your story yourself, Jeff, you were going to... What uni were you at when you started this? Or were you at uni?

JR: What were we all doing? I think when we started doing the Coodabeens, I was working as a school teacher. Simon was a solicitor. Ian was working as a journalist. Billy Baxter was working in the film industry. Tony was in the public service, Torch was a school teacher.

Andy wasn't born.

GTR: Amazing.

JR: Greg, very early in life, Greg took the very firm and courageous choice that he was going to make his living as an entertainer. And he was already a full-time professional musician at that time.

GTR: Yeah, incredible stuff. The combination, I think this is what makes it, call it the yin and the yang or whatever, but I suppose boil down to me when there's so many people involved. And I think your group at some stages had six or seven. It requires different backgrounds and experiences to come into the melting pot.

And I think this is one of the secrets behind that Coodabeen success is there've been a great mixture of different talents with that one thing is to make people laugh and two provide entertainment. We thank you so much for that. You've been a good part of our lives for the last 42, 43 years. But what more is there to achieve? You've been in the Hall of Fame. You've sang at a Grand Final. What's next?

JR: Look, we'd like to age gracefully I think, Greg. One thing we've enjoyed the last couple of years is moving, as I was saying before, the industry is changing, and more and more people now don't listen to the radio the way they used to.

They listen to podcasts. And although the last couple of years we've been on air, but as you pointed out, we go to air on a Friday afternoon. But I think the majority of our listeners actually pick up the podcast. And I sense that we might move further in that direction, that that's the way our audience is moving too. I mean, appointment listening, yes, I've got the radio on, it's 10 o'clock on a Saturday morning. I will be listening to that. I think less and less people live that way now. And certainly we don't. I think moving with people's listening patterns and moving with the technology of the times is probably the next thing we'll do.

GTR: That's right. Well, actually, the podcast thing is quite brilliant because of course people now can listen to the Coodabeens. Just to get into the Saturday vibe, they can listen to the Coodabeens while they're out shopping on a Saturday morning or taking the kids to their sport just so it feels more like a Saturday. And that's a brilliant part of what you do, you bring to people's lives. Jeff Richardson, thank you so much for being part of this podcast, The Last Post and in our magazine. And we thank you once again for your contribution to life and just broadcasting generally.

JR: Thank you so much, Greg. That's really, really, really nice to hear. It's been marvelous speaking with you. ■



ABOVE: AFL Anzac Day honour guard (photo taken from a previous year's game).

AFL honouring our fallen

The Australian Football League (AFL) works with the RSL each year to honour service men and service women as part of its pre-match ceremony for the Anzac Day match at the MCG.

Since 1995, the Anzac Day match has been played annually between Essendon and Collingwood while, in recent years, Richmond and Melbourne have built their own traditions around a match on Anzac Eve.

Matches on Anzac Day between these two traditional Victorian clubs have regularly drawn more than 85,000 fans and are among the most sought-after tickets for any game of the season, apart from the Grand Final.

On eight occasions across the last three decades, the two clubs have drawn more than 90,000 fans, pulling 95,179 in 2023, 94,825 in 1995, 93,373 in 2013, 92,241 in 2019, 91,731 in 2014, 91,440 in 2018, 91,234 in 2006 and 90,508 in 2007.

For this year's game, veterans from World War Two, Korea, Malaya and Borneo, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Timor Leste and Sinai, Bouganville, the Solomon Islands, East Timor and Iraq were part of the pre-match ceremonies, that includes a motorcade lap and a full Catafalque guard of honour.

Honourees on the day were Leonard Hitchens (now 99, served with the 55/53 rd Battalion in Bouganville in WW2); Ralph Wollmer (served with HMAS Murchison in Korea); Gerry Shepherd (served with HMAS Bataan in WW2 and Korea); Dennis Campbell (served with HMAS Quiberon and HMAS Stuart), Merv Landy (served with HMAS Quickmatch), John Sanders (Served with the Royal Australian Engineers in Vietnam), Andrew Turner (served with the Royal Australian Armoured Corps in Vietnam), Brigadier Michelle Campbell (commands the Army's Fourth Brigade and served in Afghanistan), Sergeant Tanya Angove (serves in the Royal Australian Ordnance Corps and has served in Timor Leste, the Sinai and Afghanistan), Warrant Officer Peter Swandale (served in Bouganville, East Timor and Iraq), Chief Petty Officer Elaine Egan and serving daughter Ashleigh Egan, Lieutenant Colonel Ash Graham (serves in the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps) and Warrant Officer Adam Ireson (serves in the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers).

The AFL thanks each member of our services for their commitment to our country and congratulates them for their involvement on Anzac Day.



Currumbin Palm Beach RSL

Nestled in the heart of the Gold Coast, the Currumbin Palm Beach RSL stands as a beacon of community spirit and veteran camaraderie. As we approach Anzac Day, the RSL is abuzz with preparations for the anticipated gathering of 35,000 people at Elephant Rock. This solemn yet uplifting event honours the sacrifices of servicemen and women.

Last year, the RSL witnessed remarkable attendance at the Vietnam Veterans Day and Remembrance Day services, followed by a heartfelt luncheon. These occasions serve as a tribute to our veterans and a testament to the unyielding bonds formed within this community.

The Currumbin Palm Beach RSL has been a hub of activity throughout the past year, fostering veteran connections through various initiatives. Sailing trips have cut through the waves, offering peace and camaraderie on the open sea. Whale-watching excursions have provided awe-inspiring encounters with nature's gentle giants, while running groups have pounded the pavement, finding strength and solace in every stride.

The weekly coffee catchups continue to be a resounding success, brewing a blend of friendship and support that is a weekly highlight for many. These gatherings are more than just a caffeine fix; they're a lifeline for veterans seeking a sense of belonging.

The pinnacle of this year's accomplishments is undoubtedly the creation of the Veterans Garden. The hands of veterans and some volunteers transformed what was once an overlooked dumping ground across from the RSL into the beginnings of a verdant oasis. This garden is not merely

about aesthetics; it's a symbol of growth, healing, and sustenance. Plans to plant various fruits and vegetables promise a bountiful future, where the fruits of labour will be shared and savoured by the volunteers who tend to it.

As Anzac Day draws near, the Currumbin Palm Beach RSL stands ready to welcome the throngs of attendees at Elephant Rock. The deep rumble of the didgeridoo will mark the day, the solemn notes of the Last Post, and the respectful silence of the crowd. It's a time to reflect, remember, and recognise the enduring spirit of those who served.

The Currumbin Palm Beach RSL's commitment to its members and the broader community is unwavering. Through its diverse range of activities and the nurturing of the newly established Veterans Garden, the Currumbin Palm Beach RSL continues to be a place of support, healing, and remembrance. As we look to the horizon, we see the dawn of Anzac Day and the promise of a community forever united in gratitude and respect for our veterans.

In the spirit of Anzac Day, let us all remember the ethos of mateship and courage that defines the Australian spirit. Lest we forget.



Anzac Day Message:

As another Anzac Day arrives, and the bugles are played and the wreaths are laid across Australia, some cold hard facts remain the same.

I repeat here the same words that I used at the dedication of the "Sufferings of War and Service Memorial" at the AWM in Canberra on 22 February 2024 – the first memorial of its kind anywhere in the world acknowledging the long-term and enduring cost of war and service to us all. War and Service can and does have consequences. And it does come home.

The human toll is all around us, in front of our eyes; although this struggle is known it remains poorly understood. For as long as the flux and woe of human frailty returns us to war to settle our petty differences and competing interests, we, as a nation will be required to account for those who so freely sign a defence service contract and we place in harm's way in our name. That responsibility falls heavily on all of us.

As a nation we have waxed and waned in that responsibility. The evidence before this Royal Commission and the Recommendations that will follow, must be a catalyst for change – the abuse and injustice, the ignorance and disbelief, the corporate malfeasance and mismanagement, and the lack of accountability and transparency can no longer to be tolerated.

So, when ceremonies are over after Anzac Day, we should all share a closing thought, first expressed by the 18th century French philosopher - Voltaire: "To the living we owe respect, but to the dead we owe only the truth."

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