

JUST BACK

A MEMOIR FOR MY FAMILY & FRIENDS

JOHN BENNETT



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BY JOHN BENNETT

Just Back, A Memoir by John Bennett

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For Jen, Melanie, Matt and Andy
for giving everything meaning
and for my many friends
who made it so much fun along the way

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Introduction

Cedarvale Farm, September 2021

Through my life I have been an earnest archivist. I have, since childhood, kept old tickets and driver's licences and documents and of course many photos of friends and family and events in my life. Perhaps I thought that one day they might be useful. Perhaps I just liked being able to look back and enjoy memories of people and places and what we did there.

In my study at Cedarvale Farm I have long shelves of carefully dated and organised albums containing photos and memorabilia covering different periods of my life. I also have diaries and journals and even copies of letters home which my mother typed up and censored.

With a slowly eroding memory and a long life behind me, this archive has been invaluable to help me write this memoir. I have also referred to other friends' published memoirs and to some of the many books published about the history of South Africa, in which my forebears have been mentioned. For anyone interested in these sources, I have compiled a list you'll find at the end of this book.

I haven't written this book to win any sort of literary prizes. I have merely wanted to preserve an account of my life for my family and friends, as I have often wished I had of my mother's and father's lives. It is of course, only as reliable as its sources and my memory. Any errors of fact or lapses of memory are my responsibility alone and I apologise if anyone reading this feels I have misrepresented them or someone close to them.

I suppose a book such as this befits a man of my age. I am 79 now, with the time to do it and without the distractions of other, perhaps more active pursuits with which I occupied myself when I

was younger and which gave me such pleasure. I have children and grandchildren whom I love dearly, and many friends (and two wives) who have given my life meaning and purpose. My existence would be barren without you and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for all that you have given me.

PART ONE

1. Ancestry

My maternal grandmother Edith Sophia Moodie's family can be traced back to Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland from 1306-1329. My great, great grandfather Captain Benjamin Moodie [1789-1856] was the 10th Laird of Melsetter on the isle of Hoy in the Orkney Islands off the northern tip of Scotland. After service in the Napoleonic Wars he returned to the Orkneys with few resources and was forced to sell the heavily indebted family estate. This led to the venture which took his family to what was then the Cape Colony in South Africa.

There was a high level of unemployment in northern Scotland at this time, and a great need for workers in the Cape. This led Captain Moodie to gather a party of two hundred indentured tradesmen and labourers and in 1817 charter the ship 'Brilliant' to sail them to Cape Town. He agreed to meet all costs on the understanding that members of the group would repay him with money earned or a term of labour when they arrived in the Cape.

On arrival Captain Moodie settled in Cape Town, where he married the Hon. Lady Sophia Pigot, whose father, a former Governor of Madras, had moved the family to the Cape in 1806. The couple's son, Donald Hugh Menzies Moodie [1830-1911] moved to Grahamstown (now renamed as Makhanda) in the Eastern Cape, where in 1867 he married Barbara Adriana Smuts, the aunt of General Jan Smuts, who was later to become Prime Minister of South Africa. Barbara was an only child, yet she and Donald went on to have eighteen children, one of whom was my grandmother, Edith Sophia Moodie, born in 1875.

In 1893 two of my forebears, Tom Moodie and George Benjamin Moodie (who my father is named after) led the Moodie Trek from the Orange Free State and settled the town of Melsetter in Rhodesia which they named after the family's home in the Orkney Islands.

When goldrush fever broke out in Barberton in the Eastern Transvaal (now renamed as Mpumalanga) the Moodies set out from

Grahamstown in 1887 by wagon on what became a six-month journey. My great grandfather bought a farm a few miles out of Barberton. While their house was being built, they rented the only brick shanty in the top mining camp, populated mostly with hard-drinking pioneers. But eventually they moved into their new house and settled happily, creating a beautiful garden and orchards and raising their family. Frontier conditions were tough, however, and most of their children did not survive. Three infant sons died as a result of the frequent attacks of malaria and one child died at birth under the care of a decidedly inebriated doctor. Of the eighteen children, only six survived.

In 1890, at the age of fifteen, Edith Sofia was sent to boarding school at St Anne's, Hilton in the KwaZulu Natal Midlands. The story goes that an African driver, with a huge pet baboon sitting beside him, took Edith by wagon to the town of Newcastle, where he put her on a train to St Anne's and she did not see her beloved family for three years. After school she spent some years working as a governess before returning to live at Orange Grove. By this time, Barberton had grown and there were parties and picnics and dances, where eligible young women were no doubt greatly outnumbered by eligible young men - and she became twice engaged. The first engagement, to a much older man, lasted only 24 hours after her father reputedly said to her, 'Darling one does not marry for pity'.

The story goes that she found it more difficult to break off her second engagement as she was fond of the man's mother. Finally, in her words, 'Then came the Longfeller and I did fall.' This was my grandfather, Alfred Henry Bennett. He was twenty-one years old, and she was twenty-two.

Alfred Henry Bennett was born in England in 1876. He was raised in Gloucestershire, where for 400 years the Bennetts had farmed at New House Farm near the town of Badminton. The family owned 375 acres and leased another 200 from their neighbour, the Duke of Beaufort. History has it that it was in one of the large rooms

of the Duke's palatial home that the modern game of badminton was first played in 1873. Today, the village of Badminton abounds with shuttlecocks and all things pertaining to the game.

New House farmhouse, a large, double storey home, still stands today. The farm also boasted seven stone cottages, in which lived twenty labourers. The 1881 census records Alfred's father William [36 years], mother Harriet [33 years], their son Alfred [5 years], with his five siblings and five staff. By the next census in 1891, Alfred was fifteen and a student at Long Ashton School in Wiltshire, described as 'a boarding school for young gentlemen'. From school Alfred went to Bath University to study civil engineering. I remember his stories, when I was growing up, of walking the ten miles from the farm to Bath every day. Today this route is part of the Cotswold Trail, one of England's heritage trails.

Upon graduation he heard of the Barberton Gold Rush, and being an adventurous young man, set sail for South Africa. And so my grandparents - Edith, petite, pretty, vivacious and blue-eyed with long curls of blonde hair and Alfred, tall, handsome and charming - with their roots in the far-flung Orkneys and green rolling Cotswolds, met in the Lowveld of South Africa. He called her Sunbeam and she called him Longfeller. The couple became engaged in 1899, shortly after the outbreak of the Second Boer War.

Alfred joined up with the Thorneycroft Mounted Infantry, a respected corps raised by Major AW Thorneycroft of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, which enlisted 'Uitlanders', or British immigrants to the Transvaal, to fight the Afrikaner Boers. He fought at the Battles of Colenso, Spion Kop and Hlangwani and received four medals for bravery. He kept a diary in shorthand which among other things described the death of a man in the trench next to him on Spion Kop. It also gave a good insight into the everyday life of a soldier. Between battles there was shooting practice, caring for the horses, polishing boots - and boredom. He was hospitalised with dysentery in the British military camp at Mt Alice near Winterton. In these

simple tents, complex, innovative operations were carried out by the renowned surgeon Frederick Treves, who had become famous at London Hospital as the doctor and friend of the 'Elephant Man', Joseph Merrick.

At the start of the war Donald Moodie moved his family from Barberton to Pietermaritzburg and built a large mansion just outside the city which he called Melsetter after their old home in the Orkneys. He took up politics, became an MP and was Speaker in Natal's first Legislative Assembly. When peace was declared in May 1902, my grandparents married in Pietermaritzburg and Alfred obtained a job as Chief Engineer with the Natal government. Unification of the Cape Colonies was being proposed and the Natal government was developing irrigation schemes with funds they didn't want to see disappear into the Union. Alfred was commissioned to build schemes at Weenen, Winterton and the dam at the Little Tugela Gorge, three miles above the junction of the little and big Tugela Rivers. The dam was never built and only a few concrete pillars remain, sorry evidence of a plan abandoned well over a hundred years ago.

Alfred and Edith bought a farm called The Homestead two miles out of Winterton and lived there for the first years of their married life. During these years Alfred built a weir across the Little Tugela River just above the village and an irrigation canal excavated to carry water to Colenso. A community of farms known as The Settlement was established. Alfred bought the second farm on The Settlement and called it New House Farm after his old home. (The Settlement still exists.) This was where Alfred and Edith raised their family. They had a daughter and five sons, the youngest of whom was my father, George. His brothers were Hector, Billy, Percy and Dunbar and his sister was Barbara.

Later Alfred was appointed Inspector of Lands, travelling throughout Natal, determining land values and ensuring that government bonds were being paid. He was also Bailiff of The Settlement, in charge of water allocation for the community's farms. He and my

Gran took many camping trips in the Drakensberg and Alfred was also an avid hunter, joining safaris to Rhodesia and the Congo. The trophy heads of buffalo, buck and other animals (and even a fox shot while hunting in England) hung on the walls at their home at New House Farm.

In 1911, a few years before my father George was born, Alfred and Edith took their four sons, aged from two to seven, to visit their grandparents in England. My Gran put dog collars around the boys' waists so they wouldn't fall overboard, and on those nights when the family slept up on deck, Gran used big safety pins to pin the boys' clothes together in case they wandered.

My grandfather Alfred loved building structures which would last. (With the help, of course, of his African labourers.) Using stone cut on the farm he had a beautiful thatched roof church constructed, with stained-glass windows and pews which his parents had sent out by ship from England. These landed in Durban and were then carried to the farm by ox wagon. The pews were little oak chairs joined together, simple rush seats with boxes on the back for hymn books. Alfred's parents also sent out the carved eagle-winged lectern to hold the Parson's Bible. In 1910 the family gave ownership of the church to the Anglican diocese in Winterton. He was later honoured by the main park in town being named Bennett Park.

My grandfather also built a four-storey water mill on the Little Tugela River which ran through the farm. It was quite an engineering feat and is featured in the book 'Watermills of South Africa.' Some years later, between 1925 and 1930, he built a huge double storey house in Amanzimtoti for family beach holidays. The house had balconies and strong teak doors and was such a landmark in 'Toti' that it featured on a local postcard.

My uncle Dunbar wrote this about Alfred: 'I suppose one of my main memories was him standing or working on the construction of a big concrete structure on the banks of the Tugela River. If ever there was a monument to him, it would have been one of those buildings,

the English church at Winterton or the house at 'Toti.

'I also remember him well as Superintendent of Settlements and Inspector of Lands, when he would be away for weeks at a time. And later, as local Justice of the Peace, he would emerge from his two-finger typing in his office to face a lot of patient, sitting natives and listen to their individual grievances. At each decision, the recipient would salute and gratefully walk away leaning on their sticks, with total acceptance of his decisions.'

During these years, my grandmother was also productive, in the style of English ladies of the day. Although she had had no formal lessons, she was a talented artist. She also wrote poetry, spent hours working in her magnificent garden and, of course, keenly supported the local parish.

Alfred Henry Bennett died in 1961 at the age of 85.

Edith Sophia Bennett died in 1971 at the age of 96.

2. Mum & Dad's story

George Benjamin Bennett, born 12 April 1917, died 2000, aged 83.

Patricia Joan Janet Bennett, born 28 July 1921, died 2004, aged 83.

Dad was born in the farming town of Winterton in the foothills of the spectacular Drakensberg Mountains. His mother, Edith Sophia Bennett, described him as, 'George, our seventh, a man from babyhood. Just sprung straight into manhood.'

Dad grew up on New House farm and attended the local primary school until the age of nine. He was then sent to board at Durban High School (DHS). He was a good rugby player and athlete and in my teens proudly showed me a plaque at DHS to mark his achievement setting a school record in the 440 yard running race.

My grandmother's memoirs, written when I was about fifteen, provide an insightful description of our family: 'My fifth son, George Benjamin. (George the independent, chaff and smiles.) It seems he has always been a man. He was a wise babe and grew up quickly, always knowing his own mind and acting thoughtfully and bravely. Dear Pat and he are continuing in bringing up their fine boys, Georgie the gentle, John the go-getter, Felicity the independent and now Allan the infant. God bless and help these young parents.'

After school, at the age of sixteen in 1933, he went to the General Botha Naval College near Cape Town. He was a good student and was awarded the prize for mathematics by Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, Founder and Chairman of the renowned South African diamond mining and trading company De Beers. The prize was a boxed set of mathematics instruments which he passed on to me when I went to university. After leaving college, he joined the Merchant Navy as a midshipman while undergoing officer training and was assigned to the 'Nantola' on the London to Beira run. (Beira is a port in what is now Mozambique.) He later travelled to the Americas and to Australia. I

have photos of Dad skiing at Mount Buller in the late 1930s, before the advent of ski lifts or rope tows. By then he was a midshipman with the British India Line, where he was Batman to Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement.

At the outbreak of World War II he joined the South African Navy and was seconded to the British Navy as a Lt. Commander and at the age of twenty-three, became the youngest Commander in the Mediterranean. Still in his twenties, he went on to command minesweepers, a dangerous and highly responsible posting. His commands included the 'Treern', which on 12 January 1945 (after he had left its command) struck a mine in the Trikiri Channel on the east coast of Greece, with the tragic loss of twenty-seven lives and only one survivor. (The Treern remains the last South African ship ever lost in action.)

When Field Marshall Montgomery defeated Rommel in North Africa, Dad's ship was the first into Tobruk, sweeping the harbour of mines ahead of the entry of the British Navy. Montgomery welcomed the ship into Tobruk and came aboard for lunch with Dad. I first became aware of this story when I visited the General Botha Museum in Cape Town in 1998. I told the story at Dad's funeral, to find that my friend Frank Olivier's father had been a senior German officer under Rommel and was the last officer to leave Tobruk. Thus, he and Dad had missed crossing paths by only a few days.

Dad was always rather stern and strict but I hope I picked up some of his strengths. He placed great store in punctuality, for instance, and the importance of commitment and strength of character. I'd say the main thing I learned from him was to be independent, persistent and reliable. He was his own man and I admired him and feared him at the same time. In his later years, however, he softened to the extent of accepting a hug when I saw him. He didn't give praise easily and I always felt the need to please him. At the age of twenty-nine, when I was working in Singapore, I told my mother how much I was earning and she said quietly that I'd better not mention this to Dad – it was

more than he was earning at the time. Dad said you should never complain about paying tax, because the amount was only an indication of how much you earned. Dad was also very practical and could fix almost anything, although unfortunately this is one trait which I did not pick up.

In early 1962, Dad established the Australian branch of the global company Mine Safety Appliances. He started with only a salesman and a secretary and built MSA Australia into a large national business, employing hundreds of staff and manufacturing and selling all over the country.

Mum and Dad lived in the same home in Lindfield for 30 odd years and only when they could no longer manage the property, moved to a retirement villa in Turrumurra. These last few years must've been tough for them. Dad missed having his own house and garden and Mum had health problems and wasn't able to socialise very much.

Unfortunately, I have very little information about Mum's family. She never really wanted to talk about her family and her background, and when she married Dad, she and they were already estranged. She only had a sister, Philippa, to whom she was not close. Mum also found it much harder than Dad to adapt to life in Australia. She was in her early forties when the family migrated and having always had staff in South Africa, had never even learnt to cook. So family life for her in our new country required quite an adjustment. She also lacked the opportunity to meet new friends, as the rest of the family did at school, university or work. But she was a pillar of strength in the family and always very supportive of all her children and our endeavours. For many years, she insisted on typing my numerous reports and assignments from university. The main thing I remember about Mum was that she was always very warm and loving, and was always ready to help others and would do anything she could for me.

3. Childhood, Youth and Buzz Bikes

During the Second World War, my father, George Bennett, was a naval commander on a minesweeper seconded to the British Navy, based in the Mediterranean. My mother, Patricia Bennett, was staying with her parents in Krugersdorp, South Africa and that was where I was born, in March 1943. My father was away at the time. I was christened John Michael Bennett. I was nearly two when my father came back from the war and saw me for the first time. He didn't like the name Michael, because it was the name of my mother's earlier boyfriend, so my middle name was changed to Christopher.

My mother already had one son, George, a year older than me, and after I was born my mother moved us to the Umhlanga Rocks Hotel, where my brother and I had two African maids to look after us. Because of this, I learned a smattering of Zulu before I could speak English. I didn't walk until I was around two and, I was told, I didn't start talking until even later.

When he came back from the war, my father got a job as a Mine Manager at Crown Mines, a gold mine on the West Rand, near Johannesburg. The position came with an old cottage. My first memory is my brother and I being rounded up from the nearby forest by our border collie, Timmy, and brought home like sheep at the end of the day.

A few years later, in 1947, Dad got a job as the social secretary and my mother as a typist at the Johannesburg Light Plane Club at Baragwanath. Our house was one of four dome-shaped buildings which had been constructed by forming concrete over large inflatable rubber bladders. The doors and windows were cut out later and the building became a cute two-bedroom home beside the large Club swimming pool. Most of the Club members owned their own planes. The father of one of my friends, Pat Bell, was a test pilot and I

remember him taking us for joyrides in a Harvard fighter plane.

I used to sleepwalk a lot in my early days. My mother said that one night in the middle of winter that year, they found me outside, walking around the pool. I shared a room with my brother George and my parents had warned him that it was dangerous to wake me up while sleepwalking. One night I was walking, fast asleep, and woke up to find George sitting up in bed watching me nervously. To play a joke on him, I pretended I was still asleep and picked up a cricket bat from the floor and started towards him. Just as I was about to hit him (or pretending to) he yelled out in terror. I burst out laughing and although he whacked me it was worth it. Bigger and older, he normally always got the better of me.

I also suffered from polio at this time and was paralysed from the waist down for about five months until, fortunately, I made a full recovery. My first school was Auckland Park Preparatory school. Later, we moved to a friend of the family's beautiful thatched home in Arcacia Drive, Northcliff and I was sent to Northcliff Primary.

My dad then joined MSA, a company supplying safety equipment to mines and other industries and the family moved to Durban, where his first job was to set up a branch office. We lived initially in a boarding house in Musgrave Road, Berea, Durban, and George and I went to Glenwood Primary for a short time. My parents then bought a house in Durban North at 26 Hoylake Drive. It was a faux-Spanish styled home built, I guess, in the late 1940s. My memory is that we settled in very well there and George and I went to Chelsea Drive Preparatory School. I don't remember ever being driven to school. Instead, we walked or rode our bikes.

I have happy memories from that time of Dad driving George and me and our mates to soccer on Saturday mornings, which was not something many of my friends' fathers did. We were very lucky in that we lived next door to two girls about our age, named Helen and Margaret Van Malsen. Next door to them was Jennifer Slater. These three, and Kevin Hojem, who lived in the house in front of us, have

been life-long friends since. We used to go exploring in the dongas in an old quarry and built hideaways in the bush between our house and the beach. I also remember crawling through stormwater pipes and emerging up onto the road a mile or two away and then having to work out where we were.

I also have fond memories of going to the Rex Cinema in Broadway on Saturdays, and still remember when Helen put me in a pram and dressed me up as a baby for a fancy-dress competition. An old girlfriend from those days, Diane, befriended me through Facebook recently and revealed I was the first boy she ever kissed - at the Rex Cinema. It turned out that Diane had completed a PhD in Psychology as a mature age student and had just recently retired from her own clinical practice in Perth.

I was a keen member of the Cubs and then when I got old enough, the Boy Scouts. I remember particularly, a Jamboree for which we travelled by train from Durban to Empangeni in Zululand, and I was very proud of the badges and awards I earned. It was only later I found out that during his time in the Merchant Navy, my father was Batman to Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Scout movement. Some friends I particularly remember from my primary school days are Anthony (Paddy) Sykes, Ken Morgan and Kevin Hojem.

When we misbehaved, rather than punish us, Mum would say, 'Just wait till your father gets home.' Dad was always the strict one. When he wanted to punish me, Dad would give me his pocket knife to go out into the garden and cut the stick with which he would hit me. I remember very clearly always searching for the stick which I hoped would inflict the least amount of pain. I also remember that one time we had a white ant infestation under the house and George and I had to dig out tunnels so Dad could treat them.

My sister Felicity was born in 1950. Mum and Dad were thrilled to have a daughter after two boys, and Helen and Margaret loved looking after her and treating her like their own baby. In 1956, at the age of 13, I started at Northlands Boys High School. Fortunately, I

had a few friends from primary school start with me and this made the transition to high school less confronting. I became very interested in girls around this age and in later years I made a list of all the girls I fancied or went steady with in those years around 1956 to 1958. I still have the list in one of my photo albums and reading through it takes me right back to that time. For whatever reason, I can remember almost every girl on the list.

I had a bad stutter through my early childhood years, mostly presenting when I had to stand up and answer a question in the classroom. It dented my confidence and made me very self-conscious and embarrassed to speak in front of other people. I remember having a few sessions with a speech pathologist and learning some tricks to avoid stuttering, such as taking a deep breath before speaking. My memory is hazy about how I grew out of this, but I think the stutter gradually disappeared as I became more self-confident.

Perhaps like most children, one thing I seem to remember about family life were the holidays we took. One year we sailed on a small cargo ship, the MV Boundary, from Durban, around the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Town. I also remember a camping trip to Salt Rock, just up the coast from Durban, with our friends the Swart family, who had three daughters, Shireen, Carole and Deanne. About this time the Swarts had a windfall and built a second story on their home. I was very impressed with this as no one else I knew had ever done such a thing. The first wedding I ever attended was Deanne's at the MOTH Hall on Kensington Drive. Perhaps I remember this because this was where I sneaked a few alcoholic drinks and got tipsy for the first time.

When I turned fourteen, I got my buzz bike licence. A buzz bike was a moped with a tiny 50cc two-stroke engine, which being two-stroke, made a high-pitched whine, hence the name 'buzz'. The law at the time was that mopeds that size did not need to be registered, so they could be ridden by teenagers too young to have a full motorbike licence. Getting my buzz bike licence, and soon after my first NSU Quickly (a very popular buzz bike) changed my life. It

meant I was able to roam wherever I wanted under my own steam. It also helped me pursue my other great interest – girls - particularly those impressed by buzz bikes! My brother George also had a buzz bike and used to help me repair mine when something went wrong. I remember that one day he complained to Dad that I should be able to fix my own bike. Dad replied, ‘Don’t worry about John. He’ll make enough money soon enough to pay someone else to fix his bike.’

After a couple of years in Hoylake Drive Dad built a new garage and converted the old garage into a large bedroom for George and myself. This gave us even more freedom, as we had our own entrance through the garden to our new bedroom. When we went out at night and had a deadline to be home by say, 11pm, Mum and Dad set the alarm next to their bed for 11:15 pm. If we were not home by then, the alarm went off and we would be in trouble the next day. We soon solved this problem, however, by one of us going home by 11pm, sneaking into the bedroom, turning off the alarm and going out again. Often, we would hitchhike into Durban and wander through the dangerous Point Road area on the harbour. We would try to get into whichever bars we thought would allow it and sometimes even managed to talk our way into the notorious red-light dive, the Smugglers Inn. It horrifies me to think that we did this when we were only fourteen or fifteen. And I’m not proud of the memory of plundering the neighbours’ milk deliveries on our return home in the early hours of the morning.

My younger brother Allan was born in 1956, nearly 14 years after me. Mum found out she was pregnant while planning an overseas trip with her friend Pat Stewart. She liked to say that Allan was the overseas trip she missed, but he was worth it.

Many of my favourite holidays were spent at our Uncle Billy and Aunt Deedle’s farm outside Winterton in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains. Our cousins William and Folliot were a little older than us and took us under their wing as we explored the farm. I used to love swimming and fishing in the Little Tugela River and hunting and exploring the Berg and its many resorts. Our family also made

regular visits to my grandfather who had a small holding, growing rhubarb, near Hilton Rd, on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg.

My close friends at high school were Derek Moe, Patrick Newson and Mickey Williams. Mickey lived opposite the Northlands Girls High School, which made visiting him even more appealing. I wasn't a diligent student. Instead, I spent too much time riding my buzz bike and pursuing girls. I subsequently failed my Standard Eight exams (the equivalent of the School Certificate) and had to repeat the year. Fortunately, at the end of that year, 1958, when I was fifteen our family moved to Westville, on the outskirts of Durban. The move meant I changed to Westville High School and was spared the ignominy of repeating the year at the Northland Boys. Westville High was my first co-ed school so I was able to enjoy the new experience of having girls in my class.

Westville is only ten kilometres from the Durban CBD, but in those days it was still semi-rural and my parents bought a lovely old home on a two-acre block. The house was the farmhouse on what had been the original Westville Farm and my parents put a lot of work into renovating the house and developing the garden. We also took in many animals - geese, dogs, a young lamb and a horse which only the African gardener was able to ride. The lamb used to jump through Felicity's bedroom window and sleep on her bed.

I settled into Westville High and quickly formed strong friendships with a gang of like-minded boys. I particularly remember Jeff Davies, Cedric Browne, Rob Shotland, Graham Reeves, Clive Marnoch and Bugs Ward. I had several girlfriends over that time, but the girl I remember most fondly was Jackie Fripp, who I think was two classes behind me at school. I became very keen on rugby over these years and progressed from the Second Fifteen to the Firsts. One highlight I remember was a rugby tour to the Eastern Cape where we were billeted in different homes and we ended up in East London. I especially enjoyed catching the Union-Castle Line ship the Pendennis Castle back to Durban. I spent all my cash buying duty free cigarettes,

only to have them confiscated by customs on arrival in Durban.

Dad would let George and me take his V8 Ford Customline to go shopping at the local store and we would stop on the dirt road and then accelerate quickly, wheels spinning till we hit the tarred road, when we would take off like a rocket. Dad never seemed to work out why a set of tyres only lasted about three months.

PART TWO

4. The Move To Australia

We lived happily in the house at Westville for three years, then one day late in 1961 Dad came home from work to announce that we were moving to Australia. He had been given the job of opening a branch of his company, MSA, in Sydney. Us kids didn't have any input into this decision and I was not at all keen on leaving all my friends behind. In hindsight it was the best thing ever for the whole family and I admire my father for making this tough decision. He was forty-four with a wife and four children to support and he knew he was uprooting the family to sail across the seas into the unknown.

Dad went ahead to Sydney in late 1961 and the rest of the family followed on a Dutch immigrant boat the *Zuiderkruis* in early 1962. Just before we left, I attended a big night at Claridge's Hotel in Durban where Major 'Mad Mike' Hoare was recruiting mercenaries to fight in the Congo. Hoare's private army was to fight the so-called 'communist rebels' in Katanga province.

It was a real macho 'Boys-Own' adventure. (Hoare told a journalist, 'You can't win a war with choirboys.') And with a R200 payment for signing up - about \$2,000AUD today - I was very tempted. What young man in those days didn't fantasise about being a mercenary? (The 1978 film *The Wild Geese*, starring Richard Burton, Roger Moore and Richard Harris was closely based on Mad Mike Hoare's mercenary expedition in the Congo.) Quite a few friends did sign up that night, including one close friend, Patrick Newson. From memory we spent most of their signup fees celebrating that very night. I got terribly drunk and disgraced myself in my friend's father's Studebaker Silverhawk on the way home.

Patrick Newson was always a rebel non-conformist, living close to the edge. Patrick had the gift of the gab, so during his second tour to the Congo he was given the job of recruiting new mercenaries. He bought cars from the Belgians fleeing the country and got the

mercenaries, at the end of their contracts, to drive the cars back to Johannesburg, where he sold them at a handsome profit. Later he became a gem dealer, buying uncut stones in Madagascar and having them cut in Amsterdam, again to sell for substantial profit. He also dealt in other dubious commodities and has ended up living on a beautiful farm near the mouth of the Great Kei River in the Eastern Cape, where he has built a beautiful Turkish bathhouse. I visited him there many years later in the early 2000s.

Shipboard life on the *Zuiderkruis* was basic, if not primitive. (We found out later that the ship was sold for scrap immediately after our trip.) Our fellow travellers were either young men, mainly Dutch and German, who were immigrating to Australia, or other South African families like ours on an assisted passage scheme. At mealtimes we all sat at long tables and the food was placed in the middle of the table. If you didn't grab what food you could quickly, you went hungry - and there were no seconds. Our family of five were crammed into one cabin and George and I spent most of the time being led astray by the young men on board. David Love, a school friend who also lived in Durban North, was heading to university in Perth and he was part of the rolling party until he disembarked. The ship continued around the bottom of the continent, and our party continued with it.

On the last night before landfall in Sydney we literally drank the ship's bar dry. With no more liquor to sell, the bar closed. George announced that he knew where there was more to drink and returned with the bottles of spirits and liqueurs Mum had bought to give Dad on our arrival. Later a fight broke out between our group, mainly Dutch, and another group of mainly Germans, who wanted to share our spoils. George got beaten up badly but I managed to escape to the communal toilet, where I passed out. I was woken up the next morning with a very sore head, only to be told I had missed the ship's grand entrance to our new home – our arrival as we sailed through Sydney Heads. But I do remember the Harbour

Bridge towering over us as we docked in Circular Quay. The Opera House would have been under construction on Bennelong Point, but I don't remember it at all.

Dad met us at the Quay, but it was probably not the greeting he was hoping for. Mum was very rightly furious with George and me for our appalling behaviour and told our father that she had done her bit and we were now his responsibility. She wanted nothing to do with us. I don't remember any more of this, but I do remember that we spent our first week in Sydney at the Shore motel on the busy Pacific Highway at Artarmon. It might sound rather suburban now, but because it boasted a swimming pool, in our estimation it was total luxury.

5. University Life And My Big Overseas Trip

I had finished high school in Durban the previous year, and being such a distracted student, never thought I would earn a good enough matriculation to get into university. But surprisingly, I did. The university year in Sydney had already begun when we arrived in March 1962, but Dad had me booked in for an enrolment interview at the University of NSW on the very afternoon of our arrival. I was still sporting a clanging hangover from the night before and I'm astonished that the university considered me at all. I had no idea what I wanted to study, so they gave me a quick rundown on the courses available to me. Commerce sounded good and I was interested in psychology, so that afternoon I enrolled in a Bachelor of Commerce in Applied Psychology and started lectures the very next day. Meanwhile, George started a marine engineering apprenticeship with Adelaide Steamship Company and Felicity and Allan were enrolled at school.

After our week of luxury at the Shore Motel, the family moved to an old-fashioned boarding house in Killara, where we lived for about two months. One thing I still remember about that place was that one of the old residents had never been into Sydney city, a thirty-minute train ride away.

It took me a while to settle into university. I didn't know anybody and I found there was also a lot about my new country that I had to learn. I even had to get someone to show me how to use the public telephones. My first real friend was Frank Olivier, who was also doing a BComm. Frank lived in Artarmon on the lower North Shore and often caught the same train as me into the city. (It used to take me nearly two hours to get to university each day. I walked to Lindfield train station, caught the train to Central and then a bus to UNSW at Kensington.) Frank and I have been lifelong friends since. I also later formed friendships with other Commerce students, Kevin Foley, Mohammad Yunus and Les McDonald.

We often decamped to the old Oceanic Hotel in Coogee for Friday lunch, where a hearty plateful of barbecued sausages was a cheap and cheerful student favourite. I remember returning to afternoon lectures with Yunus, who was not used to drinking. Not many people find economics amusing, but Mohammad kept us all amused with the laughter and giggles he couldn't suppress.

In those first years in Australia I missed South Africa a lot and was keen to make contact every time I heard a South African accent. They were rare in Sydney in the early 1960s, although now of course they're very common. This led to one memorable, if embarrassing incident. During that first year at Uni, I had let on to my Commerce friends that I'd never been to a strip club before, so one night they decided to break me in at a club in Kings Cross. One of the acts was introduced as the 'Diamond Girl from Kimberley, South Africa.' I don't remember anything about her performance, but excited about the South African connection, I was allowed backstage after the show to introduce myself. I wanted to tell her I also came from South Africa. In the roughest Aussie accent imaginable she told me to piss off, and the South African ruse was all just part of her act.

My first girlfriend in Australia was Noel Spalding (now Sue Scott). She was a vivacious, tall, open and friendly beauty and I really fell for her in a big way. In fact, I'd say she was my first real love. We did everything together. We went to lots of parties and spent many lazy days at the beach. Noel introduced me to her friends among the younger set in St Ives Legacy and they in turn invited me to their many social events held to raise money for Legacy projects. Noel also introduced me to her cousin, Andy Tribe, who became a great friend and recruited me to play rugby for the University of NSW. Andy was a gentle giant and an excellent rugby player. He took seven years to complete his Engineering degree and then carried on to undertake an MBA. He met Lorraine, a South African family friend, and moved to her home city of Durban to make a life with her. I always visited them on my numerous trips to South Africa, but sadly Andy died in 2021.

I made many firm friends through those days, such as Doug Young, Doug Orr, Bob Dunnet and Dave Cooper.

Noel and I also enjoyed a number of holidays away. One Christmas we caught the overnight Southern Aurora to Melbourne to stay with her sister and her family. We spent New Year's Eve at the Volga Volga, a Russian nightclub with high-stepping Cossack dancers and unusual but excellent food, which I presume involved lots of cabbage and meatballs.

In December 1962, my old Durban friend David Love visited from Perth and he and I, with two other friends, Jim and Colin, drove up to Surfers Paradise on the Gold Coast. We spent the first night in Yamba, where we drank in the pub till closing time and then slept it off on the beach below. In Surfers, we had an apartment right on the beachfront called 'Island in the Sun'. One of its big attractions was its swimming pool and my memory is that we had a continuous party around that pool for the whole week.

One wet day, David and I spent most of the day drinking in the local beer garden and met two young ladies who promised to meet us for dinner. We were both pretty under the weather, so we went back to the apartment to have a rest before dinner. After a couple of hours sleep I tried to wake David to get ready for dinner. No amount of prodding or poking woke him, so instead I grabbed his arm and tried to pull him off the bed. On the way down to the floor, however, he hit his head on the bedside table, causing a big gash just above his eye. At that point Jim and Colin staggered in, saw all the blood and insisted we call a doctor. (Remember, this was the early 1960s, when you could do such a thing.) The doctor stitched him up and sent him straight back to bed and I went out to dinner with our women friends. I saw David a few years back in South Africa, and while we were having a laugh about that trip, I noticed that over fifty years later I could still see the scar above his eye.

I had several jobs while I was at Uni. One holiday, my friends Frank, Les and Yunus and I all got jobs working as kitchen hands at

the University Regiment's annual camp at the Singleton Army base in the Hunter Valley north of Sydney. If any particular Sergeant gave us grief, we would do rather horrible things to his food before serving it. After our shifts finished, we had unlimited credit at the Sergeants' bar, which meant that when we lined up to be paid at the end of the week, I ended up owing money. It didn't help that we also had to pay for damage done to our bedrooms, probably incurred after those long sessions at the bar.

Another holiday, I got a job working 12-hour shifts anodising aluminium machinery parts in a factory in Villawood. Around this time, Dad and Mum bought an old Austin A40, which cost, I remember, £175. The idea was that Mum and I would share it, with me using it mainly on weekends. One Saturday after one of my 12-hour shifts, Noel and I got dressed in our Roman togas for the Bacchus Ball at the Roundhouse at UNSW. Driving home, I was so exhausted I fell asleep at the wheel and wrapped the car around a telephone pole in Chatswood. Noel was badly hurt, with some deep cuts on her face. A passing motorist called an ambulance and we were both taken to the Royal North Shore hospital. I waited in the waiting room while Noel was being treated, with passing nurses making a big joke of calling me Nero. Noel made a full recovery, but not before I had to face her mother the next day.

It's fair to say that I while all this was going on, I wasn't a diligent student. In the end I had two attempts at First Year Economics but failed both. My Commerce degree was put on hold for two years until I passed a deferred exam and then completed Economics One. What can I say – I was too busy having fun! I turned twenty-one in March 1964 and had yet another big party in the garage at home.

That year marked a turning point in my life. My grandfather had left me a £400 inheritance and I decided to cash it in and go travelling overseas. I hatched a plan to go back to see old friends in Durban and earn some money, then travel up to the UK and Europe. This meant leaving Noel and it was a sad parting. We'd built up a very strong

relationship (despite my driving) but I felt this was something I had to do.

So, in April 1964, I booked a berth on the famous Shaw Savill liner *Southern Cross*, leaving Sydney for Durban. The *Southern Cross* was considered luxurious for its time, though now it would probably be merely comfortable, if that. I shared a four-berth cabin with a shared bathroom down the passageway. I had a great time on board and made lots of contacts to look up in London when I got there.

In Durban, I'd arranged to board with the van Malsen family, and they really looked after me well, even if I seemed to be out all the time catching up with old school mates and other friends. I managed to get a job as an Audit Clerk with Price Waterhouse and although I liked being out of the PW office conducting company audits in many different locations, the job made it clear to me that I didn't want a career as an accountant. While in Durban, I met Tony Boyle, an Irish engineer from Waterford, and we formed a great friendship, including a trip to my uncle's farm in the Drakensberg Mountains.

My friend Mary Clayton and I had the idea to travel overland through Africa to Europe. But before we even left we found out we'd have to pay £100 each for a visa to cross the Sudan and this scotched the plan. Instead, I took to the seas again, this time on the *Pretoria Castle* to Southampton in November 1964. Again, it turned out to be a great party boat full of young people, mainly girls on their big overseas trips.

My cousin Judy Bennett was already living in London and I moved into the boarding house 'Hunters Lodge' in Earl's Court, where she was staying. I shared the attic room with two other guys. I got the short straw and found myself in the worst bed, with the angled ceiling just a couple of feet above my head. The only heating was a coin-operated electrical element in the wall, which we also used to heat canned food.

After a month or so in London I took a job as a statistical analysis clerk at The White Fish Authority in Chancery Lane. This

might sound amusing, but in fact the work was boring and my fellow workers not that friendly. But the job did keep me fed. My social life picked up when I moved into a mews flat at 26 Brook Mews North in Lancaster Gate, which was right next to the White Hart pub. It was a two-bedroom flat which I shared with Jim, a Scotsman, Lynn, a Welshman and Colum, an Irishman. We had an arrangement that if we brought a girl home the first one in could claim the convertible bed in the lounge. Looking back at my diary for this time I seem to be going out at least five nights a week, mainly visiting friends or for drinks at the local pub. It was amazing that I could do all this on my pay of about £13 per week.

My intention had always been to travel around the Continent. I couldn't afford to buy or run a car like many of my friends were doing, so instead I decided to hitchhike, and set out from London on May 1, 1965. Although I was lonely at first, I always made friends on the way and enjoyed the freedom of being able to decide exactly where and when I wanted to go.

I hitched first to Paris, and then down the Loire valley to Bordeaux and onto Biarritz, which probably suited me more than the big cities, and which I really loved. Jen and I returned to Biarritz over fifty years later and the coastline is still stunning. After Biarritz I ended up in San Sebastian in Spain, which was another great party town. I met a lovely Spanish girl there, but to put it bluntly, my lack of Spanish let me down. At the end of the evening, she said, 'Manana, manana.' I thought she'd wanted money, so I said no and unfortunately never saw her again.

I'd been told that hitchhiking was difficult in Spain, so from San Sebastian I caught a train to Madrid. I'd also been told that I could win over locals if I filled a wineskin and bought food to share with my fellow passengers on the train – and I've got to say, this did earn me short-term friends. (I still have the wineskin hanging up in the garage at Cedarvale Farm.) In Madrid, I teamed up with some travelling Canadians and we took the train down to Marbella on the Costa del

Sol. The travelling party continued on, to the extent that one night, drunk on rum and coke, two of us were arrested for singing in the street and trying to chat up girls. We ended up spending two days in the local gaol, nursing a bit of bruising from police truncheons. Luckily, our other two friends found out where we were and brought us food, as the police showed no signs of feeding us. In the end, we were each fined 500 pesetas (about £8) as a 'voluntary contribution' to the local hospital fund and then let go.

Following this, we took the ferry from Algeciras, through Gibraltar to the Spanish port of Ceuta in north Africa and then straight on to Tangier, the Moroccan port on the Strait of Gibraltar. I spent five days there, holed up in cheap hotel in the casbah, where all I did was eat oranges, drink mint tea and smoke hash with the Canadians. One of the guys didn't want his parents to know he was in Tangier, so he did a weekly trip to Gibraltar to cash in the allowance they sent him. He then bought his weekly dose of a drug called Max and returned on the ferry. We would listen with anticipation for the sound of him coming up the stairs to our room, where he would share his spoils. (Max was probably some sort of pharmaceutical opiate, a liquid that came in glass vials which we drank diluted in water.) One of the blokes was a man called Spider, from Guyana in South America, and I remember him strumming his guitar and singing a song with the refrain, 'Big Daddy Max is coming to take us on a two-day trip'. Fortunately, I managed to extricate myself after five days. The others, unfortunately, spent months in that room, wasted on 'Big Daddy Max'.

I was done with Morocco and headed back up the east coast of Spain to Alicante, where I caught the ferry to Ibiza in the Balearic Islands. Ibiza now has the reputation as a dance music party town, but in those days it was relatively unspoilt, and most visitors came mainly to bask on its beautiful beaches. Back in Alicante, I sold blood, getting 250 pesetas for half a litre, which back then was about £4.

After leaving Spain, I hooked up with four Canadian girls (yes, more Canadians!), driving down through Italy to Rome. Then I

headed up to Switzerland, where I stayed with my cousin Maureen and her Swiss husband, Ernst, on their farm in Lyss, near Bern. The thing I remember most about this visit was that their animals slept in ‘stables’ below the house.

From there it was up through Germany to Stockholm, where I stayed on an old sailing boat which had been a naval training ship but was then converted to a youth hostel, the Af Chapman. The ship was docked at the island of Skeppsholmen, right in the heart of Stockholm, which meant easy access to the city’s famous night life. The problem was that the hostel had a curfew to be back on board by 11pm, which being June, was still broad daylight. So it always felt too early to go home. Jen and I visited a few years ago and I was amazed to find that the ship is still used as a youth hostel. I even located the four-berth cabin I stayed in.

In Amsterdam I met a young Canadian (*another* Canadian!) who suggested I join him doing street art to raise money. We made a sign which read, ‘Canadian students need money to get home’, and he drew the outlines of the pictures for me to colour in with pastels. It was going great guns until the police arrived and determined that he was only sixteen and had run away from home. They took us back to the police station, split our takings between us, and while they worked out what to do with him, told me to leave town.

I guess it was all the Canadians I’d been hanging out with who put the idea in my mind that I should not just go to Canada, but take out what was then called ‘Landed Immigrant Status’, which meant that I could legally work there too. (This is now called Permanent Residency.)

In order to see a bit more of the UK before I left, I chose to hitchhike around Scotland and then sail on the Empress of Canada from Greenock, on the magnificent Firth of Clyde. It was a fittingly breathtaking departure from Europe. Most people these days never knew the era before air travel but back then travel by ship was the norm. I usually really enjoyed my trips by boat, and to varying extents

the journey was as much a part of the experience as the destination. Meals were included in the ticket price, and were usually generous. But by the time I boarded the Empress, my stomach had shrunk from eating so little food in Europe that I missed out on full advantage of the unlimited free food on the boat, for the week or so of travel anyhow.

The ship docked in Montreal, which with its beautiful buildings and vibrant French atmosphere, I really loved. I hooked up there with five South Africans whom I knew from Durban. They had arranged to deliver a 1964 Cadillac Fleetwood to Calgary and I joined them on the trip as far as Toronto. We stopped in Niagara Falls and I bunked down in the back seat of the caddy while they slept in their tent.

I'd met a bloke on the Empress of Canada called Ian Smith, a research pathologist from Liverpool, and we'd got on so agreed to look for a flat together in Toronto. We met up when I got there and found a flat beneath a Czech family's home and I started looking for work. As it happened, I met two young Australian girls at the Employment Office and arranged for Ian and me to take them out for dinner that night. Ian and Denise really clicked - and fifty-six years later are living in Gympie and still happily married.

The first job I got in Toronto was collecting worms for fishing bait. A group of us were picked up on a street corner in the early evening and taken to a golf course north of Toronto. We were each given a headlamp and two buckets, one filled with sawdust, to clean our hands after picking up each worm. We were told we would only be paid for unbroken worms, but I found out very quickly that worms 'break' very easily - especially when they saw me coming and made a bolt for cover after I tried to grab them. I worked all night and I only just made enough money to pay for the batteries in my headlamp. Needless to say, I did not return to this job. In the end I settled into a much more amenable job packing first aid kits at the MSA factory in Downsview.

My brother George was on his first posting on a cargo boat after qualifying for his Marine Engineer's ticket. The ship called into New

York and on shore leave, he met a young lady and promised to see her again a week later when the ship was back in town. On the ship's return, however, a berth was unavailable in New York harbour, so the ship anchored a kilometre offshore. Not to be deterred, George packed his clothes in a plastic bag, dived overboard and swam ashore to meet his friend. Meanwhile in Toronto, I heard over the radio that an Australian sailor was missing overboard in New York harbour. George had no idea he was on the news and only got wind of it about noon the next day. He phoned in to say he was alive and well but still ended up in the ship's brig for a few days. Over this time, I had some great weekend trips to the Muskoka Lakes north of Toronto, where I stayed in a beautiful cabin right on the lake and spent the days water skiing and canoeing.

Ian Smith and I then decided on the next adventure - hitchhiking the Trans-Canada Highway across the country to Vancouver, a distance of about 4,400kms. We left Toronto on 3rd Sept 1965. We were north of Lake Superior in the early evening, with very few signs of life on the highway, when two young brothers called John and Mike picked us up and invited us to stay the night at their family's cabin on the lake. When we got to the house their parents welcomed us warmly. I couldn't believe it when John introduced his father, Mr Bennett.

We travelled through some beautiful country with bears, moose and deer in abundance and passed through White River, reputed to be the coldest place in Canada, before stopping off in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This was where the scenery changed from mountainous rocky country to endless flat prairies. Later we were picked up by a confidence trickster who taught us some of the tricks of his trade. Then we got a ride with a real cowboy (in a Stetson!) who took us to a great pub in Regina, Saskatchewan. Our next ride was with a man delivering a big yellow school bus to British Columbia, who was picking up hitchhikers and bums on the way. One was a young guy of about sixteen who wore big jacket with many pockets and shoplifted everywhere we stopped. We shared in his spoils, although later I did

feel guilty about this. At Medicine Hat in Alberta, we all slept on the bus, where it was cold enough for me to note it in my diary – and that I was grateful I'd brought a sleeping bag!

We stayed for a few days in Calgary with my South African friends who had delivered the Cadillac some months earlier. They took us up to the picturesque ski resort of Banff for a day trip before we got back on the road again. From Banff we got a ride with the driver of a small furniture van. He said he would take us to Vancouver if we helped him unload, which seemed like a reasonable deal to us. What we didn't realise was that we had to load and unload the van every few hours, which meant that I got no sleep at all until Vancouver. But crossing the Rockies was particularly spectacular, especially Rogers Pass, which at a height of over 1,300 metres had cost one million dollars per mile to build. In Vancouver, we stayed in the inner suburb of English Bay with three lovely English girls who we'd met on the ship over from the UK. I had a whirlwind romance with one of the girls, Sylvia, who wasn't too keen on me going back to Australia.

Ian had to fly back to work in Toronto, so I bought a \$99USD Greyhound bus ticket, valid for 99 days travel anywhere on their network. Because I had little money and almost no baggage, I had to do a bit of fast talking to get across the US border. I told the border guards I was having \$800 transferred, which would last me the three months I intended to stay. I'm pretty sure they weren't convinced by this, but let me through anyway.

I had a great trip through Washington State, Idaho and Oregon and then stopped off in Salt Lake City in Utah. The temperature there was 90 degrees Fahrenheit, but this was made bearable by the fact that the city was surrounded by snow covered mountains. I kept heading east through Wyoming and crossed the Rockies again, which were not as impressive as I remembered from Canada, but of course I didn't tell them that. In Wyoming I stopped at Laramie and Cheyenne, both names to conjure up a hundred old Western movies, and then found myself in the flat wheat and corn country of Nebraska and Iowa. I

spent a few days in Chicago and took a boat cruise on Lake Michigan, which gave me a great view of the Chicago skyline and the 65-storey Marina Towers with its 5,000 boat marina below.

My next stop was Pittsburgh. When I entered the US I'd been able to get a Social Security card, and I got a job in Pittsburgh working a factory job in a degreasing plant. The work involved dipping oily, greased machine parts into a tank of boiling solvent. It was grim. The temperature was over 100 degrees and the fumes were terrible. A pair of jeans only lasted a week before they rotted away. But I made good money working six days a week, with lots of overtime, and after a couple of weeks I moved on to Boston.

After the factory job in Pittsburgh, I landed in the lap of luxury. I stayed with some old family friends, the Plums, who had a 23-acre estate in Chatham on the southeast coast of Cape Cod. They sent their chauffeur to pick me up from the bus and I lived in luxury for a few days, enjoying their heated pool and tennis court and the service of their five household staff. They took me up to Provincetown on the northern tip of Cape Cod which was where the Mayflower first landed in North America in 1620. It was an historic, quaint town with winding, narrow cobbled streets – and even back then was a favoured retreat for artists and gays and lesbians.

From there, I finally made it to New York City, where I stayed at the famous West Side YMCA near Central Park and spent my days sightseeing and being entertained by Roy Plum and his wife. They were generous hosts and even took me to see a game of American football and later a game of ice hockey (with the famous Toronto Maple Leafs) at Madison Square Gardens. I'd just got back to my room at the Y before the big power failure at about 6pm on the evening of 9 November 1965, which left the whole Northeast of the US and south eastern Canada blacked out till the next morning. Had I been ten minutes later I would have been trapped on the subway. (According to Wikipedia over 800,000 peak hour commuters were trapped on the subway that night.) My mother kept a letter in which I wrote that

other guests were robbed in their rooms at the Y and security guards patrolled the hallways, calling out for guests not to open their doors to anybody.

Following this excitement, I headed down to Washington DC, across the Blue Ridge Mountains and through the Shenandoah Valley west to Lexington, Virginia. I had a friend at college there, and stayed in his fraternity house and he took me to one of those infamous fraternity parties.

I spent a few days mooching around Nashville and then headed down to Fort Lauderdale in Florida, where I got a job as a busboy at Patricia Murphy's Candlelight Restaurant on Bahia Mar. I was paid US\$7.50 per day but the tips I earned serving arriving guests complimentary shrimp in a shell took this up to about \$20 a day. I then headed west around the Gulf of Mexico, stopping off, of course, in New Orleans where I enjoyed the food and the haunts of Bourbon Street. After that, I had a short stop in Houston, where the highlight for me was the enormous Houston Astrodome, opened only six months earlier and famous for being the world's first domed sports arena. Some months after I visited, the natural grass in the stadium died and the Astrodome became the first stadium in the world with an artificial turf playing surface, which became known as AstroTurf. Many years later in 2005, the Astrodome was used to shelter evacuees after Hurricane Katrina decimated New Orleans.

Further west in San Antonio, I visited The Alamo, site of the infamous 1836 battle between the breakaway 'Texians' (as they were then called) and ruling Mexican troops, which ended with the defeat of the Texians and the death of all inside, including the famous frontiersmen Davy Crockett and James Bowie (who gave his name to the fearsome hunting knife). I also remember the lovely open-air theatre on the San Antonio River.

When I finally got to California, I looked up Ted Cruze, who I'd met in Spain and travelled with to Ibiza, and now lived in Redwood City, just south of San Francisco. I always remember the name of the

street he lived in, Alameda del las Pulgas, Avenue of the Fleas. I had a great few days with him exploring the nearby huge redwood forests.

After California, it was time to get the Greyhound on the final leg back up to Vancouver, where I reunited with my English girlfriend Sylvia. She was much more serious about us than I was, and even offered to support me while I finished my Commerce degree in Vancouver. It was a great offer and Sylvia was a lovely woman, but I knew I wasn't ready to settle down and chose to return to Sydney. I lost track of Sylvia, but over the years I have wondered what became of her and where she might have ended up.

I left Vancouver by air a few days later, but not before Sylvia and her friends gave me a big farewell on my last night. We partied hard and I left very early the next morning on a flight to Hawaii, feeling very much the worse for wear. As soon as I arrived late in the morning, I checked into my hotel at Waikiki and went straight down to the famous beach. I stripped down to my bathers and as I was about to enter the water, I noticed what looked like a tattoo on my stomach. In shock, I peered down to try to see what it was. It wasn't a tattoo, but a Texta drawing of a heart with an arrow through it pointing down at my groin - and, in writing I didn't recognise, 'Sylvia loves >'. I figured immediately that it must have been drawn in the early hours of that morning. Being young and rather sensitive, I headed straight into the water and rubbed it off before anyone saw.

In Hawaii, I fulfilled one part of my American dream and rented a Ford Mustang convertible. It cost US\$1/day plus ten cents a mile. Money was really running short by then, so I did very few miles in the Mustang and when I took a trip to the North Shore of Oahu, even slept in the car one night to save paying for a hotel.



George and John aged 4 and 3 years.



Felicity, Dad, Allan, John and George, early 1962.



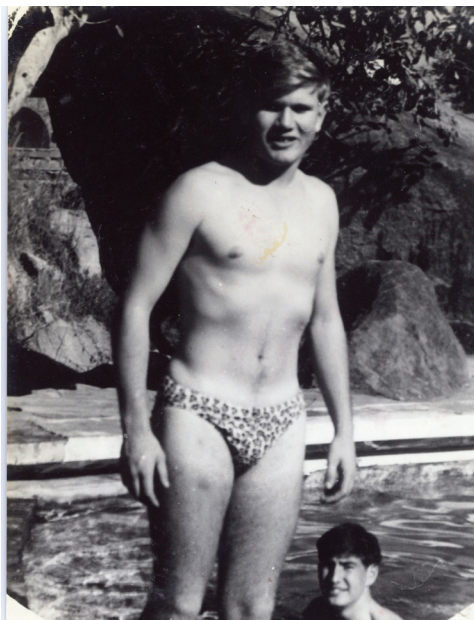
Wedding Cally and John, Sydney October 1970.



Our house in Westville 1959 – 1962.



Dad - Naval Commander 1941.



John and Graham Reeve, Natal Spa 1960.



Our house in Hoylake Drive, Durban North 1951 – 1958.



Westville High First XV Rugby 1961.



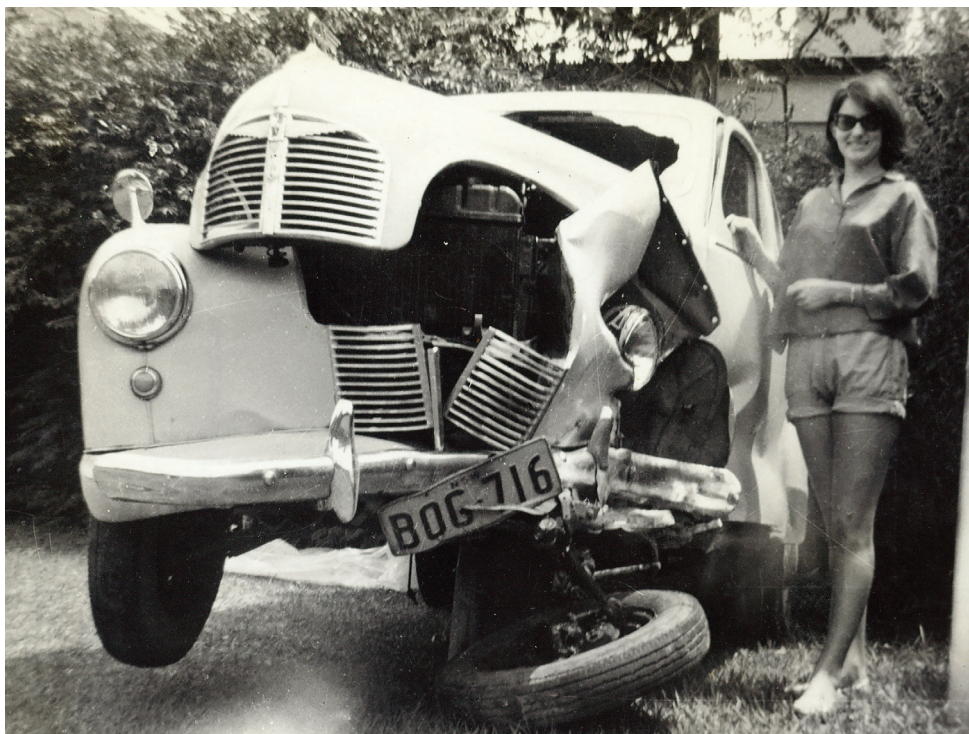
Dad and Mum, Lindfield 1963.



Graduation, University of NSW.
Beverly Bennett, Mum, John, Felicity, Allan, George and Helen Rix 1968.



Nina Oom and John, Cremorne Point 1969.



Noel Spalding with A40 - After Bacchus Ball 1963.



Skinner, McCarthys, Spencers and Bennetts, Quarterdeck 1982.



Gordon Stags - London 1987.



Tim Edwards, John and Allen Weeks - Thredbo, early 90s.



Grant Kenny, Steve Dillon, Peter Whitfield and John 1990.



Stuck in the mud, South Australia, 1998.

6. Back Home, Uni & First Real Job

I made it home just before Christmas, and moved back in with the family at Lindfield. When I'd left Australia Noel and I had agreed to leave things open to see how we felt about each other on my return. Despite how much we'd meant to each other before I went travelling, it was apparent to both of us that we'd moved on and so we didn't re-establish our relationship but remain good friends.

If I was going to continue with my degree, I knew I had to buckle down and study for my forthcoming deferred Economics exam in February. Luckily (and very generously) Kevin Foley, who I had met studying Commerce at UNSW and was by then a tutor, helped me with a few intensive tutorials. With Kevin's help I managed to pass the deferred exam with a Credit and UNSW gave me a special exemption to go straight into Economics Two.

Kevin had left school at age fifteen to become a motor mechanic and in his mid-twenties went to East Sydney Tech with Frank Olivier, before enrolling in Commerce at UNSW. He later completed his PhD, worked for the IWS in London and eventually became an MP in the Victorian State Government.

I stayed in the family home, but after two years living to my own rhythm I knew it could only be short term. Dad liked to see me out of bed before he left for work at 7:30 am, and although I made the effort to please him, I went straight back to bed as soon as he left.

My friend Frank Olivier solved the problem by asking me to share a great two bedroom flat on the water in Milson Road at Cremorne Point. I had a great time in that flat. I spent quite a bit of time hanging out on Balmoral Beach and living on Mischa's famous burgers, surrounded by gorgeous local women who would now probably be called 'yummy mummies'. I had significant affairs with two older women, Nina and Judy, who lived in the same block of flats. I don't mind saying that I learnt a lot about women and relationships

in their hands. Nina was also very generous with her car, a big old Ford Falcon. She'd knock on my door just before 9am and offer me the car for the day if I drove her to work. Otherwise, I had a ten-minute walk to the ferry at Cremorne Point and then a bus from Circular Quay to Uni at Kensington.

Nina's family were White Russians who fled the country when the Bolsheviks took control. Her brother was the famous Mike Formenko, whose high profile adventures in the Far North of Australia had earned him the nickname 'Tarzan'. Nina, ten years my senior, taught me a lot about what women really wanted in a man. She had a flat above mine and if she saw me arriving home unaccompanied on a Friday or Saturday night, she would come down and knock on my door to see if I wanted company. Later, she met and married David Oom and I was best man at their wedding. David became a good friend and helped me with the experiment for my final year Psychology thesis.

Many years later, Jen and I, on a motor bike trip, stayed with them on their farm near Glen Innes. Sadly, it was to be the last time I saw Nina. She died a few years after this visit.

I was studying full time at Uni and with my psychology studies coming in handy, also got a job with Marplan doing in-depth interviewing. This led to part time work as a coder and numerous other interviewing projects over the next two years. This was very practical and hands-on experience that led me to my later career in market research. I finished my degree in late 1966 with a Distinction for my thesis and at the age of twenty-four got my first full time job, with Nestle in the Market Research Department with an office staff of eighteen, with other part time interviewers coming onboard when needed. My boss, Laurie Thomas, had a saying I haven't forgotten. 'If you're ever accused of anything, admit nothing, deny everything and make counter accusations.'

I made many friends at Nestle, including Tim Edwards. Peter Bower, Dale Osborne, Harold Scruby and Geoff Dunn. While I was at Nestle, I also enrolled in a Master of Arts in Psychology at the

University of Sydney, but ended up completing only three of the four required subjects before being offered my job in Singapore. About this time I met Helen (Trixie) Rix through my friends Sandy Grant and Jill Stephens and we had a great time together for about a year. I remember particularly enjoying buzzing around town together in her little Honda 800cc sports car.

In early 1970 my life took a sharp turn when I met Cally Berry, a secretary/receptionist at the University of NSW Graduates Club which was in the same building I worked. From the start, Cally and I really clicked and embarked on a great whirlwind romance. I have great memories of going to bed with a bottle of Para Port and our two copper goblets.

7. Marriage, Singapore & FERO

Who knows what the future may have held if things weren't bought to a head in late 1970 when I was offered a job by David Jones, Research Director with USP Needham, to run the Far East Research Organization (FERO) based in Singapore. I will always thank David for giving me this big break. Many years later, his daughter, Bronwen Castor, worked for me at Bennett Research and told me that David was gravely ill. I'm so glad I called him and told him how much I appreciated his early support, as he died soon after.

This new job was a real turning point in my life. I had never worked in a market research company before, let alone run one. The position paid about five times what I'd earned at Nestle and came with a car and driver, three club memberships and an unlimited expense account. In those days in Singapore one just signed the chit at a restaurant or club and the bill was sent directly to your company for payment. The job positioned me in a work environment which I was able to build upon in my future career.

Cally and I were very much in love and the job in Singapore prompted our decision to get married. As it turned out, Frank Olivier, John Chambers and I were all getting married within a few weeks of each other. We knew this called for a big party, so we decided to have a joint bucks' night at Frank and Carole's new house in Balmain. Like so many things around that time, the timing was everything – the purchase only settled on the day of the party. Frank had organised a removals truck and we used it to bring in loads of beer and barrels of KFC for the eighty or so guys who were there. Someone had organised an 'entertainer' and Andy Tribe had the brainwave of hiding her clothes in the hedge for a joke. The joke nearly turned violent when her burly minders arrived and threatened to beat us up. The night degenerated even further from there. We knew that Frank was planning major renovations for the house, so proceedings degenerated into a

kind of demolition ‘grovel’ which resulted in holes in the fibro walls, the floor awash in blood and beer and Harold Scruby passed out cold in a corner.

So, in October 1970, Cally and I got married with Frank Olivier and Tim Edwards as my best men. The page boy was the young lad who would become the comedian Peter Berner. After a great honeymoon touring the South Island of New Zealand and a sojourn in Bali we arrived to start our new life in Singapore.

Unfortunately, FERO was not in good shape. I realised very quickly that the company was bleeding money, so I made the decision to undertake a major restructure and reduce staff across the company’s four Far East Asian offices – Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hong Kong. This meant reducing our total number of employees by almost half, from over forty to twenty-four.

This resulted in a speedy lesson in local Singapore customs and culture. As I had learned to do at Uni, I drew up an organisational chart and from this decided the solution in Singapore was to reorganise the office into three divisions - research executives, interviewers working in the field and data processing staff. Unintentionally, this meant that my secretary and my driver ended up on the same level of ‘importance’. Because of this perceived slight to her position and loss of face in the company, to my horror, my secretary had no choice but to resign. The only way to talk her into staying was to tear up the organisational chart and start again.

The restructure gave FERO new life and led to a large multinational job for Singapore Airlines /Newsweek. After traveling to London to brief the local interviewing team, I was able to stay and attend Tim and Anneslie Edwards’ wedding. I stayed with my old friend from Economics, Kevin Foley, who was working for the International Wool Secretariat (IWS).

It was in Singapore in 1970 that I met Wayne McCarthy and subsequently often conducted research for him in Indonesia where he was running an associated advertising company. He wrote my first

brochure for Bennett Research and became a great mentor and client. I always admired and tried to emulate his positive attitude to life. His friendship meant a great deal to me and he later became an integral part of shared skiing and motor bike trips and other adventures. Sadly, Wayne died in January, 2011.

I had my own adventures at FERO in the early days. In 1971, after only a few months in Singapore, I booked for my monthly trip to Hong Kong, travelling as usual on an old Convair 880 flown by Cathay Pacific. The flight was initially delayed by a typhoon in Hong Kong but as Cathay was based in Hong Kong, we took off a few hours later, making us the first plane to attempt to land after the typhoon.

This didn't go smoothly, however. As we approached Hong Kong, the announcement came over the plane's PA that it was still too dangerous to attempt a landing so we were being diverted to Taiwan. An hour or so later, we were told we couldn't land in Taiwan because the Taiwanese wouldn't accept some of the nationalities on board. (Being 1971, landing in mainland China was out of the question for the same reason.)

This necessitated a sharp right turn towards the Philippines. It was the early hours of the morning by the time we finally arrived in Manila. (It later turned out that we had made it to Manila with less than an hour of spare fuel.) We were bundled onto buses and taken to a hotel. Having never been to Manila, I took the opportunity to visit some of the city's famous (or infamous) night spots. In the morning, completely unslept, I joined my refreshed and fresh-smelling fellow passengers on another bus to reboard our (refuelled) plane.

Kai Tak Airport, also known as Hong Kong International Airport, serviced the city from the start of aviation in 1925 until its closure in 1998. Due to its difficult approach, pilots were unable to rely on the usual instrument landing and had to land their planes manually. For this reason, on a global list of airports, it was named sixth most dangerous in the world.

Our flight made me understand why. We approached Kai Tak

from the south, flying into a thundering wind, before the pilot decided we were travelling too fast to land. He aborted the landing when we were almost at the end of the runway. We lifted almost vertically, with the plane lurching from side to side, about 45 degrees each way, with the wings only clearing the water by about six feet on either side. When we levelled off we circled Hong Kong island several times. We were then told to put our heads between our knees and the pilot managed to land the plane safely at the second attempt.

My presentation to IBM (on office machines) was scheduled for that afternoon. I had, of course, planned to arrive the day before, allowing me ample time to take the necessary ferry from the airport to the city and get to my hotel for a night's sleep before the presentation. With this late arrival, I was cutting it fine already, and was horrified to find that due to the weather, the ferries were not running. Luckily, I found another two guys who also needed to get to the island, so between us we chartered a helicopter and I got to the IBM office with minutes to spare.

Our Hong Kong office at the time was run by a very interesting character, Derek Langston-Jones, Esq. He taught himself all about market research when he was Superintendent of Police for the Federation of Malaya in the late 1950s. His operatives posed as market research interviewers as a front to visit suspects' homes and gain information about any potential security threats to the state.

He then used his previous experience as a 2nd Lieutenant in the British Navy to run Chiang Kai-shek's navy in Taiwan – which was probably only a few small boats. He had lunch and collected his mail every day at the Hong Kong Club, and this was where we'd meet for him to introduce me to key contacts. He had a Chinese wife and two children but sadly never told his parents in England of their existence because he was sure they would not approve. He made yearly visits back to the UK, but always alone.

When he retired in 1971 the Hong Kong office was run by Esther Hookam, an extremely capable and effective, US-educated Chinese

researcher. I only wish I could have found someone as capable to run the Kuala Lumpur office. Henry Jolles, who was recruited at the same time as me to run the KL office, only lasted a few months, so I continued to run KL as a branch of the Singapore office, which required almost weekly visits.

FERO's owners, SH Benson, were bought out by Ogilvy and Mather in 1972 and FERO became one of thirty-four companies reporting to my London-based boss, Michael Ball. Michael came out for a visit twice a year. He always had a stick in one hand and a bag in the other. 'If you have enough money to put in the bag,' he said, 'I won't hit you with the stick.'

In return, Michael left me alone to run the business my way and fortunately I turned it around and started making good profits. One project I fought hard to get, for instance, was a high-profile \$600,000 (Singapore dollars) South East Asia-wide research study for Dentsu, at that time the largest advertising agency in the world. South East Asia in those years was a geo-political region of intense global interest. The Vietnam War was raging (known, of course, as the American War in Vietnam) and the economic and development potential of the region was only starting to be understood. This was brought home to us in late 1972, when Pepsi Cola invited me to bring Cally with me for the second stage of a distribution study in Saigon. Cally, five months pregnant with our first child, was particularly disturbed that we could see the bombing, only 40 kms away, from the roof of our hotel, the Caravelle in the heart of the city. Probably then we were already unsure of our future in Singapore. My two-year contract was almost over and I had doubts about renewing it. With the birth of our gorgeous daughter, Melanie, in Gleneagles Hospital in Singapore in March 1973, the decision was made that we would return home. Ogilvy and Mather, however, promised me a sizable bonus if I stayed on and helped them sell the business, so this is what I did.

Cally and Melanie left Singapore around August 1973 and I stayed behind to hand over the reins to the new Managing Director

MacArthur Whitelock. During this time the two of us spent a few days in Kuala Lumpur with the aim of introducing Mac to our clients, staying with my good friend John Ward, who was then on secondment from Qantas in the role of Marketing Manager of Malaysian Airline Systems, or MAS.

When our time in Kuala Lumpur was over, the staff of the KL FERO office put on a big dinner for our farewell, and Mac, John and I celebrated late into the night. Mac and I had rented a near-new sporty two-seater and planned to drive up to Penang the next day for a few days off. However, Mac was keen that we drive up that night. (In fact, it was the early hours of the morning.) I said I was too pissed to drive, but Mac insisted he was fine, so we headed off from John Ward's flat about 2am for the four-or-five-hour drive to Penang.

Mac was not a slow driver, and rather than sit there in terror, I closed my eyes and managed to drift off to sleep. The next thing I knew was waking up to see a roundabout with a foot-high brick wall rushing towards us. We went right through the wall at least at 100 kph and came to a shuddering stop. The first thing I noticed was a furry animal at my feet and I dived down to remove it. In a flash Mac pulled my hand away and grabbed the animal and put it on his head. He was, unbeknownst to me, completely bald and the small furry animal was a full wig.

He then frantically tried to start the car, saying we had to get out of here before the police arrived. I had to explain to him that two of the wheels were ripped off and we weren't going anywhere. We grabbed our suitcases and after a desperate search for his second shoe, hightailed it back down the highway. We were only about thirty kms north of Kuala Lumpur and soon found a taxi to take us back to John Ward's flat for the night. The next day we called in on the hire car company, and they insisted that we report the accident to the police. Mac pleaded with me to say that I was driving, but I refused so the police asked for a copy of Mac's driver's licence. It turned out that he didn't have a licence at all, so he showed them his Japanese antique

dealer's licence, all in Japanese script, of course. The police dutifully recorded the number of the licence and I was nervous for the next week until I left for Australia, but fortunately we heard nothing more about the matter.

On my return home, the bonus I'd earned for staying on in Singapore enabled Cally and I to buy, with almost no mortgage, our first house, in Killarney Heights. While still in Singapore, I had been offered a position with Audience Studies Incorporated (ASI) and started there as a project director in late 1973. I joined a team which included Barb Riley, Tina Kol, and Jill Stephens, who had worked for me in the FERRO office in Kuala Lumpur. When Tim Edwards arrived back from London, we could even find him casual work as a coder while he was looking for a job in advertising. In due course, I was promoted to General Manager of ASI but left soon after when I received an offer to join Inview as Managing Director. This turned out to be a mistake however, and after only six weeks I was fired because of personal differences with the owner.

Australia was going through a mild recession at the time, and I found it very difficult to get another job at my level in market research. So for a while Cally and I almost went back to a student life. I got work as a builder's labourer in Double Bay and while I looked after Melanie at night Cally became a serving wench at Dirty Dicks theatre restaurant in St Leonards. She would come home after work and we would count the tips she had stuffed down her front. Eventually I found a job with the Lego company in the far western suburbs of Sydney. I never really liked it there and it didn't suit my skills. Luckily the company solved this problem by firing me after only a few months.

After losing two positions this way in only a matter of months, we agreed it was time for a change. We decided to rent out the house and go travelling overseas. We had very little money, so we sold Cally's car and had a garage sale where almost everything we owned was up for grabs, including six of the seven fondue sets we were given as wedding presents. We flew to London, bought a VW Kombi van, and

spent five glorious months touring around Europe. Melanie was two years old by then and seemed to adapt very well to travel. She would often sleep on a blanket on the floor when we went to a restaurant at night. With few belongings left at home, we re-accumulated with abandon, without much thought about how we would get all the stuff home. However, my old friend John Ward was by then Manager of Qantas Germany, and he organised to have everything flown back for us free of charge.

When we arrived back in Sydney in August 1975, I was disappointed to find that there were still very few job opportunities around, so instead we rented a little house in Dee Why and were able to live for a while on the rent from our Killarney Heights house. When the lease on the Killarney Heights house expired, we decided we wanted to move back in. However, the tenant, the marketing director of John Sands, was very keen to extend the lease. As enticement for us to agree to this, he organised for John Sands to pay the rent on an alternative house of our choice.

Cally and I found a beautiful old house in Burroway St. Neutral Bay and moved in with Melanie, then aged three. It was a magnificent old mansion, over 100 years old, with five bedrooms, fabulous entertaining areas and even a tennis court. Prior to the then owners, the house had belonged to Captain John Robertson, who was commander of the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne on the night its tragic collision with the destroyer HMAS Voyager off Jervis Bay in February 1964. Eighty-two lives were lost when the Voyager split in two and sank. The subsequent Royal Commission found Captain Robertson responsible for the disaster, although he was later exonerated when a second Royal Commission some years later found Captain Stevenson of the Voyager medically unfit to command a ship, due in part to his excessive drinking. Ten years after these events, however, this was distant history unrelated to our lives. Instead, we just enjoyed the house while we could.

Around this time, an acquaintance, Peter Kane, asked me to

join him forming Bennett Kane Research. I didn't know Peter well, but with few other options available, decided to put my name to the project. I realised quickly, however, that it had been a bad idea. Peter never came into the office before eleven or twelve in the morning, and seemed to expect me to bring in all the work.

In the wake of this, Ogilvy and Mather, who owned FERO in Singapore, offered to finance me to set up a subsidiary called Fathom Research, with the help of Geoff Lindley and John Bevins. It was planned as a three-month trial, but by the end of this time it had become obvious that things weren't working. For good reasons, Ogilvy and Mather clients wanted their market research to come from an independent company, and other ad agencies and their clients were reluctant to use an opposition O & M-owned research company.

This was when I decided to set up my company, Bennett Research, in September 1975.

8. Bennett Research

Initially, I ran Bennett Research out of a small office in Arthur St, North Sydney, starting in September 1975. I engaged Margie Beaumont, and she undertook our first study, a qualitative study about hair products for Bristol-Myers. Margie quickly became indispensable. Maggie Wilkins and Catherine Huntington joined us for some years but for nearly twenty years, Margie remained the core of our qualitative research team.

Peter Kane also worked for us doing qualitative research on a freelance basis, while I took care of the quantitative studies. My friend Wayne McCarthy commissioned a lot of research in his role as General Manager of Pritchard Wood. Our first clients other than Pritchard Wood and Ogilvy and Mather were [EOI] Unilever, Newsweek, Toohey's, Samuel Taylor, Colgate, Crown Corning, P&O and Johnston & Johnston.

(Quantitative research is the process of interviewing large numbers of people and presenting the resulting data numerically. In qualitative research, in depth interviews or group discussions are conducted with a small number of respondents to understand attitudes and beliefs, etc.)

One day, during this busy first period of the company, Judy Ward, a client at J&J, took me to lunch. She said I seemed overloaded with work and suggested I hire her to do my quantitative research. I took her advice and by the time she left, Judy had spent nearly twenty years with the company. She did excellent quantitative work and built up a good stable of clients. One of her great qualities was her honesty, to the extent that when she was being briefed by clients she often told them that the research they wanted to commission wasn't necessary. Her clients loved this honesty, but it took me a while to accept that this approach was, in the long run, good for business.

When we were setting up Bennett Research, I knew I wanted the

freedom (and potential capital gain) of owning my own premises, so in 1977 I bought a lovely terrace house at 124 West St, Crows Nest. It had four offices, a group meeting room, reception, kitchen and a delightful backyard where we had barbecues and parties for our clients and staff. The building was, however, zoned residential, so I sold it some years later and bought 84 West St, a larger commercially-zoned building. It also had five car spaces which as Crows Nest and North Sydney became busier, were to prove very useful.

From the start at Bennett Research, I employed top notch researchers and made a point of paying them very well. This freed me up to do what I had always done best in business, to talk to people, to network and make connections and this enabled me to spend more time away on my other ventures, such as bike riding, skiing, rugby, and farming.

The late 70s and the 80s were heady days. We worked hard and played hard, did lots of business entertaining and developed a solid base of great loyal clients. Early in the piece, I bought my dream car, a 1973 Mercedes 450SL. It was a bright yellow convertible with wire wheels, about 18 months old. Some friends thought it perhaps a bit too flashy and extravagant at this early stage of building my business, but I thought, What the hell, I was going to make my mark.

One of the most successful ventures at Bennett Research was setting up Consumer Research Centres (CRCs) in Bondi Junction, Parramatta and Hornsby. We rented shops in high foot-traffic areas and invited consumers to do taste tests, advertising research and other short surveys, which gave us great economies of scale and fast turnarounds. We were also one of the first larger companies to subcontract our field work and data processing (to Judith Parkinson) which made us more efficient and profitable.

I conducted some memorable research in those early days. One project was for Toohey's beer. The new marketing director, Bill Widerberg, was aware that Toohey's Draught was being outsold two to one by KB Lager. So in 1977 he started a campaign to relaunch

Toohey's Draught. The production people at Toohey's had told Bill that the problem was the advertising and image, while the marketing people insisted it was the taste.

In order to establish which of these were true, we did some pretty straightforward research. We conducted blind taste tests of the two beers and then a revealed taste test of Toohey's Draught vs KB. In the blind test, participants were split down the middle – half preferred VB, the other half, Toohey's. However, in the revealed test, in which participants knew which brand they were drinking, KB won 2:1 – two thirds preferred the KB. This clearly exposed the reality - Toohey's simply weren't marketing the beer well. So Toohey's fired their existing advertising agency and appointed the up and coming groundbreakers, Mojo, who came up with the enormously successful 'I feel like a Toohey's' campaign – and the rest, as they say, is history. I was on the agency selection panel and we all agreed with Bill's choice of Mojo. Toohey's were very happy with our work (not to say the resurgence of their brand!) and engaged us to conduct further packaging research and ongoing taste testing for their beers. When the demand grew for low alcohol beer, we also did all the original research on Toohey's 2.2 Lite. We also did a lot of research with David Brent, Planning Director from Hertz Warpole.

Through these years, Cally and Melanie and I had been very happy in the house in Burraway Street, Neutral Bay, with the added bonus that the rent was being paid by John Sands while their executive remained in our house in Killarney Heights. When this arrangement ended in 1977 we decided to stay in the area. We sold the Killarney Heights house and bought an old two-storey house several kilometres away in Belmont Road, Mosman, which had previously been owned by my old friends Mike and Norma Williams. It was a lovely house, but we wanted to make it more our own, so embarked on major renovations, including a new kitchen, a lounge area at the back of the house and a swimming pool. One of the great things about the Belmont Road house was that it only took me ten minutes to get to

work. I was working very hard then, often putting in ten-hour days, growing the business and working to nurture ongoing relationships with clients. But I tried to make up for these long hours by having lots of holidays with the family and my mates.

Cally and I had been trying for another child for four or five years, and were overjoyed when Matt was born in February 1980. It was about this time that we moved from Belmont Rd to a lovely old 1890s three storey home overlooking Sydney Harbour at 24 Raglan St, Mosman. This became our real family home. We undertook major renovations, including a lounge, study, bedroom and bathroom on the lower level for Melanie. We also added a large deck on the middle level where we hosted numerous parties including my brother Allan's wedding to Stephanie.

Andy was born in April 1982 and we became very well established in Mosman. Melanie went to Mosman Primary and the boys to Killarney Kindergarten.

PART THREE

9. Boating

The success of Bennett Research allowed me to spend more time with the family and on our hobbies. I'd always loved being on the water, and in the late 1970s Cally and I bought an eight berth, 34-foot Clipper which we named Capt Jack (after the Billy Joel song), which we shared on a roster system with five other families. Soon afterwards Cally and I, together with the McCarthy, Skinner, Morrison, Spencer, Wearne and Morisset families, bought a five-bedroom house called 'Quarterdeck' on the northern point of Scotland Island. We were all self-employed, which meant we were each in charge of our own work/life balance. The house was big enough for three families at a time so we would often go down for two or three weeks over Christmas with the other families, with the fathers making calls back to their offices as required. The share arrangement worked well, so between us we also bought a Caribbean Catalina speedboat, a 16-foot 'hobie cat' catamaran and a Laser sailing dingy to share. The families all joined the Royal Motor Yacht Club at Newport, where we berthed the speedboat to use as transport to Scotland Island. Cally's parents had the home next door to 'Quarterdeck', so we did lots of entertaining with them and Cally's extended family. We also bought an aquaplane, a bit like a surfboard, which was towed behind a boat. The kids squabbled over who would use it first, but when the time came, Melanie, aged only about eight, was the first one brave enough to try it. I was very proud of Melanie!

Quarterdeck was a hub of great family activities, including fancy dress parties, BBQs on the beach, sailing and water skiing. Our families each had kids of similar ages, with similar interests. Wayne, Gavin, Keith and Hugh were keen runners and organised regular runs around the island with a big chart on the kitchen wall on which they recorded their times. I was always way down on the list but enjoyed the challenge of trying to get fit.

A few years later we upgraded from Capt Jack to a 44-foot DeFever cruiser with three cabins and two loos, with Bob Morrison, Bruce Davey and myself the major partners. It was named 'Clover' after Squizzy Taylor's saying from the 1930s, 'When you live, you live in Clover, 'cause when dead, you're dead all over.' It had more than double the internal space of Capt Jack and a large aft cabin with a queen-sized bed and ensuite bathroom. We had a permanent mooring at Mosman Bay, about three minutes from home, and also took it up to Pittwater for a month or two at a time. We had a similar roster system under which our family had two weeks use out of every six, but we could also use it when other families weren't.

Our family made great use of Clover and we often went out cruising for up to seven days at a time. Matt and Andy started taking the dinghy out tied to the boat when they were about four or five years old and within a few years had graduated to taking the dinghy and outboard out on their own. I also made great use of Clover for entertaining clients, and Bennett Research became well known for its extended lunch and sunset cruises. Sunset cruises normally started around 5pm, with a stop at Mosman or the Opera House steps at around 8pm to disembark guests with other commitments, with those remaining onboard often partying until the early hours.

On one occasion in the mid 1980s, Wayne and Ronda McCarthy, Keith and Karel Wearne and Cally and I were holidaying on Scotland Island. On a whim, or at least with enthusiasm outweighing preparation, we decided to take Clover for a run up to Port Stephens, a few hours north. We didn't even think about checking the weather conditions we were heading into. We just headed out of Pittwater and turned north and kept Australia on our left. With two ropes securing it, our yellow speedboat bobbed and dipped behind us. Of course, bad weather and high seas hit and within a few hours we were pitching and rolling all over the place. Nothing was secured in the main cabin and almost everything ended up on the floor. One rope to the speedboat snapped and we pulled it in and retied it, but then both ropes

snapped and we watched as the speedboat started to drift away.

Without really thinking, I dived overboard to try and save it. Just as I reached the boat, it started to sink, dragged down by the heavy outboard and full Eskys at the stern. With just two feet of the bow above the water I managed to grab the ignition key, and moments later, the whole thing sank. By this time Wayne had turned Clover around and was coming back to pick me up, but with the boat pitching and tossing in waves about as big as me, I had great difficulty reaching the aft platform. One moment I was high above the boat, looking down at it and the next it was about twenty feet above me. Keith was at the top of the stairs on the aft deck but he could do very little to help me. At last I reached the platform and gasping for breath, managed to pull myself aboard. However unknowingly, I'd come up right behind the exhaust pipe and sucked in a lungful of diesel fumes and fell straight back into the water. At that point I really thought I was gone, but as luck had it, the next wave placed me neatly above the aft platform and somehow I managed to pull myself aboard.

It was clear we had to abandon the speedboat, but we still had another five or six hours ahead of us as we battled the heavy seas to Port Stephens. With two of us taking turns on the top deck steering and navigating and the other four below decks, we made it by night-fall.

We spent the next day trying to get the boat shipshape again as we contemplated the return journey ahead of us. Within a couple of days, the seas had calmed down, but our wives were not at all keen on the return trip. Instead, we chartered a seaplane and while the rest of us flew back to Scotland Island, Wayne and Keith brought Clover back down the coast. We put in an insurance claim for the lost speedboat, but the insurers argued that we were outside the coastal zone covered by their policy and it took about a year of argy-bargy before we received a payout. The incident convinced us all to take navigation and radio operating courses, and the speedboat ultimately washed ashore near Coffs Harbour about two years later, encrusted in barna-

cles and well beyond repair.

Another incident, less life-threatening, but no less indicative of my boating skills was the evening we invited about thirty key clients to join us for the Bennett Research Christmas party onboard Clover. It turned out, however, that one of our best clients, Creative Oasis, was having an all-day Christmas Party at Watsons Bay the same day. Bennett Research, of course, had to be represented. Margie Beaumont and I took our responsibilities as BR representatives seriously, and fortunately other staff were on board Clover to greet our Christmas guests as Margie and I arrived back somewhat late. We cruised the harbour until about 6pm and then decided to drop anchor in Tarban Bay at Hunters Hill. We entertained our guests with full commitment to the task, and only realised at about 9pm that the tide had gone out and we'd run aground.

I lifted anchor and tried to motor into deeper water, but to no avail. When the boat started to keel over, I realised that we weren't going anywhere until the next high tide. With all our guests still on board, I tried to radio the Water Police to help them off, but could not get through. Luckily, a nearby resident saw we were in trouble and called them on our behalf. By the time they arrived to escort our guests from the boat, it was leaning at about 30 degrees.

By the time I was ready for sleep, Clover was tilting at about 45 degrees, so I would have just rolled off the island bed where I normally slept in the aft cabin. Instead, I passed out in the quarter berth in the forward cabin. I woke in the morning to feel a gentle swaying movement and looked out the porthole to see other craft passing by. After a few moments of morning-after confusion, I realised that the high tide had floated us free, and with horror, remembered that I'd left the anchor up the night before. This meant we were drifting free, in danger of colliding with any of the passing craft.

I leapt out of bed stark naked and rushed up to the flybridge to start the engine, and miraculously managed to avoid hitting any other boats. As soon as I felt I could safely do so, I killed the engine

and rushed below decks to put on some clothes, then hurried back up to pilot the Clover back to its berth in Mosman Bay. I somehow managed to berth the boat alone – this was never easy, as it was a very tight berth – and then descended to face the devastation in the main cabin, where all the food and drinks from the night before had ended up spread across the floor. Clover was rostered that week to one of the other owners and he had let me use it for one night only for our Christmas party, on the clear understanding that it was to be returned, cleaned and shipshape, for his own event starting that day at noon. I was, of course, hugely hungover, and spent the next three or four hours honouring my promise. Among the many vows I made to myself that morning, one was to remember, if I ever ran aground again, to leave the anchor down.

10. Motor Bikes

As you probably all know, I've always had a thing for motor-bikes, ever since my first buzz bike back when I was fourteen. With business and family life occupying all my time and attention, for many years my interest in motorbikes lay dormant. However, when Bob Morrison and I bought the farm at Bangalow in 1980 and started Benmor Plantations, we also bought two Honda XL 250s to use on the farm – and beyond.

Cairns to Cape York, 1981

Hugh Spencer had told me about a ride he and some mates did in 1980 up the from Cairns to Cooktown. The Cairns Regional Electricity Board carved the track through the Daintree rainforest to construct and service the power line north to Cooktown in the 1960s. It became redundant when the Bloomfield Track, closer to the coast, was opened in the mid 1980s and is now used purely by recreational adventurers.

Bob and I loved the idea of doing something similar, and with some competitiveness perhaps, hatched a plan to ride from Cairns all the way to the tip of Cape York - about 1,000kms. We put the word around, recruited another four riders, Gavin Morisset, Patrick Dwyer, Roger Glasson and our friend Max and got organising. It was to be the first of our many great bike adventures.

After months of preparation, we were finally as ready as we were ever going to be. In May 1981, we had the bikes (all Honda XL 250s) shipped by train to Cairns and the six of us flew up to start the adventure. We had far too much gear, and in the end unloaded more and more of it as the trip went on, mostly giving it away to whomever we met along the way and was willing to take it off our hands.

By the time we finally set off in May, we were the first travellers up

to the Cape after the wet season so were mostly on our own, careering up and down the notoriously slippery and mountainous old track. We had to cross many rivers and creeks, still swollen from the Wet.

The biggest challenge was the Jardine River. In later years ferries made the crossing, but back then it was up to us work out how to get ourselves and the bikes across the river, which at that time of year was about seventy metres wide. Our solution was to inflate two large tractor tubes which we had brought with us, and floated one bike over at a time. This took about five hours, with us guiding the bikes across in chest high water. We were only told later that the river was infested with crocodiles.

By the time we reached Cape York, we were more croc-savvy – and respectful. We camped just behind the beach at the most northerly point of Australia. We had been warned about saltwater crocs coming up from the beach at night, but I felt some comfort that my sleeping bag was closer to the campfire than the other guys’.

However, we weren’t gourmet travellers. Dinner was usually some variation on baked beans and beer and after eating we threw our empty cans in the fire as we always did. However, just as I was falling asleep two wild pigs with enormous tusks came scavenging for food. I lay frozen in horror as they snuffled around only a couple of feet from me and I only relaxed when they soon scuttled away with a few food remnants. In the morning we found crocodile tracks coming up from the water to about twenty feet from where we were sleeping.

From Cape York, we decided to visit Thursday Island (TI), about forty kms north in the Torres Strait. There were no regular ferries to TI in those days, but we managed to get a ride with a team from the Bamaga Football Club (Rugby League, of course) which was heading to TI for a game.

I noticed a sign saying ‘24 max passengers’, but counted close to sixty on board. (The massive footballers among them!) We spent three days staying at the hundred-year-old Grand Hotel where reputedly Somerset Maugham sat on the veranda sipping gin slings as he

wrote some of his famous short stories. Unfortunately, the original Grand Hotel burnt down in 1990, but has been rebuilt.

Adelaide to Alice Springs, 1982

Our second big ride was from Adelaide to Alice Springs, in June 1982. This time Wayne McCarthy and Peter Whitaker joined the gang. Again, we were all riding Honda XL 250s. No crocs on this trip, but we did forget to pack our toolkit and had to improvise repairs through numerous breakdowns. Finally, Wayne had to get a lift back to Port Augusta to buy a new wheel before catching up with us in Arkaroola.

We happened to arrive in Maree with the annual picnic races, where we got together with a group of nurses from Port Augusta who were renting the old Stationmaster's cottage and offered their 'backyard' for us to camp in.

We drank our way through Race Day and that night at the Annual Ball (or it might have been a Bush Dance) we bought roll after roll of pink and blue tickets to exchange for beers and Bundies and Coke. The highlight of the evening was the auctioning of a particularly flashy red hat with a lyrebird feather stuck in a yellow band. In my inebriated state I was desperate to have this hat at any price. To the cheers and applause of the smoke-filled hall, I ended up gazumping and re-gazumping my own extravagant bids until I finally outbid myself to claim the hat. I remember sleeping for a few hours under the veranda floor boards of the Stationmasters Cottage before we set off in the cool of the morning. The very expensive red hat turned out to be about three sizes too small, so I left it behind.

Peter ended up writing very amusing full colour booklets, with photos, about this and our other rides. They're great mementos of the trips, even if they remind me of how young and often gauche we were.

In his book about the Adelaide to Alice ride he included what I hope was a tongue in cheek description of me. 'Undoubtedly, the

Hercules of Hedonism, JB is also a maestro of manipulation and a chameleon of commitment. At a very early age, JB had a micro-chip implanted into his big toe to catalogue a comprehensive file on everyone JB had ever played for, against, over or under. And how they would best fit into his scheme for a pleasurable future.' A digital copy of Peter's colourful account of the trip can be found in the Appendix.

Papua New Guinea, 1984

In July 1984, we embarked on our fourth big ride, three weeks in Papua New Guinea riding, flying and boating from Lae, the country's second largest city, on the north coast of PNG, up into the Eastern Highlands and back down to Lae via Madang. My brother Allan joined us for this trip.

We air-freighted our bikes, mainly updated Honda XR 350s to Lae, while we all flew in from cold, wet Sydney, via Port Moresby and arrived, of course, just in time for Happy Hour in the balmy, tropics. Listening to us detail our planned trip, locals in the bar that night urged caution, if not cancellation. There were *raskols* all along those tracks through the mountains and we should stop at no point, for fear of assault or theft. One man even tried to press a handgun on Allan, who probably at that point wondered what the hell he'd got himself into. As so often happens in such situations, these warnings proved unfounded and the only real dangers we faced were caused by our own inexperience and ineptitude.

We took the Highlands Highway up to Goroka, about 300kms from Lae, and the capital of the Eastern Highlands Province. Goroka sits at about 1600m, but in the tropics that feels much higher and colder. At the urging of a couple of locals we met – yes – in the pub, we followed them on a side trip riding high up a ridge through numerous small villages, with their inhabitants scattering off the track at the sound of our approach. Unfortunately, the only way back was on the same steep track and the same inhabitants seemed to particularly

enjoy the show we put on attempting to stay vertical and attached to our bikes as we passed them on the way back down. Our lack of riding expertise was unceremoniously exposed.

We continued west onto the small towns of Minj and Mendi, where this time it was our lack of mechanical expertise which was also exposed. Peter's engine was overheating badly and only a fortuitous revelation in his previously unopened owner's manual warning that the dusty dirt tracks required us to regularly clean our air filters to enable us to continue.

We took a side trip to Kaiap Lodge, sitting at the end of a mountain spur with 360-degree views over the Western Highlands. To get there, we had to navigate our way up a narrow track which rose over 600 metres in less than two kilometres. Again, our inexperience was cruelly exposed, but when we arrived the many bottles of SP Lager and the surprising and surprised company of a High Court Judge really made the climb well worthwhile.

At Mount Hagen airstrip we joined the two Northern Islander planes which we had chartered to take us, crammed in front with the pilots, and our bikes, crammed in the luggage compartment behind us, across the Owen Stanley Ranges to Karawari Lodge near Ambion. After two days there, we loaded our bikes and ourselves onto four 'river trucks' (in reality, just dugout canoes) and with only inches of freeboard, floated down the Karawari River until it met the Sepik River, which eventually took us down to Timbunke, a drive away to Wewak on the coast.

A highlight of our night in Wewak was the evening drinking to the accompaniment of 'Tubular Bongs', percussion played on varying lengths of bamboo thumped with rubber thongs. Who would have guessed that ten years earlier a young Mike Oldfield had visited Wewak and stolen their ideas and – well, the rest is musical history.

The next morning we rode along the coast to the mouth of the Sepik, where the MV Melanesian Explorer was to carry us and our bikes around the coast to Madang. Our bikes had to be manhandled

onto dingys and taken out to the boat, which was waiting midstream in the river. We spent the first night anchored off Mannam Island, where we lazed on the afterdeck in the evening watching eruptions from the island's active volcano light up the night sky.

In Madang we started our long recuperation from the grueling trip with a few days R&R at the Madang Hotel. The diving in the shallow waters of the Bismarck Sea off Madang is famous for the many sunken craft still intact from World War Two. We dived to a B24 bomber, with its bombs still in place, lying on the seabed at about 80 feet depth. A few hundred barracuda, each about three feet long, circled around, giving us a curious stare and thankfully moving on.

The Kimberley Ride, 1987

I ended up doing a bike ride every year from 1981 to 2003, and some of our crew are still riding today. In 1987 we set out for what has become known as 'The Kimberley Ride' and my good friends John Tesoriero and Ben Goodman joined the fun. We set off from Alice Springs and headed up through the Tanami desert and the Bungle Bungles and then down the Gibb River Road from Kununurra to Derby. We stopped for a night in the old asbestos mining town of Wittenoon where we spent the evening happily drinking off the day's ride in the only remaining pub in town. Walking back to our motel, John Tesoriero found a large empty drum and the next thing we knew he was IN the drum and I was rolling it down the road. The local copper heard the noise and threatened to arrest us so we headed back to the motel to continue our party in peace – which wasn't very successful. I took a running dive to tackle Bob Morrison but he did a quick side step and I managed to take out a large piece of the old asbestos wall with my shoulder. The motel owner closed the party down and the next morning presented us with a bill for repairing the wall. Writing this now, when asbestos is such a dirty word, even visiting Wittenoon feels cavalier, if not stupid. But of course, back then, its dangers were

yet to be well known and asbestos was still regarded as a useful and respected product.

The highlight of the trip for me was a two-day visit to Mt Elizabeth Station, about halfway along the Gibb River Road. The station was established in 1945 when the pioneer Frank Lacy drove a herd of cattle across the Kimberley and took out the pastoral lease on the land. By the time we visited, Frank and his wife were buried near the homestead and the station was run by Frank's son and his wife Pat, who looked after us while the men were out droving. Mt Elizabeth has become well known now as a tourist stopover and is popular with grey nomads on their lap of the continent. We spent a few days in Broome on our way down the coast, and then put our heads down for the long, wet and cold ride all the way to Fremantle.

The scariest part of riding for me were the long, straight stretches of dusty roads in the Northern Territory. We'd find ourselves stuck behind road trains sitting on 110kph, and our earlier bikes were only capable of a top speed of around 120Kph. We would sit behind the road trains eating dust until we'd run out of patience and take our lives in our hands in an attempt to overtake the endless monsters. Even with our bikes cranked open to full throttle, this seemed to take an eternity, with breathing difficult and visibility almost zero in the cloud of dust. We knew an oncoming car – or even worse, another truck – could appear at any time, so we hugged as close to the road train as was safe. To let our concentration lapse even for a second could be fatal, as the road trains had a terrible tendency to sway from side to side. And even when we reached the cab of the train, with the driver leering down at us and somewhat less dust to eat, we had to maintain our speed to avoid being flattened like an insect by the 110kph beast at our backs. Believe me, riding a bike on those outback roads is not for the faint-hearted.

Pancho Villa Tour, South West USA & Mexico, 1995

In 1995 I heard about Pancho Villa Moto-Tours (PVMT), based in San Antonio, Texas. PVMT was the brainchild of Skip Mascorro, a native Texan with a passion for motorcycle touring and sharing the wonders of the US South West and northern Mexico. That year I organised a group of us to join a PVMT tour out of El Paso, through the Sierra Madre Ranges and down into Copper Canyon, which with six separate canyons is four times the size of the more famous Grand Canyon. My very good mate Peter Whitfield, based in LA, joined us on the ride. Peter is one of the most gregarious, friendly guys I have ever met. He is always willing to give anything a go and has made, and lost, three or four fortunes during his life in business. Over the years I have skied with him, been hang gliding and sailing, done two Variety Club bashes and I joined him on numerous occasions in Hong Kong to watch their famous rugby Sevens.

Skip led the tour, which included six other American riders we hadn't met, and we had the great luxury for the first time (for us) of a backup truck as support. After a wild night on margaritas and the local green stuff in Creel, a railroad town on the edge of Copper Canyon, we headed off the next morning, all feeling rather seedy, but as usual, fired up for a good time. It was a trip of some mishaps, but in the end, great camaraderie and building friendships with strangers.

The highlight of this trip for me was Batopilas Canyon, the largest of the Copper Canyons. To reach the town of Batopilas on the floor of the canyon, we had to negotiate a hair-raising switchback track which dropped 1800 metres over a distance of only six kilometres – that's a drop of one metre in every three.

Unfortunately it was notable for a different reason for Peter Whitfield who, of us all, had the least experience on a motorbike, let alone the sort of riding required on a trail like that. After only a few hours' sleep the night before, he came to grief on a corner and badly injured his shoulder when the bike slipped from under him.

We managed to get him down to the clinic at Batopilas, at the bottom of the trail, where the male nurse told us that the doctor only came in every second Monday. The nurse examined Peter and decided that his shoulder was ‘merely’ badly bruised, and after a couple of days rest he’d be fine to continue on the ride.

We’d already planned to spend two nights and a day in Batopilas so Peter was able to rest the shoulder as instructed. Batopilas turned out to be a fascinating old Spanish silver-mining settlement. The famous local attraction was the ‘Lost Cathedral of Satevo’, which turned out not to be lost, just forgotten.

However, when Peter got back on his bike he only lasted a few hours before the pain got the better of him and we loaded him and his bike into the backup truck. It was three days before he could see a doctor in Chihuahua City, where an X- ray revealed a bad break. He flew out the next day to LA, and after a complex operation faced many months of rehabilitation.

Roof Of Africa Tour, 1998

I had such a good time on this trip, I subsequently took on the Pancho Villa Moto Tours franchise for Australia and New Zealand and spent the next six or seven years arranging and selling overseas motorcycle tours. To promote the tours, I wrote articles in motor cycle magazines such as *Two Wheels*, *Sidetracks* and *Riding On*. I also held information evenings at Bennett Research’s Crows Nest office, at which I showed slides and videos to groups of ten or twelve potential riders. (See Appendix for a link to my website to read some of these articles.)

The first trip I organised was the ‘Roof of Africa’ tour in 1998, when Jen and I took ten riders to South Africa. Dirk du Plooy provided the bikes and Jen drove one backup vehicle while our friends John and Bev Kable drove the other. We rode from Johannesburg through the Orange Free State and up and across the Drakensberg Mountains,

where we passed through a landscape of enormous sandstone bluffs, grassy plateaus and deep valleys of red and yellow cliffs and spectacular overhangs.

We stopped at the cultural village of Basotho, which lies within the Golden Gate National Park. The Basotho are one of the Bantu ethnic groups native to Lesotho and South Africa. To protect themselves against the high altitude cold, the Basotho wear traditional woollen blankets which have now become famous worldwide. The blankets are wound tightly around the body and fastened at the neck by over-large safety pins. They are often worn with traditional woven straw hats and, of all things, white gumboots. It was hard not to laugh, but they are proud and authentic people. And it turned out that these white gumboots were standard issue from the local mines, where many of the Basotho men were employed.

We then rode into the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho (famous for having the world's highest lowest point) and over the 3000 metre Mafika Lisiu Pass, which Peter declared 'the most spectacular mountain pass' he'd ever seen. (And Peter has seen quite a few.) We rode through the Gates of Paradise and had a refreshing two-day stopover in the old stone rondavels and shady gardens of the peaceful Malealea Lodge.

From Lesotho, we rode back into the Eastern Cape Highlands, where we spent a night at the historic Rhodes Hotel (built in 1888) and then stopped over at the Shamwari Private Game Reserve, where we saw elephants, rhinos, lions and numerous bucks and sat in awe as an enormous giraffe circled our vehicle.

We then rode up onto the semi-desert plateau of the Great Karoo. This was where I was cruising along a dirt road when a huge male baboon came charging straight towards me out of the scrub. In an instant, his enormous head was level with my petrol tank and I could clearly see the whites of his eyes and his bared canine teeth. Then for some reason, he skidded to a halt and propped himself on all fours. I'd missed colliding with him by about 10 centimetres and it took about

half an hour before my heart stopped pounding.

We ended the tour by taking the scenic Garden Route over the Outeniqua Pass to Oudtshoorn. (The Outeniqua Pass was where the disgraced former South African cricket captain, Hansie Cronje lost his life in a small plane crash in 2002.) The Garden Route is a 200km stretch of coast, with stunning beaches and forests and a necklace of national parks. It's one of South Africa's most beautiful driving or riding routes and a fitting way to arrive at our destination, the wonderful city of Cape Town. It was a truly magical trip, and one I'd wanted to do for years. In fact, I so enjoyed riding the BMW 650 Funduro that Dirk du Plooy had organised for me that I bought my own when I returned to Australia.

Inca Expedition, 1999

Our next ride, in South America in September 1999, we called the 'Inca Expedition'. It turned out to be our toughest and most exciting ride – a thirty-four day, 8,000km journey across the Andes, through Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Peru.

After a stopover on Easter Island, Jen and I flew to Santiago, Chile and then to the coastal town of Vina Del Mar to meet the other PVMT riders and our leader, the well-known and extremely well-travelled adventurer Helge Pedersen. There were eighteen riders, three of us with partners on the back. All the bikes were shipped down in a container from Houston. Some of us (Jen and I included) rode bikes rented from the PVMT organisers, while others had their own bikes brought down from the US. A lot of the US riders had new-fangled GPS devices fitted on their bikes. I'd never seen them before and couldn't believe how accurate they were. Of course, they're universal now, a standard feature in every mobile phone around the world.

Jen and I were on a late model KLR 650. We each had one side pannier to fit everything we needed for five weeks. We crossed the Andes at the ski resort of Portilla, with snow falling on the pass and

the roads treacherous with black ice. I stopped on the way down to have a pee and admire Mt Aconcagua, the world's highest mountain outside of the Himalayas. I had to undo seven layers of clothing and then slipped midstream on the black ice and rolled about three metres down into soft snow. It took ages to get all the snow out of my clothing and warm up enough to get back on the bike.

People eat late in Latino countries (restaurants in Argentina only open at 9pm) and on our first stop, in Mendoza, I arrived after the others, at about 11pm, just in time to join them for dinner. It was a vibrant city, with bars and restaurants still bustling at midnight. Although we had to be up every morning around 6am, we tried to make these late hours work for us. We usually arrived at our hotel by 6pm, which gave us ample time for a few quiet drinks before dinner.

From Mendoza, we headed up into central Argentina and for the next thirty-four days, as the country became more rugged and mountainous day by day, we were either in the foothills or in sight of the mighty Andes. After a night in the beautiful oasis town of San Augustin del Valle Fertil, we rose in the foothills of the Andes for the next few days until we reached the Andean Altiplano, the High Plateau, surrounded on all sides by high mountains. Here we had our first two-night stop, at the beautiful town of Salta, which at about 11,000 feet, was our opportunity to get acclimatised to the altitude.

From Salta, we crossed into Bolivia where the locals were even more colourful and very friendly, but a lot poorer. There seemed to be fewer people in Bolivia, but we did encounter herds of llamas, and their smaller, plumper relative, the guanaco. We stopped in the small city of Tupiza, which even then was a big backpackers' destination. This was due in part to the local legend that this was where the infamous Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid met their end during a shootout with the Bolivian Army in 1908 – although this is only one of many stories about the pair's demise.

We then rode on to Potosi, the world's highest city, founded by the Spanish in 1545 to mine the rich nearby silver deposits. This silver

financed the Spanish Empire for the next two hundred years, albeit of course, by exploiting the local miners, who lived as virtual slaves. Potosi retains much of its history, with narrow cobblestone streets and beautiful Spanish architecture of the period.

Next it was on to La Paz, a spectacular city nestled in the crater of an extinct volcano, surrounded by snow covered mountains. From there we climbed even higher and rode through the snow to Lake Titicaca, the largest lake (and one of the highest) in South America, which straddles the border between Bolivia and Peru. Our next stop was Cusco, another beautiful and well-preserved Spanish colonial city, with Inca ruins scattered through it. From Cusco we rode to Agua Calientes from where we explored the nearby ruins of Machu Pichu, which we all agreed outshone our expectations and was the highlight of the whole trip.

After Cusco, we headed to Canyon de Colca, famous for its giant condors, the symbol of the Andes. We stood at the edge of the canyon as the morning breeze warmed, lifting the magnificent birds, some with a wingspan up to four metres, towards us and over our heads. From Canyon de Colca we had to cross a 16,400 ft mountain pass. We had to adjust our carburettors for the altitude and we all found it difficult to breathe.

We spent that night at the 7,500 feet 'White City' of Arequipa, where the highlight was the Santa Catalina Convent, first built in 1540 and beautifully restored. From Arequipa we crossed back into Chile, where it took four days to cross the Atacama desert, the enormous 'fog desert' (which means its only precipitation is due to fog) west of the Andes, famous for the fact that much of its 100,000 sq km has never recorded rainfall. Riding on, we visited the Chuquibambilla copper mine, the largest open cut mine in the world, and then the coastal ports of Iquique and Antofagasta. Finally, we arrived back at our starting point, Vina Del Mar, after 8,000kms of riding. We returned to the Yacht Club of Chile to share stories and celebrate a really epic adventure.

I have great memories of these grand adventures, even if my riding these days are now restricted to the quad bike on the farm and my recently acquired electric bike. In April 1997 we also did a circumnavigation of Honduras in Central America, ending up on the beautiful Caribbean island of Roatan, and this trip also involved some hair-raising experiences both on the bikes and in the bars.

11. Skiing

I made my first trip to the snow in the mid 1960s with some mates from Uni, who were part of a team building a ski lodge called Narraburra in Perisher. Having grown up among the towering Drakensberg mountains in South Africa, on the way into Perisher I asked in all innocence, 'When do we get to the mountains?' My friends thought I was being a smartarse until I explained the 'real' mountains I was used to. I had a very old pair of 220 wooden skis with no edges and boots with leather straps. I paid per ride on the chairlift and could not afford ski lessons. Needless to say, my skiing did not progress much.

After a long break, in the late 1970s, Bob Morrison and I and a few others began making regular ski trips to Falls Creek, and later Perisher and Thredbo. These developed into regular boys' trips and the group grew to include Wayne McCarthy, Gavin Morisset, Hugh Spencer, Tim Edwards, Darrell Skinner, Allen Weeks and Keith Wearne. We tried many different resorts and in due course settled mainly on Thredbo. Our best accommodation was when we rented the red-shuttered Da Dacha ski lodge, formerly the Chairman of Lend Lease, Dick Dusseldorp's, private lodge. It had four bedrooms and four bathrooms, a great entertaining area and looked over the Thredbo duck ponds. Crucially, for apres-ski entertainment, it was close to the Thredbo Alpine Hotel.

We were joined that year by Sue Gaunt and Ben Goodman, the owner at the time of Winterhaus, known as 'Thredbo's Haus for all seasons' and one of the village's most sought-after lodges. We also met the 'A Team', a group of top women skiers from Austria. They had bottles of spirits stashed in different spots over the mountain and with them, we learnt to drink Absolut vodka neat. (And cold.)

Cally and I also went on several annual family ski trips. We bought a share of Thredbo Farm, located just outside the National Park near the Ski Tube, but we soon became tired of cooking and

driving the kids into the ski fields each day so we sold that share and instead bought shares in Stillwell Lodge at Charlotte Pass and Winterhaus in Thredbo.

In 1990 Cally and I did our first ski trip to Colorado, with a Steins World Ski Tour group which had the bonus of including four instructors. Our first week was in Aspen where the snow was heavenly and conditions perfect. I learnt the saying, 'The only ice you get in Aspen is in your drinks'. Our participation came to a sudden end on the second last day in Aspen, however, when Cally had a heart attack and was taken to intensive care in Aspen Hospital. The rest of the group moved on to Vail and I stayed with Cally and had the occasional ski during the day before visiting her at night. We had some small compensation when our insurance company upgraded us to Business class on our return trip, and fortunately Cally recovered well, without any permanent damage to her heart.

Also in 1990, we were on a family trip to Stillwell Lodge in Charlotte Pass when Terry Rouhan recruited me into a cross-country ski trip to Mt Kosciusko. About five or six of us left early in the morning with provisions for the day. I found it to be the most exhausting day of my life. I was more than relieved to make it safely back to Stillwell that evening, and decided that, as well as being my first, it would also be my last cross-country ski trip.

When I got together with Jen, she revealed that she had never really skied before. So, in 1998, the two of us did our own Steins Tour to Vail and Aspen. Being the only learner in the group, for the first six days Jen had lessons each morning with our private ski instructor. She was obviously a fast learner, because from then on she was skiing blue runs with the rest of the group. It was a fabulous holiday and Jen has been a ski devotee ever since. We have gone on to ski Whistler, Telluride and Taos, with some great road trips in between as we moved from one resort to another.

In 2003, Bob and Patti Lowry and Chris and Lynda Dean joined us for a trip to Beaver Creek and Aspen, where we celebrated my 60th

birthday. Peter Whitfield, from Los Angeles, owned a ski condo in Beaver Creek and was keen to join us for the birthday dinner. He flew to Denver and then caught the Rocky Mountain Express to Beaver Creek. However, a severe snowstorm blew up and he and his fellow six or seven passengers were snowbound in a basic motel halfway up the mountain. They couldn't get in or out, and Peter spent the next three days trying to charter a helicopter, to no avail. He had seven steaks packed in his luggage for my birthday dinner, and they were much appreciated when the group ran short of food. Peter's trip had two silver linings. After some delay, he did manage to join us in Beaver Creek for a late celebration. As it happened, one of his fellow passengers on the Rocky Mountain Express was Maureen Foreman. They hit it off and are still together nearly twenty years later, living on their equestrian ranch in Senoia, Georgia.

Sometime in the late 1990s a group of us formed the Mullumbimby Ski Club. My vagueness about the beginnings of the club can perhaps be explained by our motto: 'Ski High!'. (For non-locals, Mullum is in the subtropics and about 1,300kms from the nearest skiable snow.)

Soon after, the Club conducted its first trip, to Guthega. By then I was involved in The Uncle Project, a local organisation which matched up carefully screened men to be mentors to boys living without an active father. Jen and I decided to take my 'nephew', Adam Harvey, on the trip. Adam had never snowboarded before, but he went out on his own the day we arrived and taught himself the rudiments, and by the next day was riding the lifts and snowboarding by himself.

Jen and I cemented friendships with old friends and got to know some of the other Club members such as Paul Jameson, Michael Leach, Geoff Williams and Ron Priestley, who have gone to become firm friends. We had a fabulous singalong one night led by the talented local doctor and musician Michael Pelmore. As well as being a top skier, a fanatical sailor and a fearsome tennis opponent, Paul Jameson is to this day a committed community activist. Originally

from the UK, his first job in Australia was in sales at IBM. Later, when he moved up to the Northern Rivers, he went on to set up and mentor many community organisations, such as the NRCF (Northern Rivers Community Foundation), BETC training organisation and Sourdough small business incubator. In 2021 he was appointed President of the Byron Bay Community Centre.

Following these humble beginnings in Guthega, this new group of friends made regular skiing trips overseas. We went to Aspen in the US, the Dolomites in Italy, Meribel and Val d'Isere in the French Alps and to some of the excellent ski resorts in Japan. For me, the most memorable accommodation was in Meribel, where we rented a beautiful ski in/ski out private chalet owned by a dentist friend of Michael Leach's. The chalet came with a fabulous chef who initially served us four course meals until we pleaded for him to cut the meals back to three courses. We enjoyed the Dolomites so much that we returned a few years later, and were joined on this trip by John and Julie Mashford. As part of our stay, we went on a two-day ski trip to a remote refugio perched a day away at the top of the range. We skied all day, had a great dinner, slept soundly and then made first tracks down the mountain, returning by a different route. Over one long flat section, a local entrepreneur had horses to tow the tired skiers, and we happily hooked up, a completely new experience for all of us.

Over time, injury has reduced our skiing group to three regulars. My dream for a long time had been to ski in the Swiss Alps. So in 2017, Jennifer, Michael Leach and I booked a week in each of Verbier and Wengen with another week in Oman in the Middle East to warm up and do some completely different sightseeing.

Verbier was everything I had dreamed it might be and I was skiing well and fast until I hit some ice, did a 360-degree somersault and heard a sharp crack as I landed on my shoulder. The paramedics carted me down to the bottom of the run in a banana boat and the doctor arrived soon after in a helicopter. He examined me and without much ado, I was loaded onto the helicopter for the seven or

eight-minute ride to the nearest provincial hospital about sixty kms away. Michael was skiing elsewhere, so Jen stayed to get my skis back to our lodge in Verbier.

The helicopter landed on the roof of the hospital and with typical Swiss efficiency, minutes later I was being X-rayed. I was diagnosed with a broken humerus and ended up strapped into a brace with my arm sticking out at 45 degrees. As it was late afternoon by then, I thought the hospital would keep me in overnight. But no, they called me a taxi and I sat there like a bird with a broken wing drugged up against the pain for the 90-minute drive back to the lodge. The driver was adamant he would not accept a credit card, so I had to phone Jen to organise cash for the \$600 fare.

With skiing and even sightseeing out of the question, Michael had to travel on his own to Wengen and Oman, while Jen and I caught another taxi to Geneva to try and get a flight home. We were traveling on cheap business class tickets, so we had to fly on to Zurich and wait for another flight home. I was in a lot of pain and could not even dress myself. On the second day I asked Jen to give me a wash, which she kindly did. The next day I asked again and she said, 'What? You had one yesterday!'

We eventually got home about six days after the accident and went straight to John Flynn Hospital on the Gold Coast for treatment. I'd always been a fairly fast and fearless skier and I thought if I started skiing again, I would slow down and even exercise some caution. The idea of this felt just too boring, so reluctantly I quit skiing.

12. Rugby

I'd always played rugby at school and university and although I was keen, I was not that good a player. However I really came into my own in 1983, when Bruce Davey invited me to play with his Gordon Stags Golden Oldies team in Sydney. I had a few preliminary games and got to know and like some of my fellow players, such as Terry Rouhan, John Kable, Tony Narracott, Bill Andrews, Bruce Robertson, Peter Goodman and their wives or partners. Tony later holidayed at our farm, Benmor, outside Bangalow in the late 1980s and he and his partner Barbara made the move up to Byron Bay soon after.

Tony hit the ground running when he came to Byron and was very active in the local community from the start. He put a lot of effort into building up the Byron Bay Chamber of Commerce, growing it from thirty-odd members to more than two hundred. Sadly, Tony died from lymphatic cancer in September 2007, but not before organising his own Living Wake at the Byron Bay Golf Club in January that year. It was an evening which has become part of Byron history, with 300 friends paying tribute to his larger than life contribution to the town. He was one of the first to agitate for a Byron Bay bypass, which was finally opened in early 2021.

Our first Golden Oldies Festival was in Sydney in June 1983. The schedule involved playing three different teams over the week, with, of course, almost nightly parties and other social functions in between. Our team also included ex-Wallabies such as Bob Davidson, Don Logan, the notorious hard man Tim Bristow and Bill Currie, a friend of mine from advertising. In the leadup games, I always went number two in the lineout, but in the first big game I felt a strong hand on my shoulder saying, 'I go number two.' I looked around to see that the hand belonged to Tim Bristow, and quickly said, 'Sure Tim.' In a later game we were playing Petersham, which had many ex-Wallabies and other Internationals in the team. I found myself propping against

Sir Nick Shehadie, ex-Wallaby Captain and Lord Mayor of Sydney. He recognised my accent and we started chatting after the scrum broke and he called over an ex-Springbok from his team to introduce me and we ended up later on having a drink together in the bar. Rugby is a great leveller and it introduced me to many new and different people. I also remember a night after a game with Tim Bristow and a few players from the Gordon club in the famous Oaks Hotel at Neutral Bay in Sydney. Tim is a good storyteller and we were happily entertained for hours.

Our next Golden Oldies Carnival was in London in 1985. As part of the trip, former Englishman Tony Narracott organised a tour through Devon and Cornwall, visiting many of his old haunts and even meeting his mum. At the Pirates Rugby club in Penzance, we were entertained by the Cornish Male Choir as we feasted on homemade Cornish pasties. Cally and I also did a trip on the Orient Express from London to Venice, which was another great experience. After another Carnival, in 1989, in Toronto this time, we tied in a two-week cruise of the Caribbean, and a road trip of the maritime provinces of Canada.

The most memorable trip was Dublin in 1993, with my brother Allan. He and I did a cruise in the Greek islands and visited London and Scotland before meeting the others in Dublin. After the Carnival, we also had a week's trip around Ireland with the rest of the team. My old friend Don Recsei was part of the team by then, and to this day we remain close. I was by then President of the Gordon Stags, and I always enjoyed giving presentations and speeches after the games.

Cally and I attended the Carnival in Cape Town in 1998, but because of a back injury, I couldn't play. It was in Cape Town that I really appreciated the role Cally had taken on over the years, running along the sidelines with a camera, in case she could snap a shot of me with the ball. I've got to say, I didn't get possession that often, so it must have been a pretty thankless task. Sitting on the sidelines at Cape Town made me realise that Golden Oldies rugby is a great game

to play, but not that exciting to watch.

I played my last game at the Golden Oldies Carnival in Brisbane in 2003. I had just turned sixty and the rule in Golden Oldies was that over-60s had to wear red shirts, to indicate that they could not be tackled. I found this rather boring so I never played again. However, I'm still an avid fan and watch any rugby game I can, from Club Rugby to Super Rugby, Rugby Sevens and Internationals.

Cally and I had became good friends with Don and Susie Recsei when we lived in Mosman. We also met fellow Mosman residents Peter and Cathy Whitfield about this time, and it was Peter who first invited me to Hong Kong to watch the famous Hong Kong Sevens. Our trip to north became an annual event, including spending time with John and Sandy Allen who lived in Hong Kong.

13. Variety Club Bashes

I did my first Variety Club Bash in May 1989. Wayne McCarthy had bought and fitted out a 1960 Mercedes 220 and Darrell Skinner and myself joined him for the departure from Sydney. The Bash itself went from Bourke to Broome. Unfortunately, we had our first breakdown in western Sydney but we sorted that out and pretty quickly even became adept at changing drivers while keeping a minimum speed of about 60 kms.

Our crew teamed up at times with our friends John and Bev Kable in a 1927 Nash Special and we also spent time with Clint Dawkins, one of the organisers. The Bash made a point of taking in iconic Aussie destinations en- route. We visited the Combo Waterhole on the Diamantina River where Banjo Patterson reputedly jotted down the verses for Waltzing Matilda and stopped at the Walkabout Creek Hotel where Crocodile Dundee was filmed. We even managed to fit in a beer with iconic Aussie singer John Farnham.

The next Bash went from Bourke to Burnie and this time Peter Whitfield and I bought our own 1963 model Mercedes 220S. We had it rebuilt and fitted out by Germania Motors in Crows Nest. I'd managed to wrangle sponsorship from Uncle Toby's, a major client of mine, and they repainted the car with Uncle Toby's logos and even built an Iron Man in an Uncle Toby's cereal box on the roof. Steve Dillon, Uncle Toby's Marketing Director, and Ironman Grant Kenny joined us as co- drivers. Uncle Toby's also kitted us out in company gear and provided a seemingly unlimited supply of muesli bars, which proved very popular with the local kids wherever we stopped. After a while I became rather blasé about being asked for my autograph by kids who thought I was an Ironman too.

Luckily, we'd packed our dinner jackets for the Black Tie Ball at Stawell, and everyone agreed our formal attire was resplendent when worn with red Uncle Toby's bike shorts. Of course, the night

was a big hoot. We crossed Bass Strait on the 'Abel Tasman' and then did a fabulous drive through northwest Tasmania before ending up in Burnie. Most evenings Peter seemed to become best friends with the restaurant manager or owner, which meant we usually ended up with complementary glasses of after-dinner port. On our final night in Queenstown Bev Kable borrowed a Salvation Army jacket and hat from the fundraiser in the pub and she collected about four times more than the fundraiser normally did.

I did one more bash, into Far North Qld in 1991, but Peter had to cancel at the last moment, the car blew up and I found it was time to get on and do other things.

14. Horse Racing

In 1985, my friend Bruce Davey, a keen racing man, invited me to join a small syndicate to buy a racehorse. The actor Mel Gibson was a client of Bruce's and he, Bruce, Margie Beaumont and I formed the syndicate to buy a two-year old filly sired by 'John Splendid'. We named her Mad Maxine in recognition of Mel's now famous, career-defining film role.

Suddenly, I found myself with a new life, attending training sessions at daybreak with breakfasts to follow with the trainer Paul Cave and his jockeys. We often hired a limo to take us to the racecourse for the day's entertainment. One day we were queued behind Kerry Packer in his Bentley and saw him get out of his car and go to buy a hotdog. We watched as he searched his pockets for cash, and to our amusement, come up empty-handed. At this, someone in our car had the bright idea to lend him \$5 just to be able to say later that he had once lent money to Kerry Packer. He jumped out and we watched as KP laughed and graciously declined the offer.

We had quite a few wins on country tracks, and our jockey Rodney Quinn even went on to claim two Sydney races for us. But our biggest success was in July 1986 when jockey Stefan Stepetz, aged just seventeen, won the feature race at Randwick, the 1400m 'Jumbuck Handicap' at odds of fifteen to one. This was a great thrill, but the real fun came afterwards.

As was the custom, the 'connections' of the winner of the feature race, the horse's owners, trainer and jockey, were invited to a cocktail party in the AJC Members Bar. The guest of honour that day was the Deputy Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir Gaetan Duval, and his Tourism Minister who were both in Australia trying to secure landing rights for Air Mauritius. We ended up having a long chat (Sir Gaetan owned thirty-four horses) and I helped him secure a meeting with my old friend John Ward, who was by then General Manager of Qantas.

I mentioned that I intended to visit Mauritius on my way to South Africa in a few months and Sir Gaetan insisted I join him for dinner.

When I got to Mauritius and settled into my hotel, he duly sent a car to take me to the Deputy PM's residence. The dinner, however, was not that successful. The only other guest was Sir Gaetan's French trainer who couldn't speak English, so we spent most of the evening watching videos of Sir Gaetan's horses. He wrongly assumed, of course, that I knew a lot more about horses and racing than I did. He was however, very hospitable and invited me to another two functions. At one I found myself a member of the official party for the opening of a new resort, and the other was a formal dinner where I danced with the Prime Minister's wife. I needed a suit for this occasion, so borrowed one from a large guy I met at the resort, which of course was about three sizes too big.

It turned out that Sir Gaetan pretty well controlled horse racing in Mauritius, and the hotel staff, who saw me coming and going in his car, kept buying me drinks in the hope that I would tell them which horse was going to win on Saturday. Never one to miss an opportunity, I made a pitch to the Minister of Tourism to do their market research in Australia. Unfortunately, on this occasion I was unsuccessful – but it was worth a try.

Our syndicate bought another horse in partnership with two Italian guys who owned the Mixing Pot restaurant in Glebe. It never won any races, but we had some great times with all-day lunches at their restaurant after watching training in the morning.

My interest in horses has continued down the family line. My daughter Melanie was horse-mad as a teenager and we kept a horse for her to ride on holidays on the farm at Bangalow. In order for her to be able to ride more often, we had the horse shipped down to Sydney where Mel stabled and rode her at a property at Oxford Falls. Now a mother herself, Mel lives with her family on the far South Coast near Tathra. Their daughter Maddie, aged twelve, is also a keen horse rider.



Crossing the Jardine River, Cape York 1981.
Bob Morrison, Roger Glasson, John and Pat Dwyer.



River trucks down the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea 1984.



My Austin Healey 3000.



Jen with Mercedes 450 SL.



Mel and Shaddie, Western Australia.



John, Andy and Matt - Bennett Park, Winterton South Africa 1995.



John and John Tesoriero at McWasp Party 1997.



Abby Orford, Mel, Cally and John at Mel's 21st on Sydney Harbour 1994.



Stirling Moss in new Jaguar with John 1997.



John on Northern Territory bike ride 1987.



Matt and Vanessa Wedding 2009.



Korben, Cradle Mountain 2021.



Matt rolled the tractor, Cedarvale Farm 2008.



Jen on True North, Kimberley.



Captain Jack, early 80s.



John, Delene, Jen and Pat Grier, 2011.



Brian Jones, Jeff Oakley, John Mashford and John 2003.



John and Jen under Christ the Redeemer, Rio de Janeiro 2016.



Airlifted from Verbier, Switzerland 2017.



John and Noel, Bacchus Ball 1962.



Ex Miss World Belinda Green at John's 50th.



Matt, John and Andy on Bellinghen bike ride.

PART FOUR

15. Farming

In 1980, Bob Morrison and I bought a 150-acre farm outside Bangalow and named it Benmor Plantations. We appointed John Wilkie and Graham Fleming as farm managers, stripped the farm of old fences and buildings and planted macadamias, peaches and guavas. Over the first few years, I made five or six visits each year, often combining business with family holidays. Mel learnt to drive an old Subaru we left there and the boys learnt to ride motorcycles when they were four and six years old. I bought them little 50cc Hondas and the three of us would spend hours riding around the farm. I later bought a bike trailer so we could do rides further afield in areas such as Whian Whian forest and out west towards Tenterfield.

In 1981 Bob and I decided to go into processing and marketing guavas and in partnership with John Spence, built a processing plant in Newrybar. Bob Morrison at the time was a very successful Investment Advisor and he promoted guavas as an investment to his clients. In partnership with Dr Maurice Lewin, a gynaecologist from Lismore, they planted many new farms in the area, with Roger Glasson, a farmer from Alstonville, providing the farming know-how.

Our processing plant at Newrybar was opened with great aplomb by Doug Anthony, at the time, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia. This featured on local TV and received great coverage in the local papers. We conducted a concept ('Guavas have five times the Vitamin C of oranges!') and taste test for guavas. This was received very positively, so using Tony Higgins as our marketing consultant, we actively started marketing guavas. This was a steep learning curve for me. I had to learn the business of exporting, including such matters as Bills of Lading, cost, insurance and freight (CIF) etc. I managed to make a sale of about \$60,000 worth of guavas to Hi-C, a Coca-Cola division in Hamburg, and the large and well-known Australian juice retailer, Mr Juicy, ordered one hundred tonnes of frozen fruit, to be

paid for as they were needed. However, Mr Juicy went bankrupt soon after, and we had only received payment for twelve tonnes. At the same time forty of Bob's investors, who had invested \$2 million, sued him for misrepresentation and I was dragged into the case, with Bob providing me full indemnification. Bob lost the case, and the guava business folded. I ended up losing over \$400,000 but I also learnt some good lessons in the process. Subsequently, however, we cut out the guavas on the farm and concentrated on macadamias and peaches. Later still, I switched to raising and fattening cattle. But that story comes later on.

16. Life in Byron

The Move To Byron

By 1990 we were spending more and more time at the farm in Bangalow. One day Cally said, 'Why don't we move up north?' I thought about it for a minute or so, then said, 'Sure. Why not?' Mel had completed her diploma in Hospitality at Macleay College and decided she didn't want to leave Sydney. Matt and Andy were still in primary school so we did extensive research on the best school for the boys. At that time, Alstonville Public School seemed the best, so we concentrated our house search in the school's catchment area. Cally found our dream house, 'Tintagel', on thirteen acres on Maguire's Creek in Byrnes Lane, Tuckombil, six kms from Alstonville. It had five bedrooms, a study, a pool and a very private northeast facing aspect on the river. We had bought five acres in Coorabell some years earlier, but with our move to Tuckombil, sold that to Kim and Len Grey. We rented out the Raglan Street house and bought a brand new four-bedroom townhouse in Cammeray for my Sydney work base and for Mel and her friend Sammy to live in. Finally we were ready to go. Tim and Anneslie Edwards threw a farewell party for us and we had a fantastic send off with fifty or so of our close Sydney friends.

We settled in well at Tuckombil and soon started a major renovation of the house, consisting of a new main bedroom with ensuite and a sitting room overlooking the river. Part of the plan was for me to extricate myself gradually from Bennett Research so I had a headhunter help me find a buyer for the business. Terry Squire proved to be the man. He initially bought 20% of the business for a nominal sum and was then to pay me out over three years from his share of the profits. With this, I cut my time in Sydney. Initially I was in Sydney every second week, responsible mainly for new business

and administration, and gradually cut this back to one week in every three or four.

In another big change, in 1992 Mum and Dad sold the family home at Lindfield and bought into very comfortable retirement villa called Huon Park at Turrumurra. And sadly, Cally's father, Don Berry died in 1993. I was very close to Don and when I heard the news, rushed home from a boys' trip on Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe to attend the funeral.

My 50th Birthday

When I turned fifty on 20 March, 1993, I decided a big celebration was warranted. We started off with a big party organised by Don Rescei and my brother Allan at the kindergarten which Sandy Muston ran on Balmoral Oval in Mosman. We decided, being an educational institution, the guests should be required to come in school uniforms. About sixty friends turned up, in a ridiculous array of undersized, or outgrown apparel. Ex-Miss World, Belinda Green, looking gorgeous in her school uniform came with a friend, and we were entertained by a variety of amusements quite inappropriate for the venue. Don Rescei reminded me only recently that poor Sandy Muston was nearly evicted from his lease because of the noise we made and the rubbish we didn't get around to cleaning up.

The main event, however, was a three-day party weekend in Byron, Bangalow and Tuckombil with about thirty visitors from Sydney and the same number of locals. Cally and I managed to accommodate the Sydney visitors at home, on the farm or in our units in Bayview Lodge in Byron. The celebrations started off at the Beach Hotel on Friday night and then Cally put on a great party at Tuckombil on the Saturday night. Wayne brought a Jeroboam of Moet and a group of friends put in to spoil me with a Malibu surfboard. On Sunday we had an all-day barbecue and tennis day at the farm at Bangalow. Unfortunately, Peter Fox tore his muscle badly playing tennis, and

Cally had to take him to a Gold Coast hospital – not a party that he forgot quickly. But despite injuries and sore heads, it was a great way to introduce my Sydney friends to the easy-going Byron lifestyle, so much so, that four of them subsequently moved to the area.

Commuting To Sydney

Commuting to Sydney had its pressures. I was never really fully in one place, always looking ahead to when I'd have to shift mindset to the other place. Cally and I were living increasingly separate lives and this took its toll on my life with her and the kids.

In 1993 I went on a trekking expedition in the Himalayan Annapurnas in Nepal. It was a camping trek, which meant a full-body immersion in the ancient local culture and spectacular scenery. The Himalayan Nepalese are forever smiling and famously hardy and it is hard not to fall in love with them as a people. But they are very poor and at the conclusion of our trek, I ended up leaving almost all my clothes and trekking gear with our tour guides and porters. After the trek, I went white water rafting down the Trishuli River and spent a few days at the Chitwan National Park looking for tigers. My reading material for this trip was 'Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway' by Susan Jeffers. As the title suggests, the book is based on an innovative training program which helps participants deal with fear and self-doubt. It the right book for me at the right time and it helped me think very differently about options for my future.

Cally had her own journey to our decision, but events such as this helped me to the realisation that we needed to live apart and in April 1994 we made the mutual decision to separate. It was one of the hardest times of my life. When you'd been together as long as Cally and I, and brought three beautiful kids into the world, who we both continued to love unreservedly, a decision to separate is never taken lightly. We were committed to being respectful to each other and continuing to parent as well as we could.

Cally stayed on at Tintagel at Tuckombil and I bought a three-bedroom apartment in The Terraces, right on the beach in Lawson St in Byron Bay. It was my priority that there would always be room for the kids to visit. It was a three-storey townhouse and the boys could check out the surf from their bedroom on the top floor before deciding whether or not to get out of bed.

Melanie turned twenty-one in March 1994 and had a big party on a chartered ferry on Sydney Harbour. It was a full-on black-tie evening, with everyone dancing to a fabulous band on board the ferry.

I'd always had the dream of owning a Harley Davidson and around this time, probably as part of some sort of midlife crisis, bought myself a Harley Davidson Softail Custom motorbike. It was a beautiful bike, but the battery often ran flat while I was away in Sydney so I would ask Jeff Linden, the local magistrate, who lived in the same block in Lawson Street, to help me push start the bike. I was so into Harleys that I ended up buying Byron Bay Harley Tours, which involved myself and five other bikers (including the local head of the Nomads bike club) taking locals and visitors for trips into the hinterland. It was a great way to meet people and we got to visit a wide range of lovely spots in the hinterland.

There were a few significant changes in my life around this time. Andy started boarding at The Southport School on the Gold Coast, and Cally purchased and took over the running of the Little Deli in Lismore.

About this time, Matt was riding his motorbike (too fast) up the long driveway to Cally's house when he ran into Cally's 4WD. It was a bad accident and he sustained injuries serious enough to require helicoptering to Lismore Base Hospital. He had twelve broken bones, including both arms and one leg, and ended up spending over three months in hospital and took many more months to fully recuperate. It was a significant setback for Matt and he carries its physical consequences to this day.

17. Life With Jennifer

After separating from Cally I dipped my toe into the waters of a couple of short relationships and then at the end of 1994 I started getting serious with Jennifer Regan, a lively Prosecutor with the DPP, based in Lismore. Tony Narracott had introduced me to Jen at the Rails when I was still with Cally. I hadn't seen her for a long time until one night I was with a few friends in a cubicle in the Rails with my then 'friend' Wendy next to me. Jen looked down at Wendy's hand on my knee and pointedly said, 'Where's Cally?' I told her that Cally and I had separated. Jen, who has never been one to mince words, looked again at Wendy's hand and said, 'Well, that didn't take you long, did it?' I laughed, but poor Wendy removed her hand as quick as a flash. Jen's directness and authenticity had always appealed to me, and at that moment my future with Wendy probably teetered into uncertainty.

Jen and I had our first dinner date at the Raving Prawn in Feros Arcade. I left the evening thinking she wasn't that keen on me, but a week or two later she invited me for dinner at her place with John Witham and Jane Anderson. We decided we were getting on well enough to camp together up at the Woodford Folk Festival in January 1995, followed by a few days at Noosa. Anyone who's been to Woodford knows what a full-on, all-day and all-night immersive experience it is. I think we both thought of it as a bit of a trial by fire, which we survived and even thrived on.

But the real test of our relationship was to come a few weeks later when we took on the great Tassie Bike Ride, cycling four hundred and eighty-four gruelling kms together over seven days. We took this on with Don Rescei, his then partner Gillian, and his two boys, Julian and Alistair. Both my sons would have come too, but Matt was still in hospital after his accident, so only Andy came. The boys camped

out every night, while the adults spent every second night in a hotel or B&B. It was a great experience, far tougher than I had envisaged. However, this didn't seem to faze Jen at all and our relationship grew stronger because of it.

We had another great holiday on Heron Island a few months later. Jen and the boys and I snorkelled, enjoyed the animal life and capped off the trip with a helicopter ride back to the mainland.

In April 1995 I did another trip to South Africa, where I met up with Mickey Williams and Bill Belson. We organised our own safari through the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe near its border with Mozambique, where we camped out on the Save River and went four days without seeing another person. We then crossed the unmarked border and trekked about fifteen kilometres into Mozambique. The only person we saw was a woman heading into Zimbabwe to visit a store many hours away. We had to be very careful to keep to the path as there was still many unexploded landmines from the recent civil war in Mozambique.

We then went up to Umtali (now called Mutare) to explore the Chimanimani Mountains and stayed at the Leopard Rock Hotel in Vumba. I'd arranged to meet up with Tony Narracott and Bill Andrews, fellow rugby players from the Gordon Stags in Sydney, and we toured South Africa for two weeks, watching Rugby World Cup matches in the lead-up to the Final in Johannesburg. The Final was a spectacular game where against all odds, South Africa beat New Zealand on the bell.

As he was awarding the trophy, Nelson Mandela famously said to Francois Pienaar, the Springbok captain, 'This is a great thing you have done for our country.' To this, Pienaar replied, 'Not as great as what you have done for this country.' The crowd kept chanting, 'Nelson, Nelson.' The win was a great morale booster for the newly independent South Africa and people of all colours celebrated for weeks. Our friend from Byron, the former Sydney professional Rugby League champion, Tom Mooney, was also at the World Cup. I remember

being seated next to him on the flight home and being so exhausted by the excitement of the previous weeks that I fell straight asleep for almost the entire flight.

In December 1997, Jen and I visited Jen's sister, Suzanne, and her husband David and their kids Hayden, Daniel and Rhiannon in Kendal, in Cumbria in the far north of England. Being the middle of winter, I found it particularly confronting that the sun went down about 4pm and didn't rise till about 10am. It was great, however, getting to know the family a bit better and enjoying their beautiful home and walking the Fells nearby. Christmas Day itself was a real treat, when we woke and looked out the window to see fresh snow.

After Christmas, Jen and I did a Mansion and Manors self-drive tour along the length of Hadrian's Wall. We then flew from London to Nairobi, where we were to meet Matt and Andy (who at seventeen and fifteen had flown solo from home). Thanks to Daz's partner Dors, Jen and I were upgraded to First Class on the British Airways flight to Nairobi. This involved a silver service dinner in the British Airways Lounge beforehand and complimentary pyjamas soon after take-off. After the hostess had handed them out, a couple of the male passengers went straight to the toilets to change. Jen, however, not known for her patience, immediately jumped up to change (discretely) in the aisle. The rather stuffy hostess, probably accustomed to unruly colonials, just rolled her eyes.

It was great to meet up with the boys in the land of my youth. We spent a couple of days exploring Nairobi before we headed off in a Land Rover 4WD on a private safari through Kenya and Tanzania. At Ngorongoro, the world's largest intact caldera, and without doubt the most spectacular game park I've ever seen, we stayed in Serena Lodge, right on the rim of the crater. The crater was about twenty kilometres across and packed full of fantastic wildlife including the 'Big Five': elephants, lions, leopards, buffalo and rhinos. I remember vividly preparing our picnic lunch in the shade of a giant mopani tree, our every move being watched intently by a mass of monkeys nearby.

Andy had taken ages to prepare a huge sandwich and just as he was about to take his first bite, to his fury a large monkey scampered down and snatched it from his hands.

On New Year's Eve we held our own party in the lodge. The boys imbibed well and then disappeared after Jen and I went to bed. It turned out that they had partied on with a group of friendly African waiters and Andy had lost his wallet. Matt was still up for the 5am game drive, despite almost no sleep the night before. We had lunch with a group of Masai warriors in the park, who were intrigued with the hairs on my chest and kept on trying to pull them out.

From Ngorongoro we continued through Amboseli and Tsavo National Parks, where we had to join a convoy and be accompanied by an armed guard because of the extensive rebel activity in the area. One of the guards travelled in our 4WD and let the boys handle his very large gun. We had a short stopover in Mombasa and then headed up to Malindi where we stayed at the famous Watamu Hemingways resort, right on the beach. Next stop was Ken and Di Drummond's ranch at West Nicholson near Bulawayo, where I was particularly impressed with their 1500-acre dam – ten times the size of my then farm at Bangalow. The boys rode motorbikes and we explored the Rhino Conservancy and enjoyed their great hospitality. It was sad to hear that this beautiful property was later confiscated by cronies of the corrupt President Mugabe. This resulted in all the African staff losing their jobs and the property falling into rack and ruin.

We then made a must-do visit to the stone ruins of 'Great Zimbabwe' in the south-eastern hills of Zimbabwe, once a medieval city thought to be the capital of a great Shona kingdom, abandoned in the 15th Century. (Zimbabwe means 'stone houses' in Shona.)

Jen had to fly home to get back to work after four weeks away, but the boys and I drove on to Mapelane in northern Zululand, where we camped with Mickey Williams and his family. Our camp was just behind the beach and we woke up the first morning to find fresh hippo tracks around our campsite. Matt and Andy were keen surfers, so we

then flew to Jeffreys Bay (known as J-bay) in the Eastern Cape, where we rented a small flat close to the beach. Matt would wake before dawn and take the rental car (without a driver's licence) and head off surfing. After this, it was back to Durban for some more surfing and then onto the Drakensberg Mountains to spend time with my cousins William and Folliot. We went on numerous drives and walks through the Drakensberg, tubed down the Tugela River and visited the famous 3000m Cathedral Peak. The trip was fantastic and exciting from start to end and really cemented Jen's relationship with the boys.

In 2000 Jen and I had been together for about five years. We had bought a lovely timber home at 178 Friday Hut Road, Possum Creek, in the beautiful hinterland of Byron Bay. We really wanted a lovely garden, so we asked Jen's old friend Tim Hays, an inspired landscaper and master gardener to design and build our dream garden. We also built a new kitchen, new master bedroom, and a self-contained studio over the garage.

We decided this house was where we should get married. We wanted Jen's sister Suzanne and her family to attend, so with rather rushed planning, we married on 29th December 2000 in the garden at Friday Hut Road. We had only immediate family present and the ceremony was followed by a lovely dinner at Pogels Wood Café in the nearby village of Federal. In January the following year, we held a large party at home for our local and Sydney friends, and this was when Jen had the great idea of explaining the connection between each guest and ourselves.

We spent seven happy years at Friday Hut Road, but by this time were ready for a home with a northern aspect and more land for a pool and tennis court. We wanted to stay in the Possum Creek area and were initially looking for around five acres, but in 2003 Jen found a beautiful old farm of eighty-four acres on the ridge to the east of Possum Creek, with a northerly aspect and great views all the way to Mt Warning. We sold the house at Friday Hut Road and as well as buying Cedarvale Farm, bought an apartment in The Links, Byron

Bay, where we lived for two years while planning and building our dream home on the farm. We engaged our architect friend John Gray to design the house and Peter Harcombe and Brian Jones, who had bought Jen's old place in Carlisle Street, Byron, to build it. Before we even started the house design, we'd bought some beautiful old Balinese doors and other wooden pieces and John Gray incorporated these into the house design.

There were considerable earthworks to be done first, including diverting the road past the house site to give us more privacy. We also had a 200,000 litre water tank installed under the three large garages. The tennis court and the three-bay farm shed was built before we started on the house and we used to host tennis games up there before the house was completed. Most days we would take up our sandwiches and spend the day onsite, with Jen directing the architect and builders on last minute changes and me picking up rubbish. Tim Hays, our good friend who designed our garden at Friday Hut Road, had been planning the garden from the early stages, and once we'd finished the main earthworks we built the paths through the gardens and started planting. There were only five trees on the house site, so planting new trees was a priority, and under Tim's guidance we planted hundreds of trees and plants which now flourish around the house.

Jen and I ultimately moved into the house in 2005. The house was immediately comfortable and suits us completely. We each have a study and the house even has a separate 'media room' if one of us (me) wants to watch late night rugby without disturbing the other. We also use the large north-facing veranda next to the pool and cabana all year round.

Over the years, Jen and I have gradually improved the property. The land was rocky, so I bought an old Case tractor and with the help of Jono, our quirky but hugely knowledgeable, chain-smoking gardener, spent at least two years clearing the land of rocks. We also discovered a small spring-fed dam south of the house and this has now been dug out and made three times larger. I'd always dreamed of having a cabin

right on the water, so after we moved in, my son Matt and his friend Aaron built a lovely cabin with a large covered deck right on the dam. We've also put in new post-and-rail fences and cattle yards and just recently, built a Tiny House consisting of two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen and lounge area with a large covered deck looking north. This new Tiny House has its own entrance for privacy and is fenced off from the cattle paddock.

18. Family Life

I've mentioned my kids and other members of my extended family many times over the course of this account of my life, but I haven't emphasised just how central family is to me. In the end, it's the reason I do everything. Too often, I think it can appear that men take their families for granted. We go out in the world and do all the stuff that we do, but in the end it'd be meaningless if we didn't have our families to love and support and provide for at home. This has been reiterated over and again in my conversations with men, especially in our men's group. It's a running joke that men join men's groups to whinge about women. That couldn't be further from the truth. We often process things that are going on for us at home, but the aim is always to understand ourselves better and to live more authentically in the world. And this means in our relationships with our partners and families and all the other people who matter to us.

So I thought I'd spend a moment talking about my kids and their families and Jen's brothers and sisters and their families.

Cally's and my first child, Melanie, was born in Singapore in 1973. She has always been a bright, sociable and environmentally conscious young woman. From around the age of fourteen she had three different part time jobs – at McDonalds and Sizzler, and working for the local newsagent. She was always good with money and saved up and bought her own car when she was seventeen and still at school. From her years at Queenwood School, Melanie has made strong lifelong friendships. Abby Orford and Samantha Morgan are two of her good friends from school. She did well in her matriculation exams and then completed a Diploma of Hospitality at Macleay College.

In the late 1980s, just after Mel left school, I was commissioned by Wayne Kirkpatrick to do a large visitor study on the Ayers Rock Resort. This involved taking a team of four researchers to interview a cross section of visitors. Mel and my secretary Lisa were both keen

starters, and to make the most of the trip, Mel and I had a few days at Cape Tribulation before meeting the rest of the team at Ayers Rock. We stayed at the fabulous Sails in the Desert Hotel and as well as conducting our interviews we fitted in all the must-see excursions around the Rock. I really enjoyed all the one-on-one time I had with Melanie on this trip.

Although Mel didn't move to the Byron area with the rest of the family, her visits north helped her realise what she was missing and a few years later she bought a lovely property of about fifteen acres with a funky old 'hippie house' and some lettable cabins in Upper Main Arm.

About twenty years ago she met and married the world's nicest guy, Anthony Rowsell, a great landscaper, who found time to nurture our garden between servicing his many other clients. Some years after marrying, they moved five minutes away from us to a community title property on Fowler's Lane. Their daughter Maddie was born in 2009 and son Jarrah in 2012. Both did their primary schooling at Bangalow Public School. Maddie is bright and bubbly and very sociable (just like her mum) and she has a real love for animals, especially horses! Jarrah is a bit quieter and a real thinker with a gentle and engaging personality. When he was about five years old, I picked him up from school and he wanted an ice cream. I said, 'You'd better not tell your mother or I'll be in trouble.' Quick as a flash, he replied, 'Imagine getting into trouble from your own daughter!' At the beginning of 2021 the family moved to Tathra on the far South Coast of NSW, where they are building their dream home on two and a half acres with views of the Bega River and ocean.

Our first son, Matt, was born at the Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney in 1980. He has always been a laidback friendly guy, and especially popular with the girls. He was eleven when the family moved up north and he quickly fitted into Alstonville Public School, before moving on Alstonville High the next year. He was very outdoorsy and keen on boating and motorcycle riding from an early age, learning

to ride on the farm when he was about six years old. As I mentioned earlier, he had a serious motorcycle accident that really set him back, and causing him to lose nearly a year schooling. Matt was very good with his hands and studied carpentry after finishing school. (I have no idea where he got that from, because it certainly wasn't me.) I often hear glowing feedback about Matt from clients of his before they learn that I'm his father. Of course, this makes me beyond proud. I'm also very impressed with all the improvements he has made to their property over the years.

Matt had known the beautiful Vanessa from school and after a few years of living together they got married at Cedarvale Farm in December, 2009. It was a great wedding. Vanessa organised two helicopters to bring the bridal party from Victoria's guest house at Ewingsdale and they landed in spectacular fashion next to the big fig tree, where all the guests were waiting to welcome them.

Jayden, our first grandson, was born in 2011, a few days before they moved into their new home on five acres on Teven Road, a couple of kms from Alstonville. Jayden is an extremely bright young boy with an exceptional knowledge of all things technical and scientific. He has been into hip hop for a few years now and just recently, to this grandfather's great delight, started playing rugby. He also shares his father's love of motorcycles and camping. His sister Aya was born in 2014 and is a beautiful (like her mum) young girl. She has a great love of music and excels in dance and performance. She is very feminine but also loves camping and the outdoor life with the rest of her family.

Our second son, Andy, was born in 1982, two years after Matt, also at the Royal North Shore Hospital. Cally and I brought him home from hospital in the back of my yellow convertible Mercedes and I remember stopping at Chris and Jim Allen's home on the way to show him off. Andy was and still is a great looking young boy. He turned out to be a great soccer player and learnt to ride a motorcycle when he was only about four years old. We've done some great motorcycle rides together over the years and when I retired from two-wheelers

to stick to my quad bike on the farm, I was very happy to pass on my BMW Funduro to him.

Andy starting boarding at The Southport School on the Gold Coast when he was thirteen, which in hindsight was way too young. He left Southport after two years to return to Alstonville High School. It took a while for Andy to decide what to do workwise but his great entrepreneurial skills stood him in good stead when he bought a Fastway Courier franchise. He worked extremely hard, with very long hours, but managed to double his turnover, which allowed him to split his territory into two and then sell the business later at a good profit. He and Matt then together set up a mowing and firewood business, called Matilda Services, and this also went very well. Later he ran his own firewood business near Murwillumbah, again working long and hard and investing in a bobcat to build the business.

Jen and I had an enjoyable holiday with Andy and his girlfriend Lisa in Fiji, to attend the wedding of my nephew Garth and his fiancée Ashley. We followed this with a Captain Cook Cruise around the Fiji Islands. Later Andy met Tiffany, who shares his love of the outdoors and four-wheel driving. They went on a long 4WD tour around Australia, and reported especially enjoying and making new friends in Tasmania. In Darwin they were very pleased to find that Tiffany was pregnant and they returned home to have the baby, Ivy. She was a lovely young baby, very warm and affectionate, but sadly for us Andy and Tiffany decided to move to Tasmania, where they bought a large home on a lovely block on the outskirts of Sheffield, about thirty kms south of Devonport.

Their boy Korben was born in 2018 to his very proud parents and I'm sure they won't mind me saying he was probably the best looking of all the grandchildren. He has a lovely disposition and has the most enduring smile one could imagine. Jen and I are sorry we don't live closer, especially as COVID and distance means we have only seen Ivy and Korben twice. But we loved our holiday with them in Tasmania in December 2020, especially staying at and exploring

Cradle Mountain. Cally moved to Tasmania in mid 2021 and bought a cute little house in Sheffield very close to the family. In true Cally fashion, she quickly joined various social and fitness groups and has already settled in well.

Now for an update on my siblings.

My older brother George married Beverly Caffin in the mid 1960s and had two lovely children. Their daughter Mandy has three children of her own, and their son Garth had two sons, now young men, with the lovely Ashley. Sadly, Beverley died many years ago and George went on to marry Zell, with whom he spent three years travelling around Australia in their big Winnebago motor home. When they were ready to settle down, they bought a house near us in Clunes and we saw a lot of them during that time. But they divorced some years ago and since then George has been splitting his time between the house in Clunes and the Philippines. However due to COVID restrictions, he hasn't been back to Australia for more than two years.

Felicity remained in Sydney and has been married for many years to John Kean, a successful businessman whose community involvement saw him awarded an Order of Australia in the 2012 Honours List. Felicity spends her time playing bridge or working as a volunteer for the Harding Miller Foundation. Their daughter Amy has two lovely young children and has been very successful in the area of renewable energy. John and Felicity's son Bradley has three children with his wife Clare and has carved a successful career in finance.

My younger brother Allan married Stephanie in the 1980s, and they had a son James, who runs a successful food business on the far North Coast and a daughter Laura, who lives in Adelaide. A few years after Allan and Stephanie separated, Allan met and married Susie Rogers and they spent a few years in Killara bringing up the children before they moved north to create a beautiful home in the Promised Land, a few kilometres from Bellingen, NSW. Allan worked in market research, but retired early to make his move north.

After Jen and I got together, she introduced me to the members of her family as the opportunities arose. I first met Jen's older sister Suzanne, with her husband David, an author and professor at Lancaster University, and their three children Hayden, Daniel and Rhiannon when they visited Jen in Byron around 1995. Suzanne obtained her PhD in Public Sector Social Work from Lancaster University. (By coincidence, this is also where our friend Peter Bowen earned his PhD.) Suzanne subsequently bought an apartment in Byron Bay.

Suzanne and David's son Hayden formed a band called Wild Beasts which has enjoyed great international success, releasing several critically acclaimed albums and touring the world. Daniel followed in his parents' footsteps on the academic side before settling down in London and also working in the music industry. Rhiannon has been living in Lyon, France teaching for a few years and has recently earned her Masters degree in Environmental Planning.

Jen's brother Michael met a gorgeous Austrian woman named Claudia who had been working as a wwoofers with Mel and Ant in Mullum. (Wwoofing is a worldwide organisation which links volunteers with organic farmers. Volunteers usually work on the farm for several days a week in return for food and board.) Michael and Claudia have since moved to Vienna and have two lovely daughters. Michael's daughter Mairead lives in Perth with her husband Michael and their two children, and we see them whenever we can.

Jen's sisters, Julie and Cathy are both living in Sydney and teaching - Julie at UTS and Cathy at a private language school. Being closer to home, we frequently see them up north, especially for Christmas and other major family events. Jen's younger brother Chris has been long settled in his home in Lismore, originally completing a Bachelor's degree in Media at Southern Cross University and more recently a Carer's Diploma. It is great to see that Jen and all five of her siblings have completed university degrees. There was much sadness when their dad Norm passed away several years ago, in April 2015. Following this, their mother, Rita, spent her final years in a retirement

villa in Bangalow, with the whole family helping with her care. Sadly, Rita also passed away a few years later, in May 2020.



All the family at Cally's 2015.



MV Clover - 44ft De Fever Aft Cabin.



Cedarvale Farm - House paddock.



Our new tiny house at Cedarvale Farm 2021.



Tallowood Ridge Advertisement.



John, Kevin Hojem, Mickey Williams and Peter Bowen, Mozambique 2012.



Cabin on the dam.



Allan, John, Folliot, Felicity, George & William Bennett.



Regan family at our wedding 2000.



Don Rescei, Paul Jameson, Larry Anthony and John at Flush Media presentation.



Deans, Lowrys, Jen and John - My 60th at Beaver Creek, Colorado.



Andy, John, Mel, Ant, Matt at Mel and Ant's wedding 2002.



Our first grandchild Maddie 2009.



Penny Webster, Graeme Connelly, Jen, Peter and Julie Bowen, Galle, Sri Lanka 2010.



Andy and Tiffany.



Andy's Fastway Courier Van.



Adam Harvey



Vanessa, Matt and Jayden.



Maddie and Aya 2020.



Korben and Ivy,
Sheffield Tasmania 2020.



Jayden at Bangalow 2021. Maddie and Jarrah on Jay Jay, Tathra 2021.



Jarrah.



Andy at Bali 2011.

19. Memorable Holidays

I've always enjoyed travel, particularly when I've been on trips with good friends. I thought I'd record here some of my most memorable holidays.

With Cally to South Africa, 1984

In 1984 Cally and I did a fantastic six-week trip to South Africa with Wayne and Ronda McCarthy. We visited my old haunts in Durban and then travelled up to Zimbabwe, where we stayed on an island on Lake Kariba. We had a great stopover in Mombasa, before heading up to Malindi where we stayed in thatched rondavels right on the beach. The highlight, however, was a visit to an old Arab town, called Lamu, up near the Somalian border. It's on the tourist map now, and very trendy, but back in 1984 it was all but unknown. We came back through Bombay, intending to visit the Maldives, but a hiccup with our baggage caused us to miss the only flight so, happily, we made the decision to visit Sri Lanka instead.

Boys' Trip to South Africa, 2003

At a party at George and Candy Katsamas', Jeff Oakley, John Mashford, Brian Jones and myself hatched a plan to undertake a boys' trip to South Africa.

I went over two weeks before the others to spend some time with family and old friends. When the boys arrived, I scooped them up from Durban Airport and headed straight to Thirsty's Bar, a fabulous watering hole so close to the entrance to Durban Harbour that you felt you could almost touch the ships as they passed. There is no better introduction to Durban, although Thirsty's succumbed to old age and closed down in 2007.

Mickey Williams had organised us an apartment right on the

water at Umdloti Beach, and we woke up the next day to see a pod of dolphins right out the window. After a couple of days exploring Durban, we flew on Swazi Express to Vilanculos in central Mozambique. Because the airline didn't meet European safety standards, Swazi had the dubious honour of being banned from operating in the European Union. This might have been difficult anyway, as they only owned two small aircraft – one an eleven-seater, the other seating nineteen – and they ceased operations in 2008. But we did arrive safely, and in Vilanculos rented a beautiful thatched cottage right on the point from a friend of Don Rescei's. A cook was provided with the rental, but we established very quickly that he had trouble even making toast so we survived pretty happily on BBQs and fresh seafood.

From there we boarded Kevin and Sally Hojem's 42-foot catamaran. This had four spacious cabins (with ensuites) and a small cabin up front for the captain and the chef. We set sail for the Bazaruto Archipelago for a week's cruise, during which we scuba-dived on the coral reefs, caught many large tuna and explored the Santa Carolina Islands. The biggest, called Paradise Island, was made famous by the huge 250-room Hotel Santa Carolina, built in 1962 by a flamboyant Portuguese businessman. Very popular with honeymooners, it later became the place to be seen by wealthy Rhodesians and international glitterati. It is reputed that Bob Dylan visited there and it helped inspire his song *Mozambique* on the 1976 album *Desire*. The hotel was shelled during the civil war in Mozambique and finally abandoned in 1973 towards the end of the war. It was basically left to decay gracefully and by the time we saw it was in a pretty sad state, peppered with bullet holes, with missing walls and rooves.

When we got back to Durban we rented a 4WD bakkie, or ute, and drove up to the Drakensberg to visit old friends and pay our respects to the old family farm. A highlight was being taken on a day trip to the site of the Battle of Spion Kop, where our very knowledgeable guide explained in graphic detail what happened on that day.

We then tackled the notorious 2,876m Sani Pass into Lesotho and spent the night in the highest pub in Africa, which happened at the time to be completely covered in snow. We passed through some spectacular mountain scenery and stayed in some great lodges where we interacted with the lovely Basuto tribespeople and got to hear some of their fantastic music. In the Eastern Cape, we headed for Jeffreys Bay so John Mashford could have a surf and then drove onto St Francis Bay where we stayed in Kevin Hojem's luxury holiday house right on the water.

From here we took the beautiful 200 km Garden Route to Cape Town, which with its wide sunny beaches, lovely lakes and shady evergreen forests was a spectacular drive. In Cape Town we rented a lovely two-bedroom apartment overlooking the ocean right on Sea Point. We did all the sightseeing, of course, including a drive down to the Cape of Good Hope. But what the guys told me they enjoyed the most on the trip were the many African bars we visited, the great music we heard and all the friendly locals we met along the way. We ended up at some really off the beaten track places but never did we feel threatened or unsafe. It was a great holiday for all of us, and especially lovely for me to be able to introduce some of my Byron friends to the wonderful country I was brought up in.

Tours with Pat and Delene Grier

Africa 2010

In 2010, Jen and I and the Griers joined a Captains Choice chartered plane trip, visiting eight remote locations across Africa. The tour started from the small airport at Luton, north of London, flying on a Boeing 757 fitted out completely with business class seating. On flying days we were normally in the air for three to five hours per day, with a gourmet three course lunch served with the best French wines and champagne. We stayed at each destination usually for three nights and more often than not didn't have to go through immigra-

tion or customs, instead coming straight off the plane through our own gate onto a waiting bus.

We often stopped on the way to our (usually five star) hotel for some sightseeing. When we arrived at the hotel, our bags would be waiting for us in our rooms. We had planned to fly from Luton straight to Timbuktu in Mali, but terrorist activity forced a change of plans to Marrakesh in Morocco, from where we took a side trip up into the Atlas Mountains for the day. I got chatting to a fellow passenger named Lawson Lobb and we worked out he'd been at Rhodes University in the Cape with my cousins John and Judy Oxland, and it turned out that John had been the first person to welcome to him to Australia. Lawson and his wife Jill Harris became instant friends with the Griers and ourselves.

After three days in Morocco, we flew on to Victoria Falls in Zambia, where we stayed in the beautiful Royal Livingstone Hotel right on the Zambezi River. From Victoria Falls we flew south to Cape Town, with the pilot taking us on two flyovers of the city and Cape Peninsula so that passengers on both sides of the plane could enjoy the spectacular view. In Cape Town, we stayed in the super luxe Taj Hotel and were taken on trips to Table Mountain, Cape Point and to dinner in a winery. We got to know Cary and Rob Gillespie in Cape Town and they have also become good friends.

Our next stop was Madagascar, a very poor country but with breathtaking scenery and unique and beautiful plant wildlife. Madagascar was colonised by the French in the 19th Century and the capital Antananarivo was still very French with cobblestone streets and fascinating indigenous mock-European 'trano gasy' architecture. Because it is an island, much of Madagascar's flora and fauna is found nowhere else in the world. I was particularly taken with the lemurs. There are over one hundred species of lemur and because there are no monkeys or other competitors on the island, they were everywhere, cute, beautiful and troublesome. The saddest thing about Madagascar for me was the massive deforestation. Arriving and departing, we flew

over large red patches of bare earth and cleared forests.

After Madagascar, we flew to Zanzibar, the semi-autonomous archipelago off the coast of Tanzania. We stayed on the beachfront to the north of historic Stone Town, which due to its location on the east coast of Africa, has over the centuries been occupied by everyone from the Sultanate of Oman, to the Germans, the Portuguese and the British. It was a centre of the slave trade and was the birthplace of the singer Freddie Mercury, whose house we visited, and is probably an even bigger tourist attraction now than it was then. Unfortunately Jill had a bad fall in Madagascar while looking for lemurs and had to be flown home to Canberra via Johannesburg (it took nine days) for a major operation which ended her and Lawson's African adventure prematurely.

In Tanzania we broke into groups of six – Jen and I were with the Gillespies and Griers. Each group had its own driver and 4WD, and we spent three days in the spectacular Ngorongoro Crater Conservation Area, in northern Tanzania. Ngorongoro is world famous for its wildlife, particularly the 'big five' game animals (elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo and rhino) and the herds of wildebeest and zebra which pass through the crater on their annual migration.

From Tanzania, it was on to Ethiopia where, after exploring Addis Ababa, we flew on to Lalibela for the day to see the World Heritage Rock-Hewn Churches. This is a complex of eleven churches carved from within the earth from 'living rock', each two or three storeys high, with interiors decorated with murals. Ethiopia was one of the first countries to adopt Christianity, in about the 4th Century, and the Rock-Hewn Churches are thought to date from the 12th and 13th Centuries. They are an astonishing engineering achievement and one of the high points of the trip.

Our final stop was Tripoli in Libya, where my father had spent time during World War Two. He had given me many photos from that time, and from them, I recognised the entrance to Tripoli harbour. Our visit was just before the death of the Libyan dictator, Muammar

Gaddafi (on 20 October, 2011) and we were surprised how many people still supported him and how nervous non-supporters were to say anything about him. Despite the upheaval in the country, however, we always felt safe. I remember a group of us walking back to the hotel one night, and people yelling out of their cars, ‘Welcome to Libya!’

For me, the highlight of our stay in Libya was a day trip to the Roman ruins at Leptis Magna, on the Mediterranean coast about two hours east of Tripoli. In Roman times, Leptis Magna was the third most important city in Africa, rivalling Carthage and Alexandria, and its ruins were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. The setting, overlooking the Mediterranean, is spectacular, and the ruins have far fewer tourists and feel more untouched than, say, Ephesus in Turkey’

By the end of the trip we had become friends with all the fantastic staff especially our air hostesses, or ‘hosties’, and we all enjoyed a great celebration on the flight back to the UK.

USA 2011

Our next trip with the Griers was to the US in 2011. We met up at the ski resort of Jackson Hole in Wyoming and explored the adjoining Grand Teton National Park before moving on to Yellowstone National Park, which had been on my bucket list for years. We stayed at the Bar N Ranch, where we were joined by Peter Whitfield and Maureen Foreman. Pat and Peter were very competitive in choosing the best wine each night, and I think their choices were often based mainly on the price. I loved Yellowstone, with its amazing variety of wildlife and dozens of geysers. Peter had to go back to work after four days so we continued driving north in our big SUV, chosen especially to accommodate all Delene’s suitcases.

In Montana we then turned West and drove right across the state to a beautiful lodge just south of Missoula. We looked up the Hipgrave’s in-laws, academics at the local university, who entertained

us and gave us a good understanding of life in the West.

From Montana we flew to New York, where we had arranged to house swap a large two-bed, two-bath apartment in Chelsea for 2 1/2 weeks. Pat and Delene stayed for a week and together we crisscrossed Manhattan and Brooklyn in search of a good coffee. We went to see 'War Horse', the play of the moment on Broadway and visited some fabulous restaurants. When the Griers left, we were joined by Peter and Maureen, both jazz aficionados, who took us to some of their favourite clubs.

We were then joined then by Donna Hipgrave, with whom we visited all the major art museums and galleries and the High Line greenway, an innovative two km-long park built on a disused rail spur up the west side of Manhattan. It's an inspired adaption of disused urban infrastructure and walking its length among resident New Yorkers, we really felt the beating heart of the city. While we were in New York, Jen's nephew, Hayden Thorpe and the band he formed at school in Kendal, in the UK, The Wild Beasts, happened to be playing in Brooklyn. They were well known on both sides of the Atlantic by then, and it was a fantastic night.

From New York, we flew to California to again catch up with Peter and Maureen and we all stayed with David and Mary Ann Northcott in their beautiful ranch house in Santa Ynez. We finished that holiday with a road trip driving north up the Big Sur coast, visiting Hearst Castle and Carmel along the way.

Flinders Ranges 2012

We'd found we really got on with the Griers as travelling companions and in June 2012 we went on another trip together to Adelaide and the Flinders Ranges, where we stayed in our own two-bedroom lodge and went off together on day trips. On the first day we chartered an aeroplane to circle Wilpena Pound and then land at Arkaroola where we had lunch and went on a 4WD tour of the area. It happened

that at the time Lake Eyre had had one of its periodic infills of flood waters which had come down through the Diamantina and Cooper Creek river systems. When this happens and the lake fills, it becomes the largest lake in Australia and people from all over the country come to see it.

So, the next morning we took off in the freezing cold at daybreak on another charter flight, flying north to look down on the amazing sight of the usually dry lake filled with water and bird life. We landed at William Creek and celebrated Delene's birthday with lunch at the pub and then flew southwest over the Painted Desert towards the underground opal-mining town Coober Pedy. The next day we tackled the four or five hour climb up to the rim of Wilpena Pound, much more taxing, but equally spectacular.

When we got back to Adelaide we looked up Pam and Bob McCabe, who we had met on our African air charter. Pam and Bob owned a small airline called Aerotech, and they invited us to join them for a day's trip in their ten-seater plane. Bob piloted the plane and we flew down towards Kangaroo Island and then turned left along the coast to the mouth of the Murray River. From there, we headed east to their large cattle property, where we landed, had lunch and then came back to Adelaide over the lovely Adelaide Hills. It was a great way to see a big chunk of South Australia in one day. Thanks Bob and Pam!!

Turkey and Croatia 2015

In April 2015 we went on another trip with the Griers to Turkey and Croatia. Jen and I met Pat and Delene in Istanbul. We spent a few days together, exploring that amazing ancient, yet modern city, before joining Peter and Di O'Connell for a private tour with a guide and driver in a large and very comfortable Mercedes van. Our guide took us to the markets to choose food, which we then had at a lovely picnic on the banks of the Bosphorus. We then continued down what is known as the Turquoise Coast, because of the stunning blue of the

Aegean Sea, stopping at the lovely towns of Fethiye and Kas. We then left the coast and headed inland to Cappadocia, famous for its tall cone-shaped rock formations, called 'fairy chimneys', and hotels built in the caves in the cliffs. Cappadocia is a renowned ballooning area, and the view of the fairy chimneys from our hot air balloon in the early morning was stunning.

We got back to Istanbul, where our grand finale was a trip up the Bosphorus at sunset in our private forty-foot cruiser. Someone requested a gin and tonic, so we just nosed into a bar right on the water's edge and a crew member jumped off to buy the tonic.

We then flew to Dubrovnik in Croatia, where Jen had found us a lovely boutique hotel on the water but out of the hustle and bustle of the Old Walled City. We climbed the ramparts and did all the touristy things and then took a day trip down the coast to Montenegro, where we visited the popular towns of Kotor and Budva. Some parts of the towns were still quaint but surrounding this, a concrete jungle of Russian hotels spread all the way down to the beach.

From Dubrovnik we boarded our chartered boat, the MV Corona, for a week's trip up to Split on the Adriatic Coast. We called in on little islands and pretty beaches and had lunch every day on the boat. We spent most of the nights however in different ports, free to roam and poke about and choose our own restaurants for dinner. We found this to be a great balance. There were only twenty-four passengers and a very friendly crew of eight, mostly family members of the Captain. In Split we rented a car and after exploring the city, drove north to the amazing Plitvice Lakes National Park, a collection of sixteen spectacular different coloured lakes, each joined to the others by a series of waterfalls.

We ended the holiday in Zagreb, where we stayed at the beautifully restored Esplanade Hotel. We found Zagreb to be a really interesting city, with many reminders of its communist past.

Once again, the Griers proved great travelling companions, always keen to meet new people and visit places they'd never been. Pat,

in particular, tended to become the 'newest best friend' of everyone he met.

Trips with Peter and Julie Bowen

New Guinea 2009

In 2009, Jen and I joined Peter and Julie Bowen on a trip to New Guinea on the cruiser 'MV Orion', a leader in its luxury class, with only a hundred passengers and gold-standard food and service. We flew into Cairns and then onto Rabaul where we were to board the ship. But first we took a tour to see the Tavurvur volcano, which overlooks Rabaul township. The volcano erupts regularly, but not always dangerously. There were eruptions in both 2008 and 2009, before our visit, with a more destructive eruption in 2014, five years after we were there. Once onboard the Orion, we called at many ports down the coast and did many excursions on land which gave us a good feel for the country and the people.

Sri Lanka 2010

Our next trip with the Bowens was in 2010 when the four of us travelled to Sri Lanka with Penny Webster and Graham Connelly to attend the Galle Writers Festival. Galle is on the southwestern tip of Sri Lanka, a really fascinating city with a long history as a port, with Persians, Chinese, Malays and Indians among the many nationalities which traded there well before European colonisation. A Portuguese trading fleet first visited the city in 1502, but the Dutch East India Company took it over in 1640. The Portuguese built the first fort there in the 1550s, but the Dutch extensively fortified the city a century later and the World Heritage Galle Fort is still standing and in good condition, even withstanding the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. It is one of the most amazing places I've been, with remnants of its long and varied history everywhere you look.

We arrived before the festival began and spent a couple of nights

in the historic and spectacular Galle Face Hotel right on the ocean, facing the town green. One hundred and fifty years old, the Galle Face was once known as ‘the finest hotel east of Suez’, and is everything you can imagine in historical luxury. Thoroughly spoilt already, the Bowens and Jen and I then travelled down the coast to visit Lunuganga, the beautiful home and estate of the famous Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. Together with his Danish architectural partner, Bawa became famous for what has become known as ‘tropical modernism’ style of architecture. Bawa designed many grand hotels and we visited some of them on this trip as well.

Jen had stayed in Galle previously, and for the duration of the Writers Festival, she had booked us into our own private home (with pool) in the middle of old walled city. We were really spoilt by the house staff (they were great cooks) and we were walking distance to the Festival.

The Galle Writers Festival is small but internationally famous and we met and listened to some great writers including the Scottish detective writer Ian Rankin, who promised Jen he would come to the Byron Bay Writers’ Festival one day. We even hosted a lunch for one of the writers at our home and when we weren’t at the Festival, spent our spare time exploring the walled city and the ramparts.

After the Festival, we travelled east along the coast to Talla Beach, where we stayed at a lovely low-key resort owned by friends from Byron Bay. One thing I remember from this visit is that I amazed myself by beating both Peter and Graham at chess, having not played for many years. Further along the coast, we visited Raymond and Gai Harris’s holiday home at Tangalle. We loved Sri Lanka. It is postcard beautiful and the people are welcoming and friendly – and, we found, more relaxed and not nearly as frenetic as their northern neighbours in India.

Namibia and South Africa, 2012

Peter Bowen's father was born in Durban and grew up in Potchefstroom so he was keen to visit South Africa with me. Peter and I flew to Johannesburg first and had a couple of nights with my very good friends Helen and Dave Kleynhans, who had been my next door neighbour in Durban when we were kids. With lots of reminiscing to do, we demolished a bottle of vintage Chivas Regal on the first night. The next day, Helen and Dave drove us to Potchefstroom, about 120 kms southwest of Johannesburg. Peter particularly enjoyed seeing where his father grew up and it was interesting for us all to potter around the historic old university town, which is also famous for being the first capital of the Transvaal.

We then flew to Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, and picked up a 4WD bakkie (or ute) which we had rented to get a taste of life off the beaten track. Thankfully, Peter noticed that the tyres were badly worn and we waited about four hours for them to be replaced. We had been warned about the dangers of driving on the local cambered gravel roads and three hours north of Windhoek, we saw the car in front of us lose control on a corner and roll two or three times. We drove extra carefully after that, firstly to Tsumeb and then onto the Etosha National Park in the far northwest of the country. We stayed at the 'restcamp' of Namutoni on the edge of the park and using this as our base, did a combination of guided tours (usually starting in the freezing cold of dawn) and our own self-drive game tours. Early one morning, after spending the night at Etosha Pan, the massive 5,000 sq km salt pan in the park, we left camp only to be stopped by a pride of seven or eight lions which strolled nonchalantly around our bakkie for about twenty minutes.

After leaving Etosha, we drove south and then west over a spectacular mountain range to Hentiesbaai, or Henties Bay on the Skeleton Coast. Henties has always been a holiday town, and we saw literally hundreds of empty houses, which we assumed were part

time holiday homes. We continued south down the Skeleton coast to Swartkopmund, passing a few old ship wrecks visible off the coast. In Swartkopmund we looked up my old school friend Rudi Loutit and his lovely wife Jennifer, who generously became our guides for the next three days. Rudi qualified as an accountant but gave it away after a few years to become a game ranger in Namibia, a job from which he'd only recently retired.

Swartkopmund was established by German colonists in 1892 and was still very German in its colonial architecture, newspapers, food, and even the German language spoken by many residents. In a 2008 article, the New York Times described it as 'more German than Germany' and 'having the disconcerting feel of a Baltic Sea resort set in the tropics'. We thought this description was pretty spot-on.

From Swartkopmund we continued south to Sossusvlei, which literally translates as 'dead-end marsh', on the edge of the Namib desert. The area is famous for its massive sand dunes and Peter and I attempted to climb what was promoted as the 'highest sand dune in the world'. It looked quite easy from a distance, but was however much steeper and the sand much softer than we had guessed, so we only made it about half the way up.

It was a great trip. We stayed in an amazing variety of accommodation, from basic camps to luxury lodges, and we made sure we always carried ample food and water, as there were few places to shop. When we finally reached Durban, we stayed with my oldest friend Kevin Hojem and his wife Sally and we had a lovely night out with about sixteen of my old Durban friends, including Jennifer Slater.

Mickey Williams then joined us for a trip to the Drakensberg, where we stayed in my cousin Folliot's cute rondavel on the little Tugela River in the foothills of the famous Spion Kop. It was here that the famous eponymous battle took place in January 1900, with a cast of luminaries. The Boers were commanded by Louis Botha, who went on to become the first prime minister of the Union of South Africa (the forerunner of the modern South Africa), Winston Churchill was

a young war correspondent and Mahatma Gandhi was a stretcher bearer. The British suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the fearsome Boer fighters.

We did some exhilarating Berg (or mountain) walks in the Drakensberg and visited the old Bennett family farm at Winterton. Kevin then drove Mickey and Peter and I up through Zululand and over the border into Mozambique where we stayed at his beach house, Casa Blanca, in Ponta do Ouro, which means 'tip of gold' in Portuguese.

A few days later, we continued north on a bush track to Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. There we stayed at the legendary Polana Hotel, with breathtaking views overlooking the Indian Ocean. Built in 1922, the Polana became known as the 'Grand Dame of Africa' and was famous for being a neutral meeting place for spies and secret agents from both the allied forces and the German and Italian forces during World War Two. We did lots of shopping for arts and crafts and then started our long trip home, via Johannesburg.

Trips with Jen

South America, 2016

Jen and I had done two previous six-week trips to South America, a motorbike ride through Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Peru in 1999 and then in Patagonia in 2002. We loved South America, so we decided to hand pick all the destinations we had previously missed and made sure we had guides in each place so we would not miss out on anything. After a spectacular flight over the snow-covered Andes, which we had previously crossed by motorcycle, we landed in Santiago. We stayed there in a boutique hotel with views of the Andes from its rooftop restaurant.

The 2016 Summer Olympics were just about to take place in Rio de Janeiro, and although we didn't particularly want to be part of that madness, we were keen to maybe taste a bit of pre-Olympic

excitement. So our next stop was Rio. We stayed in a hotel right on Copacabana Beach, and as we hoped the pre-Olympic excitement was in full Brazilian blast. We took a tour up to Sugarloaf Mountain to enjoy those spectacular views of the city and to stand under the outspread arms of the massive Christ the Redeemer which overlooks the city. We also walked for miles to try and find an Australian barista in Ipanema. We felt safe most of the time in Rio and found the Brazilians lived up to their reputation – they were extremely friendly, full of life and very colourful.

From Rio it was a short flight to Iguazu Falls, where we stayed at the magnificent Hotel das Cataratas. We had a front room overlooking the falls. It was the only hotel in the National Park, and we found we could visit the Falls in peace in the early morning before more tourists arrived, or in the late afternoon after they left. We did a helicopter tour of the falls when we arrived, and this gave us a good idea of their layout and magnitude. The falls are 2.7 kms in length and consist of 275 separate drops. They also mark the borders of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. We had a full day exploring the falls from the Argentinean side, walking for miles on the boardwalks which took us right up to the falls.

We then flew to Quito, the capital of Ecuador. The city sits at an altitude of 2850 metres and was originally built in the 16th century on the ruins of an old Inca city. The city has the best-preserved and least altered historic centre in Latin America. When all the beautifully restored buildings were lit up at night, it looked really fabulous. This was one place where we really appreciated our guide. She took us to unusual out of the way places and her restaurant recommendations were invariably top notch.

We then took a flight to the Galapagos Islands, on which we met Greg and Jen Power, who have become great friends. When we got there, we took a week-long cruise around the islands on the 'MV Santa Cruz 2'. We went ashore two or three times each day and did fabulous walking tours through some of the most unusual country

and wildlife I have ever seen. The animals were incredibly tame. We often had to walk around the large iguanas, for example, to avoid stepping on them. On my first swim on the beach a seal mimicked my actions and swim under and over me, wanting to play. I couldn't help comparing this to Africa, where you see wildlife at a distance and there is far less of it.

After the Galapagos we flew to Iquitos, at the head waters of the Amazon River in Peru, where we did a river tour on the beautiful Aqua Expeditions riverboat 'MV Aria'. The boat had only sixteen suites, each with full length windows, so we could lie in bed and watch the pink dolphins and other wildlife in comfort. We went ashore a couple of times a day to walk through the forest and visit Indian villages. The most exciting day was our late afternoon 'sunset trip'. We were about two hours up a tributary of the Amazon in powerful eight-seater zodiacs when the heavens opened up and the sky turned black. We immediately turned back to the Aria, but the return trip took us over three hours in the pitch dark and nearly horizontal rain. We really admired the crew for managing to find their way back in the most horrendous conditions. We fished for, and then ate, piranhas and even encountered a giant anaconda. But because the Amazonians hunted and ate from the river, the wildlife was nowhere near as tame as it had been in the Galapagos.

We ended the trip with a few days in Lima, the capital of Peru. The city is renowned for its cuisine, and we sampled it with great delight. We also visited some of the best museums and art galleries anywhere in South America.

Canada and Alaska, 2018

We started this holiday in one of my favourite cities, Vancouver, where we warmed up by riding our bicycles around Stanley Park and revisiting some of our favourite spots. From there we took the ferry to Victoria on Vancouver Island, which is the largest of any island on

the entire west coast of the Americas, and like most islands, proudly different to the nearby mainland. For some historical reason, Victoria is the capital city of the entire province of British Columbia, and interestingly is almost exactly 100kms from both Vancouver and Seattle (and only 40kms across the Strait of Juan de Fuca from Port Angeles, the northernmost city in Washington state).

In Victoria, we hired a car and headed west across the island to the funky town of Uclulet where we rented a tiny cabin. Although a popular tourist destination, Uclulet is still a working town and the cabin we rented on the water, was right next door to the town's fish processing plant. The town was full of basic but interesting cafes, and the tag line everywhere seemed to be, 'Life on the Edge'. (And it is – about as far west as you can go in Canada.) From Uclulet, we ventured out to do some walks on the Wild Pacific Trail and then headed up to the touristy town of Tofino, famous for its incredible sunsets and some of the best surfing in Canada. It's a tourist must in Tofino to stop for coffee at the iconic Wickaninnish Inn, which of course we did. Tofino has the reputation of being one of the most liveable, laidback towns in Canada, and from our experience that could well be true. Vancouver Island as a whole seems one of the most liveable places I've been.

Back in Vancouver, we boarded the 'Silver Wind' the crown jewel of the luxury 'small ship' Silver Seas line, for a week's cruise up to Alaska. Our first stop was the rather plain port of Ketchikan, but things got interesting when we got to Juneau and took a helicopter trip across the Rockies. We landed at a high lake, where we transferred to an airboat to see the glaciers from the water, before reboarding the helicopter to later land on a glacier. Weirdly, Juneau is the second largest city by area in the entire USA, and Sitka is the largest – both bigger than the states of Delaware and Rhode Island combined.

We also did an interesting train trip into the Yukon near the famous gold mining town of Klondike, before landing in Sitka. Although indigenous peoples had lived in the area for over 10,000

years, Sitka was part of 'Russian America' from 1799 until the Alaska Purchase of 1867. Following Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, Tsar Alexander II wanted to divest the country of its vulnerable far eastern territories. At the same time, in the aftermath of the catastrophic American Civil War, the then Secretary of State William Seward, became a believer in the popular principle of 'Manifest Destiny', that American exceptionalism would ensure US expansion across the entirety of North America. Alaska, as they say, came on the market for the very reasonable price, under the terms of the Alaska Purchase, of \$US7.2million, about \$US133million in 2020 value – about 37c per acre. The US jumped at the opportunity and Alaska became the 49th state of the Union.

Sitka was the site of the transfer ceremony and the city retains a strong Russian flavour, with St Michael's Cathedral, first built in 1848 and fully restored, topped by a Kremlin-style onion dome. Sitka, it is worth noting, is also justifiably famous for its seafood.

The cruise finished at Seward, on the Kenai Peninsula in southern Alaska, and there we rented a car to drive up into the nearby Kenai Fjords National Park, where everything felt dwarfed by the surrounding snow-covered mountains. From Seward, we drove to Homer, famous as the 'Halibut Fishing Capital of the World', and the subject of a popular humorous memoir 'As Far As You Can Go Without A Passport'. The singer Jewel was brought up in Homer, where she started her career in a yodelling duo with her father. We stayed in a very comfortable small hotel on the water overlooking the Homer Spit a 7km long, locally famous, gravel bar extending into the Bay.

The best experience of the whole trip was a full day charter flight out of Homer, flying for nearly three hours over spectacular mountains, glaciers and isolated towns. We landed on a beach in the Katmai National Park where the five of us and the pilot donned waders for a trek up the valley to see the brown bears. We had to creep up on them, keeping close to the ground, and from about forty metres

away we watched the young bears play-wrestling and then bounding into the river to catch salmon. As she was crossing a stream, Jen fell in, but was very happy to be rescued by the good-looking young pilot.

By the time we got back to our plane the tide had come in and there was only about ten metres of beach remaining. We had to clear the beach of driftwood for about eighty metres so we could take off – very cautiously! We flew a different route back to Homer to soak up the great scenery, and didn't see another person all day.

From Homer it was on to Anchorage, which felt like a real frontier town. The most common form of transport in Alaska is by air and we weren't surprised to hear that it had the highest per capita ownership of private planes in the country. Anchorage is also cold! The temperatures ranged from a maximum of 17 degrees C in July to - 5 degrees C in January.

From Anchorage we flew to Calgary to join the Rocky Mountaineer Group for our train trip across the Rockies. Unfortunately, there had been severe bushfires in the area just before we got there, so the scenery was rather smoky but we really appreciated the excellent food and service on the train. We teamed up with a lovely Indian couple on the train, Heena and Hitash Patel, who had been born in Tanzania and Kenya respectively but lived in London with high powered jobs in IT and Compliance. We went on to have dinner with them in London on our way back from the Orkneys in 2019.

We had a couple of days in Banff, where we stayed on the top floor of the fabulous Rimrock Resort overlooking the valley. I insisted we take a dip in the Banff Hot Springs, but I'm afraid I found them nowhere near as impressive as I remembered from my journey across Canada in 1964. I guess maybe my expectations were a lot simpler then.

Jen and I overnighted in Kamloops and we made the most of the local country fair, feasting on ribs and dancing to a local band playing a mix of Beatles hits and Country and Western standards. Back in Vancouver on the way home, we splurged for a few days at the lovely

old Vancouver Hotel, the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR) Hotel with the copper roof which I had dreamed about staying in when I visited Vancouver in my early twenties.

Egypt, Israel and Jordan, 2019

We started this trip with a few days in Abu Dhabi, which I found to be a good change from the much-stop-overed Dubai. In Abu, we visited the Louvre, the Grand Mosque and best of all, took a boat trip along the coast. From there, we flew into Cairo and went straight to Giza (now part of Cairo, and only about five kms from the city centre). We stayed in a hotel overlooking the Grand Pyramid and the Great Sphinx which were even more magnificent than I expected. The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities and the Cairo Citadel of Saladin were also well worth visiting.

Cairo, with a population of over twenty million, is the second biggest city in Africa (after Lagos in Nigeria) and I found it to be a dirty and overcrowded. But it definitely had a feeling of excitement about it, and I loved soaking up the ancient history imbuing everything. Then, and this was a must do, we took a boat trip down the Nile, which at 6,650kms is the longest river in Africa. We boarded at Luxor and were on a very comfortable river boat. We visited the Luxor and Karnak temples, and the Valley of the Kings where we did a fantastic pre-dawn hot air balloon ride. The real highlight was a bus trip across the desert to the incredible temples of Abu Simbel, which were originally carved out of the mountainside in the 13th century BC. The complex was moved to its present site in 1968 to avoid being flooded under the waters of Lake Nassar, following the construction of the Aswan Dam.

From Egypt, it was to Israel. In Tel Aviv, we stayed in a lovely small boutique hotel a block back from the ocean and I found the city to be exciting and cutting edge and much more interesting than I had expected. We spent a whole day walking to and around Jaffa, the

ancient port city out of which Tel Aviv has grown and which claims to be the oldest port in the world. We visited the ancient city of Caesarea and then spent a night in Haifa. Found the Israelis to be very friendly. The manager of a seafood restaurant where we ate even insisted on giving us a ride back to our hotel after dinner.

Jerusalem brought back all my childhood images from Scripture and we visited the Wailing Wall and walked along the Via Dolorosa, the route Jesus supposedly took on way to his crucifixion. (It means 'Sorrowful Way' in Latin.) From Jerusalem we also made a fascinating visit to Masada, the site of an ancient fort on a rock plateau overlooking the Dead Sea.

We then crossed into Jordan at the ancient port city of Aqaba on the north-eastern tip of the Red Sea. We walked from our hotel down the coast for a few hours and then found a speedboat driver to take us back to the hotel jetty. A special treat for my birthday was a drive across the most stunning desert landscape to Wadi Rum. After a sunset camel ride into the desert, we spent the night in a tented camp where Jen organised a special cake and dance performance (by the male staff).

From there it was on to Petra, the famous 'lost city' which turned out to be merely hiding in the steep sided canyon of the Wadi Mousa and was larger and more dramatic than I expected. Next it was onto the Dead Sea again, at almost 400 metres below sea level, the lowest point on Earth. Our hotel the Crowne Plaza was enormous but unkempt and unloved, and unsurprisingly had very few guests. We enjoyed the experience of floating in the Dead Sea and the mud bath that followed.

We found Amman, the capital of Jordan, a not very pleasing city, but very much enjoyed our day trip to Jerash, which has a reputation as one of the most beautiful and well-preserved Greco-Roman cities. We also visited the Golan Heights, which offered great views of the lush green countryside on the Sea of Galilee, and we could even see the Syrian border in the distance.

After leaving the Middle East, we had a few very pleasant days on the way home at the Fullerton Hotel (the old post office) in Singapore. Our lunch at the markets cost the same as a cup of coffee in the hotel. We also had another great walk around the Gardens by the Bay.

Norway, Iceland and the Orkney Islands, 2010

Our neighbours in Possum Creek, Katy and Bernt Berentsen, had invited us to stay with them in Egesund, Norway, where they lived on a fiord opening out to the North Sea. Katy collected us off our flight into the nearby city of Stavanger and the next day we were joined by John and Julie Mashford, our good friends from Byron. We spent our time on walks and drives into the surrounding countryside but I'd say the highlight had to be Katy and Bernt's great cooking, with produce often supplied by their very generous neighbours. I was also very impressed by the 26-foot cruiser Bernt had parked in the boathouse, which because of the small tidal variation was directly accessible to the ocean. Bernt took us out to fish for our dinner, and in the process, we completed a circumnavigation of the island. We all went on a walking tour of Stavanger with Katy, after which we caught the bus to Bergen, Norway's second largest city. It was a great bus ride, and I don't think I've ever been on a road with so many tunnels and bridges. Bergen is a very old port city and we went on lots of walks around the harbour. We also went up the mountain behind the city by cable car, and took a trip down the coast by boat and were amazed to see so many Norwegians sunning themselves on the nearby beaches.

From Oslo we flew direct to Reykjavik in Iceland, where we visited the National and Saga museums and enjoyed sampling the fabulous local seafood. I found the buildings to be rather stark and utilitarian from the outside, but they were often nothing like that inside, and we became used to being surprised by the cutting edge, modern interiors. Everything was designed to make the most of the local climate, of course.

We did a trip to Gullfoss Falls and the Blue Lagoon, both on the popular 300km 'Golden Circle' loop into the inland from Reykjavik. But the highlight for me was snorkelling between the tectonic plates of North America and Europe at the Silfra Fissure in the Thingvellir National Park. The underwater visibility was over 100 metres, but with the water temperature about 3 degrees Celsius we were forced to wear thick two-layer dry suits.

We then undertook a circumnavigation of Iceland on 'Le Boreal', a Ponant Lines ship which takes about two hundred passengers and provided excellent food and service. Our first stop was at the island of Isafjordur, where we did an interesting walk through the town. The cruise then took us across the Arctic Circle around Grimsey island. We docked at Akureyri and from here we did a day tour into the hinterland, visiting Godafoss, the 'Waterfall of the Gods', where we found some of the best mountain scenery we had seen.

Next we stopped at the island of Heimaey, where the ship just managed to squeeze through the tall cliffs which form the narrow entrance to the port. I couldn't believe the number of birds, but then I read that while the population of Heimaey is 4,500, in summer it is visited by over eight million puffins and many more millions of other breeds which migrate there to breed and feed.

Heimaey made international news in January 1973 when its volcano Eldfell erupted in the dead of night and the entire 5,000-strong population of the island was evacuated by the resident fishing fleet before daybreak. The eruption continued until July that year, with lava flows threatening to swallow the town. As it was, half the town was lost, but with townspeople continuing to spray seawater on the molten lava, the harbour was saved. In the end, the size of the island grew from 11 square kms to 13.5 square kms and only one person died.

We flew from Reykjavik to the UK and spent a few lovely days with Suzanne and Michael Regan and their families in Kendal, before a couple of hilarious days at the Edinburgh Festival. We then flew to

Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands, on a mission to see where my family originated. We based ourselves in the delightful harbourside town of Kirkwall. On our first day we saw the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar both Neolithic henges or stone circles and toured Skara Brae, Europe's most complete Neolithic stone village, over 5000 years old.

We then took a ferry over to Hoy to visit the original family estate at Melsetter. This is from where my great-great-grandfather, Benjamin Moodie, the 10th Laird of Melsetter, set off in 1817 for South Africa. The old family mausoleum was intact and accessible, with details of many of the family members buried there. I also found a lot more information on the Moodie family in Tankerness House Museum and the Kirkwall Library and also saw the steps up to St Magnus Cathedral, built in 1137, where another cousin was assassinated.

20. Property Investments and Tallowood Ridge

I've already mentioned my first property investments, the two terrace houses I bought to use as office space in West Street, Crows Nest, when I started Bennett Research. Around the same time, in 1977, I also bought three cheap properties in Kings Cross and Elizabeth Bay. The best outcome for me by far was a studio in Bayswater Road which I bought sight unseen for \$13,500 through Joe Beaumont. I arranged solicitor's finance for \$12,000 from John Tesoriero and Mark O'Brien and a few years later had converted my \$1500 cash deposit into well over \$100,000.

In the late 1970s I also bought a block of four flats in William St, near Mount Street, North Sydney and the sale of this block provided the means to purchase extensive commercial properties in Byron Bay in the 1980s. My principal when buying property was to try always to put down a large enough deposit to ensure the rental income covered the mortgage. This could become rather scary however, as those were the days when interest rates climbed to 17%.

In the early days I always bought at the lower end of the market so I could ensure that my net returns would be higher. I also made sure that I was buying properties which would rent well, rather than be swayed by ones I thought I'd like to live in.

In 1980 I made my first purchase in the Byron Bay area, the farm at Bangalow which I bought with Bob Morrison, and which we called Benmor. I discuss this in the chapter called Farming.

Then, in 1984 two apartments in Bayview Lodge, right on the beach at Byron Bay, came up for sale. I tried to talk Dad into buying one but he wasn't interested, so I ended up buying both for about \$72,000 each. Their position on the beach made them great investments, and they were also a lovely place for family and friends to stay.

In the mid 1980s, I met Bill Etheridge, one of the founders of the Heathley Merchant Bank, at the airport in Ballina. He suggested we buy commercial premises in Brunswick Heads, which he saw as underpriced and a good investment for future growth. My friend Sue Gaunt, who worked at Heathley, advised me that Bill was a financial wiz and straight as a die. I took Bill to Byron and introduced him to a few of my real estate contacts and persuaded him that Byron had more upside than Bruns. In the end we bought Bannister's Building on Jonson Street, which housed three shops, paying about \$70,000 per shop. Shortly after this, we bought Feros Arcade, which ran between Jonson and Lawson Streets and housed thirteen shops. At the time, the \$1m purchase price was the second highest amount paid for property in Byron Bay.

Our next purchase was a block of four fibro flats in Lawson Street, just south of Feros Arcade. We demolished them and built four new shops, which we later named Solace. We couldn't afford to put on a second story on the shops, but designed the building to allow for this at a later time. A few years after this, we built three luxury apartments on top of the shops and rented these out until we decided to sell them, one by one, when the prices were right.

Bill and I had a very successful partnership for thirty-odd years, with Bill handling all the finances and me providing some local knowledge. Bill liked to keep the rents just below market and this ensured we had very few empty shops. He initially managed the rentals himself, for which he received a fee, but in due course we appointed David Gordon from Ray White as manager, and he did a fantastic job.

Around 2018, we decided to sell Feros Arcade, and David achieved a much higher price than we expected. A year later we also agreed the time was right to sell Bannister's Building. David had a list of six or seven unsuccessful bidders for Feros and he sent them each the same one-page letter describing the property. The building sold a week later, again at a great price, without us spending a cent on promotion. Our timing turned out to be excellent as Covid hit a few

months later. Although property prices in Byron have subsequently proved extremely buoyant, we were more than happy with the return we made on our investment. As with so much in Byron these days, these early property purchases proved to be part of a bygone era. Only the very wealthy can afford to invest in Byron now. Back then, when Byron was still undeveloped we saw lots of future for the town and decided to have a go.

Tallowood Ridge

In 2003 I was invited by the local property developer Eric Freeman to join an investment syndicate to buy and develop a housing estate called Tallowood Ridge on the southwestern fringe of Mullumbimby. Initially there was Eric and nine other investors, and I joined the management committee, chaired by Christopher Dean. We had a lot of initial resistance from neighbours and had to submit the proposed development to the Land and Environment Court for approval. This was an expensive and drawn-out process and although the project was eventually approved, nobody, other than the lawyers and planners, really won.

The need for affordable, entry-level housing has been growing in Byron Shire for years, and as locals know, it has now reached critical proportions. As well as being a good investment, we really hoped to alleviate some of this need. Unfortunately, about the same time as we'd received final approval, the global financial crisis rocked the world, and banks responded by tightening their loan conditions and charging higher interest rates.

We were initially selling blocks for under \$200,000 but sales were very slow. We bought an old shipping container and converted it into an on-site sales office which a few of us volunteered to man. Ian Oelrichs designed two entrance signs pro bono which David Daniel, Paul Tamplin and myself built from large railway sleepers and installed, using David's excavator. We tried many real estate agents

and ended up with excellent service and great success from Chincogan Real Estate in Mullum.

Only half the land was residentially zoned, so Steve Connelly prepared a detailed proposal for rezoning which Chris and I personally presented to all nine Councillors. This was approved unanimously by Council, but we then had to seek approval from the State government. After two years of waiting, I approached our State MP and my old friend, Don Page, for help and the proposal was approved within months. The banks however, became tougher and tougher. They required frequent and costly updated valuations of the land for sale. We realised we had to come up with about another \$5million to stay afloat, so all partners agreed to either increase their shareholdings or find new investors. I did both. I more than doubled my share and found five new investors: John Welch, David Daniel, Paul Tamplin, Pat Grier and John Bashforth. As encouragement, these new investors and the existing investors who increased their shareholdings were given a better deal than the original investors. The Chair, Christopher Dean and the Project Director had a major fallout after a few years so I reluctantly took over as Chair and our new investor John Welch has joined Peter Dean, Tony Farrell, David Daniel and George Knott on the management committee.

The project has really turned around now. Stage 9, with forty-eight blocks, has been recently approved, and we're finding we have at least five or six registered buyers for every new block we release. We expected the entire project to take about five years, but we've already spent twelve years to get to this point. The upside is that we are now achieving about \$600,000 per block compared to under \$200,000 when we started. We expect to sell about 340 blocks in total. After initial hiccups with the project, the investors are proud of what has been achieved. Tallowood is a vibrant and friendly family community with excellent sports facilities, extensive cycle paths and it was the first NBN greenfield site in NSW north of Coffs Harbour.

21. Some Tricky Ventures

Not every investment I made was plain sailing – or the sort of thing I would get involved in today.

In the early 1980s, Bob Morrison and I were offered an opportunity to invest in a subdivision at North Arm Cove, near Port Stephens. Astonishingly, at the turn of the 20th century, North Arm Cove was under consideration as the main seaport for NSW and as the possible capital of Australia. Our subdivision was part of a 1918 design by Sir Walter Burley Griffin for the large city required under the plan. When we got involved, the land, 3400 blocks, was zoned ‘non-urban’ but it was sold in the hope that one day it would be zoned urban. Our group bought 25% of the deal, paying about \$700 a block. We employed a sales agent and John Singleton did the advertising, nicknaming it the ‘Crook Land Deal’. Agents flew perspective buyers up to Port Stephens, usually at low tide, and sold the blocks for around about \$7000 each, often bought on the recently released Bankcards.

In the mid 1980s, my friend Heinz Gloor, ex-head of Thredbo Ski School and proprietor of the well-known Thredbo restaurant Eagle’s Nest, trained as a Hang Gliding instructor. I arranged a group of eight to do a two-day Hang Gliding course with him at Thredbo, staying at Ben Goodman’s Winterhaus lodge. On the first day we practised on the lower slopes of the mountain and all went well. On the second day, however, we started at the top of the mountain and foolishly I volunteered to go first. I took straight off on my first go and was so elated I threw my arms in the air and this caused the hang glider to dive and crash into the ground about forty feet below. My back and legs were badly banged up and I was hobbling around for the rest of the trip feeling sore and stupid. Other than that, it was a great weekend!

It’s probably no surprise to my old friends that I’ve always had a hankering to own an E- Type Jaguar. So, in 1981 I bought a 1967 ‘Series 1½’ convertible and my dream came true. Like all dreams,

it came at a price. I had all the mechanics and engine restored by a friend specialising in Jaguars, however it was still unreliable and often off the road and could really only be used as a third car. I remember driving my brother Allan up to the farm one time with the roof down in the rain. This added him quickly to the list of friends who were not fans of my pet Jaguar.

After about three years I decided I really had to let the dream loose. I started advertising the car for sale and a journalist from Sports Car World magazine saw the ad. He contacted me and said he was doing an article on second hand sports cars. 'Would I like him to feature my car?' he asked. I jumped at the offer, thinking it would be a great free glossy ad for the car. The journo did an extensive interview, took lots of photos and then offered to do an NRMA inspection at his cost. I had just spent about \$8000 on the mechanics, so I happily agreed.

Months later, in June 1984, I was amazed to see a picture of my Jag and myself on the front cover of Sports Car World with the headline, 'Would you buy John's E-Type? ... the pleasures and pitfalls.' The article completely rubbished my car and highlighted all sorts of problems I didn't even know about. My two lessons from this were, when restoring cars, to put the money into the body work and not the mechanicals, and to never be so naive and trusting with journalists again. In the end, I sold the car at a big loss to someone who had not read the article.

I also made a big mistake when I lent our boat Clover to my brother George without being on board, which was specifically against the owners' partnership agreement. George was taking a group of about twenty out to celebrate his son Garth's 18th birthday. I had planned to be on board, but had to attend an urgent business meeting at the last minute. The next morning, the radio news announced, 'Boy from cruiser Clover missing overboard in Sydney Harbour.' Within minutes the co-owners of Clover were calling me to find out what had happened. Obviously, they weren't pleased to hear that I hadn't been

onboard. It turned out that the boy in question had had an argument with his girlfriend and around midnight jumped overboard. As soon as he was alerted, George turned the boat around to look for him, but to no avail, so he called the Water Police and they spent all night looking for him. It transpired that the boy had swum ashore and gone to a nearby friend's house unaware of the drama unfolding on the Harbour until he heard the radio news later that morning. The incident had echoes, of course, of George's midnight swim in New York Harbour when he was in his twenties.

In 1985 I ran what I liked to joke was two City-to-Surf races, my first and last at the same time. Of course I'd done no training at all, but somehow I still managed to complete the course in eighty minutes. With this achievement, I thought it was best to quit while I was ahead. Far more exciting and much less painful was my 60th birthday present from Cally and the kids - a tandem skydive from about 10,000 feet. There were no disasters this time. I remember it happily as one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life.

22. Men's Group

I was in my late forties when was able to make space in my life to spend more time in the Northern Rivers. I was winding down from the frenetic pace of my business life and I was ready – a classic midlife thing – to explore a different sort of life of my own making. I'd always found the area to be a calm but still lively place. Fortunately, I had accumulated enough capital through Bennett Research and my various property investments not to be constrained by money-making ventures alone or with notions of the sort of person this required me to be. I could do what I liked, with nothing to prove – I'd been there and done that. For the first time in my life I had the opportunity to do lots of new things with different values and a much slower pace of life.

I had the time, literally, to take stock and look around and choose the sort of person I wanted to be, not the person I thought I should be. Looking back now, I can see that the move to the Northern Rivers and specifically Byron Shire, was the start of a real shift into the next stage of my life. Befitting a man my age, it was at once more introspective, and also more outward-looking, focussing on what I could do to help others, not merely look after the concerns of myself and my family. The most telling demonstration of this is probably the nourishment I have received from my participation in our men's group and my involvement in local community organisations.

For a long time, I'd liked the idea of being part of a group of compatible men who could discuss and get feedback on meaningful aspects of our personal lives. I joined a couple of different men's groups but was often frustrated by men who dominated the meetings and seemed only interested in using the groups as a platform to air their views. I also encountered groups in which men with serious personal problems seemed to expect the group to somehow 'solve' these problems. Both these scenarios were a real turn off.

I remembered something I'd learnt many years ago from my

good friend the social researcher and author Hugh Mackay, that groups of like-minded people, or 'affinity groups', were more effective social groups than non-affinity groups. With this in mind, sometime in the early 2000s I suggested to my good friend Paul Jameson that we hand-pick the members and set up our own men's group, which we'd call 'Men of the North'.

We got a group together and established various ground rules, which remain much the same today. We meet fortnightly, rotating between each of our homes. The host provides the main course for dinner and decides the topic or theme for the evening's discussion. Each meeting starts with each member sharing the highs and lows of his fortnight, before moving onto the chosen theme for the evening. The host facilitates the evening, and we encourage each other to only speak of their own experiences and feelings. A firm rule is that everything we discuss remains confidential unless agreed otherwise. Sometimes a new member is suggested, but we have another rule that any new members have to be approved by existing members.

Along with Paul and myself, Michael Leach, Peter Bowen and Pat Grier were early members, and a few others came and went over the years. Later we were joined by Nick Paris and the two Ians - Ian 'Hoss' Hosken and Ian Oelrichs, both of whom have sadly passed away. Charlie Zammit and John Welch have been newer members and they have fitted into the group extremely well. We discuss a wide range of topics such as health, personal relationships, transition to retirement, and bigger themes, such as climate change and the environment and other political issues.

It's been a great meeting space, lasting over many years, and has certainly met my hopes for the sort of group I wanted to be part of. I have learned a lot and hopefully contributed as much as I feel I've received. The group has really bonded us together as friends and, with our partners, we share many other interests. We have taken holidays together, travelled widely and done many walking, camping and skiing trips as a group.

23. Community Organisations

NEIS / BETC

In Sydney I was not involved in any community work at all. Like many men building their careers, I can see now how single-minded I was during those years. Work, family and fun were it, basically. In fact, I'd probably be hard-pressed to even name any of my local councillors from those days. But this changed when I moved up to Byron permanently. I think I was just at a different stage of my life, with more time and a desire to give back from a life which had done me well.

Sometime in the late 1990s my skiing friend Paul Jameson, who was then working at the small business training and mentoring organisation BETC, invited me to give a few lectures on market research to his students. Paul is a very community-minded guy with years of experience in mentoring small businesses, and his enthusiasm and commitment rubbed off on me. I really enjoyed being able to share some of my accumulated business knowledge, so I accepted his further invitation to join the NEIS selection panel for individuals and small businesses wanting to enrol in the course. NEIS offers training and mentoring to eligible job seekers interested in starting and running a small business. Paul was a great mentor to me, teaching me how to use my business skills to support and build community organisations. At this stage of my life, with the battle for business success behind me, I get great satisfaction out of this, and have found it really meaningful.

The Byron Bay Community Centre

Jen joined the board of the Byron Bay Community Centre in the late 1990s. Originally built as the Byron School of Art in 1907, the Community Centre had been the hub of the town for many years, but it was really showing its age. It was a big old two-storey weatherboard

building next door to the Post Office in the heart of Jonson Street, with a much-loved mural covering its entire street-facing façade, dominated by a ten-metre long dolphin and depicting local identities and locations. Inside, it was a rabbit warren of small offices leased out to many and varied community groups. The wind whistled through the gaps between the floorboards, the exterior weatherboards were rotting and the internal timber walls were crumbling.

The Board was tasked with raising enough money to demolish the existing structure and plan and build a modern community centre. It was a massive job, and all voluntary, of course. Somehow, probably at the behest of that local fundraising dynamo, Dee Tipping, I got involved in the Buy-a-Brick campaign to raise funds. This was successful in raising enough money to get the demolishing and rebuilding process underway. In the process, I further realised how my years of experience in building a business, and in sales and market research could be useful in further fundraising efforts. I have gone on to advise and offer practical help to many local organisations – and when the COVID crisis hit, I was able to help the new General Manager of the Community Centre, Louise O’Connell, raise significant funds to keep the Centre and the organisation going.

The Uncle Project

The Uncle Project was started by a local social worker, Michael Light, in the late 1990s. Michael had worked with the then NSW Department of Community Services (DOCS) and other organisations and had witnessed first-hand how many local boys, usually the sons of single mothers, lived in households without an active father. His aim was to support these boys by matching them up with a suitably screened adult man who would play a mentor, or uncle role for them. I thought it was an excellent project and when, in about 2000, my friend Sandra Heilpern asked me to replace her on the Uncle Management Committee, I readily agreed.

My key role on the committee was fund raising. I particularly enjoyed organising two Variety Concerts, firstly at the Great Northern Hotel in Byron and later at the grand old A&I Hall in the showgrounds at Bangalow. We had full houses at both events, simultaneously raising far more money than we'd dared hope and helping to publicise The Uncle Project in the process. At the time Michael McDonald was Editor of the Byron Shire Echo and Gary Chigwidden editor of the Byron Shire News and I'd particularly like to acknowledge the great support they gave both events and the Uncle Project in general. I made many friends while at Uncle, including fellow committee members, Robbie Cameron, Michael Murray and Alan Close. I was very proud to serve as President of the organisation for the last two years of my time on the committee.

But most importantly, The Uncle Project brought Adam Harvey into my life. I started mentoring Adam in my first years at Uncle when he was nine years old and he has grown into a fine young man. He was always keen to learn and was a willing participant in Uncle activities and with me personally. He has really become a key member of our family, a cousin of sorts to my two sons and daughter. We've had some great trips away, including the ski trip I mentioned earlier. He went on to live in the cabin on our dam at Cedarvale Farm for about eight years while he was building a business as a qualified carpenter. I am immensely proud of him and he is living proof of the value in mentoring and providing young men with healthy role models as they make their way in life.

There is a curious aside to my involvement in The Uncle Project. Sandra Heilpern's husband Hans has had a long career in the NSW public service, including as a former Director General of DOCS and a member of the New South Wales Parole Board. While an academic in the 1970s, Hans had run an experiment at the University of NSW in which paid participants spent a few days in a simulated prison environment. Half were playing the role of prisoners and the other half were prison warders. The object of the study was to determine

how the behaviour and attitudes of the two groups was affected by the roles they were playing. (This has become quite an extensive field of study.) Hans was amazed when I told him that during my period of unemployment in the 1970s, I had earned a few dollars as a participant in this study.

The Northern Rivers Writers Centre

The Northern Rivers Writers Centre had held the first Byron Writers Festival in 1997. It was a great success and soon after, the Director, Jill Eddington, approached me to assist her to design and run ongoing market research to help define target audience groups and determine their preferences. Together, we formulated a longitudinal study - to be conducted on zero budget. I designed a questionnaire and gave a few talks at Southern Cross University to recruit students to work alongside local volunteers as pro bono interviewers in return for a ticket to attend the festival. Judith Parkinson, who for around twenty years had done my data processing as a subcontractor to Bennett Research, agreed to do the data processing in return for a box of books. This study turned out to play a major part in the Northern Rivers Writers Centre's applications for government and non-government funding. This continued until about three years ago, when it was decided to use iPads to collect and process the data instead. So, after about twenty years in the role, I was happy to step aside and retire graciously.

Flush Media

Flush Media was in some ways an offshoot of my involvement in The Uncle Project. Uncle had made me aware of the challenges faced by many young people in Byron Shire, particularly those coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Byron might have a glittering, fun-loving public face, but there is also significant poverty and disadvantage in the community.

Flush Media came into being twenty years ago, in the early 2000s. A few of us, including Paul Jameson, Gary Charles, Simon Du Bois and myself who were already involved with local youth services identified the value that a free business training course could hold for young unemployed people who had not matriculated. Paul designed the course, we hired my newly arrived friend Don Rescei to manage the project and Christopher Dean, George Lewin, Gary Charles, Alan Yarrington and myself agreed to put up the funding.

The course ran for twelve weeks, run out of the Byron Youth Service with twelve participants. Gary Charles came up with the idea of selling ads to be displayed in toilets, above urinals and in other public places where we had a captive audience. This was where we got the idea for the name Flush Media. We proud to say that almost all the participants later went on to paid jobs. My son Matt and Ben Bullock ended up running the business, with Matt looking after production and Ben in charge of sales. Matt then set up his own business and Ben took over Flush Media. The business is still running today, twenty years on, as a part of his Adhere Marketing. Our local MP, Larry Anthony, the federal Member for Richmond, offered his support from the start. We knew we wanted to give our first group a big splash for their graduation and Raylee Delaney organised a bells-and-whistles Graduation Day to be hosted at Delvene Delaney and John Cornell's Beach Hotel, with Larry Anthony awarding each graduate their certificate of achievement. It was a great day, and a big achievement for all of us.

The Northern Rivers Rail Trail

I met Pat Grier after he'd recently retired as CEO of Ramsay Health, about 2008. Pat was still on the Board of Ramsay Health, and was a member of quite a few other boards as well. He had a very successful business career and was keen to put his skills to work in our community.

In the early 2000s, the NSW Government decided that train services on the Casino to Murwillumbah line were no longer financially viable and the last train ran on 15 May 2004. The line ran through Byron Shire, stopping at Bangalow, Byron Bay and Mullumbimby before it continued further north. The closure of the line was done without public consultation and caused considerable outrage among the communities affected. Some fought for trains to be brought back into service through the organisation TOOT – Trains On Our Tracks. Others saw the opportunity to use the disused rail corridor to build a rail trail, as had been done very successfully in other parts of the country and overseas. A large study had determined that train services were no longer feasible in the Northern Rivers, and Pat and a few others formed the Northern Rivers Rail Trail and he invited me to join the committee. I went on to serve on the Committee for about seven years.

My major role initially was in Community Relations until I recruited Marie Lawton, who has continued to do a great job in this role. I also provided input on marketing and undertook a fact-finding trip to New Zealand to study the highly popular Otago Rail Trail. After many years of lobbying, Pat and his team, with great assistance from Don Page, the former Member for Ballina in the NSW Parliament, have finally secured funding to construct the Rail Trail. However, due to continued agitation from locals for a train service to be restored, the funding does not include money to build the rail trail through Byron Shire. Hopefully by the time this is printed, Byron Shire will be on board and the full rail trail underway. Pat has shown great patience, perseverance and business skills to progress this very worthwhile project. Pat received recognition for his contributions to health care and charity organisations with an Order of Australia in 2010.

Northern Rivers Community Foundation

In 2003, Megan Edwards approached a few locals to help establish a Foundation to provide support to worthy community organisations. This became the Northern Rivers Community Foundation (NRCF). The founding directors were Alan Cowley, Margaret Robertson, Barry Evans and myself, with Christopher Dean as Chair. Our aim was to raise funds which would be invested in perpetuity, with annual returns from the invested capital to be distributed each year to local causes which the Foundation agreed were worthy of support.

It took a year or two to get all the legal and compliance work done (including a few of us becoming certified as Justices of The Peace). Given my business background, it was perhaps predictable that I soon became head of the marketing committee, with our main role, of course, being to raise funds. I set up and hosted the early Information Nights at which Leslie Ford from Red Ginger provided delicious finger food pro bono (and served it) and members of the Committee provided and served the drinks. Later, we extended the concept to having recipients of the grants present their stories. Early supporters were the Parches from Byron@Byron and Paul Spotswood, General Manager of the Northern Star, which made monthly donations and provided us with free advertisements and publicity.

I always made sure that any businesses which donated to the Foundation were recognised with a newspaper article and accompanying photo. I recruited my very good friend Peter Bowen to join the team and he became a board member for twelve years, making a great contribution to the Foundation. Peter also helped finance and set up the SCU-Bowen Education Fund, providing annual scholarships for underprivileged students. We worked well as a fund-raising team, with me lining up appointments with potential donors, and Peter providing the expertise on technical questions such as compliance and tax. As one of the three key contributors (with Megan Edwards and Christopher Dean), on the NRCF's 10th anniversary, I was honoured

to be recognised with its Community Achievement Award.

A few years ago I made the decision to share a large part of my estate between NRCF and my three children. It is a major bequest and was the genesis of the Bequest Programme which I set up for the foundation. Paul Jameson has subsequently bequeathed his entire estate to the NRCF and has joined me as a Bequest Ambassador. We hold regular morning teas for up to ten potential bequestors. This has been very successful and we now have numerous supporters whose bequests will ensure the long-term viability of the Foundation. We now are also fortunate to have the luxury of a CEO, Emily Berry, who does a great job of running the organisation. It has been heartening to see so many of my personal friends come onboard as supporters, both financially and in giving their time to this very worthwhile cause.

Sourdough

About twelve years ago in about 2010, Pat Grier, Ian Oelrichs, James Cowley and Paul Jameson wanted to form an organisation with the aim of mentoring small businesses and creating employment in the region. Originally intended as a not-for-profit, they called the organisation 'Sourdough', after holding their first meeting in the bakery at Harvest Restaurant in Newrybar.

The first stage involved ten participating mentors each working with a small business for six months, with ongoing evaluation done by Southern Cross University. I mentored Kelvin Davies, whose not-for-profit Rainforest Rescue aimed to protect and restore endangered rainforest both in Australia and overseas. I'm sure I got as much out of this experience as I hope he did. I thought I was a bit of a fundraising expert, but Rainforest Rescue introduced me to many new ways to raise funds for an organisation.

Under General Manager, Fiona Sheridan, Sourdough has expanded to become an innovation hub, with a women's division, accelerator programmes and education workshops. It has turned out

to be one of the great success stories of the Northern Rivers.

Screenworks

Based in Ballina, just south of Byron Bay, Screenworks' aim is to help build a vibrant and sustainable regional screen industry, with a particular focus on the Northern Rivers. I was asked to help Screenworks raise funds to finance paid work experience opportunities for young people in the Northern Rivers area on the filming and production of the movie Deadlock, which was being made locally by Every Cloud Productions. Working with Ken Crouch, the CEO of Screenworks, I managed to raise over \$40,000 in donations from friends and colleagues such as the irrepressible John Welch, who is always a great supporter of local organisations. It is great to see Screenworks go on to great recent successes and the employment opportunities it provides in this region.

Liberation Larder

I was always very impressed with the great work that Helen Hamilton was doing with Liberation Larder in Byron Bay. LL is a completely volunteer-run organisation in Byron which feeds the needy and homeless by rescuing, from local restaurants and food and grocery outlets, good food that would otherwise end up in landfill. It is a simple idea, servicing a great need. I was keen to volunteer, but being a hopeless cook, instead I did food pickups from the restaurants and food suppliers in town. The aspect I enjoyed most, and which suited my business background, was expanding our food sources by approaching new restaurants and food suppliers. Unfortunately, back problems forced an early retirement from this venture.

Enova Energy

Started and based in Byron Bay, Enova Energy was the first community-owned energy supplier in Australia, with a business

model based on supporting communities to self-power with locally sourced renewable energy.

I was part of a Sourdough mentoring panel which advised Enova on their business plan and on ways to promote their upcoming float. I then invited potential investors and customers to my home, where Alison Crook, the dynamic Chair of Enova, presented the company's business proposal. I became a keen investor, customer and supporter of Enova - and I've been very impressed by their new CEO, Felicity Stenning.

Byron Visitors Centre

I'm very proud of Byron Bay and its hinterland and found my experience running Byron Bay Harley Tours useful in giving tourists ideas where to go and what to do. As a way of giving back to this town which has become my home, I joined the Byron Visitors Centre as a volunteer and I've found the work to be fascinating and rewarding. I am always chuffed to see the plaque at the entrance to the BVC, marking its opening by three friends, Don Page and Neville Newell both local MPs with whom I also played rugby, and Ian Kingston, the then Mayor of Byron Shire.

Byron Shire Citizen of the Year nomination

In January 2021, without my knowledge, Margaret Robertson and Paul Jameson nominated me for the Byron Shire Citizen of the Year. They had obtained letters of support from about a dozen people or organisations I had been involved with over the last twenty-odd years. Among these was a letter from Adam Harvey who I mentored for about sixteen years, initially as part of The Uncle Project, and subsequently in a private arrangement. (You can read his letter in the Appendix.)

Paul gave me a copy of the letter, and reading it really tugged at my heartstrings. I'd never thought I had so much impact on Adam

and it was fabulous to read how much he appreciated the support I'd given him and his acknowledgement of this in helping him become the great young man he is. I had about twenty friends and supporters at the Awards dinner, including my sister Felicity and niece Amy from Sydney. I didn't win the award, but was proudly runner up to the very deserving Zenith Virago, a good friend who has worked tirelessly for many years in the Natural Death movement, both as an educator and hands-on support for dying people and their families. The whole experience made me feel appreciated and acknowledged for the work I have put in in support of this community I have so grown to love.

If I look back on my life, it probably goes without saying that never in my wildest imagination could I have guessed what my life would be at this age. Growing up in South Africa, if Australia made any impression on me at all, it would have only been as that huge island on the other side of the Indian Ocean – red on the map, because like South Africa, it was also a former British colony. Which meant, of course, that they also played cricket and rugby. As I noted earlier, my father's decision to move his family here was the best thing that could have happened to us. It opened up opportunities and possibilities which I'm almost certain would not have been available to us had we stayed in South Africa.

Australia has its issues, especially with its indigenous peoples, and as a white Australian brought up in Apartheid-era South Africa, I am keenly aware of inequities which need to be addressed. But any Australian will tell you that it's only when we leave that we really appreciate how lucky we are to be able to call this amazing country our home. I probably got a glimpse of this when I arrived as a raw young man, but living and travelling outside Australia as extensively as I have, has made me love this country with gratitude and passion. And like my father's hunch to move the family to Australia, my move to the Northern Rivers and in particular, Byron Shire, was the best thing I ever did. The love, friendship and fulfillment I've found here is more than I could wish for any person. I thank you all for making my life everything it is.

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Departed Friends

Cedric Browne

DURBAN

Geoff Williams

MULLUMBIMBY

Graham Reeve

DURBAN

Ian Hosken

MULLUMBIMBY

Judy Oxland

BANGALOW

Ian Oelrichs

NEWRYBAR

John Oxland

BANGALOW

Trisha Roberts

SYDNEY

William Bennett

WOLLONGBAR

Nina Oom

INVERELL

Bob Morrison

SYDNEY

Andy Tribe

DURBAN

Tony Narracott

BYRON BAY

Graeme Connelly

MELBOURNE

Sandra Oakley

BYRON BAY

Candy Katsamas

BYRON BAY

Wayne McCarthy

SYDNEY

Acknowledgements

Alan Close for his tireless dedication as editor, who also extensively researched and added more information about events and places mentioned in the book.

Obi McDonald-Saint for designing the front and back covers and undertaking the layout and artwork for the book, the Appendix and website.

Anthony Maxwell from Digi Print Pro in Bangalow NSW, for his excellent practical advice, scanning the photos and producing this book in print.

Folliot Phipson, my favourite cousin, still living in South Africa, who inspired me to research our family history and provided me with much written information about our forebears.

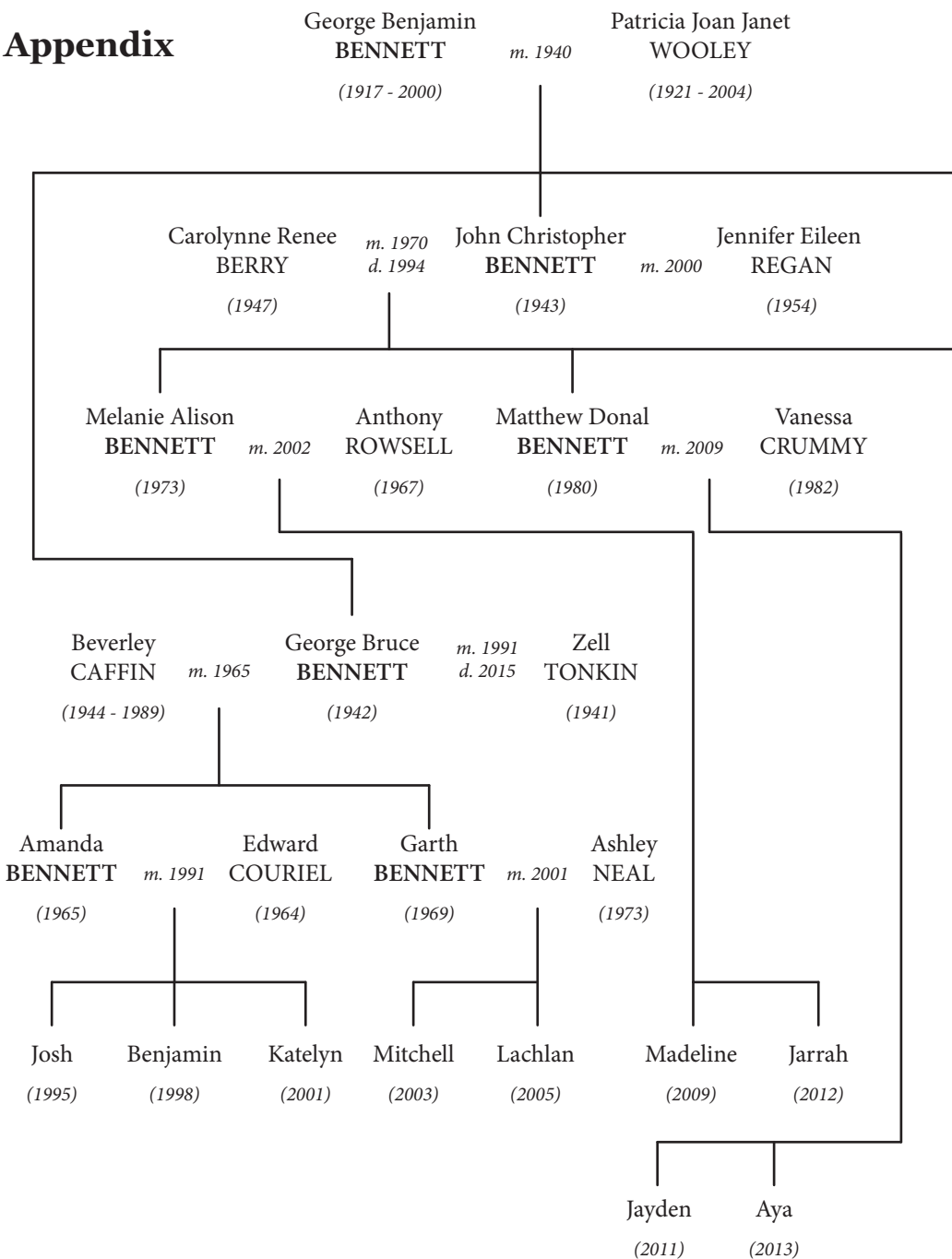
Lawson Lobb, my good friend, originally from South Africa, who kindly proof read the final manuscript.

Frank Olivier, my first friend in Australia, who set me a good example by writing an excellent biography of his mother and encouraged me to write my story.

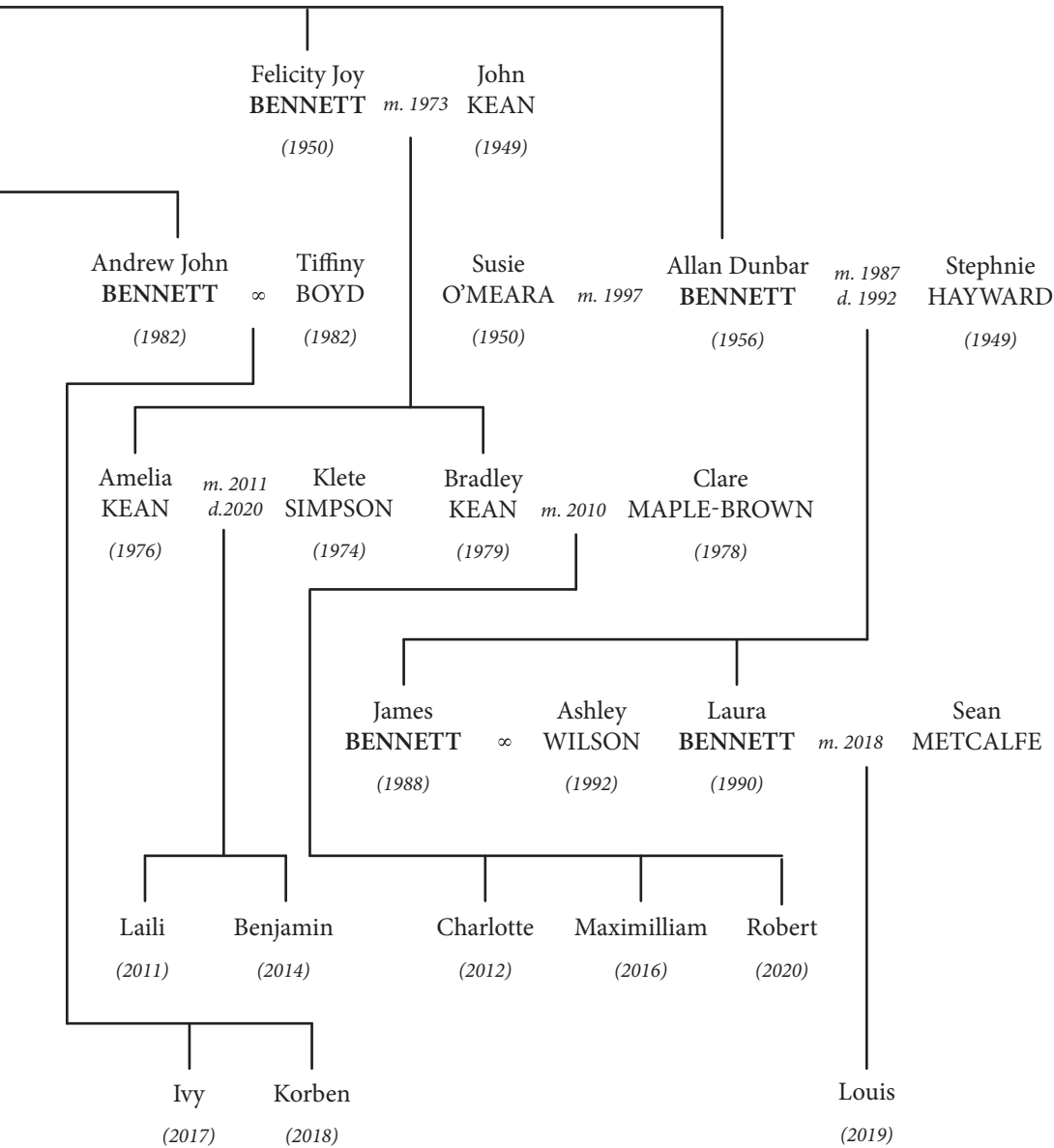
My children, Melanie Rowsell, Matt Bennett, Andy Bennett, their families and my many friends who are in so many ways the core of this book.

My wife, Jennifer Regan, for her practical computer advice and for teaching me how to use the Microsoft Office dictation program that saved her from the task of having to type up this manuscript.

Appendix



BENNETT FAMILY TREE





IONE 85254

WESTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

P.O. BOX 19
WESTVILLE
NATAL

9. 2. 62

To whom it may concern

John Christopher Bennett was a pupil of this school in 1959, 1960 and 1961. He passed the Natal Senior Certificate examination in 1961, qualifying for matriculation exemption.

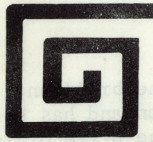
He showed himself to be a boy of more than average intelligence, with a pleasing personality and good character. He mixed well with his fellow pupils and was in fact very popular.

He is a manly boy and of good physique. He took part in school games and did well, particularly in rugby football.

For Bowden.
Headmaster.

Headmasters report from final school year, end 1961.

U.N.S.W.
GRADUATES
CLUB LTD.



GRADFITI

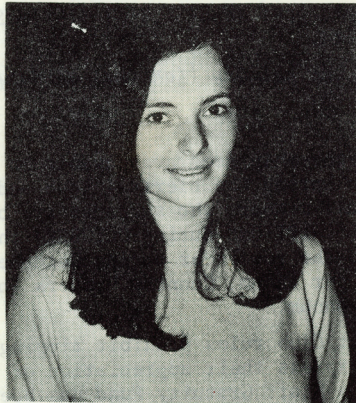
Price 5c

Vol. 1 No. 4

Monday, September 28th, 1970

Carolynne Renee Berry, who we all love and know as Caly, was born in Burnley, Lancashire, England and lived there until her early teens when the family moved to Gayton, Cheshire.

Caly commenced a two year Pre-Nursing Course at Carlett Park College but after only eighteen months of the course she emigrated to Australia. The Berrys live in Wahroonga and soon our long suffering Registrar is going to have to drive home alone.



Remaining in Australia for four years Caly then visited the old country for fourteen months returning home via the United States where she visited her American Mother's family.

Caly nursed at North Shore and Neringah Hospitals prior to becoming our receptionist. After being with us for only eight months Caly has been hooked by John Bennett, a Club member, and will be married in October. The lucky couple plan to honeymoon in New Zealand and Bali before John takes up his post as General Manager of F.E.R.O. in Singapore in November.

Alas they will be away for three to five years but we take this opportunity to wish Caly and John every happiness, success and future fulfillment.

University publication Gradfiti 1970.

Inscription	BENNETT George, Patricia and family	
Location On the Welcome Wall:	2000	
	Panel Number:	019
	Column Number:	1
	Line Number:	013

	Name 1 Details	Name 2 Details
Surname	BENNETT	BENNETT
Given Names	George Benjamin	Patricia Joan
Date of Birth	12/04/1917	29/07/1920
Date Deceased		
Original Vocation	Sea Captain	Mother
Town of Origin	Winterton	Krugersdorp
Country of Origin	South Africa	South Africa
Place of Arrival	Sydney	Sydney
State of Arrival	NSW	NSW
Date of Arrival	01/1962	02/1962
Method of Arrival	Air	Sea
Town First Settled	Sydney	Sydney
State First Settled	NSW	NSW
Australian Vocation	CEO of MSA	Mother

Comments

Saw Australia providing a great opportunity and a secure future for his wife and four children. His brothers, Percy and Dunbar also immigrated with their children, starting another 12 families of Bennett's. George Bennett established a mining supply company MSA, now employing many people across Australia.

	Submitted By
Surname	Bennett
Given Names	John Chris
Relationship To Names	Son

Welcome Wall - Information on family.

The
WELCOME WALL

George & Patricia Bennett
and family
NAME

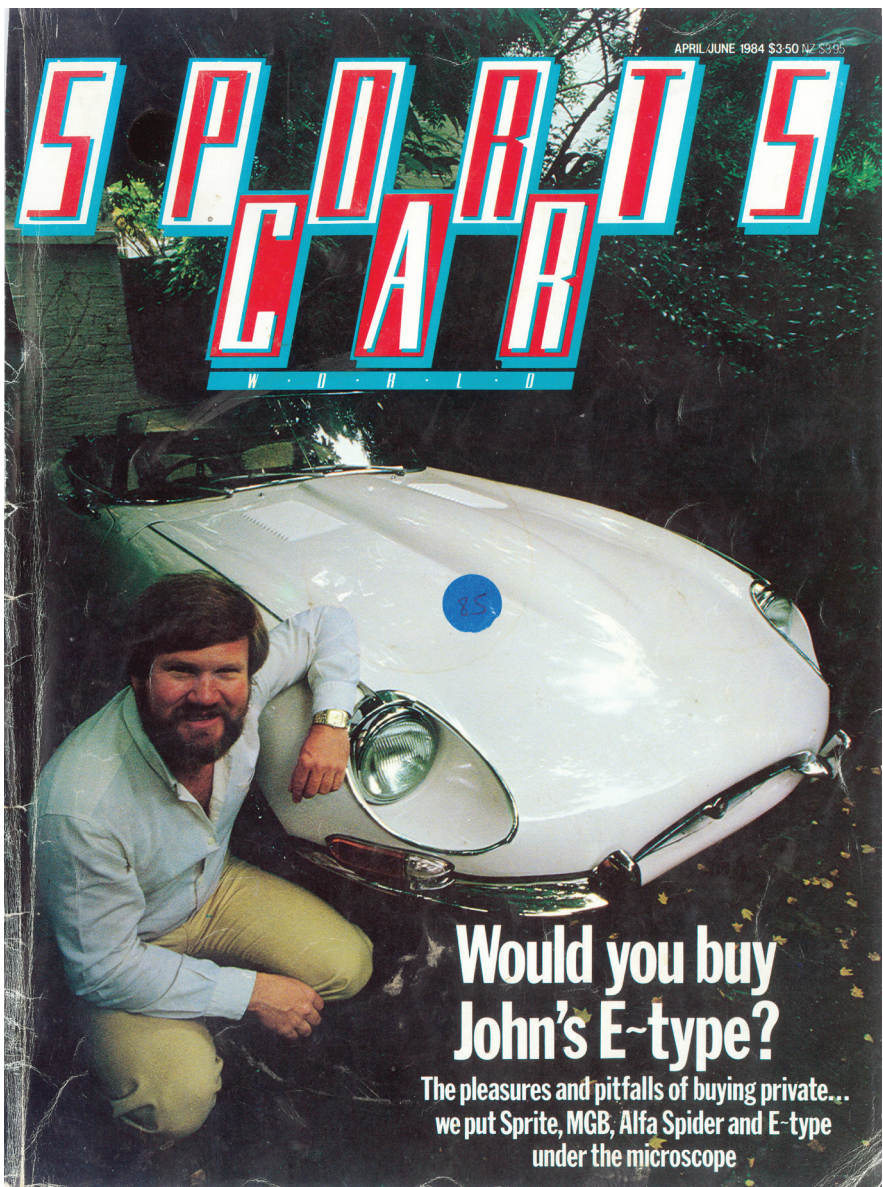
January & February 1962
ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA

Sydney, New South Wales
ARRIVED AT

Many people have made the journey
from other parts of the world to live
in Australia and help build our nation.

Family and friends are honouring these
voyagers by recording their names in
bronze on the Welcome Wall at the
Australian National Maritime Museum.

Panel 19, Col 1, line



Cover of Sports Car World Magazine 1984.

JOHN BENNETT RETIRES

John Bennett has retired from market research, 25 years after founding Bennett Research in September 1975, initially working out of two rooms sublet from Masius Wynne Williams in Arthur Street, North Sydney. He worked as an interviewer for Marplan, Frank Small and Survey Research Centre while finishing his B.Comm and then for Nestle, FERO in Singapore and ASI before venturing out on his own.

Margie Beaumont, who spent 14 years with Bennett Research, did their first project – a qualitative advertising research project for Clairol and Ogilvy & Mather. Other highlights were the relaunch of Tooheys beer, researching Bob Hawke as a presenter for the Army Reserve, P&O's first foray into television advertising and Ita Buttrose as a presenter for Australian Womens Weekly. Other long standing researchers at Bennett Research were Judy Ward, Maggie Wilkins, Catherine Huntington, Linda McAvenna, Bronwen Castor and Al Marshall who is still there with Terry Squire.

Bennett Research's most interesting venture was developing Consumer Research Centres during the eighties in Bondi Junction, Parramatta and Hornsby where they specialised in product testing and advertising research in the consumer packaged goods. Terry Squire joined Bennett Research in 1991 and the company became more strategically orientated concentrating more on qualitative research.

Ten years ago, Terry Squire became Managing Director and John Bennett semi-retired, moving up north to run his already established macadamia and peach farm at Bangalow. John ultimately sold the farm and moved down to the beach at Byron Bay. He then renewed his interest in motor cycling and set up Pancho Villa Moto-Tours where he arranges and promotes motor cycle tours of the Americas and Africa.

Since fully retiring from Bennett Research he has become more involved in the Byron Bay community and is currently honing his selling skills to raise money from local businesses to help build the new Community Centre. He is also currently conducting a research study for the Byron Bay Writers Festival. In return for getting volunteer interviewers from Southern Cross University, he is conducting a series of market research lectures at the University.

John would like to keep in contact with old friends, clients and other colleagues so if anyone is in the Byron Bay area, please give John a call on 02 66 871512. He is now living in rural Possum Creek with his new partner, Jennifer Regan, a retired prosecutor and defence lawyer and enjoying the country life.

John would like to thank all his clients, suppliers, staff and colleagues for their invaluable support over his very enjoyable 32 years in market research.

Ode to J.B.

Since '75 the man has strived
To make this company go go
Now in '99 has come the time
For him to take it slow

It's been harder than you think
To bring this company to the brink
Of World Domination as it is now

Many a party, the odd lunch,
Possibly even a punch
Actually better not to know how!

What ever ocured
What words were slurred
It was always done for the cause
Of course that was no prob
Gotta get that big job
Can't have anyone shuttin' no doors!

John, what can we say
For forever and a day
This company has always been you
We'll struggle along
Singing the song
But John~

We'll sure miss you.

*Lisa,
Bennett Research
December 1999.*

Ode to J.B. - by Lisa Settree.

Cover of Yellow Pages
Donald Rescei 2008.

2008/09

Ballina, Casino, Coffs Harbour, Grafton,
Lismore, Murwillumbah

Yellow 

- ✓ Buyer's Guides & Checklists – Hints & Tips under selected headings
- ✓ Handy local maps

yellow.com.au



Hi Margaret,

I would like to share some really nice things John Bennett has done for me. When I was in primary school he would organise weekly to hang out and do such activities like, fishing on Matt's boat, snorkeling in Byron, learning to drive his Z3-BMW in the industrial estate before it was busy (Year 2000), adventures around the hinterland on his motorbike, ultra light Flying around Tyagarah/Brunswick area, aeroplane gliding around Byron area, trips up the Gold Coast staying in nice hotels, swimming in pools and eating out, first time on commercial plane trip to Sydney, fast boat tours on Sydney harbour, watching movies at cinema, eating out at restaurants, John gave me his old laptop and would organise his computer man to show me how to use it, He would take me to his friends place for dinner and I would be socialising with all his friends, took me to visit David (mum's husband when he was in Sydney hospital) checked out the sports Ferrari's on showrooms floor, sailing on the south passage through uncle project, John would book me into tennis camp over school holidays and play tennis with me at his place. If I was having trouble at home or school he would invite me to come stay with himself and Jennifer at their Possum Creek house where I would have my own room and enjoy Jen's beautiful home cooked dinners, John would invite me to stay at his Lawson st beach house and help me with school work such as mathematics, he would also let me invite some of my school friends over to stay. John was there for me every time I called and if I didn't call he would definitely call and see what I'm up too and if I'd like to come hangout and have a bite to eat. When I got older John and Jennifer took me to the snow for the first time, we stayed in a snow village called Guthega, booked me in for snowboard lessons and when I could keep up we all went exploring the Perisher and Mt Blue Cow ski resort, that was the best and most memorable trip I've ever had. John would talk to me about business and money, his assets and what he did for work, what he studied at university, he would give me advice on anything I needed help with or any troubles I was in. We would sit and look at old photos of trips he'd taken around the world, he would give me work on his farm where I could ride motorbikes, trucks and tractors.

John would always make me feel welcome at his home, he had a photo of me next to all his children on his study shelves, would tell me to help myself to food and I could use his computer, watch movies on projector screen and would invite me to his men's group with the old fellas. When I would arrive to his place I would hold my hand out to shake and he would laugh and give me a hug, John has always shown me love and care our whole relationship and has been the most positive influence in my life. I often wonder and admire how sweet John has been to me growing up, he is really the most caring and loving fella I know. It means so much to me having John around as I grew up without a dad present. Having a positive male influence and mentor has impacted my life immensely. In people skills, relationships in my community and how I present myself at work and in a social setting. I have a girlfriend named Jessica, we have been together for nearly 10 years now and I believe John's presence has impacted a healthy relationship with her too.

Adam Harvey

Reference from Adam Harvey for Byron Shire Citizen of the Year Nomination.



HON BEN FRANKLIN MLC

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Mr John Bennett
Cedarvale Farm
49 Cedarvale Road
POSSUM CREEK NSW 2479

Wednesday 17 February 2021

Dear Mr Bennett,

I write to offer my sincere congratulations on being nominated for the Byron Shire Citizen of the Year Award this Australia Day.

These awards are an important acknowledgement of the work that people like you do for their communities and I am delighted that your hard work, commitment and passion has been publicly recognised in this way.

Your dedication in serving and supporting the people of Byron and surrounds is to be commended and this nomination is a testament to your outstanding efforts in our community. It is a privilege to call you a friend.

As a resident of the Byron Shire, it is always a privilege and a pleasure to share in the successes in our community and I'm thrilled that you have been nominated for this honour.

Congratulations again and if there is anything I can ever help with, please do not hesitate to contact my office any time.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Ben Franklin MLC
Parliamentary Secretary for Energy and the Arts
Nationals Member of the Legislative Council

Room 1121, Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Tel: (02) 9230 3793

Fax: (02) 9230 3350

ben.franklin@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Letter from Hon. Ben Franklin for Byron Shire Citizen of the Year Nomination.

Online Appendix

There are only so many pages you can fit in a book. But when you've lived a lifetime, a page limit cannot be a barrier.

More content is available online including a video tribute and published articles from my many adventures.

To see the online appendix or read the book online, go to:

www.justbackmemoir.com



Scan the QR code to go directly to the website.

JUST BACK

JB was often away and when he returned, his clients, friends and staff would say, 'Just back!' Very soon, this led to the nickname 'JB'.

John Bennett was born in Krugersdorp, South Africa in 1943 and emigrated to Australia with his family in 1962. This is his memoir of a life well-lived. JB's twin mottos might well have been, 'If you're not living close to the edge, you're taking up too much space.' And, 'Don't wait for things to happen. Make them happen!' From the bosom of a loving environment in South Africa, JB became an intrepid young man in the Sydney market research scene during the 1970s and 80s when almost anything went and JB went with it.

John's company, Bennett Research, was a leader in its field and when he wasn't working, John was usually having fun with his friends and family on a boat, a motor bike, playing rugby or on skis. Anyone who knows John knows that when the phone rings and he's on the line you'll hang up enlisted in either an adventure or a business venture. And you can guarantee, if JB's involved, both will be fun. He now lives in the hinterland outside Byron Bay in Northern NSW, where he raises beef cattle with his wife Jennifer.

