

PORT PHILLIP WRITES

Stories and Poems

Gathered from the City of Port Phillip Seniors' Writing Awards 2019



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The contributions in 'Port Phillip Writes' were all submitted as entries in the 2019 City of Port Phillip Seniors' Festival Writing Awards.

A condition of entry was that all contributions are considered for publication.

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PORT PHILLIP WRITES

Stories and Poems

Port Phillip Writes Stories and Poems celebrating 15 years of publication



Close-up of Park Towers 1969. PORT PHILLIP CITY COLLECTION

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We thank the contributing writers for the 2019 edition of Port Phillip Writes for their memories, stories and poems.

We acknowledge the many writers and poets who have contributed to all editions of Port Phillip Writes. On this 15th Anniversary of the Writers Awards we especially acknowledge the contribution of two writers who have contributed to every year, Brenda Richards and Rose Stone.

Many thanks go to the judging panel: Lesley Greagg of the Older Persons Consultative Committee, Shannon Haritos of the Port Phillip Library Service, Lee Koffman and Richard Holt Writers and writing workshop facilitators and Scott Steensma esteem judge of many years. The judging panel kindly gave their time for free and brought their knowledge, insight and passion to this project.

We would like to acknowledge the hard and enthusiastic work Lesley Greagg our dedicated Port Phillip Writes guardian from

the Older Persons Consultative Committee, for being MC at the 15 years of the Port Phillip Writes Awards ceremony. Lesley also spends many long hours proofreading, organising the ceremony order and readers. As well as reading many herself!

We again would like to thank her profusely and appreciate the great value and service she has given freely to this Awards.

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Thank you to Readings in St Kilda who have contributed to the vouchers for the awards.

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INTRODUCTION

by Lesley Greagg



It is once more a great pleasure to introduce another year's entries in the City of Port Phillip's Seniors Writing Awards, now in its 15th year. This year 2019, we have 46 entries from 30 entrants (seven men and twenty-three women). Each writer is limited to two entries. It is lovely to see work from both old friends who have entered before and new entrants being published for the first time.

Until this year there were two entrants: Brenda Richards and Rose Stone who had entered every year. Sadly Rose Stone died just after last year's Awards Afternoon but not before submitting an entry. Rose was a gifted writer who using her second language could make an interesting story from the simplest of things as well as being able to do justice to a good story. Her daughter, Janie, has written an obituary for her to be included in this year's anthology. Rose Stone will be much missed.

"There is so much talent in the City of Port Phillip."

As always the topics chosen by this year's writers are varied. Several chose to write about fitting into the City of Port Phillip as a new arrival, a stranger from somewhere else. Brenda Richards tells of her past as well as offering another of Lucky, the cat's adventures. There is a heart-warming story of a fatherless Port Melbourne eight year old boy helping his mother. One story looks at what happens to Granny on Christmas Day. There is even a poem celebrating 50 years of public housing at Park Towers and a story on what to do with writer's block! There are entries to make you chuckle and others to make you think. There is so much talent in the City of Port Phillip.

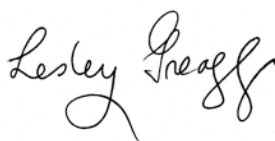
Judging the awards is always difficult and done anonymously so it is a surprise after the decisions are made to discover who we have rewarded. This year's judges were myself, Shannon Haritos of the Port Phillip Library Service, Lee Koffman and Richard Holt Writers and writing workshop facilitators and Scott Steensma esteem judge of many years. I want to thank them for the care they took and their patience and good humour.

We thank the Council of the City of Port Phillip (CoPP) for the funding generosity and hard work that enables the continuation of these awards and the preceding two weeks of our local CoPP Seniors' Festival. No other Victorian local government is as generous to its seniors' and we thank them for it. These

programs are administered by Laura Cattapan, Coordinator of Diversity and Inclusion and Sherridan Green, Community Development and Liaison Officer of Diversity and Inclusion. Both of them seem indefatigable as they cheerfully and thoughtfully work for the Seniors of Port Phillip.

We thank the library for hosting these awards as they have done from the very beginning. Again this year they organised two workshops for would-be entrants which was a great encouragement.

In closing I wish all our writers past and present well and urge you to keep on writing and improving and entering. And if you haven't entered for a while or ever, why not start now for next year?



THE SCARLET LETTER

Brenda Richards

The Council for the Single Mother and Child (CSMC) started in St. Kilda, fifty years ago. As the first self-help group in Victoria, it was the organisation that made a difference.

Its newsletter was named *The Scarlet Letter*, from the Nathaniel Hawthorne novel of the same name. It described how the red letter 'A' was compulsorily worn by women who had an ex-nuptial child, signifying their status as an adulterer.

'How come you kept your baby in 1962? Was it because you went to university?' asked the sad-faced man, who related his unhappy experience as an adoptee.

"No. It was probably because I didn't. Being fully self-supporting at sixteen, gave me an advantage."

As an itinerant worker travelling up and down the east coast of Australia I had gathered knowledge of life. I knew that asking for help can place you in a vulnerable position. I was thus able to protect myself from being helped into an 'Unmarried Mother's home,' where well-meaning people may have 'helped' the baby and me by removing her from my care. I remained independent, working until the week before she was born.

She arrived. I looked at this miracle, stunned by her beauty, but was not allowed to touch her. They stated that because she weighed just under the regulation six pounds, she needed 'special care', and so she was whipped away before I could touch her. Breast feeding was not an option. Daily I would go down to the 'prem' ward and look at her through the window.

My discharge was a week later, after signing a form, headed 'Registration of an Illegitimate Birth.' Wendy had to stay in hospital. I came in regularly and gazed in wonder through the glass.

She was discharged after another week. At last, I held my precious babe for the first time. They gave me a bottle of formula, with instructions on how to make more, and then helped me into the taxi that would take us back to my rooming house accommodation. As we drove off, Wendy started hiccupping. What should I do? The wonderful taxi driver said 'Hold her upright and pat her back'. It worked.

The pension was only available to women who were widowed, divorced or separated. If you hadn't married, you could get a small 'special benefit' which was only for a few months. The Welfare Department man told me this was because unmarried mothers were a 'dirty word.'

"Show me where it says that." He pointed to a book.

"That will have to change," I yelled, with more bravado than knowledge.

I left, not crying till I was out of his sight.

A few years later, I had moved house. Then disaster struck. The building was condemned. Working full time and searching for accommodation put me on overload.

Perhaps now the Welfare could assist? Yes, but only if I admitted myself to care as a 'mental breakdown' case. I replied that mental health wasn't the problem, finding somewhere to live was.

"Please yourself. We'll take you involuntarily in a few more weeks, anyway."

A nun came to my rescue, providing a free child placement in an aged care facility, while I re-established myself. I then moved to a house in St. Kilda. It became a home.

'Parents Without Partners' were having a meeting at the St. Kilda Town Hall. Mingling with a wider group of lone parents and sharing experiences would be great. But I had walked a different path. Most of the participants had been married. Some were looking to re-partner. I didn't fit in.

But there was an amazing bonus from this meeting. I met Eric Benjamin, who was encouraging inspirational Rosemary West to start up an organisation for single mothers, run by single mothers. I came on board.

Our first meeting was held in an empty room above the State Bank in St. Kilda. We sat on the floor. Eric donated \$10. As the first treasurer, I opened an account the next day.

Council for the Single Mother and her Child (CSMC) was formed in August 1969. Commenting on an Unmarried Mothers group in England, Patricia Harper suggested we define ourselves by what we were rather than what we were not, rejecting the negative term, and instead, referring to ourselves by the positive term "Single mothers." This reflected what we could offer our children and the community.

As CSMC grew, I was surrounded by women who did not treat me as a deficient person requiring assistance, but as an equal,

discussing ways to improve our situation. Then sadly, cancer struck. The operation was complicated.

At last I got back to the group. Life improved immensely. President, Jill Millthorpe, said I was intelligent, and should go to university. The time was right. The Council of Adult Education let me jump to year 12, which I completed over two years. Thank you, Jill and CSMC.

As an itinerant worker, adapting to the language of work mates was necessary. Luckily, earlier language skills returned, and words that were freely used as a child, were remembered. Still working, I started university, part-time. Then the Whitlam government removed the fees. I could study full-time. CSMC also succeeded in getting the Supporting Parents Benefit for all parents.

On completion of my degree, I started work in the Children's Court Clinic. The self-help experiences of CSMC were invaluable, not only for me, but hopefully for my clients. As human beings, they were my equals – not somebody I helped from a superior position. They were also giving to me. As a representative of CSMC, I became involved with the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) developing the newly formed Committee of Self Help Groups.

I'm now rethinking the Scarlet Letter. Red is the colour of energy and courage, and 'A' is for achievement. Single mothers of any description, should wear this letter with pride.

WALLY*

by Jan Harper

What can an 8-year-old boy do when he's the family breadwinner? That question occupied the mind of Wally in 1957, as he walked back from his Port Melbourne school in Nott St to his home in Garden City. He wasn't strong enough to be a boxer. He wasn't artful enough to work in a circus. And his mother, although an atheist, preached strict honesty, so theft was out of the question.

Garden City was just a spit from Station Pier where the big ocean liners docked. Wally often went down there when a ship was in and, as it left, mingled with the crowds of relatives and friends waving farewell from the wharf. Sometimes it would be one of the 'White Sisters', the *Strathnaver* or the *Strathaird*, painted pure white. Both ships had previously had separate first and tourist class areas, but had been converted to one-class ships. Being classless was decidedly in line with Wally's family values of socialism.

There was no father for Wally but there were four uncles, all working in the traditional occupation for Port men – as wharfies. One or the other would often be unloading or loading cargo in the hold of one of these passenger ships, which took general cargo as well as the passenger's trunks. It was one of the uncles who gave Wally the idea for his first job – selling coloured streamers to the relatives and friends waving off the passengers bound for London.

The timing was perfect. New passenger liners were being built every year, rising incomes allowed the middling classes to consider travel, and young people saw a 'trip to England' as their finishing school.

The tradition of throwing paper streamers between shore and ship, as it sailed away from the pier at the start of a voyage, was well established. A thick web of coloured paper spread like a lace waterfall between the two. Then came the blast of the ship's whistle and the slow easing of the ship out of the dock. Gradually the streamers broke, one by one, finalizing the connection between travellers and their friends and family.

So, armed with as many boxes of streamers as his little arms could carry, Wally went down to Station Pier for his first job. He wove his way among the crowd, catching travellers as they went up the gangway, trapping revellers as they descended after a bon voyage party on board, weaving his way among the crowds, his eyes on the lookout for the well-heeled, spruiking his wares, tugging at the heartstrings of those about to be separated. "Show them that you care", "Only tuppence a roll". He played on the emotions of lovers wanting to hold on to the last vestige of contact, to mothers whose apron strings were stretched to breaking point, or to fathers desperately proud of their sons departing for the adventure they had never had.

Later, as his mother popped his takings into the teapot on the mantelpiece, Wally could not have felt more satisfied.

The other income from Wally's efforts was not in cash but in kind. It provided most of the evening meals for his mother and himself, and the leftovers finished up in his school lunches. There were two take-home stipends - rabbits and fish.

The rabbits came from Fisherman's Bend, not too far from Wally's home, where the sandy soil made it easy for rabbits to burrow. This patch was undeveloped, with grass enough to feed more rabbits than Melbournians could eat, if they had known they were there, had not been too lazy to harvest them or had not found them unpalatable. Wally kept a favourite ferret, Felix, that he always took rabbiting. He would cover all the burrow entrances with nets, pin them down, and drop Felix into one of the holes. When Felix chased them out, Wally grabbed them with the quickness of a fox – sometimes one, sometimes as many as three at a time.

He skinned and cleaned the rabbits right at the Bend, leaving the remains for the seagulls and the rats, both of which were in plague proportions there. Wally was not squeamish; nor was he cognizant of the debate about animal rights, still in its infancy.

It is certain that his mother never cooked Julia Child's *Lapin à la Moutarde*. But she did cook fricasseed rabbit with parsley, curried rabbit and rabbit stew, which sometimes included wild mushrooms picked by Wally at the Bend.

If it wasn't rabbit for dinner it would be fish. Normally Wally fished by rod and line from his little kayak. He had plenty of mentors, all of whom loved the smell of fish as much as he did, all of whom delighted in the silver sweetness of the Bay. One of his uncles was a keen angler, and there were professional fishers on the Bend who befriended him. They fished out of rowboats and made a subsistence living by selling their catch, often directly from Liardet's Jetty.

Wally regularly took out a couple of snapper or flathead. He cleaned and scaled his catch right there on the beach, and again the seagulls rejoiced in the free meal. When dinner time came he would devour his mother's fish and chips or fish cakes.

These three sources of income saw Wally and his mother out until he was 14, at which age he could leave school and get a job. Again, the timing was perfect. Although Wally continued fishing in his spare time, development at Fisherman's Bend meant the number of rabbits was reducing exponentially. As for the paper streamers, passenger ships began to decline in number. And then the coloured streamers were banned - they polluted the Bay and the authorities balked at the cost of cleaning up the wharfs.

Wally had to wait until he turned 18 before he could become what he had always been destined to be – a wharfie. But that is another story.

* Name has been changed

TIME

by Lois Best

I'm the observer. My family are squabbling and laughing around the dining room table or they're in the kitchen clearing up after the main course and preparing the pudding. The familiarity and confusion is such that I am no longer sure which part of the family supplied the venue for this Christmas dinner. The biggest house with the biggest kitchen. It's all very new.

It's the first time in years that the family are all in the same city at the same time but look what has happened to me. I have become that old one who gets sat in the chair tucked in the corner. Redundant, overlooked, except for 'don't forget to give Granny her card'.

Would they believe me if I told them about past Christmases? Especially that special Christmas when the overseas visitors came. Was it really fifty years ago? Would they believe me that it still feels like yesterday? Would they believe me if I told them not to trust time? Time, fifty years, half a century, gone in a flash.

Back then I was the one, the centre of the household, the centre of everything. My table, my cooking, my trimmings, my perfectly smooth gravy for my perfectly roasted chicken.

Now this one is vegetarian, berating that one for eating chicken. This one is vegan, berating that one for eating potato salad with egg mayonnaise. A gaggle of family fighting for space in the kitchen, pooling what they have supplied to cater for their own family's dietary whims and preferences.

This one upending a pudding from its plastic container, bought from the supermarket yesterday. That one opening a carton of custard to pour over it. Another one getting ice-cream out of the freezer because someone else doesn't like custard.

My Christmas pudding had hung in its calico bag in the pantry for six weeks. It was the triumph of the table that Christmas, the flaming brandy delighting the youngest ones whose only reason for nibbling at the pudding was to find the hidden sixpences. They didn't know I knew that. They knew, however, how generously I traded sixpences for cents. They knew that I kept the sixpences for the next year. To serve with my pudding I made my perfectly smooth custard, and the brandy sauce for the discerning palate, on the day. But ice-cream on Christmas pudding? No, no, no, never.

Is this really my lot now? The observer, my culinary and conversation skills no longer recognised nor required. Then my laughing daughter calls to me.

'Mum, do you remember that Christmas, with the rellies from overseas? I was about ten. Which kid choked on a sixpence from the Christmas pudding?'

'That was your little brother'. I call back, smiling. 'Joe, you were five.'

I remember now. It hadn't been funny on the day it had almost been tragic. Strange that I'd forgotten such a drama. Maybe it's because so much else has happened since then. So this is my lot. My family enjoying themselves, being together, and together with me, recalling and remembering and knowing that I am here.

It is then that I recognise the real culprit causing my mood. It's not me, nor is it my family.

The real culprit here is time.

THE LEMON TREE

by Lois Daley



Lemon tree planted 1929



Albert Edward Daley 1902 – 1976 and
Jessie Georgina Crasha 1904 - 1991

I am a Meyer Lemon Tree, a well-known species planted in areas near the sea and suitable in sandy soil and full sun. This year in 2019 I celebrate my 90th birthday.

I was given to Albert Edward Daley in 1929 when he purchased his first home built on land in Port Melbourne by the State Savings Bank of Victoria. The homes were of an English style, two storey of grand proportions of their day and accompanied by large blocks of land with room to grow fruit trees, and plant lawns of buffalo grass.

I was planted in a north facing back yard and this is where, to this day. I still reside.

I have been climbed on by many children; I starred in a movie with a small child sitting under me who was visiting her grandmother. But my fame is the abundance of lemons I have produced in my 90 years. No-one has kept count, but let's say it is in the thousands.

No visitor leaves my home without a basket of my fruit. I am pure of spirit; have never been sprayed, only fed at my base with blood and bone, bore water quenches my thirst, which is not salty but perhaps contains magic ingredients.

Around my wide base are sprinkled the ashes of Albert, and his wife, Jessie, as was their wish.

My present carer and owner, Lois, also nourishes the soil around my large wide gnarled trunk and branches.

One needs to ask,

"Who will nurture me when the Daley clan is no longer living in Garden City, Port Melbourne? No one knows! But one hopes I will still be here in the back yard.

ST KILDA, MY FATHER AND ME

by Lola McHarg

My father loves the sea although I never see him in it. He says it helps his asthma. He grew up in Potts Point and had a weekend shack at Yowie Bay where he met my mother. When they moved to Melbourne they bought a house in St Kilda and named it 'Yowie'. In the 1920s my father anglicised his long Czech family name but his voice still retains a slight accent.

Melbourne's streets are frightening for me as a small child. 'Refos!', 'Dagoes!', 'Wogs!', 'Bolts!', 'Nazis!'. We no longer walk our tiny, sweet Dachshund on the streets.

It is Saturday morning and Acland Street is a safe, busy, familiar place. We buy French cream horns and pig's ears at Monarch Cake shop, my father slipping comfortably into another language. Then onto South Melbourne for liverwurst, black bread and coffee beans.

This afternoon we are taking the chain-driven car punt from the end of Williamstown Road right across the Yarra River. Oh! so scary and so very exciting.

My father used to take my sister to the footy at the St Kilda Junction Oval, but one Saturday she cheered so loudly for the Saints she was poked in the back by an umbrella. She never went again.

My father's hobbies and tastes are eclectic. He and mother subscribe to the Melbourne Symphony Concerts, leaving home in evening dress and wafts of Chanel and Bay Rum.

He also adores playing the Comedy Harmonists endlessly on our gramophone. We have permanently booked Friday night seats at the Palais and we also visit the Victory and the Astor cinemas.

He returned from his last European work trip with a movie camera, a screen, a projector and a splicer. He makes movies around St Kilda and he belongs to a cinema club and enters competitions.

He teaches me to read books and maps. He challenges me intellectually and patiently answers all my hows? and whys? as I perch on the lavatory seat watching him shave.

He subscribes to the National Geographic magazine over which we pore together. He introduces me to the writings of Marco Polo and I long to travel the Silk Road.

We explore all the numerous local jetties and piers. My favourite is Station Pier. The crowds around us crying with happiness and the sound of many languages fills the air as hundreds of passengers disembark. My father tells me they are refugees and explains why they had to leave their homes. I am sad.

My father has an important job at the Yallourn briquette factory. I miss him and he misses me and St Kilda. Each Friday night he comes home on the steam train. We meet him at Caulfield Station.

September school holidays 1947. I am sixteen and very much into fashion. Mother has bought tickets to the Spring Fashion Parade in the Myer Great Hall. It will feature the 'New

Look' straight from Europe. This is now
the rage and I am very excited.

However, my father is extremely ill with
bronchial asthma so mother and my aunt
will stay with him. I am to take my young
sister and my cousin instead.

Mother has set up a bed in the dining room
where there is a briquette stove. It is stifling
hot. My father is very distressed. Coughing,
wheezing and gasping for breath. 'Does
he even know I am here?' I stroke his thin
shoulder and kiss his cold, sweaty cheek.
'Bye Daddy'.

About 3pm my heart seems to miss a beat.
I gasp for breath and the room darkens.
I can no longer see the catwalk nor hear
the Compere. The young girls are restless
and I want to be home but we are too
polite to leave.

Finally, we cross our front lawn. My aunt
comes to greet us. I put up my hand, 'Don't
tell me. I know. Daddy is dead'.

They take me into the large, chilly front
room. This is not his bedroom. The bed has
an elegant rosewood headboard. He lies
beneath a forest green, ruched, silk spread.

I do not kiss him. I do not cry. Instead, I put a
finger lightly on his shin. His leg is like marble
– so cold and so hard.

He is fifty-two.

The end.

TOO MUCH IN COMMON

by Marygrace Levakis

He likes walking along the beach and so do I; so do I.
 I like candle-lit dinners and so does he. So does he.
 He likes to work out at the gym and so do I. So do I.
 I like to move to some pulsating beat
 and so does he. So does he.
 He likes to take me to the drive-in
 And promptly falls asleep.
 But so do I. So do I.
 One day I received an invite to a fancy dress party
 and invited him.
 He wanted to dress up in my clothes
 And wear one of my wigs.
 I told him I'd rather he dress up as a cowboy.
 And he did. THAT he did.
 He said since I'm always aiming for his neck
 Perhaps like Dracula I should be dressed
 But I went as the statue of liberty
 Because I believe in freedom and democracy.
 At the party, he turned real queer
 Stroking all the fella's beards
 And then I realised, oh dear!
 He likes men
 And so do I. So do I.
 We have too much in common
 He and I, he and I.

PORT BOWLO GAMES

by Megan Jones

With just one look Sylvie knew the tall, dark and handsome stranger at the bar of the Port Melbourne Bowling Club would not be a stranger for long.

From the casual way he'd flung his sky blue 100% cashmere sweater loosely over his shoulders to the tips of his no socks timberland deck shoes, she could see he was all class. That was Sylvie's expertise. Hadn't she driven through Paris in a sports car, lunched at The Ritz when in London and Paris, and celebrated her 30th Birthday in Chad.

Sylvie didn't bowl, and was not the least interested in learning, but she paid her concession membership for somewhere to go, a reason to dress up and, quite possibly, a chance to flirt.

"Let's face it," she told her friend Zelda, in her snotty nose drunk voice.

"I joined the bowling club for somewhere to go."

Zelda knew Sylvie too well to take offense.

Everyone knew the Bowlo was a respectable place. Why even the tradie TV presenter Scott Cam, from The Block, was a regular.

"Beware Piscean men with blue eyes," Zelda giggled, as she put two glasses of chardonnay down on placemats adverting the Port Colts.

"What do you mean, my dear? I don't understand?"

"I saw you eyeing off the new talent," she said, bobbing her head backwards in the direction of the handsome stranger.

"Has he got blue eyes? How do you know he is a Piscean?"

"Joke, Joyce,

Tis girl code for be careful around dangerous and sexy men."

"Zelda, leave off. I have no idea what you are talking about," Sylvie said, sipping her wine quickly to ensure she'd be at the bar before he left.

Playing it cool, she made no attempt to attract to his attention but meekly waited her turn to order. The handsome stranger bent over and brushed his lips to her ear.

"You are the most beautiful woman in the room."

She responded with her most fetching smile.

As the barman hovered, the handsome stranger handed over a \$50 note, and looking directly into her eyes, he said.

"A lady should not have to pay for her own drinks. Certainly, not while I am here."

"Why thank you, dear sir," she replied in her best Scarlet O'Hara imitation.

As they walked back to her table, with his arm proprietorially protecting her lower back, she felt a spring in her step. Zelda had tactfully disappeared to the ladies.

"I'm Bill. I don't know anyone here as I am new to Port Melbourne," proffering his right hand.

"I am Sylvie," she said, her face splotched with embarrassment, as her bejeweled right hand lingered longer than strictly necessary for an introductory handshake.

"I am buying the penthouse flat in the Mirvac block opposite Station Pier. I'm down here today to inspect the renovations. I live in Macedon, you see. I, simply, couldn't stand the previous owners' Versace style. I go more for the New York penthouse look myself."

"Oh, I know what you mean," she replied, never having been to New York.

"What about you, Sylvie?"

PORT BOWLO GAMES (CONT.)

by Megan Jones

"Oh, nothing so glamorous. I own a little two bedroom cottage off Heath Street. It is nothing to write home but it suits me."

"My dear, I am sure you have exquisite taste. That Chanel jacket you are wearing screams effortless style."

He must be gay was her first thought.

"I know you may think this a little presumptuous but I'd love a woman's opinion of the renovations. My wife died a few years ago and I have no one else to ask," he said, reaching for his G & T.

He is not gay was her second thought.

"I know we have just met but I feel a strong connection with you, Sylvie. Something, I don't feel very often," he said, finishing his drink.

She blushed for she knew she took care of herself, not like some at the club. She had been a runway model in her day, a mannequin as they were called in the 1960s. She still spent a fortune on herself, hoping a suitable man would fall victim to her beauty, faded as it was.

"I've got to visit the flat tomorrow. Will you come with me? I can pick you up on the way through. Would you like me to drive you home now?"

"Oh no," she remembered Zelda. "I am here with my friend."

"I live in Heath Street three up from the corner, behind the bowling club. The hawthorn brick place," she said, writing her phone number on one of the coasters.

Finally, I have found Mr. Right, she thought as she watched him jauntily walk out the door.

The penthouse was nothing but a shell, and

the builders had downed tools before the couple visited the next day.

Walking to the bank of windows facing the Bay lighthouse, Bill waved his arm to show her where he had planned to position the Italian Marble kitchen island bench.

"But, darling, if you'd prefer it to go somewhere else, just say so," he said, clinching his arms around her shoulders in an embrace.

Later, at her place, he produced a bottle of Veuve Cliquot which he served in two coffee mugs he found on the sink.

When she woke, she was happy but bewildered. How could she possibly have fallen asleep with such a gorgeous man in her bed?

"Where's lover boy then?" a grinning Zelda quizzed, as she sidled up to Sylvie next day, at the bar.

"Your round love," she added, trying to keep the amusement out of her voice."

Handing over her card to pay for the drinks, Sylvie turned to her friend.

"I haven't heard. He's got my number. Said he'd lost his phone. I mean, we only saw each other yesterday so it's not been long."

"Sorry love," the barman said.

"Says here, card declined."

A TRUE BLUE

by Raffaella Cava

It makes no difference
That you are an Aussie,
born and bred in Melbourne;
That you walk putting on a pose
Wearing THONGS in winter,
your loose TRUCKIES and SUNNIES
over your nose.

It doesn't matter
that at every second word,
you say:
MAN, RANDOM, G'DAY,
When with your MATES
you MUCK AROUND and play

Or when, glued with them to the TELLIE,
You yell: "Go Blues!"
SHOUT for the next ROUND of booze,
MACCAs and fried SPUDS on your plate,
Or just nurse some cokes
With other BLOKES,
Where you stay,
To sober up
Before you drive away.

You might be skilled in cutting words in half
So that:
Excellent becomes ACE,
An uncool person, DAGGY
A service station, SERVO
An afternoon, ARVO
An avocado, AVO.

From you I learn
To stay focussed and concise,
Uncluttered,
Minimalist in words' size.
Hands in pockets,
a steady voice,
void of emotion,
filled with poise;
never personal,
even and nice,
ever so precise;
Thus, I avoid shaming you,
in front of another TRUE BLUE.

But when you come to me,
Your Italian mum,
My dear son,
You don't come TO GRAB
a few SNAGS
with sauce and veggies, on a BARBIE to roast
Nor BICKIES or Lamingtons, for tea
Or eggs on toast.

All THAT stays out of MY door!
No ketchup on MY pasta!
No matter how long it takes,
I leaf out fresh basil,
Peel the garlic,
And toss the lot
with roasted pine nuts
and olive oil,
all in the one pot.

My Pesto will make you remember
How to say whole words,
Filled with
melodies of songbirds,
the sounds of Venice and Florence
the warmth of ancient dialects
From Naples, Calabria and Sicily,
That have found their way,
All the way to Carlton's Little Italy,
And from there they managed to crawl,
Up to Port Phillip's Town Hall,
In Carlisle Street, East St Kilda
Where, new Aussies like me, come to sing
Waltzing Matilda.

We came to swear allegiance
And share with your ancestral land
Now ours, too.
So we, each, like you,
become a TRUE BLUE.

A TRUE BLUE (CONT.)

by Raffaella Cava

Your blood is greener than red, or blue
My son!
Thousands of Pestos
Made with tons of basil leafs
grown in the sun,
In your Aussie veins, they run.

Today, I am on a SICKY at home
To make some real food by the book
To remind you from where
You also get your charms and looks!

They come from me too, you know?
And your loud ancestors
Who ate their pasta in a bowl.
I, like them, at home,
Gesticulate when I talk and talk away
My angst,
My split identity,
My unforeseen destiny,
My longings to stay
With the sounds of my Mediterranean sea,
So far from you and me.

Like every Italian MAMMA,
I hover over your steaming *food-ah*,
And tell you:
MANGIA, MANGIA!
It is-ah good-ah.

EAT, EAT!
I command,
Oil dripping from your chin,
Or should I say:

DIG IN, my son,
DIG IN!

YOU LEAD, I'LL FOLLOW

by Ruth Parker

The pharmacist tells her she'll need the largest size. It's cold and dark outside and they're standing in the bright lit centre of a chemist shop, next to a twin tower rack of reading glasses and a display of organic skin care products.

She's holding her hands out in front of her, parallel, to indicate the width of her husbands hips.

"Definitely a large," the chemist repeats, after she's scooped her right hand out and around illustrating the girth of her husband's pot belly, saying "and you know, he's not small... down there," gesturing towards her groin.

"The trouble is," the chemist continues, "we're all out of large, it's medium or nothing I'm afraid."

She's left a pot of spaghetti bolognaise on a low simmer, on the stove top in her kitchen a few blocks away. She usually thinks of it as his kitchen – there's been years of it being his kitchen, because he's usually the one in there chopping, dicing, tidying things, ordering and reordering, needing to keep things just as he likes them. But since his operation, then being in recovery mode on the couch in the living room adjacent to the kitchen, she's had to open recipe books and cut and dice and boil and stew again, and for the space of a few weeks, has resorted to calling it her kitchen.

It zaps her mind back years, to days at her mother's place, just before her wedding, her mother saying, "just start off with the bolognaise I taught you, you can build your menu from there. You have to keep him happy. Remember an efficient wife will end up a happy wife."

She thinks she's timed it right: a five minute walk to the chemist, in the brisk winter air with her parka zipped up; a brief, perhaps five minute conversation with the pharmacist; then an equidistant walk home. Surely the bolognaise won't be sticking to the pan or burning. Then again she may have forgotten exactly what simmer means, and she may have turned the heat up a fraction too high, and she never did concentrate very well when her mother was telling her things, especially in the kitchen.

She buys the packet of mediums. What else can she do? It's lucky she brought a substantial sized shoulder bag, because the packet's bulky. There's a photo on the front of a grey headed man in a business shirt and pants, weight resting on one leg, arms crossed, and in a small circle, off to one side, a close up of hips in nappy-like underwear with the words "fits like real underwear" running around the circles rim. Then some high-lighted dot points:

- fast absorption
- discrete fit
- odour control.

Her husband's not a good patient. It's as if he can't wait. She understands that he has to lie horizontal, keeping his hips still, but does that really mean that he can't raise his arms to hold a book and read, or type onto an iPad screen or lap top?"

"You could be occupying yourself a lot more," she's been thinking, but not saying, lately, standing there behind the kitchen bench, interrupted as he tinkles his bell.

YOU LEAD, I'LL FOLLOW (CONT.)

by Ruth Parker

Stepping out of the shop she already knows the mediums won't be right. If they're too small they'll tug at his hips and it will be difficult and unpleasant when she's bending down, straining to pull them up over his thighs, attempting to secure them bellow his belly. But it's either the mediums or nothing, for this evening anyway. Tomorrow, she just knows it, he'll send her off on another mission. To a larger chemist in a more distant suburb. She'll have something else on the stove, or in the oven, and she'll have to do it all over again.

Approaching an intersection just not far from the shop - caught in a reverie about which pasta she'll cook and how much cheese she'll need to grate - she runs into a friend. She knows she only has five minutes to get home, but their eyes meet and they talk for a while.

The friend says she's just been to the beach. "I often walk down there in the evening," she says, "It's dark, but that's ok. If I get into trouble I can always wack someone with my umbrella," she continues, holding an orange and blue geometric patterned umbrella up and out, simulating a sharp, short but very effective wack in the damp, crisp winter air.

The friend doesn't have a husband. She's never had one. She's travelled an off the beaten track in life and actually no-one's ever proposed to her. Her coloured 'once was a hippy-tried being a lesbian-always have been an artist' past has meant that she's certainly had lovers, but no-one she's ever had to run errands for on a sharp, wet winters night, leaving bolognaise simmering on a stove.

After the friend departs she checks left and right at the intersection then steps out onto a zebra crossing. The streets are wide and the white stripes of the crossing, punctuated by the black bitumen spaces between them, seem to stretch and extend further than they should. A glitch, a kink, an unzipped moment in time and she sees a zebra crossing. There it is, close, beside her, it's sleek coat and diagonal, hard edged, off centre stripes zigzagging around it's form.

She reaches up ruffling her hand along it's tufted mohawk mane, then raising a second hand she grabs hold of two bristly shanks of mane hair, hoisting herself up and over on to the animals back. Thwack goes her bag, down inert, a strangely lifeless creature now, onto one of the white stripes of the crossing.

"Lets go." She whispers, leaning forward, her hot breath entering the zebra's right ear.

"Go, my beauty, you lead, I'll follow."

MY COUNTRY

by Alex Njoo

We are an island-continent,
adrift in a brown sea.
A large forgotten relic, of dry deserts and
dense forests.
An emptiness that swayed the imagination of
those who came,
to claim it as theirs.

We have no land boundaries
to share,
no neighbouring tribes
to dispute racial divides.
Nor languages to
quarrel with.

Nor a spoken word to share
with others like us.

We are a blot
in the landscape.
A blinking light in an Antipodean
summer;
forever dazzled by the mythical truth:

Terra Nullius.

MORE THAN DREAM

by Allan Lake

I died in my sleep last night,
believed death was taking me
to nowhere. Why not? Death
took a sweet girl half my age,
takes blameless kids every day.
Wasn't happy about dying but knew
there was nothing to do but accept.
So much less trouble than birth!
No discomfort, tears, blinding lights,
rough handling, unwelcome kisses,
strange voices, drafts. Deep sleep.

But then the horrid alarm. I awoke
feeling disappointed/relieved/flat.
Always the damned 'to-do' list.
I realised death, a rather kindly
beast that's now my acquaintance,
was yet to pay its obligatory visit.
Till then there's coffee and this.

SPECTACULAR VIEWS FROM MY WINDOWS

by Anna Rogalina

SUNRISE

Magic moments of Sunrise
Are pleasant picture for my eyes!
Bright Colours grow above the place
They put a smile upon my face!
When night has melted into the Bay
Happy birds begin to greet the day!

DOLPHINS

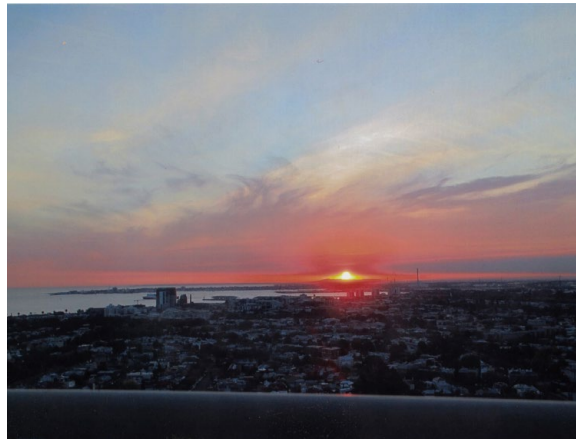
One Summer, when I looked on the Bay,
I saw a couple of dolphins making a play!
Their performance was graceful and nice
I could not take from them my eyes!
Shortly after, they left the Bay,
But that view just made my day!

SUNSET

The reddish colour of Sunset
Looks so magically great!
The melted Sun will soon be gone
To deeps of Bay for rest till dawn!
But stars and Moon upon a blue sky
Will make the view of night divine!



Sunrise from Park Towers



Sunset from Park Towers

YOUNG AT HEART

by Anna Rogalina



Park Towers Circa 1969.

Park Towers 50th Anniversary 1969 – 2019

Park Towers is 50 years old, our High Riser!
Time makes Him stronger and wiser!
He looks old-fashioned and modest,
I should say it, to be honest.
Here so many people live
Under his wide and long roof.
They speak different languages,
And of that, He is living proof!
The views through His windows
Are so beautiful by day and by night!
The moon is reflecting on the Bay
That gleaming by the light!
Ships are entering our harbor
To see in reality from the Bay
Our Young at Heart Giant Celebrant,
A Hero of the Day!

I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO SYDNEY

by Aziza Khamlichi

Living in beautiful Balmain two minutes away from the Ferry Station. I could happily travel with commuters and tourists. I enjoyed looking at the blue sky, the blue sea, the views of the Opera house and the Sydney Bridge. Or walk across the Anzac Bridge on my way to the fish market.

Just love it!

Suddenly, with a heavy heart and feeling home sick, I land in Port Phillip. I go to explore the lake and get lost when it got dark. I try to find my way to Chapel Street and I get lost. I go for a walk all along the beach and I get lost. I attempt to explore Albert Park and I get lost.

I take my grandson to school, on the way I pass two elderly sisters living next to each other attending to their front gardens. They became the highlight of my life. Violet was about to celebrate her hundredth birthday. Gwen not far behind. I thought that is a celebration not to be missed.

I stop by after dropping my grandson and over a cup of tea I am surprised to find the inside of the house has not been changed in over seventy years. It looks like the time has stood still. I learn about how they came to Australia from England and the amazing history of Port Phillip and the wonderful places to visit.

At the school I meet other parents and I get involved in play dates, school pickups and other events.

I meet a sick mother with her two children who go to the same school and offer to pass by and take the kids with my grandson. She became my best friend.

My next-door neighbour opened her door and said, "Welcome to Albert Park, make my home an extension to yours." Her three daughters became my granddaughters and I help them with their French and Spanish homework. The girls have different diets; I cook for the vegetarian, the Vegan and the carnivore.

My neighbour organised a welcome party, and I made many friends from different ethnicities. This gave me the opportunity to meet some of the local community and share different cultures, languages also food from around the world. We get together for any excuse, Australia Day, St Kilda Festivals, Melbourne Open House, picnics by the beach and the botanical Garden. Even setting tables by the grassed area on front of our houses to watch the display of the fighter jets at the end of the Grand Prix. Although it makes the dogs bark, the birds flight away and the children squeal for the excitement and terror.

I take my neighbour's two dogs for a walk while she had to go to the hospital in an emergency with her daughter. Disaster; one of the dogs run away and I panic. Passers-by all offer to help find the dog. Well, this created such a commotion. All the community came together some running on foot, others on bikes or driving they kept looking until they found the dog. Through this incident I gain many friends and discover other neighbours who need help with their baby and they become my adopted family. This introduced me to the local mothers group and I enjoyed the yearly toddler's birthday parties at Vincent Park.

I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO SYDNEY (CONT.)

by Aziza Khamlichi

I meet a young manager at Bunning's from my country and he invited me to his baby's naming party where I met other people whom invited me to their parties. The circle of friends became bigger. Especially during Ramadan, the fasting month and celebrations.

Then my cat started disappearing. I put a note on his collar with my phone number and soon I get a call. I found out where my cat has been going. And I added a friend who would feed my cat when I am away.

I joined the Melbourne Sport and Aquatic Centre and what do you know I gather wonderful friends. They invite me to their second homes and share trips to discover other places.

I join Port Phillip Active Life for more activities, bush walks and weekends away.

And my favourite, University of the Third Age which is food for body, mind and soul. I love Songs in French, creative writing, films and documentaries, French for pleasure and what a pleasure! As a volunteer, I love taking photos for the seminars and events.

Five years later, I am no longer a stranger to the area. I have found the sights to rival those in Sydney. The trams take me everywhere. I can easily walk by the beach to watch the little penguins coming home at dusk, pass Luna Park and stop by Acland Street: Cakes galore.

Port Phillip pier is the best place to enjoy, sun set and the sun rise. Look at the Spirit of Tasmania leaving or coming back. From here I can see the New Year Fire Works as well.

And the good news, I don't need to go very far or get lost.

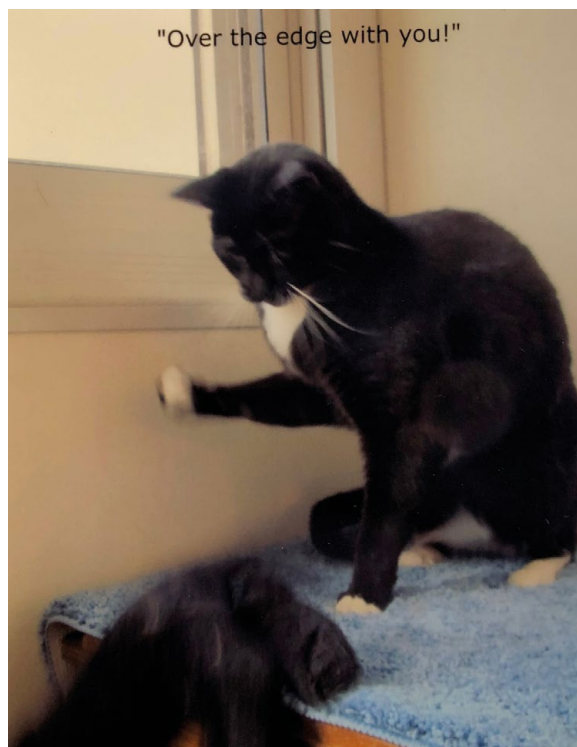
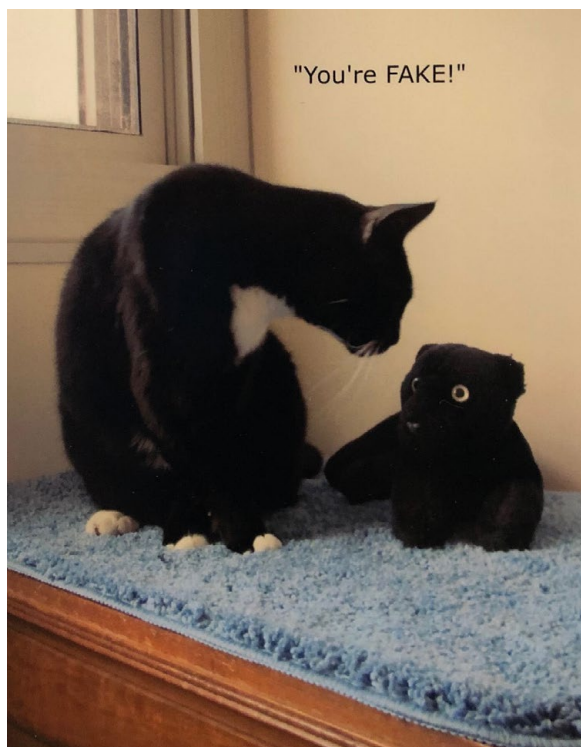
Since I landed at Port Phillip my feet haven't touched the ground. I became a part of the community. Never a dull moment; so many twists and turns. Violet is almost a hundred and five, recently she went to Aged Care, still very much alert and sweet. Gwen had a hip replacement and is doing very well. The sick mother sadly died leaving the children and I keep in contact with them. I am glad to have known their late mother. Now the babies are at prep school. And the next-door neighbour's girls at the local college and Melbourne university.

Life goes on: looking after each other pets, minding children, helping in times of crisis and sharing happy events. I could not wish for a better place to be: Green, clean and well maintained. Would I ever go back to Sydney: NO way! This is my Port Phillip!

"FAKE NEWS"

by Barbara Anne Magee

"What's 'fake news'?" a child might ask,
Well, explaining this is no easy task,
It's a term oft' used by America's president,
The current, that is, so it's not always evident
If "fake" means untrue, or just inconvenient,
The latter meaning it's far more expedient
To pretend things aren't true, to be in denial,
Though for most of the world, this proves such a trial,
We're not just old-fashioned, or even cynical,
And this situation is far worse than comical,
But there's still room for hope, for in 2020,
There may be a leader with wisdom aplenty!



LUCKY THE CAT-DOG

by Brenda Richards

It's the 1960s. Lucky the cat still lives in the rooming house in St. Kilda, and with the help of the roomers, still runs the Kid Kat Klub.

Wendy moved into one of the bungalows at the back of the rooming house in St. Kilda, with her mother, Kathy.

Long term roomers, Desley and Vonnie were drinking tea in the communal kitchen.

"I've tried really hard to talk to Kathy, but she dodges me. She seems scared."

"Maybe she's just shy," Desley replied.

"It's not easy moving into somewhere new, as a lone parent," said Vonnie.

"The kid's name is Wendy. She's just started at the school up the road, and rides the little bike that stands at the side of the bungalow. She seems even lonelier than her mother."

"I saw Lucky talking to her yesterday."

"He's not talking to many people today. He's hurt his paw and is limping a bit."

"I'd better have a look at it, and I'll make sure Wendy and her Mum know about the Kid Kat Klub."

"Poor Lucky. He'll be so upset if he can't get there."

It was home time. A lot of the kids had their mothers collecting them from school. Some had a dog in tow. Everyone seemed to know everyone else. Maybe one day she would get to know them. If only she had a dog, they might talk to her.

She rode up the side lane to the bungalow, leant the bike up against the wall and went inside.

A little bit later, she came back out and sat on the step. It was a lovely sunny afternoon. She wished she had someone to play with. Lucky limped up to her.

"Hello pussycat. What have you done to your foot?"

Lucky looked down sadly at his paw and shook his head. He said "Murr."

"You poor little man. Did you have some dinner?"

Vonnie came out with some food for him. She put it down near the front of Wendy's bike and introduced herself, then told Wendy about the Kid Kat Klub which was not far away. She explained that it was really Lucky's club. He helped her and her friends to run it.

"But with his sore paw, he won't be able to go to it for a while."

"Maybe that's why he looks sad?"

"If your Mum says it's ok, I can take you up tomorrow and you can see it. She can come too. It's on every weekend, both days, at 2 o'clock."

Wendy ran inside to tell her mum as Vonnie had a look at Lucky's paw. Lucky was unhappy. He couldn't even say 'Murr,' He just said 'Mmmm.'

After she came home from the club, Wendy found Lucky sitting near the bungalow. She told him how good it was.

"All the kids asked where you were, Lucky. They missed you."

Lucky pricked his ears up and looked at her. Vonnie had put a bandage on his paw. Wendy patted it gently.

'Don't worry, Lucky. I can help you. I've got a plan.

Lucky pricked up his ears again.

Wendy took the little bamboo basket off her bike and put it on the ground. She placed a small soft towel in it. When Lucky finished his meal, she lifted him gently on the towel and rocked the basket until he went to sleep.

Next morning, when he woke up, she lifted him out gently so he could eat his breakfast. He limped around a little bit before coming back to sit beside her.

Wendy helped him into the basket again and hooked it back on the bike. She practiced wheeling him around the backyard.

After she did this a few times, she took him for a ride around the yard. He pricked his ears up and looked like he was smiling.

After lunch, Vonnie asked Wendy if she wanted to go to the club again.

"Yes," said Wendy. "But I've got a few things to do first. I know the way now, so I'll see you up there."

Again Wendy brought out the towel. Lucky limped over to her and placed his good paw on the edge of the basket. Wendy helped him in. Then she hopped on the bike and started riding up the street. Lucky's ears could be seen just over the edge of the basket.

They passed one of the kids from school, walking a dog.

"What's that funny thing you've got on your bike," the girl asked.

"It's my dog," said Wendy.

"It doesn't look like much of a dog to me."

"It's a cat-dog."

"Alright, make him bark."

"Bark boy, Bark," said Wendy adding "Woof, Woof" with her head turned away.

Lucky said "Wurrff, Wurrff," in his deepest voice.

The children were glad to see Lucky at the club. Wendy told them about the girl who said he wasn't much of a dog. They all agreed that he was a good cat-dog, and started barking.

"He could be cat-frog if he wanted," a boy said, making frog noises. "He could be a cat-horse," said another, neighing.

"Or a cat-sheep," or "a cat-duck." They thought up more animals, along with matching sounds. Lucky joined in imitating them.

It was hilarious. Everyone was so happy with their inventions and Lucky's attempts to copy them. They decided that he was the best cat in the world. Lucky sat up straight in the basket, smiling, as the children waved good bye to their cat-dog and his chauffeur.

'See you next week,' they called out to them, as Wendy waved goodbye.

Lucky said 'Murr-Wurrff.'

A TRIP TO THE COUNTRY

by Bruce Cormick

Steam and Ashes swirling, shunting carriages rattling, squealing wheels screeching the train departed the station. Leaving the stately dressed couple and small child standing amongst the stack of luggage too hard to handle.

Nodding to the women the man walked along the worn pavement following the red brick building to a small grilled window reflecting the glare of the afternoon sun. Stopping there, holding a hand up to shade his face, speaking murmured words of request, soliciting a desired effect.

From within a porter appeared neatly dressed with a small cap upon his head making his way along with a trolley following. Loading the luggage on quickly with a shy smile he stepped slightly aside so as to not be in the way.

He noticed the pretty young girl about eight years of age standing behind a tall well-dressed woman holding her parasol as protection for the sun, her dark thick hair caught up in a bun covered by a feathered hat. Standing erect and tall her unsmiling face covered by a small veil the women turned to the porter and gave little cough as to draw his attention.

"Mam" showing respect the porter politely doffed his hat then with a little bow proceeded to the trolley lifting the handle waiting for more instructions. A handkerchief appeared in this tall women's hand imitating a flag waving. Moving slowly away where they could make their exit from the station. Indicating, to the young girl Anne do not stray. An elegant walk she floated along towards the ramp where above a trap waited to carry them, the porter was assisted by the driver to load the luggage so they could be on their way.

Standing waiting beside the trap the well-dressed man had been watching their approach tapping his brass embossed cane as if impatient or was it for show or was it for reproach, or was he pretending or in a hurry to go.

"My dear " he addressed the tall women as she attended him, taking her arm to lead the way. "Come Anne come follow quickly please," his voice a pleasant sound Anne loved to hear, she skipped along happily only wanting to be near.

The graceful couple their heads bent towards each other making whispers and coded language that was not for little girls to hear. Plans and conclusions had all been decided, to shock, to wound a frail child this day. Her both parents had departed her world creating despair an accident in a motor car that was so rare, sent them to death that no one thought fair, left to this couple for comfort and care. Anne the daughter so young of the deceased pair. A childless couple this uncle and aunt not prepared for a gift so rare, their knowledge denied of happiness that children do bring. The answer was confusion of how to begin, not understanding that the blond little girl that true love would bring.

A resistance to change was of their mind, selfishness, callous indifference to the fragile mind of this child.

Surprise on Anne's face told her of the horror of their intent the trap had arrived at the boarding school gate.

A wail of despair caught at her throat seeing through blurred eyes she alighted the trap, feeling unwanted, distressed Anne clutched the doll to her breast covering it with tears rolling freely down her face, alone to be abandoned to be her future fate. Depressed and saddened she led the way a part of unhappiness to end this once happy day.

A woman appeared at the door with a fractured smile and took her hand while the elderly couple just wandered away. Anne was led into a great hall the fractured smile had slipped away from the matron who was leading the way. Not a word said as she was led along to a room with two beds and another child stood. She welcomed Anne with a little smile, understanding what was felt by as a time gone by, she enclosed the girl in her arms so kind that Anne felt Amelia's love entwined.

Together from that day forward they were always a pair taking holidays together when the time came at Amelia's home whose parents were so kind, a happiness discovered as the years passed by adventures excitement and travel came by. As time moved along this old aunt and uncle died however never visiting this once happy child. Happier now with their fortune given to her who was deprived.

An act of forgiveness at their passing was now noted as Anne thought it through she decided she would never have known happiness that she discovered on the way without being left at the boarding school that day.

THE ADVENTURES OF LUCKY PHIL: LUCKY GOES TO BENDIGO

by Cristina Ceddia

"I could kill him, I could kill him, think of your anger management,"

Ant mumbles tapping his foot while shaking his head. I have just pulled up in the driveway of my brother's home. Ant is standing on the porch looking really pissed off. I have a letter from the solicitor asking for my brother's car back. We three are about to embark on a journey to Bendigo to swap cars. About six weeks ago Phil, known as Lucky, swapped cars with a bloke in the pub in Bendigo, a supposed mate. "Why did you do that?"

"Because I thought I was going to get beaten up."

"Oh; well I have a letter from the Solicitor with the last address of the owner from the registration. We will return their car and ask for yours."

I wonder if my brother understands me; I wonder if my sentence construction is too complex.

Off we go Lucky, Ant and me in this bomb of a car un-roadworthy unregistered and smelling of LPG gas.

Big mistake; Lucky drives:

"Millers Road Exit 1Km, see I can read!"

"Shut up and drive."

While driving on the West Gate Freeway Lucky decides to blast me and Ant with the knowledge he can read. He turns and stares at me with flat brown eyes and articulates his reading skill in a flat monotone voice. Meanwhile Ant sits fidgeting in the front passenger. I'm in the rear fearing the smell of gas and the drive ahead. It starts to rain, a rare sight after ten years of drought. The rain becomes quite heavy and follows us all the way up the dry flat road.

We stop midway for some gas and breakfast. At the roadhouse we sip on fairly ordinary coffee. Lucky enjoys his standard bacon and egg roll. Food variety is not Lucky's forte, bad coffee doesn't bother him either. Once in Bendigo Ant suggests we go to the Police Station to talk to the nice Copper. The Policeman says

"this is a civil matter but if you get into strife give us a hoy."

Just before arriving at the registration address I caution Phil,

"this might not be the same person who swapped the car; this person may be an innocent."

As we pull up a man comes out aggressively to greet us.

"That's me car; they were supposed to pay me \$250 and hand in the plates."

"Do you know where they live so we can swap cars?"

Having explained how we have come to be in possession of the vehicle the disgruntled man agrees to show us. He accompanied us 'with a bone to pick.' The rain had stopped and the sun was now out. I'm feeling nervous because the rightful owner has explained the bloke he sold the car to lives with an Aboriginal De-Facto who is rather partial to swinging a baseball bat. I am now scared, I don't know how we are going to exchange the keys? Lucky doesn't seem fazed while Ant and Mr. Innocent are all fired up for some confrontation.

We all rock up to Kookaburra Street, Lucky screams in his flat toned voice, "there's me car."

Unbelievably my brother's car is sitting on a hill outside the cream brick veneer

residence. The three men head toward the front door up a driveway and onto the porch. As I survey the landscape it occurs to me that you could house about ten cars on that property up the driveway in the double garage and on the front lawn. I head towards Lucky's car parked on the street on a hill under a gum tree, my legs hollow with fear. As I approach I see the window down and the keys in the ignition. Wow these people are lazy! I jump in knees knocking and drive off.

"Who's that in me car?"

"That's me sister" Phil explains.

Mr. Innocent throws a punch at the dishonest Car Swindler. The De-Facto Couple then turn on each other,

"why did you leave the keys in the car?"

Ant and Lucky come running after me without throwing a punch; Ant opting to just chuck the car key instead. The Car Swindler in pursuit,

"Hey what about me stuff?"

Ant proceeds to throw the stuff out the window, baby seat, Melways, wallet minus drivers license ready to 'really fuck him up'; baby shoes, bottle, all out the window littering the street. Satisfied by his punch, Mr. Innocent walks home, having earlier refused my offer of a lift. In the driver's seat, feeling empowered, I won't be surrendering to Lucky any time soon the car or the keys. I am impressed by Ant's control, the anger management worked. Ant is an ex-penitentiary Inmate now a Do-Gooder who was once also in trouble for swinging a baseball bat. Ant educated himself at tax

payer expense and got out seven years into a twenty-five-year sentence. As a hired hit man Ant was merely doing his job in what was a case of don't shoot the worker get the employer instead. When we arrived back we stopped to celebrate at the Ferntree Gully pub. Me with a red wine and the fellows with a beer.

"I kind 'a of feel sorry for Chip" says Lucky.

"Why; He didn't feel sorry for you when he swapped his \$250 unregistered un-roadworthy car for your \$3500 roadworthy registered car."

My brother has a very strange way of showing empathy maybe he feels culpable because of his irrational obsession with cars?

Oh, the ballad of Lucky, it just keeps on going with the same pedestrian reoccurring themes, cars, lawn mowers, fires, knives, wanting a girlfriend, and the Police not doing their job properly. Michael Philip was born in late September 1966 just after the St Kilda Football Club won the Flag. In life there is a saying 'you make your own luck' if you apply this to Michael Philip you could say he is one of the lucky ones.

LANDSCAPE EXERCISE; SOILED LADY OF ST KILDA

by Cristina Ceddia

Swing and all that jumping jazz sways in the late afternoon heat tangoing with a tangerine sun. Not a breath of swaying breeze accompanied the icy crunch of chilled tea for two. While celebrated brass and wind instruments bowled out a tune nothing sedated the blistering yellowed heat. The brash brassy sounds no match for the brassy sun on this vulgar toe tapping stinking hot day. The electric fan trumpeted air through the room all the while clashing with the chatter and beat of the day. My head thumped with the oppressive beat. There was too much brash and brass steam in the room to feel comfortable. The space felt like flat warm champagne thus like my head there was no fizz. It was simply too hot. Confusion sounded as if sauna of everything to come. Iced tea was no match for this day that blistered everything.

Thanks, I'm going for a Walk with a Tiger:
I had a dream about a Tiger and protecting
a young child;

A girl: and just when we thought we had
dealt with the Tiger, we turned away;

He swiped at the girl, the Tiger, swiftly
scaring her for life.

The Tiger was from the Tasman Sea, the
girl' named Eliza, her dream vivid. Gold
then rushed the Lady's skirt, her landscape
soiled with wealth while the sea disappeared
beneath her. A vulgar opulence waited
ready to pounce on the temporal beauty
of this virginal place.

The sky was blood orange and the sea the
same. Catani's mannered garden sits majestic
and silent as if to shadow the day, gone. The
sea is green and calm, the sky red and angry.
Anxious parrots scurry to find a place in the
palm trees while penguins slowly waddle up
from the sea to the safety of their rocks. The

red light signaling time to head home from
frolicking in the sea and playing in the sky.
Time for bed, time for rest. The sinking sun,
red, heralding another sleazy night under
cover of the moon's overt light.

Catani mannered the indigenous landscape
with his volcanic rock and Italian love seats.
He set the scene to seduce the Lady in a
landscape already mannered by the English
gentrification of rolling hills, deciduous trees
and vandalized lakes; Catani added the
Italianate.

St Kilda is a majestic place, home to the
roaring 20's Palais Theatre, Luna Park and
all that is oddly electric and decadent about
Melbourne (a city founded in 1835). Studio
box apartments and mansions of yesteryear
are hilarious reminders of the Lady's fall
from grace. The grand outrageous 'Lady
of St Kilda' named nostalgically after a
mysterious Scottish Island is no saint but
rather a bit of a ship wreck shimmering
silver with opulence and decadence. Like
his lady boat, Acland's name lives on in a
street frequented by delicious cake shops.
A tram suppository and driver's toilet share
the space with outer suburban visitors,
backpackers and odd locals. At night Luna
Park's big mouth laughs at St Kilda's ladies
in red soliciting the strip with their pimps.
Transvestites play in their urine stained car
park while the gay boys forage for peanuts
at the Peanut Farm Reserve. Homelessness
and all manner of prostitution sit on the
grand lady's skirt, soiling it. The ghost
of Acland, his lady boat, her remnant
boat shed have been captured within the
infamous Vineyard. All have lost their way.
The fallen lady seduced by Catani, now sits
on Balaclava's railroad, in the jaw of a tiger
within the glare of her bereft lover, Acland.

THE SERVICE STATION

by Deb Hall

The service station we drive into is spacious, orderly, and sterile. It's not like the petrol stations of my childhood. They were smaller, and cluttered. They were greasy, oily places, where a man in dirty overalls wiped his hands perfunctorily on an even dirtier rag hanging out of his back pocket, as he came to the driver's window to find out how much petrol was wanted. While the petrol was pumping into the tank with that particular gurgling sound those bowzers made, he would lift up the bonnet and check the oil or clean the windscreen. He would take the proffered money and dig deeply into his pockets to find some change amongst the greasy lint, before returning to the shadows of the workshop.

My partner has pulled up next to one of the rows of self-service pumps. It is all high-tech now. There is an array of different kinds of fuel. When I was young it was ordinary petrol or super, and diesel fuel. I open the window before she switches off the ignition. The strong, rich, acrid, earthy smell of the petrol is the only reminder that this is a petrol station, and I like to have the full experience.

"That car has been hit hard," she says, eyeing a sedan parked in the row of nose-to-kerb spaces near the door of the wide glass-fronted building, where as well as paying the console operator for the fuel, one can purchase something to eat or drink at the mini supermarket.

I glance across and see that the boot of the car has been pushed in and the lid forced up by the impact. A woman is moving gracefully around the car, shepherding a little girl to the safety of the path between the service station concourse and the building. The woman is about thirty or thirty-five, slender, with long black hair clipped back neatly. She is Indian and typically, immaculately dressed and groomed. The little girl is a miniature of her mother, in dress and decorum.

The woman continues to move around the car, unloading cardboard boxes from the boot and stacking them beside the little girl. My partner notices that the woman is absent-mindedly rubbing one side of her neck at regular

intervals. Observing her closely I can see that she is hunching her shoulder a little on that side as if to ease the tenderness.

"It looks as if the accident must have just happened", my partner says through my open window. She has finished filling the tank.

"Do you think I should ask her if she needs any help?"

"No", I say, unequivocally. I am projecting of course. I know that if I overcame my natural reserve to offer help, the woman would probably be wary of me. I have encountered negative, even hostile, reactions before.

My partner can get away with it. People regard her as a benign presence.

She goes over and speaks to the woman and the next instant they are hugging, and then she turns to the little girl to say something reassuring. I am overwhelmed by her kindness to a stranger and her lack of inhibitions. Even if I wanted to offer some comfort, I wouldn't be able to hug someone off the cuff.

My partner goes inside to pay and when she returns to the car she tells me that the woman was upset and started crying when she asked her if she was okay. The woman told her that she had already phoned her husband to come and deal with their car, and she and her daughter were taking a taxi home.

"At least the person who ran into the back of her car did the right thing and exchanged details", said my partner as we drove away, and then in a perplexed tone, "The console operator asked me if the woman was alright. Apparently, he saw the collision. I don't know why he didn't go out to check on her."

"He probably isn't allowed to leave his post," I said, "Perhaps it would cost him his job."

I thought about how much my partner's thoughtfulness had substantially altered the level of service at that service station. It is the small acts of kindness that make a difference in the world, one person reaching out to another in a time of need.

RAY IN MY WINDOW

by Deb Hall

When they're not banging-on about "writer's block", some writers talk about avoidance, about how they will do just about anything, even housework, to avoid sitting at their desk and facing a blank sheet of paper or a noncommittal computer screen. I don't find a blank page daunting; I embrace it. I reckon that "writer's block" is simply one's mind being in a different gear, engaged in the unconscious, instinctive musing part of the process, rather than conscious thought; I regard it as part of working towards the same end. I feel that my writing is progressing even when I am away from my desk. I can be doing other things yet still be thinking about the story I'm working on. Performing mindless tasks, I can be nutting-out details of a plot or fleshing out a character. I believe that a large proportion of the work is in the thinking and in the ideas that spring unbidden when I am not consciously thinking about it, my mind idling so to speak.

I've always had to fit writing in, in-between paid work and household chores so I rarely agonize over clawing sufficient time out of a day to write. I know it will happen when it happens. I trust my self discipline. I trust the ideas that are festering in my mind. I know that if they are compelling enough, they will endure neglect.

Avoidance is not an issue for me, but distraction can be. About six weeks ago, Ray appeared, framed in my window.

I knew that the end of the street was being partially closed that Sunday morning because they were bringing in a large truck boom crane to perform some task at a nearby building site.

When the first section of the tower rose vertically above the trees and roof line, I realized that they were building a Tower Crane. I watched them lift the top section of the tower into position with two workmen guiding it. It was aligned and they bolted the two sections together. We were going to a friend's place for lunch and, before we set off, the tower had been erected and the operator's cab lifted up and installed atop the tower.

When we came home in the afternoon, the horizontal jib had been installed and the counterweight carrier and the counterweights too. A man, probably the operator, was up there inspecting everything. Afterwards I watched him climb down the series of ladders inside the tower. A couple of days later I observed two workmen rigging the cables and trolley, and saw them testing the trolley, running it backwards and forwards along the length of the jib.

We named the crane Ray because it has Raimondo written on the side of it. At night, it weathervanes freely, so sometimes we view it in profile and other times its counterweights moon us like a square concrete bum. Its illumination consists of (Bldg. Eng) emblazoned in orange neon along both sides of the counterweight carrier. The tower and jib are blue, and the counterweight carrier is yellow.

Now when I sit at my desk, I am a little distracted by the Tower Crane. Actually, it grabs my attention the minute I walk into my room because it is framed perfectly in my window. If he hasn't begun work yet; I might see the operator climb the ladders to enter his lofty cabin. He wears an eye-catching orange "hi-vis" vest, so if I am looking at my computer screen, I can spot him in my

peripheral vision. His start-up procedure is to swing/rotate the crane 360 degrees, which is quite spectacular. These days, instead of just glancing out at the sea on the horizon, I watch Ray too.

The jib sweeps across the sky like a baton conducting the clouds. I have my own Tower Crane, my own construction site ballet. I have long been fascinated by the heavy machinery used on construction sites. Ever since I was a child and the Tullamarine Freeway was being constructed in my neighbourhood, I have admired earthmoving machinery and other equipment, but I am particularly enamored of Tower Cranes. Their charisma is undeniable. If people notice them, they can be mesmerized by them.

I wonder if the operator of a Tower Crane feels privileged, maybe even superior; after all he is looking down on us. At this particular location, on the site of the Sacred Heart aged care facility in Grey Street, St Kilda, he has the benefit of a view of the bay as well as the city. I suppose there is a lot of down-time, waiting for truck loads to be brought in and readied for his crane to lift and shift into position. I don't know if the ground crew communicate with the crane operator by two-way radio or mobile phones these days.

I can watch the Tower Crane operating when I am sitting at my desk; I can only occasionally see the load due to it usually being suspended below the tree and roof line. I have however seen the pre-formed concrete sections waiting on a truck in the street when I have walked past, so I know what stage of the construction they are up to. I am enjoying having my own Tower Crane and will miss it when it is eventually dismantled.

THE SIEGE

by Irene Ritchie

The scent of fear; perspiration and sweat!
The look of fear; furtive glances, frightened
eyes, dread! The sound of fear; short
restrained voices, quiet screams, loud yells
and tears! The feel of fear; tension and horror,
cold veins!

People dressed in black outside the house.
Men and women all alike in black T shirts and
black pants. Everyone is carrying a gun and
some are drawn. A family of mother, father,
daughter and younger son, live in that house.
If they look out of their windows they will see
many people patrolling or standing outside
every window. It's an ordinary suburban
home in St. Kilda. Is this an ordinary everyday
occurrence? An ordinary every night
experience? Is this the new normal? Is this
about terrorism which is rearing its evil head
all over the world?

The father is pacing up and down inside,
terrified. The woman inside quietly goes to
each window to make sure. She is calmer
than him. Each window has several agents
standing guard. Guarding what? Guarding
who? They make no attempt to contact those
inside. It is very surreal.

Their younger son is asleep. The parents
look at each other. They want to continue
this state of affairs. They don't want any
disturbance or even evidence that they are
inside. They don't want to start anything.
More and more armed men arrive. They
move quietly around the house. They whisper
to each other looking very aggressive.

The daughter is not yet home. Fear and
panic encompass the parents. Who was that
boy she went out with tonight? He could
hardly speak English. Where was he from
again? Are these dark invaders waiting for
him? How will their daughter react if she walks
into what could be an ambush, guns drawn?

Are they under siege? Are they being
protected or is the family being held
hostage? It seems like a waiting game.

The mother tries to be calm and holds her
husband close.

A new sound can be heard. Is it a
helicopter? Is it an aeroplane or even a
drone? Thoughts of houses being bombed
in war zones flash through the parents' minds.
Are they actually about to die with their
younger son? Thank heavens their daughter
is not there and hopefully out of dangers'
way. Are they all going to be blown up at
any moment? The father takes a quick sharp
breath of air. The mother is crying. The
couple melt on to the floor.

The guards don't seem to be aggressive
toward them. In fact the pair are waiting for
their tormentors to the knock on the door
or even to smash through the door. But
nothing! Wouldn't they have knocked on the
door if the family were in trouble?

This new boyfriend of their daughter's.....
Who is he and is he leading her in harm's
way? She is so young and out so late.
Where is she?

Some of the people outside stand up and
draw their guns. The woman and man inside
are terrified. They do not have any idea of
what is going on.

The sounds from above fade away. After
what seems like an insurmountable time,
those standing guard outside the house
start to move away. Soon no one is left. Their
daughter has still not returned. Silence fills
the air and a sense of dread prevails.

MY ST KILDA GARDEN

by Irene Ritchie

In the garden I did hear,
A chirping sound, very loud and clear.
Could it be babies in a nest?
Calling for food without a rest?

I walked around my garden beds,
Hoping to find some little heads,
And finally a creeper thick
Yielded its treasure, a nest and a stick.

Two little beaks upright and tall
Waiting for food in a nest so small
I was so thrilled they'd nested here
In my little garden that I hold so dear.

Next day I checked to hear their sound,
I found a mum sitting on the nest so round
The day after that I saw some wings
And very soon a bird on the branch clings.

They're very quiet when I go by
I don't want to upset them or make them cry
I'm fascinated with the nest so low
And grateful they've chosen my fence to grow

A baby bird has made it onto the ground
I'm so worried that it will be found
By other animals large or small
To be devoured against the wall.

Next day I see it has flown away
It's got strength and will live for another day
How lucky I feel to know those birds
And to see a miracle happen without
any words.

IN MEMORY OF SISTER AND BROTHER MISSY AND BACCUS TWO POODLES

by Inge Kulmanis



Missy

Is a she dog.
She says "I love ladies best"
Protective to the end.
Her fur is snow white,
Her nose black and shiny.
In her early life,
she must have been abused.
She bites the walking stick
whenever a chance arises.
Missy is most aristocratic,
she puts her nose up in the air
if happenings don't suit her.
A white lady that eats well
and sleeps well
and looks after herself with a vengeance.
She now tries to retrieve a ball,
but it really doesn't suit her.
She loves walking up and down the street.
Missy a great watchdog.
Watchdog Number TWO!



Baccus

Baccus the retriever
Baccus is agile
fast and ever demanding.
His fur is black
white and grey.
On his left side
is a black spot.
His tail is always
high up in the air.
He waves it about nonstop.
He is very small,
but his bark is giant.
Eyes that beg,
day and night
"Please – please,
give me a morsel
or two."
Baccus is watchdog
Number ONE!
He is clean
and loves going for walks.

COUNTRIES

by Jnge Kulmanis

A land with giant mountains with snow and ice, it's cold. But the beauty it has to offer is quite phenomenal. It's clean, it's quaint.

The flowers in spring – you sit and stare – they are small, white and green.

Lakes, the water you can drink – it is very refreshing. You can walk in the forest with squirrels and deer. This is the land I was born.

The land I live in now is grand and offers everything. The sea – mountains – desert.

It is the land of possibilities. An island mighty and powerful with every climate available in different parts of the land.

Birds – animals never encountered anywhere else on this earth. A land full of surprises. Nature wild and uninhabited. Vivid bright colours – sea and sky. You can live in the bush and walk for days, along a beach, nobody in sight. It is sheer bliss.

The largest island on this earth – a continent. Australia.

IF WALLS COULD TALK...

by Josie Speranza

I need to reveal some secrets and wisdom. I can't stay silent anymore. I have to talk. The time has come.

I always hear people say, "If walls could talk...", well these walls are talking now; so listen up (as I hear the young ones cockily remark to their mates)! For those of you who have walked past me a hundred times and ignored me, I'm the house at 58 Station Street, Port Melbourne. For those of you who look at my façade and say, "What on earth is a house like that doing in a street like this!", I say, "I have a right to be here too. I just need a bit of sprucing up. A bit of TLC. I need someone who believes in me. I may not look like I did years ago when I was in my prime (I was a real beauty in my heyday, even if I say so myself), but I'm still me, and I'm still enjoying my life."

To those of you who say, "They can't tear this house down, it's part of our heritage and needs to be protected," I say, "Thank you, thank you with all my heart." It brings tears to my eyes to hear that there are some kind people out there who understand what it's like to be old and neglected, to be a shell of my former self, to desperately want people to see the real me.

You see, I know what a lot of the old people feel like as they walk past me, feeling old, neglected, cast aside, not needed anymore, as if they're invisible. It's exactly how I feel. I can sympathise with them. And as they glance at me with their pitying eyes, in that instant, I know that we have a connection. Their time-weary faces mirror my old decrepit façade, worn down by time and Mother Nature. If only people could see us and *look* at us and *really* see us for what we are. We are veterans who are living time capsules, full of age-old advice and wisdom to pass on to the world, to future generations. I always live



in hope. I could have been destroyed a long time ago but I'm still here. I'm still here and with each day that passes I'm thankful that I'm still here. I hope that one day someone will see my worth, my true value and will just fix me up a little bit, with some renovation work, a lick of paint and a lot of love and hopefully I'll be here for a while longer.

However, I know they want to build a new house here and they have every right to do so. The land here is precious and they should build a new house in my place if they want to. But I don't want to go. I'd love to stay here in Station Street. I love this street. Even though many of my house "mates" don't live here anymore (they've been knocked down in the name of progress to make way for shiny new dwellings), I really don't want to go. You see, I'll miss the view, the view

across to the park in Hester Reserve. I just love seeing the dogs running up and down, chasing Frisbees, chasing balls, chasing each other, having fun, seeing people chatting ... talking about chatting, I so remember Mrs Timms. She used to love sitting on my porch, doing exactly that, chatting with people, with everyone who went past, she'd say hello to them and engage them in a chat, young, old, migrants, it didn't matter who. Yes, she loved to chat, my dear Mrs Timms. I miss her. Amazing lady. She brought up six children within my four walls. All on her own. But as poor as could be. So when there was a fire in my kitchen area one day, she was taken to hospital, recovered, came back, and didn't have enough money in order to fix me up. You can still see evidence of the fire all over my walls. Being a Victorian timber house I could easily have gone up in flames. I could have easily been destroyed at that time. But I wasn't. I'm still here. I survived it! I don't believe in God but someone's looking after me. I'm still here after all this time. I provided a safe haven for the Timms' family for many generations. After the matronly Mrs Timms passed away, her son, Mr Timms, resided here for many years until his death. However, the moment Mr Timms died I feared for my existence because I felt that nobody cared about me anymore. My days were numbered. I could feel it in my dingy plaster walls. It wouldn't be long before I too was destroyed to make way for a new two/three storey house in my place.

So I waited for my fate ... I knew that Mr Timms' family didn't want me anymore, that they too were going to knock me down and build a new home in my place. But then,

miraculously, they changed their minds and sold me at auction. I waited with trepidation. What would happen to me now? And yet again, miracle of all miracles, the new owners did nothing for over a year. Then, I was sold at auction again in late 2019. But I'm still standing here! Yet another reprieve! I am so happy! It's been eight months now and still no sign of the bulldozer... it's probably just a matter of time.... but until then, I'll keep enjoying being in my community, knowing that my neighbours of old still love me and care about me enough to call the police whenever there's a break-in (probably poor homeless people looking for shelter) and I'll keep looking lovingly across the street at Hester Reserve, as the seasons change, as the people walk past or run to catch the tram, as the playful dogs and their owners interact with each other, and as each new day dawns, to remind me that I'm still here, I'm still alive.



QUEEN BEE

by Julie Butcher

My mother is not someone who dwells on her own ailments. Perhaps that is why certain signs and symptoms crept up on her last year.

It was 10.30 on a Friday night at home in Port Phillip when I received a phone call from an emergency department in South Australia. 'Has your mother got an *Advanced Care Directive*?' the woman from Noarlunga Hospital asked.

'Yes she has,' I said. 'Why?'

'Well, today she has been admitted with acute anaemia and, having done two blood transfusions, we think she might need a third. We want to send her to Flinders Medical Centre, tonight.'

Bloody Hell. I'd known something was not right when I received a recent photo. My younger sister and my aunt (her 91-year-old sister) had both noticed her weariness too. When our 95-year-old family friend declared, "We're *losing* her," Mum had finally agreed to some tests.

Wild thoughts raced through my mind as I lay in bed that night. I felt worried, sad, even a childish anger. Like my late father I felt the need to control things. I felt torn between my home in Port Phillip and my roots in South Australia.

So began a long and tortured journey through the public health system. Mum –unwittingly I think – elected to bypass her private health cover. I often wonder if her surgery had been performed closer to the time of that first blood test, would she now be enduring this long-term chemotherapy? The range of chemotherapy apparently available to a patient these days is astounding, yet for my 86-year-old mother the oncologists have chosen a cautious treatment favoured since the nineteen-seventies.

It's been strange to think of my mother as having a *rare* cancer – as it was described to us. What is a rare cancer? I ask. I guess. I Google.

It is a minefield. And what is it about cancer that stops some people in their tracks, while others just carry on? Some people rally. Others hide. Perhaps they fear choosing the wrong words, saying too much, or too little. My sister's sage advice for such situations: Keep calm and wear lipstick. Mum doesn't say much.

My proud mother comes from a big family with a well-recorded past. There was on her mother's side a renowned naturalist, microbiologist, mycologist and ornithologist – John Burton Cleland – also keenly interested in wildlife conservation. On her father's side there was Herbert Basedow – anthropologist, geologist, explorer. So it is unsurprising that on the evening of her first chemotherapy session she loyally attends the scheduled meeting of her local Trees For Life group. She has been a volunteer member for over thirty years. On this wintry night she is more interested in learning how to bridge long periods of extreme low nest material in the fire affected areas of Kangaroo Island, and how successful alternative (artificial) nesting stalks have been developed to help save the Green Carpenter Bee* from extinction, than anything to do with her own wellbeing.

Bright eyed and pragmatic, Mum is now half way through her treatment plan. The nurses at the Flinders infusion suite tell me they reckon she's cute! Mum winces and laughs.

We applaud our queen bee.

**The Green Carpenter Bee is a large iconic native bee species. It is beautiful jewel green in colour, and is friendly and harmless. The species is extinct on mainland South Australia and Victoria but still exists on Kangaroo Island. The species relies on soft wood to make its nests. However extensive and repeated bushfires in conservation areas on Kangaroo Island have removed a large proportion of these soft wood nest materials thereby threatening the bee's existence. (Hand out supplied by Australian Entomological Society)*

POOR CHOOK

by Lois Best

"Family is important." As I wait in the searing, late afternoon heat, I softly chant. I've become a small town curiosity, they're trying to place me in this weekend's Dale Family Reunion.

As usual, I'm the one waiting. As usual, my brother is late and not answering his mobile.

"Sorry I'm late, Sis," he cheerfully calls as he pulls up.

"Hi Paul, at least you got here," I try not to sound sarcastic or surprised. That's the first time I've heard him apologise for being late!

We have so much to do before dark. The house is not ready for my sister's return, with reunion attendees, in the morning. I'm not privy to how many will arrive en masse. In this family, convoluted arrangements ensure that everything takes longer than anticipated or causes maximum disruption and stress.

I'm left waiting because of some complicated plan where my car got left in the city, she is driving Paul's car and he's driving hers. Hers is packed to the hilt with tools and necessities.

I open the door. Now I know Paul doesn't have a good sense of smell, but really?

The pong makes me stagger back.

"What the...?" I gasp, trying not to breathe it in. "Tell me that's not the chook!"

His horrified face tells me it is. Yesterday's saga continues.

You see, our sister put me in charge of her precious hens. They have cute names; Chook, Chook Chook, Itsy and Syd. She likes them more than she likes me, she calls me Princess but it doesn't sound nice the way she says it.

This time, because it's so hot, I didn't worry about getting my hands dirty. I fussed and watered and shaded. But to my dismay, Chook succumbed to the heat. Devastated, I rang my sister and offered to bury it.

"No," she shouted. Not an unusual volume when dealing with me, "Get Paul to do an autopsy to see if I killed her by feeding her bird seed. Get him to check her crop."

Meekly I acquiesce, absurdly grateful she's not blaming me. I wrapped poor Chook in a black garbage bag and set her in the shade for Paul to do what he has to do. Neither of us would even consider disobeying our sister.

Paul is trying to explain what happened next but I can't get close enough to the car to hear him properly. The stench is overwhelming.

Long story short, he checked Chook over, her crop seemed fine. Then he re-wrapped her and put her in the car. Why?

That he cannot clearly explain. To return her? To bury her? But worse, he forgot. In the summer heat, he forgot. Poor Chook.

Now it's past midnight, still hot. Sister and guests only hours away. Curtains hung, rubbish removed, garden tidied, floors washed, Chook's grave a fitting tribute and the car still reeks. No shops open, all the baking soda used. Our only scented candle just flickered its last. Oh, please do I have time to sleep now?

THE ART COLLECTOR

by Lola McHarg

The young man has a most unusual and extensive art collection. He acquires these pieces from both overseas and from well-known Melbourne artists. This entire collection consists of small, delicate, monochromatic etchings depicting both abstract designs and realistic images. This art is portable, requires no protective packaging and does not attract the attention of officious customs officers. Although the collection is unusual and extremely valuable it will never be seen inside an art auction room. The entire collection is etched on his skin.

PIGEON

by Marygrace Levakis

Nobody loves a black crow
A rhinoceros hornbill, oh no
Nor a grey, common garden pigeon
They're flying rodents – vermin
Nobody would invite a seagull home to dinner
Or to spend the night
Then to wake to coffee, jam and toast
Everybody loves a pretty canary
Sweet with feathers of gold
But nobody loves a common pigeon
They're flying rodents – vermin
Crikey, what a little bewdy, is the striking black and white magpie
But you'd be spewing
To bog in and have some supper
With a grey, common garden pigeon
You'd go way out to billyo
To take a squizz at a rosella
But you'd be mad as a cut snake
Strewth if you found it was a ridgy didge pigeon
They're flying rodents - vermin

A PLACE IN PORT PHILLIP

by Neville Smith

A place in Carlisle Street
A place to be seen
A place of joy and smiles
A place of alluring smiles
A place where smiles draw many
A place where Zee is seen
With Jasmine, with a smile so genuine
With Sherrie, with a smile so true
Zee, Jasmine and Sherrie come from China with glee
That Port Phillip is truly the place to be

Adam is not the first man to appear to see Zee
Many from the Port Phillip Council Offices appear prior, to see Zee
Many more from all over Port Phillip parade through the door of Baba Lovey
All welcomed with smiles and coffee from Jasmine, Sherrie and Zee
Not only, those from the Port Phillip haven, are seen
Most personnel from McGrath parade to see Zee
As well Jasmine and Sherrie relay to McGrath, to please, with coffee

Zee, Jasmine, Sherrie know all by name and coffee
Frank, Joanne, Richard, Nev and Dan among so many
Come to converse and be showered with the smiles from Jasmine, Sherrie and Zee
Truly the place to be seen is at Baba Lovey, in Carlisle Street.
With Zee

FRANK

by Neville Smith

Hello Frank

Lonely, sad, no zest for life, with no hope for the future.

Frank came from a small village in Croatia, of which he talked often, his boyhood tending sheep, the hardships, the cold and the difficulties with his dad. As a young adult he spent time in the army, after which he worked for a time in Austria.

Returning to his village he married a local girl, a marriage that lasted twenty years. No child came from the union due to his future wife having an abortion, causing a fertility problem, of which he had no knowledge of until many years later.

Offspring may have saved Frank long way forth in the future.

Frank, his wife, father, mother and sister eventually landed in Australia and came to live in Port Phillip. Securing a job as a cleaner at the Alfred Hospital, being highly thought of he was appointed as head cleaner for the operating theatres and settled into a night shift life.

Frank expressed his satisfaction with his job and the friends he made, his wife then wanted to live in a house rather than the Port Phillip unit. So off to Doveton they go and miseries slowly started to grow for Frank because of the continuing difficulties of the travel to and from work.

The Doveton abode and oncoming difficulties with the marriage and with his Father, there is, in retrospect, a sense that this situation initiated his slow descent to loneliness, sadness and loss of hope.

Marriage break done and the sale of his Doveton house, drives Frank back to Port Phillip, living in St. Kilda with his mother and sister. Contractors of the cleaning at the Alfred Hospital changed three times, Frank did not survive the third change. Out of work and some mental issues arose and his sister had him committed. This only lasted three weeks, though from which he gained a disability pension, and a very pronounced discontentment with his sister.

Frank situated, alone, to Alma Road, where he seemed content with his lot for a number of years, tending his balcony garden and the birds and possums in the adjacent trees.

He was annoying holding lingering conversations with any neighbour he could, hanging out bare chested with a huge belly which was not a pleasant sight. Frank meant no harm, he was just alone and surely lonely.

Frank is evicted from Alma Road. He is devastated, as nothing like this has happened to him prior, and basically he is innocent. Precipitated by a verbal altercation with his immediate neighbour, and his extreme hoarding habit, you could hardly move in the unit, the path taken was the easy path, eviction.

Frank moves to Crimea Street, he seems ok again, though over a period of eighteen months his deterioration is obvious. He puts on more weight, develops an ulcerated leg, and it is as if he is drowning and endlessly goes over the miseries of his life and the injustice of the eviction. The verbal tirade goes on for a year.

FRANK (CONT.)

by Neville Smith

Frank became more reclusive, stepping out less, though always the unit was flooded with sunlight and his new garden thriving.

Frank is dead.

A Monday in December 2019 Frank is found dead after the concern of his neighbour Nadal who looked out for him. On the previous Friday he knocked on Frank's door, strangely all the blinds were down, he half opened the door, again strange as normally he was very welcoming, Nadal suggested he take Frank to the hospital to attend to his ulcerated leg, Frank agitatedly refused saying emphatically that he has gone and has all the pills, he shuts the door. On the Monday Nadal, very concerned, employs the real estate agent and the police to break into the unit. Frank is dead, and most likely death occurred on the Friday.

Sarah, a waitress at Truffles café in Balaclava, had many conversations with Frank as Truffles was his café destination to have cabbage rolls for lunch. Sarah suggests that his conversations indicated that Frank had terminal thoughts and a time frame, being the end of the year.

Lonely, sad, no zest for life, with no hope for the future, it is not known, maybe Frank decided his future.

Goodbye Frank

THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

by Peter Thorne

I first thought about the Age of Aquarius in 1970 when, after a conference in Sydney, my boss and I saw a performance of "Hair".

Frank was quite unimpressed, but I carried away an inkling of a more idealistic world. Perhaps it would be better, I thought, than the current society, still under the shadow of World War II, now facing the Vietnam conflict and the Cold War. It might be less inhibited, less bound by rigid strictures ruling our closed lives in a society that revered respectability. Perhaps it would value cooperation and sharing, rather than the competitive accumulation and retention of possessions. Perhaps the young had something to teach us (I was all of 30 at the time).

Back in Melbourne, opposite our inner suburban terrace house, was a freestanding corner property, surrounded by an iron picket fence. The owner, now quite elderly, had lived there all her life. She had nursed her parents until their death. She was now left alone and lived in a smaller house across the street. Although she could not maintain the family property, she could not bear to part with it. She had apparently left it fully furnished and set up, just as it was in her parents day.

The paint was peeling, and water was now coming through the roof. Due to its prominent corner position and increasingly derelict appearance, the house was occasionally burgled for fittings and items of furniture. Each event distressed the elderly neighbour and afterwards, her immediate neighbours comforted her as best they could and suggested she might face selling it, rather than see it deteriorate further.

One afternoon I arrived home to find her pacing, agitated, up and down the street. She pointed to a bicycle against the fence of her family house and explained that someone was inside.

She said: "I have already called the police". Although late home, I lingered with her as she waited for the police to arrive.

Finally, a girl, possibly a student, wearing the cheesecloth garb of the Age of Aquarius came out of the house and started to climb over the locked gate, lugging a bundle of clothes.

The owner approached her and called out: "You are stealing. They are my things".

The girl replied "They were just rotting away in there. Anyway, you don't need them". She busied herself at the bike.

"But they are my things" said the owner.

The girl responded: "You are a selfish old woman. You are just keeping things you don't need when other people can use them".

"But they are my things" repeated the elderly woman. Still watching to make sure the elderly owner was not at risk, I thought: this is the classic conflict, between the owner of goods, even items they can't use, and a young, apparently poorer, person who believes the world could be a better place if we were less possessive and shared more. Was this a precursor of the Age of Aquarius?

The girl was still busy at the bicycle when the police car arrived.

Realising that the elderly woman was now safe, I left the scene.

Reflecting on this later I was sympathetic to the elderly woman's distress. Her property had been invaded, and the goods were undoubtedly hers.

On the other hand, the girl, now presumably arrested, was also correct- the woman had no need for the goods. Ideally, they could be put to better use by someone else.

I then realised why the girl had not been able to get away before the police came. On arrival, she had chained her bicycle to the fence.

FOR WE ARE YOUNG AND FREE

by Raffaella Cava

At the beginning of June 2019 I finally received the letter I had been waiting and worked very hard for; "You are kindly invited to attend" and "On this date..."

It had been on my bucket list for years and had moved to the top of it since the 22 of March 2016 when I was diagnosed with what's every woman's nightmare.

"You are VERY lucky" the doctors said. "It is veeeery small, just a few mm but it is of THE ACTIVE type", when nasty is what they more likely had in mind. They all highly recommended I'd go through the whole lot: chemo AND radio, "Just to be on the safe side".

This news came three months after I returned from Israel where for three months, I nursed my sister, Roberta. She had been diagnosed in 2009 and she was one of the unlucky ones. Hers, could have been perfectly curable, except it was located in a vital spot, too risky to be removed.

In late August 2015, the news we dreaded arrived.

"She doesn't have much time left..." my friend, Lynette, told me.

I hated her for that and stopped talking to her.

Roberta, my big sister, was going to make it!

She was destined to be the next Anita Moorjani. How dare anyone suggest otherwise! I believed in "Thracht-gut vet zain-gut", Yiddish for: "Think good and it will be good", and set off to eliminate anyone that would oppose that. Stubbornly, I focussed on the main goal: to keep Roberta, my Robby, alive.

Magical thinking, perhaps? Some would call it denial. Others yet, faith. Whatever that was, it kept me going. It gave me Herculean strength during those dreadful months: in the all-night shifts we shared, through

medical appointments, the weary wait for the miracle oral-chemo that wasn't yet on the market, the rise and fall of hope at meetings with top specialists.

Daily, the taste of adrenaline was in my mouth. All my senses, always on high alert. I had become a watch dog. Robby's body guard. Fiercely determined to snatch her from the clutches of Death, I turned docile or dangerously wild, depending on the need.

On one hand, manipulative and servile with God and the gods of Medicine, to extrapolate from them a promise, a miracle cure, a new, revolutionary scientific fix; on the other, a Rabies, mouth-trothing freak ready to attack any imbecile, any stupid bastard not doing his job.

Often, dangerously nestled within my strength, was RAGE. A rage that would explode occasionally at doctors, nurses, the lazy, bored medical receptionist, the idiot trying to jump the queue, the desensitized GP who refused to take us in immediately when my sister hardly managed to hold her sore, skin-and-bone, frail body upright, in the wheel chair.

"Make howling noises of pain!" I commanded, and Robby, who had now become more like my baby sister, obeyed. Her performance, which wasn't an act, opened the GP's door at last.

Once, a patient sharing Robby's room, harassed me. I exploded in a horrible Sophia-Loren-style-scene, yelling that I was being attacked.

That got the Israeli hospital ward's attention alright!

That night, my sister was transferred into a private suite. It hadn't been my scene that caused that but a family connection to the hospital's chief coordinator for bedding! From then on, the staff obsequiously raced to "make us comfortable".

Small victories...

When I left, I was sure I would be back.

Three months into my treatment, upon returning from my second cycle of chemo, I was told my Robby had passed away. It was July 13, 2016.

23 years earlier, Roberta, had moved to Sydney. She invited me to her wedding.

I came from Milan with a suitcase packed for a month's stay, but...here I am, 25 years later.

Robby had loved and fully embraced her new homeland. She had been so proud to become an Australian citizen.

"This country" she often said "suits us because we are proud and free people. Let's make the most of being Aussies"

Australia was, no doubt, proud of her. At fifty she got a double degree in French and Italian Literature. An outstanding Italian teacher, she was proud of our Italian-Judeo heritage.

With few articles published in the Italian-Aussie community, she wrote fluently in three languages and longed to become a published author.

At the end, she had agreed to move to Israel to be with her kids and grandkids.

One morning, when Robby was already quite ill, we exchanged WhatsApps.

We often sent each other our Action-Plan for the day, at times for weeks, months or even years ahead.

Robby's list was realistically and sadly short.

Mine, however, was interminable. Its length, the arrogant cockiness of one who believes of having control over life's length.

It was of the type that makes you feel that once everything will be ticked off, existence would just be perfect and only THEN, your REAL, happy, successful life, would begin.

Robby texted:

"First, your Citizenship"

signing off with:

"Baby steps" and a little red heart.

So now, two years later, on the 23 of July 2019, I am all dressed up, my hair styled, my nails manicured in lilac to match my purple outfit.

It's like the first day at school except my 20 year old Aussie son acts as my parent and I feel like his proud little girl.

We are greeted with welcoming smiles at the entrance of the Port Phillip Town Hall.

I am directed to a special row of seats. My son and two friends waive at me, thumbs up, from where they sit. (Am I seeing someone familiar next to them, waiving and cheering?)

My son snaps a few shots as I am shaking friendly hands, given a certificate and a little plant from the ancestral land owners.

At the tune of Waltzing Matilda and the "Australians let us all rejoice...", I am sure of it, I hear Robby's voice singing:

"...for we are young and free!"

IF OUR LITTER COULD TALK

by Robyn Walter

Do you ever wonder how far street litter travels when it rains in Elwood?

You've seen it; everybody has seen it. That is, the mess that occurs after rain in the area below Glenhuntly Road Bridge. Something is going on; water rises; washes onto the banks, and both small and large items are deposited leaving a horrible maelstrom of litter. Beach Patrollers also collect record amounts of small and large litter on the rocks and beaches.

On May 9th 2019, before the rains had started, five bottles, with GPS trackers inside, were launched into this waterway just upstream from the Foam Street ford, above the tidal zone of Elwood Canal.

AQUEST at RMIT with Victorian government funding for The Litter Trackers project had asked the Port Phillip EcoCentre to support a pilot launch in Elster Creek and Elwood Canal. Friends of Elster Creek became the local monitors of bottles named Elster Creek (EC) 1 to 5.

Launch day was prior to rain, with a rising tide and a northerly wind. The volunteer monitors thought that, like the 5 little ducks of the nursery rhyme, the 5 EC bottles would go far, far away. Also, like Mother Duck, we felt we could follow their travels, not by quacking but by tracking, using real time GPS maps. (Footnote 1)

The 'ducklings' wandered much more than anticipated drawing us into the drama of the vacillating bottles.

After a slow start, EC1 and EC5 were manually assisted past Glenhuntly Road Bridge. EC1 took 6 days to sail the Canal, landing wedged in shoreline rocks. EC5 spent one night in the litter trap, then, 12 days after launch; it too escaped the Canal.

"Hooray for EC5" texted one happy volunteer before she trooped off to collect it from Elwood Beach as we were keen not to let this project add to left litter.

But, what of the others?

Unaided, the movements of EC 2,3 and 4 unfolded slowly.

The rain started and the tides were high overnight. The intrepid monitors woke each morning to check the maps and share news of where the bottles were visible compared to map locations.

EC3 went in and out of the litter trap then sailed upstream into a stormwater drain on the incoming tide, so the GPS showed it as being up out of the water in the school grounds! When the tide was really low, EC2 and EC3 became stranded on the muddy sides of the canal and were visible to be photographed.

The next Canal escapee, EC2, was the only bottle to get out into the bay. From a satellite perspective, we watched in awe, as it appeared to sail at speed down the channel. Was it on a boat, or just propelled by the north wind? It must have been the wind as it came to rest on the sand at Dromana. EC2's excellent adventure after leaving the canal all happened in 24 hours! Thanks again to the tracker, it was collected and photographed for the record.

Did EC3 and EC4 go far away?

Although the rain continued, EC4 remained, like the Poky Little Puppy, doggedly stuck amongst the disgusting morass of litter washed on land between the end of the narrow channel near the Glenhuntly Road Bridge and the Wave Street ford. The good news is, that there must be nutrients and

little fish in that area because, each time I went there to collect rubbish, the egret who lives in the area, was deeply engrossed in watching for a catch beside the ford. It ignored passing cars and even remained unmoved when dogs approached, only giving up its post when bullied and chased away by native noisy miner birds.

EC3 went as far as the Litter Trap; was washed back upstream; was lost to the GPS when it automatically switched off after 2 weeks; then turned up in Laverton on May 29th, 20 days after it was released. When 'mother duck' was not watching, the duckling got lost, but appropriately, relocated after arriving at a recycling depot.

Only EC4 remained at large.

Street litter continued to vomit onto the banks. When seeking EC4, I collected 2 fully sealed lunch bags – sandwiches still tightly sealed inside; large chunks of builders insulation foam; Styrofoam packing, re-useable drinking bottles; loads of tiny Styrofoam balls; biro; plus the usual wrappers, cigarette butts, plastic bags and broken hard plastic etcetera. I saw a dead possum. Each time I was there, someone came past and either joined me or said they too were collecting rubbish. Elwoodians are aware and active.

Via satellite, we knew EC4 was stationary near the ford, so on May 30th, determined to find EC4, I went to Wave Street, was picking up litter and was thanked by Jenny who said she collected litter too. I asked her had she seen a bottle with orange writing and a strange rattling inside? She had! Without her glasses, she could not read the sign that explained The Litter Tracker Project, so she did the right thing and put it into her recycle bin.

EC4 was found and returned with its GPS intact.

Thankfully, the GPS tracking system meant 4 of the 5 'little ducks' were retrieved by the monitors and the RMIT project demonstrated the need for local collectives like Love Our Streets as well as educating all Melburnians about the movement of street litter into our Bay. (Footnote 2)

Footnote 1: [online app rmit.edu.au/littertrackers](http://online.app.rmit.edu.au/littertrackers)

Footnote 2: theage.com.au/national/victoria/rising-tide-of-plastic-choking-port-phillip-bay-20190727-p52bcn.html – Rising tide of plastic choking Port Phillip Bay Benjamin Preiss – July 28, 2019 – 12.01am)

AN OLD PRAM

by Bob Croker

She wore an old dress and a tattered beret
And wheeled an old pram in her own special way
With a blanket tied on, in a bag down below
To stay where tonight, she didn't know

She'd once been a lady of breeding and class
Who now roamed the streets, oft' slept on the grass
She'd been trained in good music, song and fine art
But hidden deep down, was a well broken heart

He'd been a good man, who loved her deep down
But their world somehow tumbled when they shifted to town
There were many distractions and difficult times
As he sought the nightlife, and grape from the vines

She stuck by him though, through all thick and thin
'Til the sickness that struck him pallowed his skin
She'd done all that she could to be a good wife
It'd taken all that she had, and shattered her life

There's other such stories around us each day
And many need help as they drop by the way
So if ever you're walking, a road or a street
And such an old lady you happen to meet

Exchange a kind word or give her a smile
Let her remember she once lived in great style
Think of all that you have, take a moment to share
It'll help make her day, to know that you care

THE COTTAGE

by Bob Croker

It was a simple timber cottage
Built way out in the bush
By a man who loved that country
Where the trees around were lush

I found it quite by accident
Whilst hiking out that way
There was history all round it
From the old and early days

'Twas a pioneers or settlers hut
Hewn timber all way through
The chimney was still standing
I looked around for any clue

It became a little more intriguing
When I found a simple wooden cross
Someone at peace, resting there
Perhaps that builders loss

I tried to flashback in my mind
How life then must have been
To settle there with nature
With things today not seen

An axe would of course be needed
And some iron pots and pans
A tank to catch some water
A time for busy hands

Hot tar to fix the winter leaks
And salt to keep the meat
Some legs to make a table
An old log would be the seat

A lantern needed somewhere
To produce a little light
No television, phones or radio
They would be early nights

Serenity joined with solitude
And strength within the soul
So far away from everywhere
This story should be told

Now I cannot tell just who you were
Or when you marked your line
But rest assured my unknown friend
Your hut has stood the test of time

And if sometimes from that place above
You cast an eye below
It's still exactly as I found it
But, you may already know?

MELE BAY WAVE

by Roderick Waller

Forward: In 1995 I was working as Principal Agricultural Economist in for the Government of Vanuatu. The story below is true, and occurred in Mele Village, Efate Island in December 1975.

It must have been fourteen meters high, its crest folding in on itself; like galloping seahorses. I was watching out of my front window, across the verandah, down the slope of the lawn, across the dirt road, above Blacksand beach, to a mile past Hideaway Island to the South Pacific Ocean.

Was it luck or fate? The outcome was the same; the category 3 cyclone was heading east to Port Vila. The rogue wave was coming straight at us, our small community in Mele Village, a hundred expats and three hundred ni-Vanuatu. My eyes were riveted to the slow, ominous wave, hardly discernible. But it was coming; no doubt. The expats' bungalows were in a line half a kilometer from the tide edge of Blacksands beach.

Vanuatu is a lovely tranquil place but un-nerving between December and February, when cyclones bear down from the North. I remember the first time I walked barefoot on that black sand; no-one around, I soft-pedaled onto the beach and then stopped, screaming in agony. For days I was in pain. The blisters puffed, and then popped. The Blacksands were well named. The heat of the tropical sun took inches of skin from my white soft heel and sole. Early on I taught myself a mantra: wear sandals, when swimming crawl style, turn my head to the horizon and always keep my eyes open, and lastly sense the color of the clouds and stiffness of the breeze.

On this particular day the sand had cooled. Strong wind gusts had been blowing most of the night, drawing the heat from the

sand, bending the tall cypresses eastward, thrashing the oil palms, roaring through coconut palms, old nuts crashing to the salt grass.

Down at the water's edge my neighbor (and my landlord), and his two larrikin kids were dashing in and out of the tiny ebbs and flows. Seb, 10 years, and Dan 12 years were born here and the sea was their constant companion. Jim, a strict Quaker, raised them within strict moral conduct. They had a quality of courage and readiness for adventure much advanced for their years. I knew them as solid likeable lads though for a brief moment I wondered about their safety, but I also knew Jim to be aware of the danger and considered carefully the oncoming menace. Jim allowed his lads to experience an astounding event in the world. How blest I felt for my neighbor. Jim knew of the storm, and kept a watch on the line of black cloud, forks of lightening, grotesque stickmen hurtling kamikaze to the sea, thunder rolled out there too, distant but was closing in.

Jim turned; waved an invitation. Panic, fear, adrenal rush, excitement darting through my sinews, I came to a sliding halt in the black sand, 'Five minutes, it'll be here.'

And it came much closer, a slow moving wall, gray like the sky, an awesome ogre, the crest its cruel lips and sparkling white teeth, disdainful, mocking all in its path. We felt in audience with a royal.

We backtracked to the pine tree line, excited, afraid, a real base fear, trembling knees and a rumbled up panic of dry mouth, pulse race, hot flush.

Now the giant was no more than 100 meters away.

'What'd you say'? Jim laughed.

'Okay.' my heartbeats notched up a few levels. Ready non-the-less.

'Let's go' Jim shouted over the deafening thunder and roiling seas.

At waist level we dived the snarling, fuming wall of liquid muscle, helpless almost immediately, sucked in by the enormous backwash, though for a few moments our bodies turned in slow motion, I thought of a babe in the womb.

Then we were thrashed and tossed about like rag dolls, somehow we surfaced half up this monster wave then we surfed along for a while, then closing in on the sand we were hurled unceremoniously 100 meters to the cypress pines. We were sprawled on the sand, the furious rivulets raced on across the road, up the gauntlet lawn, and almost to the railing of the front verandah. The lawn was a sea of bubbles, snowflakes resting on the grass, as with all organisms, its force spent, the back wash receded like a pleasant stream along a meadow. We got up and laughed and danced whooping and elated; ecstatic and a wondrous sense of being free of all worldly attachments.

It's the power of nature, that's why, I said to myself, those rare moments in life when certainty of an unknown force is felt. I looked at our puny bodies like black sand grains against the unknowable vastness of the universe, this massive warring wave, a signature of our Milky Way, the balance binding us.

Jim and I nodded a look of triumph. The tower of tumultuous fury could have easily flattened lives and homes, houses into sticks, bodies into bones, the lands surface shaken to the hems of its skirts. A thought came, 'we are not ships in the harbor, we have un-reefed the main sail, flattened head'sil, heeled to starboard headed straight toward the beautiful dangerous wave.'

Jim made a victory sign. 'To the next time'.

'Jim, let's not test fate again.' I stuck my thumb up in sentry position.

MENYAMA MUSTER

by Roderick Waller

Foreward: In 1973 I was a rural development officer (diddyman, as we were called), in Papua New Guinea, a year before PNG's independence, and was employed by the Department of External Affairs in Canberra then responsible for developing agriculture in PNG. The story below is true and occurred in May 1973, in the highlands of Morobe District.

Charlie and I took the lumber road that wound and twisted its way down to the old gold mining town of Bulolo, descending from 3000 to 1000 feet. Over the precipice the wild river skipped along the rift and down into the valley below. A rusting dredger squatted, dormant, where once it had sieved the river-bed for gold.

From Bulolo we set off on a native track that zig-zagged, rising gently up the foothills to the rocky walls that lead to Menyama. Then the track petered out. Vigorously we climbed across mountain springs and stepped up rock waterfalls. 'Agh!' Charlie moaned, slapping his leg. 'Something bit me.' His lips curled in a snarl.

I caught hold of his shoulder, fearing a snake. 'Let me look. Oh, it's just a leech. Pull it firmly, it'll surrender.'

Charlie sank in the waterfall 'I hate this rotten country.'

I sat down with him. 'I remember your christening; your Dad was so proud; he had a hard life then after your mother passed away. He worked his rage and grief out on his coffee plantation'

Charlie remained silent, sullen.

'You're a lucky boy to be living here in the cool hills of Wau. Folk who live in tropical coastal towns of Papua New Guinea come to Wau for rest and recreation.'

'But we left Lae and I had friends there.' Charlie muttered. 'And then he couldn't even make the coffee grow.'

'It was a big disappointment yes, but he was lucky getting work as a patrol officer. He had debts, you know.' I spoke; keeping my

irritation down, recalling John had asked me to bring Charlie, hoping somehow to dispel the black cloud hovering over his son.

We went on in uneasy silence, tripping on trailing treacherous roots; arms outstretched pulling aside lianas twisted round massive trunks of Eaglewood; our boot's soft thuds, twigs snapping, frogs, cicadas calling. The night-drawing sounds filled the forest; suddenly a screech, then a flash of bird of paradise plumage, a splash of emerald, ruby, and sapphire.

We cursed, driven mad by the leeches sucking our blood. The montane forest is thick on the lower slopes, Kwila, Rubberwood, Redwood, Southern Beeches, and Kauri choking for the sun, for 100 million years, their canopy blocking out the sky, yet we were drenched as the rain fell in torrents through the densely tangled branches.

As the moon ascended I felt pale with hunger and sweat. Charlie glowered; his nimble legs, and light breath a walk in the park. As for me, 42 years and a legacy of beer and smokes, I was coping, but only just.

We took cover under the upturned stump of a giant mountain ash toppled some time past in a tropical storm. We slept lightly and then woken at first light by sunbeams slanting through the canopy, we set off, our eyes at the ridge peak of Menyama.

The forest thinned as we climbed higher, Klinks pine, and Alstonia, opened their canopy, letting in some more light, and fresh rarified air. Finally, we arrived at our destination. We'd come to pick up a mare and her foal and bring them back with us. On the plateau, Joe the Kiap sat on the top rail next to his bamboo house. Charlie and I

looked over the foal and mare, flighty, sharp, rounding the yard, prancing hysterics, Devil gleamed in their eyes. Joe's southern drawl 'They'll quiet down' A defiant snort, the mare bucks and rails Then Joe jumps down, catches the handsome bay.

'Right Charlie lad, down the mountain we go' I say, gripping the bridle. 'See you later, Joe. We'll set a pace before the rain comes' Pausing at the ridge the mare reared and split the air in a fearsome display and a satanic neigh. She startled the bare breasted girl swaying across the rope bridge a bilum slung round her neck, a piglet squealing inside. Her uncles, Kukuku warriors bobbed above the long grass, curious, holding spears; we waved, and then dropped over the side.

Damp leaves, mud, round slippery rocks and jagged stones made the descent treacherous. We slipped our way down; the horses surer of foot. In the high noon sun, steely rays splintered through the canopy. At dusk, thunder clouds cracked, then burst. Wet right through, we cautiously made our way back to the stump and camp, flushed and sweating, with leeches siphoning our blood, and our legs buckling. We hobbled the mare, ate cold beans from a can, and drank long from a freshwater spring.

As we settled down to sleep, Charlie spoke softly. 'Sorry I was rude back then.'

'It's okay.' I smile as we fell silent to the night.

We slept soundly till dawn. Around noon we arrived at Bulolo, the abandoned gold mining town. At the nursing post we disinfected the leech wounds. No worse for wear I saddled the mare; Charlie held on to my back, and with my heel I lightly tapped her flank. We

cantered up the logging road; graveled, a winding sinew, its precipice steeper as we ascended. We headed home for Wau.

We stopped for the foal, her dangly legs askew, her breath running out, her belly thumping. So, we rested a while. Then round the steep curve a logging truck grinding its gears down, threw out stone chips. We hugged the rock wall as clouds of dust smothered the air. The bay mare got jittery; her foal clung to her side.

'Wow! That was close.' Charlie grabbed the bridle. 'Can I have a go riding?' Charlie asked in a burst of enthusiasm.

'Sure you can.' I laughed and swung onto the mare and circled Charlie's front.

"Let's gallop our mare's hysteria out!" Charlie made a pure sharp laugh.

I'm glad the boy came; twelve-year-old Charlie was a rogue, with a capacity for bad habits ruining his life. I calmed at the thought that maybe our adventure had stirred in him some sense of wonder and zest for life. As for the bay mare, I had more lessons to learn how to stamp her rage out, and for me to acquire some horse-sense.

Postscript: Ten years later a letter came from Charlie's dad.

'...Charlie's a social worker, smiles often; weekends he volunteers at the annual muster of brumbies in the high country of Victoria...'

**Wau, Morobe District,
Papua New Guinea 1973**

Events are true.

STELLA'S CUP

by Roslyn Jones



Ripponlea in the 1950's was a fun and innocent place in which to grow up. After school cricket, rounders and footy in the street with all the neighbourhood kids, but we all knew the rules and obeyed them - run home as soon as the street lights came on, or else!

In other ways it was a sad time for many families in the years following the end of World War 2. There were some confronting scenes where alcoholism, war trauma and loss of loved ones were apparent in our daily lives - counselling was rare in those days and people just had no choice but to get on with life and make the best of it.

It was April in Melbourne in 1956 and everyone in the City was very excited about the upcoming Summer Olympics (officially known as the Games of the XVI Olympiad) to be held in November/December in our own hometown. These Games were the first

to be staged in the Southern Hemisphere - and Melbourne was determined to create a sensational event, enhancing the growing rivalry between Melbourne and Sydney. My Dad was a very proud born and bred Sydney man and Mum was just as proud of her hometown of Melbourne, so it made for some interesting dinner conversations!

Far more important to me was my upcoming eighth birthday party.

The day arrived, and Mum was flat out finishing off our party hats, lolly bags and delicious party food - all home made such as sausage rolls, bread and 100's and 1000's, chocolate crackles, honey joys, iced patty cakes, tiny sandwiches and of course a lovely pink iced birthday cake with pretty decorations and a big 8 in the middle. No such thing as buying any of these goodies when you could make them at little cost!

My little school friends began to arrive and the chatter and laughter rang through our home and into the backyard where everything was beautifully arranged. I realised that my good friend Stella had not arrived and just then she walked into the backyard carrying an exquisitely wrapped box, which she gave me shyly while everyone watched on.

Mum watched me carefully unwrap the box and draw out the most beautiful English bone China cup saucer and plate set - everyone looked at it and then quickly lost interest and ran to play with my other gifts - except Mum and I! We turned to Stella, who was looking a bit worried, and I kissed and hugged her and said it was the most beautiful gift I had ever received. My Mum echoed the sentiment and then gently took the box from me and disappeared inside with it. The party continued and we all had lots of

fun – little did I know the pretty box would never reappear until much later in my life.

Our birthday parties were always a hit because, although we were well fed, clothed and went ice skating at St Moritz every Saturday with Dad on the tram, my sister and I were mindful that Dad was a returned Air Force officer and Mum made just a little money with her clever sewing and millinery. There was not much left over when payday came around each fortnight, so clever budgeting was important. We certainly appreciated the savings when we were treated to live musicals sitting up in the 'Gods' at the Saturday Matinees with Mum and Dad, after a delicious lunch at Elizabeth or Russell Collins (long gone but fondly remembered cafes on those corners).

Towards the end of 1956 the Hungarian Revolution occurred and many children began to appear at our school looking very different to what we had been used to - with their wide eyes, pale skins and scarves hiding their hair... most interesting of all was the very enticing lunches they unwrapped each day compared to our Vegemite sandwiches. They were welcomed with open arms and friendship. I made many friends with these lovely New Australians.

Sunday mornings were spent at Sunday School then home for a delicious roast lamb dinner followed by baked custard and cream - lamb was reasonably priced then but roast chicken was for Christmas Day only!

When I left the family home to be married, the day arrived... my Mum produced the beautiful cup, saucer and plate set and I was so grateful to her for having the forethought of keeping it safe for me.

My friends came to know it as 'Stella's Cup' and through many many pack-ups and shifts during the years they never volunteered to pack this lovely set and insisted I do it myself - fair enough - then I could only blame myself if it was broken!!

To this day I enjoy a moment of reflection with a lovely cuppa in this pretty cup, always remembering and being grateful for the halcyon days of my childhood, with treasured family and friends in Ripponlea.

BUNDLE OF JOY

by Veselka Gencic

There was a little island in the middle of the river. About 1, 5 km long and about 600 m wide. The islet was covered with shrub and trees. Narrow paths were meandering all over the islet.

Around the islet was weekend boat- houses, actually small huts on rafters anchored along its shore. All of them were different designs and colours, spectacular. All the owners knew each other. Very often they gathered in the middle of the island and enjoyed in barbeque and chatting.

One of those huts was mine. I used to spend almost all summer over there. It was my sanctuary. Swimming, sunbathing. Very often I slept in my boat-house. Since there was not electric power, I enjoyed in the gorgeous moonlight. I also adored mornings. When the sun was rising, the river was so beautiful, sparkling, little fish would springing on its surface and tuft of mist would floating above. I would usually made a coffee on a small gas bottle cocker and enjoyed on my little deck.

Every Sunday my friends would camming to spend some time with me. We were chatting, fishing, making barbeque, whatever. But I couldn't catch any fish. It was because I couldn't made proper bait. I couldn't pierce small fish or some bugs or something. I got from fishermen a small piece of net and tied it beneath my rafter, but never catch a fish. My friends liked to make a joke about my fishing. A friend Mark said if I ever catch a fish weight more than 1 kilogram, he will eat it raw, all with fin.

"Any fish" I said.

"Any. The bigger the better"

"With bones and gills?"

"Everything"

"I will buy a bottle of wine" said Peter.

"I am sure I will never drink that wine" said Mark and looked at me provoking.

I said nothing but I thought I would catch that fish even if I have to keep my tongue in water as bait.

They made a bet.

That Sunday, weather forecast announced a storm. Almost everybody went home; it was dangerous because some tree could fall. I remained alone. I like storms. When started thundering, my net suddenly began to move. I didn't know if the fish could detect the thunder, but when I pulled the net out of the water, there was a big fish in it. Over 5 kilograms. I was thrilled. My fish looked biggest than Santiago's in "The old man and the sea". Couldn't wait to see my friends. When a storm was over, lacking of a suitable bag, I took a small blanket, wrapped the fish and embraced as a baby. My pride. I was proud as a peacock. I caught the boat to the shore. In the boat I unwrapped the fish. People admired and I was proud. I caught a bus on the shore. Never used a car.

In the bus a young woman stared at me. After a few minutes, she asked: "Boy or girl?"

Silly question I thought, nowadays I don't even know whether the person is male or female, let alone fish.

"No idea", I said.

She looked at me stunned.

"Yours?"

"Of course it is mine," I snapped. "I got it, didn't steal."

"Sleeping?"

"Be sure, deathlike," I said and grinned.

The woman looked at the blanket again.
She probably saw blood stains because
she began to scream:

"Stop the bus. She killed a baby."

"No, no, it is not a b..."

Somebody grabbed my shoulders. The driver
slam on the brakes and several passengers
topped forward. My blanket slipped out of
my hands and went straight ahead at the
driver's feet. I ran for my pride. Somebody
shouted: "Grab her. She will run away."

How deed fish could run away I thought.
But she thought of me.

At the same time a big car hit the back of
the bus. The driver furious opened the door.
The car driver came even more furious:

"What's the... are you mad? "Our driver took
an edge of the blanket. When he pulled it,
my pride slipped out. Everybody stared in
silence.

"It is a fish." said driver.

"You gave birth to a fish?" said somebody.

"Lady, no more swimming. It could happen
again."

"Don't worry, lady, you are in. Being normal is
outdated."

I wrapped the fish, hugged like a baby and
kept silent. I let the people made a joke at my
expense. Nothing could ruin my enjoyment.
I Imagined Mark's face and grinned with a
pleasure. Poor Mark.

SUCH HAPPY PEOPLE

by Veselka Gencic

There is a joke: two villagers in some small country were sitting and drinking a beer. Strayed tourist has come to them for help. "Do you speak English?" He asked. They looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders. "Sprechen sie deutsch?" They just looked. "Parlez-vous francais?" "Parli Italiano?" The tourist desperate ran into village to seek help. One of them slowly said:

"You know what. We should learn some language."

"Why," said another. "This man speaks four languages and what's worth it."

Well, when I came to Australia I wanted to learn to speak English as soon as possible. In the beginning, it seems English is not difficult to learn, just put aside logic and learn by heart. That's all. Of course you ought to have good memory. So I entered the course on AMES, than Swinburne and I could talk. In the meantime I have lost hearing. Actually, only some tones so I do not understand people at all. Or even worse, understand different. So, when somebody talks to me I just smiled, nodded, said "yes" or something...

It is happened I had a painful tooth and went to the dentist. He asked me something but I didn't understand. He repeated the question. I thought He probably ask do I feel pain, what else, so I said: "O yes, of course." The dentist took my tooth out. When I realized what he was doing, it was too late.

My hearing doctor gave to me hearing apparatuses, with it I hear better but still not understand. The doctor told me: "Why don't you tell people you are a deaf? It is better to be deaf than stupid." She was right I thought so after that I always said, "Sorry I am deaf" I learned that is much easier than to make effort to understand somebody. Actually, I didn't even pay attention what someone talks,

I am deaf, and that's all.

But English language is not easy at all. I walked across Cole's car park on Capel str. The car park was full, no any empty space. A young woman stopped her car, rolled down the window and asked me:

"Are you leaving?"

Such question, I thought, of course I am living. I am not ghost. But I didn't, say it I just walked past her.

On the next driveway she was in front of me again, as she followed me.

"You leaving?"

"Of course I am living. Young lady, do I look dead?"

She stared at me several second than awarded me with gorgeous smile. Actually, people are always smiling when I say something.

Such happy people, I thought.

I strolled with my puppy bison down the Sandridge beach. My neighbor passed by me always looking back.

"What are you looking at?"

"There is a big ship."

"It's not from my dog."

"O dear I said big ship. Look at Station Peer." She was smiling.

After that I got panic. I stopped to communicate with anybody if I don't have to. When someone talks to me I pretend I do not notice. But it didn't help me. Once I was in tram 16, running from the St. Kilda beach. I liked to watch sunset on St. Kilda beach almost every evening and sometimes

I used to stay up to the last tram. My stop was 26 but it was dark and couldn't see so I peered out the window. It seemed a man talk to me something but I pretend not to notice. Besides, maybe he talked to someone else. Anyway, I didn't want to talk to anybody, but it made me nervous and wanted to go out as soon as possible. When I saw my stop I jumped with relieve, whispered "yes" and got out quickly. But the man left the tram too.

"This is not Domain," he said.

"No, it isn't,"

"Why you said yes?"

I stared at him. I was scared. We were alone. He was tall and strong.

It seemed he noticed it, so he said:

"Never mind. I will wait next one."

"But this is last one" I said.

"Really? Don't worry. I will walk on foot. Anyway, I should lose some kilograms." He said something else but I didn't understand.

With smile he strolled down the St. Kilda Street, slowly humming some melody. I stayed ashamed. But it is not always so bad.

My home phone ring almost every day. It is usually some company offer cheaper service, or some survey about political party or whatever. It is mostly automat. Anyway, I always say: "Sorry I don't speak English" and cut the line.

Once when I said "Sorry "... etc., a woman voice said:

"Cabrimi. You have appointment tomorrow at 2 o'clock."

"Yes, I know I will come."

"Sorry, But we have to cancel it."

"No problem. Could you make me a new appointment please?"

"Of course... Just a minute... what about Wednesday at 3 o'clock?"

"It will be fine. I will come on Wednesday at 3."

"Thank you very much. By the way, you said you don't speak English"

"That's right."

"But you speak." I didn't even notice.

"No... yes... aw... I speak sometimes, only on Monday."

She had so pleasant voice, so nice smile. Such happy people.

This time I smiled too.

"HELLO DOLLY"

by Wendy Butler

Now when I first met Paul he had a small screen with a picture of two women on it, one a woman of about eighty and one a grim-faced woman of indeterminable age. His mother and his Ex he said. So I figured that I knew what Paul's ex-wife looked like.

A few weeks later there's a much larger screen but the pictures are the same. I know now that the woman in the picture is not his ex-wife but his last girlfriend – the one who died, or should I say one of the ones who died. Anita, my back door neighbour warns me when she learns that I'm hanging out with Paul that all his girlfriend's die, but I'm not worried we're just friends who spend the evenings sipping homemade ouzo and singing along to music videos.

One night I come in and the picture's changed. A naked Dolly Parton stands in a garden setting with one arm out-stretched.

"Do you really think its dolly?" "Oh, yes" He assures me and I look again – yes there's those big boobs, a high waist and a very rounded stomach and shapely hips. I can imagine that a naked Dolly would look like that. The pose is very natural just like a family photograph, "Do you think Dolly knows this photo's in circulation?" "Of course she does, she's a good sport. She'd want to share."

After a few days I suggest that he put up a picture of a naked young Harry Belafonte for me.

"What and have every-one think I'm a Queer?" So Dolly remains and every evening I wave to her and say "Hello Dolly," and Paul asks if I'm a Lesbian or what.

Then suddenly there's a new picture, a mother and child, Paul has become a Grandfather. His little brother who's visiting says that Daniel has married a woman who looks just like his mother Paul's first wife.

"They're coming to visit in the New Year Wendy, you'll love them." But the New Year comes and goes and they don't arrive and a disgruntled Paul removes the picture and we're back to his mum and his Ex.

One evening I come in and on the screen is a picture of a nubile young woman, stretched naked across the screen like a young Marilyn Monroe calendar.

"This is Emma" He tells me proudly. "She's a really interesting person. We talked on the chat-room about all sorts of interesting things. She's got a brilliant mind."

"And a brilliant body" I say. "Have you sent her a picture of you?"

"You mean naked? I couldn't do a thing like that."

"Why not? Isn't that what she expects?"

The next night there's a new picture, this time it's from the neck to the knees with her tastefully raising her bikini top for a glimpse of her nipples while her other hand is pushing down the bottom, Paul is enraptured and I tease him about reciprocating.

The pictures continue nightly, I'm getting concerned that this is some sort of racket. Is she going to con him out of his money with a hard luck story, or ask for fare money so she can join him here? She's American.

The last picture is a doozy. Emma has been reduced to a headless, legless torso with lots of pubic hair. Paul approves. I find it tasteless.

I don't know what happened after that, but one night I come in and find the picture gone and he never mentions her again. And there on the screen, like a breath of fresh air is Dolly in all her natural beauty.

"Hello Dolly", I say and wave.

STREET ELVIS

by Wendy Butler

It's Street Elvis.
He's here in Fitzroy St.,
Without his guitar.
But I know it's him.
Who else would dress in a white jumpsuit with jewelled applique?
He's got the same pudgy face and black hair and side-burns
"Is Elvis performing, to-night?" I ask.
He holds out his hand,
"I'll take \$5 for a song maa'm,
Are there any mothers out there?
I could sing "That's all right Mama."
Some-one at the table hands over the money
And he sings a few bars.
Then stops – apologises for his voice.
It's not so good tonight.
He'll do hound dog instead.
Sings a verse then stops again.
Tries American Trilogy.
Is this part of the act?
Is he pretending to be Elvis on a bad night?
Or is this his own bad night?
Doesn't matter.
The drunks at the table keep giving him money,
So I guess it's a good night anyway.

HOPE

by Yael Hirschhorn

Is there still time for hopes and dreams
and do I even want to hope and dream?

Or am I waiting for the day that comes to all

now...

maybe tomorrow...

later...

Do I dare water the plants I grow
new seedlings in my neglected garden of life?

Is there still time to paint in vibrant colors
that once filled the now empty walls?

What color is my day? were the thoughts that followed.

Sunday was pale skin

Monday was sky blue

Tuesday was brown

Wednesday sunflower yellow

Thursday was magpie black and white

and Friday was indigo blue and later black
without cracks 'to let the light in'.

REFLECTIONS

by Yael Hirschhorn

I sit paralysed by my desires
as the rot attacks my heart and mind.
Possibilities unable to travel through the eye of the needle.

Rotting mould - one cell at a time.

The rhythm of flamenco courses through the rivulet's of my veins,
never to be danced to the sound of my beating heart.

I came to your door then, almost,
for you to teach me about living woods and smells
and water and gratitude.

The witches of the room prevented me,
the ones that never encouraged me to dare
but held me back my entire life.

What was it that brought me to the edge
just to shrivel and retreat?
And how many times did I stand there
never choosing to jump into the living?

BIOGRAPHIES FOR AUTHORS



Alex Njoo

Alex Njoo came to live in St. Kilda in the desperate years of the early 70s. He was thrown into the eye of a creative, exciting, and dark storm of human Endeavour. It was the decade of unburdening our colonial past. It was the beginning of a brave new society. Its war cry was "It's time". No longer were we cocooned in a corrosive imperial shell. He still believes that the values we embraced in those halcyon civilizing days are the currency that makes us civilized; the world we now inhabit is the measure of our humanity.



Aziza Khamlichi

Aziza Khamlichi was born in Moroccos. At the age of seventeen went to England to work as a nurse. She qualified as a Counsellor, Interpreter/Translator.

Aziza had the courage to immigrate again to Australia after retirement to join her daughter and help look after her grandson.



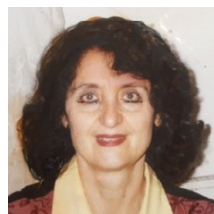
Allan Lake

Originally from Saskatchewan, **Allan Lake** has lived in Vancouver, Cape Breton Island, Ibiza, Tasmania, and, for now, Melbourne. Two collections published: *Tasmanian Tiger Breaks Silence* (1988); *Sand in the Sole* (2014). Lake won Elwood(Aus) Poetry Prize 2016, Lost Tower Publications(UK) Poetry Comp 2017 and Melbourne Spoken Word Poetry Festival/The Dan Competition 2018. Besides Australia he has been published in Canada, UK, USA, Mauritius, India, West Indies and Italy.



Barbara Anne Magee

Barbara Anne Magee was born in Launceston, and studied foreign languages and literature at the University of Tasmania, Hobart. She trained as a teacher, but was unable to pursue her career due to health-problems. Barbara is a very proud mother and grandmother, and a happy owner of three beautiful cats.



Anna Rogalina

Anna Rogalina has lived in the City of Port Phillip since 1992. Former teacher, she is very much a people person, who does a lot of voluntary work in the community. Anna enjoys writing in three languages, where she creatively expresses her feeling and emotions.



Bob Croker

Bob Croker born in Albert Park attended Middle Park Primary and South Melbourne Technical for his education before completing his apprenticeship as a Coppersmith with a local metal fabrication company. Opportunity for Bob to be involved in the building trade followed and presented him the chance to travel overseas. Before retirement Bob spent several years in the Security industry and his combined working life has given him well grounded and broad life experiences. He sees writing of many of his travels as something he can pass on and share with family or others interested.



Brenda Richards

Brenda Richards was born in Kyabram. She worked on the Itinerant Track before settling in St Kilda 53 years ago. She has two daughters and two grandsons. Brenda is a founding member of the Council for the Single Mother, and has worked for 25 years as a psychiatric Social Worker in the Children's Court. A few years ago Brenda was inducted into the Victoria Women's Honour Roll.



Bruce Cormick

Bruce Cormick has live in Port and South Melbourne all his life currently in the same house for 50 years. Bruce has been involved in council and many organisations over that time. At present in the Vossonova choir and Green Keeper / bowler at Albert Park Bowling Club.



Cristina Ceddia

Cristina Ceddia her writing is about having a voice, not disrupted by the noise of the engine, her writing is about the audience, the journey, it's about the road.



Deb Hall

An avid reader, writer, beachcomber, jazz aficionado, model-ship builder, croquet player, **Deb Hall** was born in 1957 in Melbourne, Victoria. She has published poetry in magazines and anthologies, and published short stories in anthologies, and articles in hobby magazines. She has lived in St Kilda for approximately thirty years.



Irene Ritchie

Irene Ritchie writes articles on travel in Indonesia. Irene has co-authored six books of Indonesian folk stories with senior lecturer, Eddy Pursubaryanto, from Indonesia. In 2015 Irene received a Seniors' writing award from the City of Port Phillip for an article called 'A Kooglhoupf Adventure'.



Jan Harper

Jan Harper is the great-granddaughter of Sandy McPhee, a Scot who came to Victoria during the Gold Rush. She is married to Brian Harper and has three daughters and six grandchildren. She has an MA in Sociology and has worked in research and as a change agent in the areas of women and health.



Inge Kulmanis

Inge Kulmanis was born and educated in Switzerland. Now retired she still loves to write and has ten Grandchildren and four Great Grandchildren. She loves Port Phillip's Social Inclusion, because it gives her the opportunity to go out and also attend courses. Port Phillip also provides the community bus and daylinks.



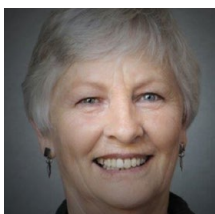
Josie Speranza

Josie Speranza lives in Port Melbourne with her husband Greg. They live next door to her mum. She's 59 and was born and bred in Port. She loves everything about Port and feels very lucky to live in such a great place!



Julie Butcher

Julie Butcher enjoys her book clubs and U3A writing group in Port Phillip. She works as a volunteer for The Biography Program: Beyond Words. She writes reviews and experiences for her blog, Butcherbird123.wordpress.com. She is also a keen golfer.



Lois Best

Lois Best discovered the joys of Port Phillip some years ago when visiting her daughter and granddaughters here. She seems to have settled, still teaching part-time and volunteering at U3A. Originally from WA, via many 'homes' in Australia and abroad, maybe this is the end of her wandering lifestyle. She likes the people, the 'village' feel, the sea and the convenience of the trams.



Lois Daley

Lois Daley lives in Port Melbourne, as a small child in the late 1930's, my family travelled by electric train from Port Melbourne to Reservoir and onto Whittlesea. Where we got onto a little diesel for the rest of our trip. My story is a reminiscence of those days when we met with our cousins for Christmas holidays at our Grandparents house on the hill.....long long ago.



Lola McHarg

Lola McHarg, born in St Kilda, has lived in the City of Port Phillip most of her life, embracing the vibrancy, diversity and tolerance. Take a walk up Acland St towards Linden Gallery. Look for the paving stones made by local artists. Lola's piece features white, red and black stones. The colours of St Kilda and the three stages of women; white: virgin, red: mother, black: crone. Lola, now a crone herself, lives in Balaclava and is experimenting in microfiction.



Marygrace Levakis

Marygrace Levakis. Call it poetry. Call it musings. Call it performance. She, Marygrace, enjoys doing it and entertaining others. Now at 71 years young, she has been writing and performing since the age of 21.



Megan Jones

Megan Jones is a retired finance journalist, now studying short story writing at university. Her family has lived in Port Melbourne since the 1880s.



Neville Smith

Neville Smith, age seventy two – forty eight year Sports and Fitness Professional Coach 20 year Professional in Show business as an Acrobatic Dance act, and Promoter Endeavours now are in writing, having completed a movie and a nutrition book, doing Classical Ballet Classes and Singing.



Peter Thorne

Peter Thorne, migrated to Australia from England at age eight. He spent his boyhood in country Victoria before moving to Melbourne. His working life was spent as an academic at the University of Melbourne. Peter has lived in Albert Park for the last 25 years.



Raffaella Cava

Raffaella Cava is an Italian Australian, residing in Melbourne since 1995, in East St Kilda. Trained as a Clinical Hypnotherapist, she works in Child Care and has been attending throughout the years, small courses and workshops on Creative writing. She writes short stories and poems and enters literary competitions.



Rob Walter

Rob Walter has lived in Port Phillip since 2003. She enjoys volunteering locally for Friends of Elster Creek, Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve, Love Our Streets, Waterwatch, and penguin guiding for Earthcare in support of the health of our Bay.

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to all the monitors.



Roderick Waller

Roderick Waller was born in Yorkshire in 1948, trained as an Agricultural Economist, and is divorced with 3 children. He was diagnosed with alcoholism in 1984. His interests are nature, farming, writing, play 5-string Banjo and he began writing poems and short stories in 1996, unpublished. Member of Roomers Writing Group since 2016.



Roslyn Jones

Roslyn Jones was raised in Ripponlea in the 1950s, with relatives in Albert Park and Balaclava. She has an overflowing cup of wonderful memories in Port Phillip.

Residing in Port Melbourne, she loves fitness, reading, films, theatre and time with family & friends. This is her first story writing venture!



Ruth Parker

Ruth Parker is a Melbourne based artist and singer songwriter who released her debut album, Cul de Sac, in Autumn 2019. She is developing her woodworking and gardening skills, and planning an escape from the city in the not too distant future.



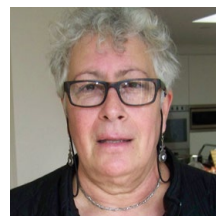
Veselka Gencic

Veselka Gencic was born in 1937. She graduated with Bachelor Degree at Belgrade University. In 1997 she migrated to Australia and lives in Port Melbourne. Her hobby is painting and writing short stories. She published one monograph in Serbia.



Wendy Butler

Wendy Butler has been writing and performing since she arrived in St Kilda in the year 2000. Most of her work is about living in the fast disappearing private hotels in St Kilda. Recently she has been writing about life in a small retirement village and ageing issues.



Yael Hirschhorn

Yael Hirschhorn BA, MA-AT (Art Therapy) was born in Israel, lived in Europe, California and New York, and came to Australia in 1993. Yael has been a counselor and art therapist with over 40 years of clinical experience working with children, adolescents and adults. Yael has 'retired' and her focus has been her collection of poetry spanning over 4 decades. Yael has been working with an editor to finalize a manuscript with the hope to publish her poetry soon. In her spare time Yael is a palliative care volunteer.

ROSE STONE

A St Kilda life



Rose Stone died last year on 23 October aged 96. She lived a very full life, travelled and had many experiences.

Rose was born 15 March 1922 in a small town in Eastern Poland. In 1938, at the age of 16, she came alone to Australia to join her family here. Her parents and younger siblings died in the Holocaust.

Rose lived with among the Jewish community in Carlton. She learned English by talking to the Australian girls in the factory where she worked. This started a lifelong love affair with the English language, which she expressed by writing many short stories.

Rose escaped twice to St Kilda, as she put it in a 2003 story. And one thing she encountered here was the Writers Competition. She was an enthusiastic contributor to the event, having entered at least one piece every year from its inception.

Rose's first escape was from her strict orthodox Jewish relatives in Carlton after her marriage in 1942. The couple moved into a flat in Blessington St. "My life changed," she wrote, "I was free from watchful eyes."

After the war Rose had two children, myself and my brother Norm.

Following her divorce in 1969, Rose escaped to St Kilda again – this time from Caulfield.

"It was 1969. Everyone felt sorry for me. I felt sorry for myself as well. So, in order to avoid the pitying looks of neighbours and friends, I escaped again... back to St Kilda". Again she felt safe and free but also excited to be living here. "St Kilda was full of exciting locals, odd bods and migrants. It was a great spot for a middle aged single woman."

Many of Rose's stories describe her life in St Kilda and above all the people she met and knew.

Her divorced friends in Dalgety Street - single women living in inexpensive flats where water dribbled down the walls and everything was old

and worn. But there was friendship and shared food, jobs to support themselves, new interests after divorce, an enthusiasm for life.

The people in her block in Hawsleigh Ave Balaclava in the 1980s, which was to be her home for the rest of her life. At first it felt like an "old people's home".

The woman who said that birds were her only friends. "She fed them through the open window. The building was covered with droppings. Everyone complained but she wouldn't stop. We also couldn't deny her her friends. We just hosed all the building."

The woman who escaped from the Nazis but was separated from her fiancée. After the war and a marriage, an amazing coincidence led to them being re-united.

The refugee couple from Yugoslavia who were still redecorating after 10 years. The man played gypsy music loudly on Saturday mornings and "continued the day with his hammer and drill".

Rose wrote about conversations in the fish shop, about the Village Bell, about the old St Kilda market, and about chicken soup (including a recipe).

My favourite story is the one about her visit to Luna Park with a boyfriend in the 1940s while still living in Carlton. "I was swallowed by a big mouth. Overwhelmed, blinded by a sea of colours, mountains of lights."

The merry-go-round music set off dreams...

"I am wearing a beautiful white chiffon dress, with a fitted bodice, a sweetheart neckline and big puff sleeves. It has a full circle skirt and there is a blue satin sash around my waist. Black patent leather shoes and silk stockings. My frizzy ginger hair has gone. Instead my hair is black, wavy and long, just like my mother's. My freckles have disappeared, my skin is rosy and clear."

And then the kiss on the big dipper. "It's like I am melting. I realise that I am being kissed. I am sure my face is scarlet, I think I should be modest and push him away, but I can't, I have to hold on."

Rose participated to the full in St Kilda life – the Historical Society, book clubs, writing groups, barbecues with young friends in her block of flats, no longer an "old people's home". She left her mark on many people in St Kilda and elsewhere. She will be missed.

Janey Stone

