

Bayside U3A

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

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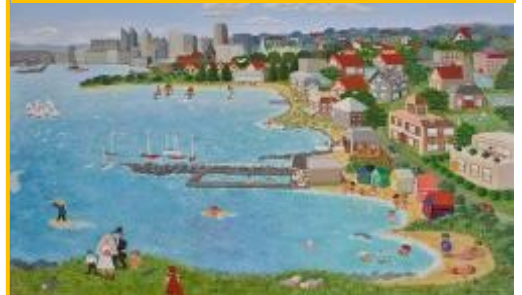
2022 TERM DATES

Term 3 11th July—16th September

Term 4 3rd October—20th December

NEWSLETTER

June 2022



Beaumaris Office:

Monday to Friday

9:30am - 2:00pm

Brighton Office

Monday and Wednesday

9:30am - 12noon

FROM THE PRESIDENT

DAVID HONE

At the end of Term 2, our numbers are still growing and we are bouncing back to pre-COVID levels. We are now one of the biggest U3As in Victoria! We should all be very proud of this story of survival, change, adaptation and embracement of new technology.

However, I have to report that as I have experienced more Hybrid classes, they have had their stressful moments for the presenter. It is difficult to achieve a seamless class experience. I have also been disappointed at the level of face-to-face participation. As a presenter, it is wonderful to have an audience to relate to and be given instant feedback. I hope Term 3 will see more members venturing out from home to attend U3A events.

Speaking of events, I remind you again that on the 1st October, we are celebrating the foundation of this U3A, 10 years ago. Along with the current Mayor of Bayside, we are inviting all the Foundation Steering Committee members as honoured guests to a Spit Roast Luncheon.

10 years ago, it was the Mayor who formally opened our first year and we have always had a close, positive and supportive relationship with the Bayside Council.

Unfortunately, attendance for all our current members will be by ticket only as the capacity of the Brighton Town Hall is limited. So, if you want to be part of this Birthday Luncheon do not hesitate once tickets are on sale. We will give you plenty of notice of the opening day for ticket sales.

The weeks go by and so far, no one has contacted me about how they could help run the Bayside U3A in its second decade.



BAYSIDE U3A 10TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday 1st October 2022

Lunch at Brighton Town Hall

(More details in the next Newsletter)



*The **BAYSIDE U3A HAPPY HOUR** is on the last Friday of the month!*

Please join us 5pm Friday 29th July at the Hampton RSL



25 Holyrood St Hampton VIC 3188

- * Everyone is welcome, just turn up!
- * Drinks: Special \$6 sparkling or house wine, discount beer and some spirits.
- * Please wear your U3A name badge and bring along your RSL membership card if you have one!
- * Dinner is available for those wishing to stay on.
- * ***Dinner bookings need to be made directly with the RSL on 9598 0460.***

Happy Hour on Friday 27th May....

A special thank you to the new members who attended!

Another busy night at the Hampton RSL for the Bayside U3A Happy Hour in May. More than 45 members attended, sharing the bar area with a wake and its mourners. 20 members stayed on for dinner.

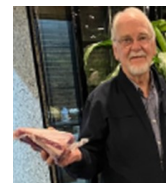
Chock (nickname), the RSL Welfare Officer, made us feel very welcome giving a short speech and some chocolates for our tables. We scooped the raffle pool with no less than 3 winners this time! Congratulations to the winning members below and hope you all enjoyed the lamb!



Mary Borghero



Chris Birch



Geoff Johnson



As this newsletter is published after the June 24th Happy Hour, please join us on the last Friday in July.

If you enrol in the ***Happy Hour Course Code: #22056*** you will get an email reminder closer to the day.



COURSE AND ENROLMENT NEWS**Convenor: Sue Steele**

Mid-winter is upon us, as is our mid-year term break. Term 3 resumes on Monday 11th July.

Following time spent thinking about 2023, the Bayside U3A Committee decided it's time to retire our home-grown online membership and enrolment system and move to U-MASS – a program used by more than 50 U3As. We will have U-MASS ready for the October/November enrolment period.

U-MASS is very easy to use. Almost all our surrounding U3As use it - Kingston, Bentleigh, Glen Eira and Stonnington. Several large U3As such as Mornington, Whittlesea and Nunawading are also U-MASS users. We will be training our office volunteers and tutors over the next few months.

At the same time and after much consideration by the committee, we will be retiring the 'Joint Membership' category. All joint members will be moved to full members in the new online system and to re-join in 2023, each joint member will pay \$50 rather than \$45.

NEW COURSE: YOU AND YOUR BODY, MIND AND BANK BALANCE

A humorous look at perennial problems we face when ageing.

Wednesdays 10:30am - 11:30am at **Timbuktu Cafe**, Wilson Street Brighton.

Commencing Wednesday 13th July - 14th September.

Enrol in Course Code: #22151 online or via email .

INTRODUCTION TO CROQUET**By Liz McConnell**

On a Tuesday in April, fourteen Bayside U3A members gathered at Sandringham Croquet Club. The sun was shining and an air of excitement permeated the clubhouse.

None of the U3A people had played croquet before, but the members of Sandringham Croquet Club were happy to demonstrate how to hold the mallet and how to strike the ball. Soon everyone was out on the courts and hitting balls around.



After that they learnt how to hoop a ball, roquet (hit another's ball away) and jump a ball. There was much laughter and many groans, but the skill levels gradually increased over the four weeks. By the last day of the course, participants played a game of croquet employing the techniques they had learnt, as well as applying tactics... croquet can be a mean game at times!

Sandringham Croquet Club was delighted to be able to run this introduction to croquet and warmly welcome new members to our friendly club.

**COMMUNITY RADIO 88.3 SOUTHERN FM****Convenor: Alina Skoutarides**

Bayside Community Hour broadcasts on the fourth Tuesday of every month, from 3pm to 4pm.

Our May interview featured Jane Olsen and Femke Meyer discussing the benefits of foreign language learning, ranging from memory training and cultural experience perspectives.

On Tuesday 28th June, Helen Lolatgis will introduce her program of a modern version of the old Chinese game of Mahjong, while Suzanne Frankham will talk about the way beginners and advanced players are accommodated in her Chess sessions.

INTRODUCING BAYSIDE U3A COMMITTEE MEMBER: CHRIS BIRCH

Chris was born and brought up in the UK but always had a yen to travel, so at the age of 21, he headed off to Central Africa for his first job as an engineer. There he met his future wife Mary who was an expat nurse in the local hospital.

They had some adventures including climbing Mt Kilimanjaro (Mary said her other boyfriends used to take her to the pictures!)

They got married in Ireland, Mary's home country and, after a spell living in England and Scotland, they moved to Australia in 1981, by which time they had two small kids. Fast forward to the present and the family has grown to include three grand-daughters and a grandson, all proud Australian citizens.

Following 10 years in Sale, Chris and Mary have lived in Bayside since 1991 and are now in Beaumaris, literally down the road from Bayside U3A. Chris worked as an engineer until 2019 and is now retired.

Nowadays he enjoys Bayside U3A activities including Happy Hour, Let's Do Dinner, Ballroom Dancing and Astronomy. He quickly found the Bayside U3A to be a great organisation and a fun way to meet people and learn something new at the same time. He also likes playing the piano and he satisfies his fascination with aircraft, by flying planes on his computer. He once flew a real one when his daughter bought him a flying lesson at Moorabbin Airport as a Fathers' Day gift and fortunately, the landing worked out OK!

Chris was accepted as the newest Bayside U3A Committee member in April 2022 and he looks forward to being an active part of the organisation.



CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS

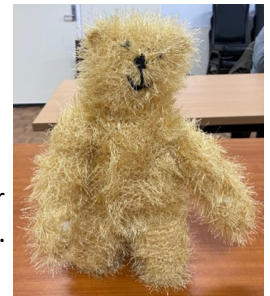
Co-leader: Alison Barnett

It has been wonderful to welcome some new members to our group this term which has helped swell our ranks whilst others have been away battling illness, the cold weather and a few lucky ones have been away on holidays. Unsurprisingly, given the weather, more of us are presently knitting with a number of our ladies busy making beanies and fingerless mittens for those in need.



Lynette Taylor knitted these toys and baby blanket for her great nieces Vylotte and Willow.

Gael Ellis knitted this fluffy teddy bear for her granddaughter Hazel.



Anne Tresise brought in her amazing quilt which is her interpretation of a pattern made from the original Civil War Bride's Quilt which hangs in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC.

Anne calls it her 'COVID special' as it was created during our lockdowns. It took her over 2000 hours to complete. The quilt depicts the bride's life and is made up of 20 individual blocks and borders.

Each block has been hand sewn and assembled by Anne and then Kerry Thomas at Macedon did the custom quilting. Instead of an overall quilted pattern, Kerry quilted each block separately which makes the features of the block stand out.

It is indeed an incredible piece and now hangs on Anne's wall at home.

But this was not Anne's only COVID creation as she also found time to knit bunnies for great nieces and nephews, knit 3 baby blankets, and make quilts for 3 grandchildren! COVID was certainly a productive time for Anne.



LAWN BOWLS AT HAMPTON BOWLS CLUB**Convenor: Rob Coulson**

This month Rob Coulson asked one of his Bowls students, Dr. Kathy Walker OAM, to give her reflections on the first two terms.

Arriving at the U3A Hampton Bowls in February this year was the beginning of a wonderful revelation of all things bowls. There was a group of about 20-30 of us, all beginners. We were a little hesitant and wondered what we were letting ourselves in for, but we were welcomed with much enthusiasm and encouragement.

Our coaches Rob and Pete plus a number of great assistants who are members of the Hampton Bowls Club, have spent week after week assisting us to learn how to play the game. Not one week was cancelled due to the wonderful weather we have had: Rob assures us he has personally organised the weather!

Hampton is a vibrant and welcoming club. A wonderful long north facing verandah sits along and above some of the greens, with tables and chairs to relax and watch the matches. Many of us stay for coffee after the lesson or return on a Friday for drinks at Happy Hour.

I'm mindful the World Health Organisation states that physical activity is good for hearts, bodies and minds. We certainly are gaining such a healthy experience! Socialising and making new connections and friendships; using so many new muscles (I could hardly walk after the first session!) gaining greater coordination; increasing our concentration and generally enhancing our well-being!

We are having immense fun and learning a lot including a whole range of new terminology!! For example:

- ♦ *I didn't realise that the term 'good weight' related to bowling!*
- ♦ *I didn't know that a ball could be called Jack or Dolly or Kitty!*
- ♦ *Who could have guessed a bowl could be called a wood?*
- ♦ *Who would have imagined that the area behind and above the rink was called a bank?*

Last but not least, the Hampton Bowls Club has just about gender equity in numbers of men and women members, so that is also great to be part of. I am grateful to Hampton Bowls and Community Club for their energy, commitment and welcoming attitude.

Thanks to all our coaches and to the club. It's been a great first 6 months.



COACH COULSON

BALANCE and BONES

Tutor: Janneke Casson

Zoom Balance and Bones classes will continue throughout the holiday break on Thursdays at 9am.

Cold mornings, deep breathing, warming stiff muscles.

What's not to like?

Your beautiful body deserves care and love.

It's the only one you'll ever have.



LET'S DO DINNER

Convenor: Karen Hall

The photos below are from 'Let's Do Dinner' held on the 14th May at the Hampton RSL.





LET'S DO DINNER

Convenor: Karen Hall



Only one dinner per month during the coldest times!

Two very large tables accommodated 33 of us this month at the Cheltenham Moorabbin RSL. Most enjoyed their meals although the first round of chips were definitely on the overdone side – unusual for this RSL. Some very traditional options available on the menu... think rissoles, lambs fry and corned beef!



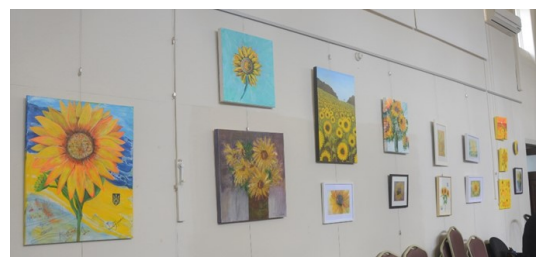
Only one dinner is planned for July - everyone is welcome on Saturday 16th July, 6.30pm at the Sandringham Hotel. If you wish to be included in future dinner invitations and reminders, please enrol in [Let's Do Dinner - Course Code: #21002](#).

THE SUNFLOWER PROJECT

BY: Geoff Rolls



As described in the last newsletter, both the Painting and Sculpture groups have been busy with the Sunflower Project as a gesture of support for the people of the Ukraine. We can now report that the sunflowers **are in full bloom** at the Brighton Courthouse. If you have not managed a visit you might like to pop in during the next few weeks to have a look?



During the school holidays the Courthouse will be open on Tuesday mornings between 10am - 12noon for the painting class. You would be most welcome to visit at that time.

SCULPTURE FOR PLEASURE**Tutor: Roy Bird**

Term 2 focused on Clay Sculpture and in Term 3, the Sculpture group will create a Mosaic piece of their choice.



Spiritual Symbol
Concrete and Steel
by Nora



Found Rocks
by Carol B.



Sunflower
Air Dried Clay
by Cynthia



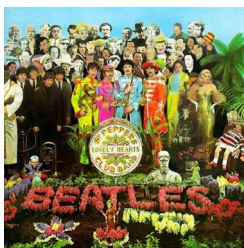
Sea Creature
by Anna



Godess in Clay
by Joan

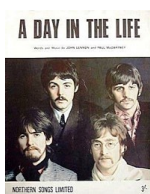
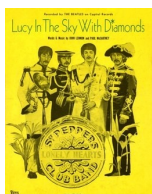
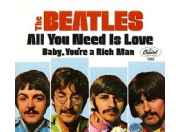
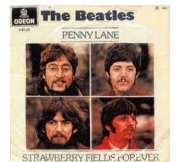


Clay Baby and Roses
by Cynthia

**BEATLES****Tutor: Bob Mason**

It has taken us more than two years to cover the Beatles' first seven albums and twelve singles from 1962 to 1966, the period in which they made their name. We now reach their most acclaimed phase, December 1966 through to June 1967.

As usual there was intense competition in the charts ('Good Vibrations' at the start and 'Whiter Shade of Pale' at the end) yet the Beatles still managed to dominate the year. The *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album became the most successful and most acclaimed album of the 1960s, along with two mighty singles: the double 'Penny Lane/Strawberry Fields Forever' (both of which continue to fascinate academics) and the first global satellite telecast, 'All You Need Is Love'.



Yet in an historical context, it comes at a time when the free-for-all lifestyle of the 'Swinging Sixties' was suddenly disrupted by drug bans and police action. In this first period, the Beatles' closest friends, Donovan and the Rolling Stones found themselves charged. Yet it was the Beatles who spoke publicly (and favourably) about their LSD experiences and sang songs like 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' and 'A Day In The Life', the latter of which was banned on the BBC for its drug references.

ENGLISH LITERATURE**By: Eiril Tan**

Our tutor was surprised to find so many 'Mrs Charmonds' attending the Bayside U3A Literature class last week!

We did this to acknowledge the plight of poor Marty in 'The Woodlanders' by Thomas Hardy and the importance of hair in the plot. A poor village girl Marty was induced to cut her abundant and beautiful hair to provide a hairpiece for the lady of the manor, rich Mrs Charmond.

You must agree that a fine wig adds dignity and glamour.

Hopefully we will not all share Mrs C's fate... she was shot by her jilted lover!

**CULTURE TOURS****Convenor: Joan Gibbs**

On Wednesday 13th and Thursday 28th July we will be driving to *Tyabb Packing House Antiques* on the Mornington Peninsula, where we can browse through many interesting stalls and enjoy a coffee in the cafe! Then we continue with a drive to *Red Hill Estate Winery* for a wine tasting session and time enjoying the country scenery. We return home 4.30ish!

Google 'Tyabb Packing House Antiques' and 'Red Hill Winery' for the history of each location.

We will travel in a 6-seater people mover vehicle and an 11-seater bus. Transport pickups are at the Brighton Courthouse at 9.15am and Beaumaris Library at 9.30am. It will be a relaxing day to catchup with like-minded friends!

Please email Joan Gibbs for any queries at joanlgibbs37@gmail.com or **0417 768 433**
Tour Itineraries for the next 12 months are available via Joan Gibbs.

**Reconciliation Writing Competition 2022*****Get Up Stand Up Show Up***

The Reconciliation Writing Competition organised by the Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation is open to all Victorians. Our theme is the 2022 NAIDOC theme:

Get Up Stand Up Show Up

which reflects a proud history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People organising and fighting for their rights and is an ongoing call to action for everyone.

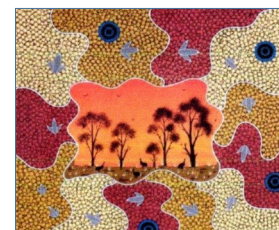
All styles of writing are encouraged, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Work must be original.

Open to all Victorians except PPCFR committee, judges and their families.

Details of the requirements for the competition including categories, word limits, judges and prize money can be found at www.ppcfr.org

Submit entries along with your name and for students, your school and your level to: writingcomp2022@gmail.com

For further information contact Rosemary Rule on 0418 675 734



Gathering for Nesting
By Wiradjuri
Artist Graham Gilbert, 2014

Absentees and Withdrawals from Classes/Groups

We would like to remind members that it is a courtesy to inform the office if you are unable to attend classes.

If you wish to withdraw from a class/group, notify the office so we can remove your enrolment and offer the vacancy to a member who is on the waiting list.

Email the office at baysideu3a@gmail.com or call **9589 3798**

BAYSIDE U3A WRITERS GROUP**Tutor: Dr Cheryl Threadgold****Word of the Month: NOTORIOUS****NOTORIOUS****by Norah Dempster © 2022**

When I first moved to Sandringham I received a lot of advice.
 An elderly retired nurse who lived two doors down welcomed me.
 "You will like it here," she said. "It's a lovely place to live. But don't go down to the beach in the evenings."
 "Why?" I queried, imagining high tides and danger.
 "It is notorious," was her reply. She added happily that she had married three times and "got rid of them all."

The middle-aged man who lived next door to me was welcoming too.
 "Do you like to walk?" he asked.
 "Yes, I do," I replied. "I've read there are a lot of walking tracks around here."
 He nodded, "Well, walk in the mornings. Best time."
 "And at sunset?"
 "Oh no!" was his answer. "Not then. It is notorious down there at that time. Don't go down."

The neighbour across the street with three young children added more.
 "Be careful," she said. "I see you like to walk on your own. Don't go down to the beach at sundown."
 I was greedy for scandal.
 "What is the reason for that?"
 "Someone was attacked. And there was a rape another time." Her voice dropped as she told me and she glanced around as if she might be overheard.
 "And those big teenagers from private schools hang around."
 "Drinking?" I say.
 "Probably. They are notorious," she added.

I had to see for myself, of course.
 So I decided to face the end of the day on Sandringham beach. I thought of carrying a stick but in the end, I simply put on my walking shoes and held my house keys in my hand for use as a potential weapon. I said to my husband, "If I am not back in an hour come and search."

I crossed Beach Road. The evening sky was pink and gold. I walked along the dry track. Two teenagers sat holding hands watching the sun slip slowly down.

A small family passed me with the smallest one carrying a bucket.

I went down the steps.

A father was shouting at his three boys to get out of the water and come home for tea.

"Yes, dad," they chorused, but they weren't hurrying.

Across the bay, the city lights were starting to appear.

An old man passed me, "Nice evening," he said.

I walked along the beach until the light dimmed. Then back up the steps with a couple of middle-aged swimmers. The teenagers had left. All was quiet and peaceful.

"What was it like? I was a bit worried about you," asked my husband.

"I know why it is notorious," I replied worrying him even more.

And I still walk there many years later. You will see me there at sundown. I am notorious.

NOTORIOUS**by Juliet Charles © 2022**

He is about to ascend the gang plank. He looks nervously around. He can't see his father – has anyone else followed him? His mouth is dry and his heart is pounding. He didn't expect this delay. Thank God, a woman has joined the queue, partly shielding him from view.

His name is Alex, it is 1904 and he is about to disappear to Honduras.

Alex Attwood is posing awkwardly on the motor bike in the black and white Facebook photo. Cristofer has deemed the motor-bike, an 'Indian'. Alex is wearing black trousers, a crisp white shirt and a striped tie. His wavy hair is tidily combed and he is peering through rimless glasses into the bright sunlight. He looks fifty, so it's about 1937. No goggles, helmet or leather jacket; Alex is not clad appropriately for a bike ride. Marjorie reads Cristofer's comment - the bike belongs to Alex's son, who Alex is visiting in neighbouring Guatemala.

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Marjorie had been shocked to hear from Cristofer Attwood. He was, it seems, her second cousin. Cristofer was born in Honduras and when he discovered that his deceased grandfather, Alex, was born in Australia, he searched in vain for his Antipodean relatives. A DNA test revealed the astonishing truth - Alex Attwood was not his real name. Alex was born **Hartley William Fairchild**. Cristofer set up a Facebook page for his newly found Australian relatives; they were intrigued to learn of a family member who had changed his name and vanished to Honduras.

Marjorie googled Honduras – ‘a central American country with Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean coast-lines’. It had had a ‘colourful and turbulent history - from Spain’s arrival and domination in the 16th Century - to its independence in 1838’. She imagined a steamy, exotic paradise. Reading on ... ‘violent crime is rampant in Honduras, the murder rate is high and poverty is a major problem.’ Hmm – Tahiti sounded nice.

Did Alex/Hartley know that Honduras was constantly embroiled in internal rebellions when he crossed the Pacific Ocean at 18 years of age? Why did he spurn safe, sedate Melbourne in favour of such an unstable domicile? Perhaps his heart quickened at the thought of living in a country teeming with danger and conflict. Or was he so desperate to escape, that he looked at a map of the world and chose Honduras for its remoteness from Australia - 15,700 kilometres away?

Why did he go? A rebellion against his family – the result of a ferocious argument? Did he commit a crime – or was there a girl back home in Melbourne, pregnant and heartbroken?

There is no glimpse of the young rebel in the photo, just a respectable, rather handsome, elderly gentleman. Marjorie wished she had a picture of Uncle Hartley in his younger days, when he left Melbourne for Honduras. He would have cut a dashing figure - like Errol Flynn perhaps?

Sadly, everyone who knew the truth about Hartley’s teenage dash to the ‘wilds’ of Honduras was dead. But Marjorie was determined to solve the mystery; was he notorious?

ARMED ROBBERY

by Tom Valenta © 2022

The newspaper headlines were large and bold. ‘Notorious armed robber gets long jail sentence.’

For his attempt to rob an armoured van at gun point, and wounding one of the guards, Steve Thompson had been sentenced to twelve years’ imprisonment with a minimum of ten years behind bars.

When passing sentence, the judge noted that Steve had a long history of crime. “Your record includes a previous armed robbery, burglary, possession of stolen goods and assault,” said the judge. “For public safety, you must be incarcerated for a lengthy period of time. I see no real prospect of rehabilitation, Mr Thompson.”

For some years, Steve had worked as an organiser for the Painters and Dockers union. He told a prison visitor; ‘My criminal record was seen as a positive with my union bosses. Part of my job was to sell advertising for the union’s monthly magazine. There were strange co-incidences for people who refused to buy ads. They got bricks thrown through their shop windows or their car tyres were slashed.’

Born in 1942, Steve had grown up in Brunswick. In the year he was born, Steve’s father, who had joined the army, was killed fighting on the Kokoda Trail. Steve’s mother worked part-time as a cleaner in local factories to supplement her war widow’s pension. It was a tough existence for Steve and his older sister, Jane.

At school, Steve showed potential as a footballer and hoped to be recruited by VFL clubs Fitzroy or Collingwood. “I was never much of a student so footy seemed a good career for me.” Sadly, he never made it. “I was told I wasn’t tall enough or fast enough.”

He left school at fifteen and found work on the waterfront. It was hard, monotonous, poorly paid work. Soon Steve learned he could supplement his meagre income by stealing cargo and selling what he acquired in pubs and on street corners.

“It was what many of us wharfies did, but few got away with it. The cops arrested me for the first time when I was flogging frying pans and other kitchen stuff in a lane not far from home. My criminal record started back then – with a fine and good behaviour bond.”

Steve’s career flourished and he was often a person of interest to investigators when cases had the Painters and Dockers modus operandi stamped on them.

The plan to rob an armoured van was months in the making. Steve and three of his union mates knew that the vans carried huge amounts of cash. It was the late 1970s and most workers still received weekly pay envelopes. The guards who travelled in the vans were vulnerable when they picked up cash from banks and delivered payrolls to employers.

It was early one morning when they saw their target van in the carpark of a shopping mall. Two guards were wheeling tins of cash towards the van when the gang jumped out of a stolen car and, with guns drawn, charged the guards. One guard appeared to reach for the pistol in his belt and was shot.

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From inside the van, the driver sent out the emergency call on his two-way radio. A third guard in the back of the van opened fire, wounding one of the robbers. Steve and the other two ran for their lives. As they reached their get-away car, sirens were heard and they were surrounded by armed police.

As the gates at Pentridge Prison swung closed behind the police van, Steve heard voices in the distance. "Welcome back Stevie. We've missed ya mate. Let the poker games begin."

NOTORIOUS *by Norm Beck © 2022*

The day Poppa Bill took me 'to waste money on the nags,' as Nanna rebuked afterward, remains etched in my memory. I was ten; Nanna had gone to Sydney to look after her sister, who was convalescing at home after an operation. She'd left casseroles and enough food in the freezer for a week.

"And if you take Jason for a meal, don't have too many beers," Nanna admonished, knowing it was pointless telling him what to do. Besides, she always enjoyed our fortnightly outings to the pub or RSL.

We dropped Nanna at the Skybus going to the airport. After we hugged and kissed and before boarding, all Nanna could say was, "you men look after each other ok." Neither of us knew what to say; joking didn't seem right. We waited and waved goodbye.

Nanna left on Wednesday. On Thursday night, Poppa Bill came home early in a cheerful mood, saying, "My dear Jason Cuthbert, on this coming Saturday, let me escort you to watch the sport of kings." Then he made an elaborate low bow.

"The races, the sport of kings," he repeated with a flourish, waving our tickets.

"The nags?" I asked, laughing, using Nanna's term.

"Jason, Jason, Jason, show respect. You'll witness why royalty has looked upon these beasts as gods."

I'd never been to the horse races or anything like that before. Of course, I couldn't sleep with the excitement.

Come the Saturday, Poppa Bill put on his suit and wore a hat with a small turquoise feather in the band, a green tie, and a handkerchief in his top pocket. I scrubbed and put on my good trousers, a pressed shirt, and a good jumper. Poppa Bill even polished my shoes.

We walked to the station, enjoyed the train ride to the city, then the claustrophobically crowded tram to the track's gates. Someone even gave me their seat. It wasn't just me; there was a sense of the carnival, anticipation, and excitement. Everyone was studying one another. How each had outfitted themselves for the occasion, the dresses, the women's hats, and fascinators. You could see how the women studied each other's shoes.

I was in heaven, the lawns, the white wooden stands, the flower beds. Poppa introduced me to the bookies setting up their boards, adjusting the straps on the leather tote bags, and discussing odds and scratchings. I could tell Poppa was well-liked, given the good-humoured banter and compliments I received. The colour, the sweet smell of grass and manure, and the electricity of anticipation and hope was everywhere.

We strolled over to the mounting yard to watch the horses running in the first parade. Those horses, those beasts, those royal gods were magnificent and terrifying at the same time. I stood at the fence with my mouth agape. They knew what was expected of them, why their coats glistened, and why their manes and tails were cut razor straight. You could tell the arrogant and proud ones, others that twitched and snorted nervously, and those that tossed and pulled impatient to race. You could see the ripple and twitching in the shoulders, the too slender legs with the veins and sinews, and the clopping scrape of the shoes. All the while, the strappers tried to keep them in line as they circled the yard. You sensed the horses understood the reason for the excitement better than us. I was trapped between fascination and fear.

"Come," Poppa Bill said, "we'll get a good spot just short of the finishing post." The crowd made way and helped me to the fence. The starting gates crashed, "and they're racing," followed by the expectant two-minute wait before they hit the turn. As the thundering mass approached, I was frozen. The visceral power, the tremor in the ground, the ferocious speed, the flying clods, the exploding flash of the silks and whip, the jostling, the fusion of jockey and horse, the white foam on the shoulders. "It's Notorious by a length, no Spartacus is making a charge on the outside, it's Notorious, Spartacus by a nose," shrilled the nasal race caller.

In that final instant, the wildness in the eyes, the flaring nostrils, the death wish desperation as they gasped, grasped, and stretched for the finish. The thunderous pounding and power rising from the earth into your limbs, the wild roar of the crowd, then it is over, gone in an instant. Poppa Bill stood there, smiling as he tore up his betting chits and ruffled my hair.

It is the only time I've been awestruck as every sense fused. It fills you with something inexplicable, approaching frenzied reverence. I can understand the addiction, although I've never placed a bet. The sport of kings? Ah, the truth.

The rebuke from Nanna when she got home was mild, realising she could never give me a day like that.

Poppa kept betting; twice more he took me. After he passed away, I had no interest in attending.