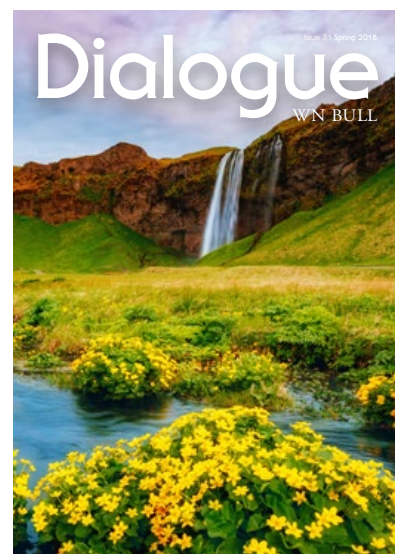




Issue 81 Spring 2018

Dialogue

WN BULL



Editorial Office:

164 King Street,
Newtown NSW 2042
Phone: (02) 9519 5344
Fax: (02) 9519 4310
Email: wnbull@wnbull.com
Web: www.wnbull.com.au

Member of InvoCare Australia Pty Ltd
ABN: 22 060 060 031

Dialogue Publications
© 2018

ISSN: 1832-8474

Dialogue is published quarterly by

Dialogue Publications
- a publishing division of
WN Bull Funerals

Editorial Board:

Richard White
Jake Ryan
Patsy Healy

Production:

Phillip Pavich
Email: phillip@ridehigh.com.au

Copies of *Dialogue*
can be obtained by
calling (02) 9519 5344

Cover Image:

Seljalandsfoss waterfall, Iceland

Editorial



Richard White

Regulars

- 1 Editorial
- 22 Recommended Reading
The Green Bell
- 24 Poet's Corner

Features

- 2 Changes at WN Bull Funerals
A Transition and an Enduring Legacy
- 6 At the Kitchen Table
- 9 To Dream the Impossible Dream
- 12 Mrs Fraser
- 15 The Gift
- 17 The Recovery of Care
and Yet Another Royal Commission
- 19 Highly Strung and Lightly Played

This morning there's a Spring in my step. Yesterday, I couldn't work out how to begin; nothing worked. Then, it came to me: there are three articles in this edition about being old and they're beautiful.

Kim Shannon's mother, Molly, has just turned one hundred. 'The Gift' is a wonderful tribute to Molly's life and to Kim's attentive and loving care for her. Then, there's Erica and her sister's domestic-remembering that, like everything domestic, is anything but 'simple and ordinary'. Finally, Rob Greenop, the former Qantas pilot, among other things, encounters the diminutive Mrs Fraser, a Scottish lady who explains what 'canny' really means.

These are little stories, not earth-shattering, homely and familiar in the telling and the feel. And, our lives are full of these 'little stories', memories and glimpses into human life and human living. They are so important, these stories, they keep our feet on the ground but they allow us to soar, to dive, to rise above the pain or the distress and to wonder and to be grateful.

Being part of a funeral company means primarily having our feet on the ground, meeting people who have been brought back to earth by shock or sadness and life times of loving. Death comes to us all, but the death of each of us

is unique, full of stories, little and great, that can comfort, console and give meaning. Funerals are so important and why Jake Ryan's new position at WN Bull Funerals is so important, for him and for us.

The bewilderment and the grief won't go away; this, too, is part of the story. Another Royal Commission, this time into Aged Care, is no easy thing to bear. Our trust in our institutions can be shaken and we can wonder at the cruelty and indifference. 'What is the world coming to?'

It is possible 'To Dream the Impossible Dream' and believe in the persistence of care, living and nourishing our lives, particularly those most in need of care. Along with this faith, enlivening and inspiring, are those who bring music to our lives, the laughter of children, the stories we tell, the generous and talented 'Highly Strung Rock and Roll Orchestra'.

Spring is about hope and wild triumphs, rain and . . . the blank pages suddenly filled with words, images, people and life.

Wishing you the greenness and growth, the quiet surety and deep living of Spring, from Jake, Marcella and all at WN Bull Funerals



CHANGES AT
WN BULL FUNERALS
A TRANSITION AND AN ENDURING LEGACY

written by Richard White

There's a divinity shapes our ends
Rough hew them how we will . . .
Hamlet

These were Shakespeare's hero's words to his friend, Horatio. The context was Hamlet's belief or hope that no matter how we 'mess up' our lives or go off track, there's a providence or underlying shaping and re-shaping that is always creating or re-creating. There are no accidents or complete disasters, in other words. In the words of the English mystic, Juliana of Norwich, quoted by T S Eliot, in 'The Four Quartets',

All will be well,
All will be well, and
All manner of things will be well...

When Patsy Healy retired this year from her position of General Manager of WN Bull Funerals, there was an initial shock, as well as sadness. For over twenty five years, Patsy has been a driving force and the human face of this funeral company. How is it possible for 'all things to be well'? Can what has been most significant about the spirit and practice of WN Bull survive such a 'rough hewing' as this?

Firstly, Patsy has not gone in the sense of 'gone for good'. Patsy is currently on long service leave until the end of the year. And, like all good long-service-leavers, Patsy continues to conduct funerals for WN Bull. Then, there's Jake Ryan.

Jake is part of the management team at WN Bull Funerals; he has, however, had no previous experience in the funeral industry; Jake is a musician

When Jake spoke about his experience in music, he also highlighted connections with funerals and with Patsy. Looking back, he could see a pattern emerging.

Jake has a keen interest in liturgical music, a tradition that enhances or accompanies the church rituals and ceremony with inspiring and meditative celebration and reflection. Jake also has had a distinguished professional career including his association with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and other professional choirs and



Images
Giovanni Portelli Photography

“ Well, many of us associated with WN Bull went to St Mary's so often, we... felt very much at home there; Jake was in no small part responsible for this feeling of comfort and close collaboration; he became part of the team. ”

musical groups. Most recently, Jake has been Event and Protocol Manager for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.

This role had close association with St Mary's Cathedral, and through this, he was introduced to W N Bull Funerals and Patsy Healy.

Prior to meeting Patsy, Jake was present at funerals conducted by her and became aware of the reputation of WN Bull Funerals. Then, as the coordinator at the Cathedral, Jake worked closely with Patsy in arranging some of the large funerals conducted there, including the funeral for John Harris, the former owner of WN Bull and for the Thanksgiving Mass for 125 Years of the company.

I am reminded of a line from 'My Fair Lady', '...I will go to St James so often I will call it St Jim!' Well, many of us associated with WN Bull went to St Mary's so often, we... felt very much at home there; Jake was in no small part responsible for this feeling of comfort and close collaboration; he became part of the team. There was this working relationship that was forming a foundation for a possible career change, but possibly there was something even more significant in Jake's life that was to impact on his new role.

Jake is a musician. I have the highest regard for musicians, as indicated by another article in this edition. Dedication, focus and an inner passion seem essential to a commitment to music. To be a musician is a life long

endeavour, a learning and a loving that grows with the playing and the singing. It is not so much what one does but what one becomes. And, if I were to ask Patsy what she felt about her role as a funeral director, I suspect I would receive a similar answer, 'it is not so much what one does, as what one becomes'.



Above
WN Bull Newtown staff at
St Marys Cathedral

“ Both vocations require dedication, focus and inner passion; both vocations require a capacity to be ‘endeared’, to become capable of feeling, of compassion, of loving. ”

There is a line from one of Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poems that I keep going back to, ‘This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears...’ The poem, ‘Felix Randal’, is about a priest visiting a dying man and ministering to him in his dying. The effect of these ministrations is for the priest to be touched by the man’s condition, to feel for him, to be compassionate. However, it is also true that the priest himself is changed, becomes ‘endeared’, more and more capable of feeling, of compassion, of loving.

To become a funeral director is not unlike becoming a musician, or vice versa; to become a musician is not unlike becoming a funeral director. Both vocations require dedication, focus and inner passion; both vocations require a capacity to be ‘endeared’, to become capable of feeling, of compassion, of loving.

Jake is setting out on this new phase of his life; it was not part of his ‘plan’. In talking with me, Jake spoke of a sense of ‘call’, an invitation or a feeling of consonance, a ringing true, that underlay the conversations with Patsy about his coming to WN Bull Funerals.

‘There’s a divinity that shapes our ends...’ These may be Hamlet’s words and my experience, but they also seem to capture how Jake described his decision to join this funeral company. I enjoyed the conversation we had for this article because I got to know Jake a little more. However, together we also tapped into what it means to be a funeral director, to see this position as more than a job, more than an accident and so much more like a blessing.

That providence that promises that ‘all will be well’ encompasses all the ‘rough hewing’, all the dead ends, the seeming catastrophes and blind turns that are part of all our lives. I am reminded of the last lines of Marjorie Pizer’s poem, ‘The Great Symphony’, a reflection on the jarrings and discontinuities that are resolved, again and again, by a refrain and a melody that keeps playing and playing...

Loneliness and love, failure and success, loss
and gain,
Pleasure and pain, again and again.
So it has been, so it is and so it will be,
The great symphony playing itself to itself,
Playing itself to us and to the universe,
Until the last syllable of recorded time,
Or playing, perhaps forever,
Because it is so true and so painful and
so beautiful.

We wish Jake every blessing in his new role, confident that all he brings and all he is, will contribute to the ongoing spirit and tradition that is WN Bull Funerals.

Now serving more families
IN THE ST GEORGE & SUTHERLAND SHIRE REGIONS



Miranda Office now open by appointment. 50 Kiora Road, Miranda

wnbull@wnbull.com | (02) 8582 1110 | www.wnbull.com.au

Put those you love in the hands of those who care

Of all life’s celebrations the funeral liturgy can touch us the most deeply.

We prefer to place our trust and reliance on those who have the skill and experience to plan a funeral that has meaning and dignity.

At least that’s what Sydney families look for when they choose WN Bull Funerals.

As the funeral liturgy expresses faith, it also contextualises the life of the deceased with traditional and contemporary elements.



WN BULL
FUNERALS
Leaders in Personal Service

wnbull@wnbull.com | (02) 9519 5344 | www.wnbull.com.au



AT THE KITCHEN TABLE

FOR NEW PHILOSOPHER
MAGAZINE WRITERS' AWARD XIX : LIFE

written by Erica Greenop

A lot of life is background information. Colour wash before the details go in, basics that give us our sense of who we are, our personhood, our version of wisdom and creativity and usefulness and belonging. Conversations. Moments. Tiny bits of life, crumbs in the corners of existence. Loves. Careers. Changing the world, the dazzling busy incomplete vastness of it all. Things that have stirred our souls, the unquantifiable 'it just is' part of ourselves, ethics and morals and goodness by which we order our lives.

And the details. Memories that claw holes in our existence. Hold us captive. Keep us lost in our own life. We don't belong. We struggle to find perspective, or sense, or reason. Or a way out from the unlit alleyways and dead ends of the past.

It is June 2015. I am visiting my sister Su in England. We are reminiscing; it's what we do, now we are old, sitting at the kitchen table, remembering unimportant things which have made our lives memorable. The wrinkled wrinkles on Bertha Hicklin's earlobes. Real butter. Bird poo on Mrs Waterman's Sunday hat.

Su puts her photo album on the table among the mugs and the Portmerion coffee pot with the purple wisteria motif. I pull my chair around and sit beside her.

"Sorry I haven't got any biscuits" she says. "I didn't think to get any in. Not very hospitable of me. You come all this way and I have forgotten the biscuits."

Su is carrying on about biscuits. She does that, carries on about things, gets an idea in her mind, compulsions almost, briefly taken over by a word she likes the sound of, a colour scheme, or the feel of something, a soft blanket, the smooth handle of her coffee mug; or a sense of dread, crowds, small spaces, the smell of tea and churches and metal railings. She is different. People don't understand. She doesn't know her left from her right. Roundabouts are the ultimate nightmare, the keep-going-right-until-you-take-the-second-left sort of nightmare. Her writing starts too far over and travels uphill and runs out of space and Ts don't get crossed and capitals appear mid-sentence.

I don't know how life turns neural pathways into a kind of 'spaghetti junction.' But I wonder if early life trauma leaves its history etched on young minds, changes forever the course of a lifetime. If it was anyone else I wouldn't know how to find my way through the disorganised thinking that twists understandings and turns sense into nonsense and spoils things between people.

But this is not anyone else, this is my beloved sister.

The photo album is brown leather with a stylised York rose sculpted into the cover. Su opens it. The cellophane

“ He is looking at her, that look that loves so much it hurts. It is only a look. A tiny thing. It is going to last forever. ”

corners which stick the photos to the pages have dried out. The photos fall off the pages on to the table. I pick one up. It is an image of Su as a baby, in Cheshire in England, being held by our dad. He is looking at her, that look that loves so much it hurts. It is only a look. A tiny thing. It is going to last forever.

I brush my finger across the black and white photo. It is 76 years old. Su puts her hand to her throat and her words are struggling. She opens her mouth. Closes it. Opens it again.

I wait.

In a while she says, "I was his princess."

Dad's work was in Hong Kong. After his leave in

England the family went back to Hong Kong, Dad and our mum and baby Su.

Two years later war came.

Mum was pregnant.

"I have done some research," I say, "for something I am writing - what happened when you and Mum were evacuated from Hong Kong."

Su looks at me from the far edge of somewhere else.

"Want me to go on?"

She seems to have run out of words. Hand at her throat. But she leans forward. Nods.

"On Wednesday afternoon 1st July 1940, all European women and children in Hong Kong were ordered to leave within 5 days. They were instructed to pack up their house possessions and lock up the quarters. Evacuees were ordered to report at the Hong Kong Club at 7am on Monday with baggage limited to one cabin trunk for each adult and one suit case for each child and a small case for immediate use. Volunteers for the British Defence Forces were mobilised. Dad was one of them. He was 34."

I sip my coffee. Su is slowly shaking her head. Silent. Incredulous.

"You OK?"

"Go on." She presses her fingers to her lips.

"Volunteers were to be billeted. Families received one week's pay before departure. Our mum and you,

with hundreds of other women and children, boarded an evacuation ship, a British passenger liner, in Hong Kong harbour."

I look at Su. The strange somewhere else look about



her. I wonder about the evermore effect this piece of history could have on a child, the belonging and believing and safety things of life, the complex patterns of interrupted stability.

“There was a shortage of space on the ships. Husbands and fathers were not permitted to board the vessels to farewell their families. They would have seen the mine



and anti-submarine defences across the entrance to the harbour. They would have known that outside the harbour there were no defences.”

I pause.

“Can you remember anything from that time?”

Su was 2 years old.

“I don’t remember it as a thought memory” she says, “but I can hear people screaming. I’m screaming. I am holding on to metal railings. I am being pulled away.”

I pull my chair closer. Put my head on her shoulder. They would spend 3 months in Manila in a refugee camp.

I pick up another photo. Mum’s pregnancy is evident. It is me, her unborn child, in there. They have left Manila and are on deck onboard ship heading for Sydney. There are Japanese mines in the Coral Sea. American war ships are being sunk in the Coral Sea. Su is wearing a party dress,

puff sleeves, a wide satin sash.

“I remember that dress,” she says. “It was pink. I hate pink.”

She gets up from the table. She doesn’t seem to know what to do with the memory, where to put it in now it has emerged from the unlit alleyways of the past.

“Fancy packing a party dress -” She moves to the sink.

“More coffee?”

She fills the kettle, stands by the kitchen sink, holding the kettle.

“When you have only got one suitcase and you spend 3 months in a refugee camp,” she says, “fancy packing a party dress. Why on earth would Mum have packed a party dress?”

Su puts the kettle on the kitchen bench.

“What if -” I say. I am sure there must be a reason. “I mean, it doesn’t seem to make sense, does it - a refugee child in a party dress on a ship in the Coral Sea with mines all around and war ships. What if you had put it in your suitcase, if Mum had said you can choose one special thing you want to take?”

“No -” I can see the memory coming to her face. New light flooding. “No, that’s not it.

I took my teddy bear. Big Bear. I remember. I can’t believe this. I remember. I took my teddy bear. I remember putting him into the suitcase. Squashing him down. It was green. Canvas, with a soft top. My amah was standing there, crying. Brown straps. A label, stuck on.”

Big Bear was inclined to fatness, Su used to say. Eyes like ripe blackberries. Velvet paws. Soft tummy. Pale brown fur. Bald in patches. He would have nearly filled a whole suitcase.

“So -” I begin again. “What if Dad took your dress from its hanger and packed it in your suitcase?”

We look again at the baby photo.

“You were his little princess. He loved you so much. He thought he would never see you again. He was afraid, for himself and you and Mum, and you were too young to understand -”

The thought hangs there, unfinished. Dad was a prisoner of the Japanese. Captured in Hong Kong. Two and a half years of cruelty and starvation. After the war he seemed to have forgotten the people who loved him.

Morning sunshine streams into the kitchen. The day has gone quiet, drifting at the intersection of then and now, searching for the unfinished moment.

Su looks at me. Hand at her throat.

“He wanted me to have a pretty dress, whatever else happened.”

We stop talking and thinking and imagining, and let ourselves feel the sadness. Sadness. Nothing more. A tiny thing that knows all about being lost in your own life.



TO DREAM

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

written by Richard White

Bill just dropped in two towels, ‘I thought you might need these. People normally only stop for a night and I forgot’. ‘Thanks, Bill’, I said and retreated back into the little cabin, twenty odd kilometres from the town of Narrabri, North Western New South Wales.

My wife, Leigh, was attending a conference and I had the day to myself. Instead of booking into accommodation in town, Leigh had discovered ‘Dulcinea’, a couple of cabins on the property of Bill and Pat Burgess.

There was a sign as we drove down the dirt drive, ‘Parking forbidden, except for submariners! Offenders will be torpedoed!’ Bill and Pat are English and Bill is an engineer and had been in the Royal Navy, on submarines. He and Pat have been in Narrabri for forty years, ‘came up for a job; it fell through and we stayed.’

I’ve yet to find out why the couple called the cabins, ‘Dulcinea’. I know that this is the name of the love interest of Don Quixote, from Miguel Cervantes sixteenth century novel. Dulcinea was the unpromising looking serving girl whom our hero saw as ravishing, the beauty and ideal of his dreams.

Above
Organ Pipes / Sawn Rocks, Kaputar National Park, Narrabri, NSW



A prepaid funeral to honour a very special life

The celebration of a life takes careful planning and is too important to leave to just anyone.

In the 125 years WN Bull Funerals has been serving the people of Sydney there has been significant growth and change in the community. We are proud to have been able to readily adapt to these changes and remain compassionate, sensitive and responsive to the needs and wishes of our client families.

The recommendation of a tailored prepaid funeral plan is part of WN Bull's proud heritage of providing real comfort and personalised care for the deceased and their families.

A WN Bull prepaid funeral will ensure that every detail is attended to so that the life lived is the life celebrated.

Paid in today's prices it's also a sound financial decision.

**When the care you seek is unconditional
- talk to us.**



Sydney 9519 5344 • Parramatta 9687 1072 • Chatswood 9954 5255
Miranda 8582 1110 • wnbull@wnbull.com • www.wnbull.com.au

Mocked by his contemporaries, humoured by his faithful servant, Sancho, Don Quixote dreamt of doing great things, heroic and misguided, 'tilting at windmills' and seeing beauty and wonder no one else could see.

Bill, our host, apologised for the contrast between the lush images on the 'Local Accommodation' website and the dry brownness of the present. 'We haven't had the rain'. But, it was not the singed shrubs on the driveway or the absence of greenery that struck us; it was the clutter of lived-ness, the tractor and ute that had seen better days, the fences and gates and gardens and nooks that suggested labour and whimsy. And, that was only scratching the surface.

Bill had assured us the stay was 'pet friendly' and we had thought of bringing our dog, Teebs. We decided against bringing our dog, but we soon saw why 'Dulcinea' was welcoming of animals.

We were introduced on arrival to 'Banjo', a very big German Shepherd, friendly and welcoming, to 'Jack', a plumpish and equally friendly, Jack Russell, and assured that 'Houdini' the uncontainable cat would be paying a visit. Each morning there were two small kangaroos not far from our back door and in the paddock on the drive out we saw two emus, along with five cows.

“ Living things replace asphalt, cars and noise give way to animals and bird sounds and courtesy and warmth begin to dissolve some of the anonymity and wariness of city life. ”

I glanced through the Guest Book and these first impressions were confirmed. Enthusiastic and grateful travellers and their pets had found solace and calm, welcome and . . . whatever it is that makes our hearts miss a beat.

'Dulcinea' is so-not-a-motel or hotel or city apartment. For us, who have had a few years in the country, the magic is still there or, rather, the magic expands and descends and develops. Living things replace asphalt, cars and noise give way to animals and bird sounds and courtesy and warmth begin to dissolve some of the anonymity and wariness of city life.

In the guest book, people wrote of this place as a 'haven' or 'respite', 'a wonderful country retreat', 'domestic bliss, unbelievable quiet', 'came for shelter from the storm then didn't want to leave...'



Above
One of the two cabins at Dulcinea, Narrabri, NSW

The 'wise and the learned', the air we breathe and the culture we so take for granted, can stifle our wonder and our deep longing for bliss and for quiet. The institutional scandals and political crises can generate despair and a lip-curling cynicism. Our own souls can become soiled and angry, caught in the currents and undercurrents of unhappiness and blame. Against my better judgement, I still buy the newspaper, still watch the news, still become agitated. I have to know what's 'going on in the world'.

Then, Bill turns up at the door with two towels in his hands, Banjo and Jack longing to come in for a party. It's a simple gesture, one of the many that have made us and others before us, wondering and grateful. For a night or few days, the Man from La Mancha lives in us and around.

The Giants of Don Quixote's imagination are kept at bay; no, more, they have been defeated, thwarted, sent packing. The Slough of Despond lies shaking, Banjo and Jack rejoicing, while two emus dance like brolgas and the cows jump over the moon.

Dulcinea smiles benignly. Bill's and Pat's two little cabins, a life time of welcomes and kindness, a littleness that shines brightly, continue to defy the odds. The Impossible Dream is so much more real than success, money and power.



MRS FRASER

written by Rob Greenop

It was back in the mid-eighties, a clear summers day and my crew and I were in our B747 at London Airport's number four terminal. All pre-flight checks had been completed and we were waiting for our allocated 'slot time' to arrive, ie. the exact time to a minute allocated by air traffic control for us to start engines and be pushed back from the departure gate. All passengers were onboard and settling into their seats.

Unexpectedly the cabin interphone rang. Carl my first officer answered and after a pause turned to me with raised eyebrows and a wry smile on his face. I had a sixth sense that something out of the ordinary was happening in the main cabin that I wouldn't want to hear.

"It's the flight services director, Captain. He says that there's a little old lady down the back in economy who wants to get off – says she doesn't want to go to New Zealand but wants to go back to Scotland. She won't sit down."



I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Here we were, just over ten minutes from departure during the busiest part of the day, with three hundred and ninety-eight passengers on board bound for Bangkok and then on to Australia and, of course, New Zealand and a little old lady wanted to get off and go home. She couldn't get off – it was too late – the doors were closed and the other three hundred and ninety-seven were waiting to get going. If we lost our 'slot time', we could be delayed for over an hour. This crisis with a little old lady was one that I had never trained for.

Carl handed over the phone for me to talk to the director while he reached for the QRH, our emergency bible. This is the *Quick Reference Handbook-747*, thoughtfully provided



by the Boeing Aircraft Company, covering what pilots should do when things go wrong. Normally Boeing have contingencies for every sort of emergency, so perhaps there was something at the back that I had overlooked.

He quickly thumbed through and mouthed to me that there was no 'Little Old Lady Wants to Get Off' mentioned in the index. We were on our own with this one.

"She won't sit down," the flight director continued – "she's rather agitated – just keeps saying she wants to get off and go home, nothing I say seems to reassure her - do you think you could speak with her if I bring her up to the flight deck?"

In my nearly thirty years of flying passengers around the world I'd never had this problem. I experienced mechanical defects, medical emergencies, adverse weather situations, even smelly noisy animals in the under-floor cargo compartments annoying the fare-paying payers above, cows on a runway as I've approached to land, but never a little old lady who at the last moment wanted to get off.

Slowly I released my straps and got out of the seat. Perhaps lots of gold braid might convince her that all was well. So I put on my hat and jacket and went through the

“ He quickly thumbed through and mouthed to me that there was no 'Little Old Lady Wants to Get Off' mentioned in the index. We were on our own with this one. ”

door into the business-class zone on the upper deck. As I did, I observed the tall director escorting a diminutive figure of approximately one hundred and forty centimeters up the aisle from the rear. My problem lady was a little old granny of about eighty with a mass of white hair and big round eyes hiding behind what seem to be enormous specs. She was sensibly dressed for travel in a long plaid skirt, buttoned shoes and carrying a huge handbag. For some reason, in that moment of crisis I imagined it full of knitting.

The director said she was Mrs Fraser from a small town somewhere north of Edinburgh. I registered the name



Fraser, but the town's unpronounceable name went in one ear and out the other. She looked up and addressed me directly in a broad Scottish accent.

"I wanna gher orf", she says "I just wanna gher orf." "I wanna go hooome."

The 'hooome' seemed to go on and on.

I glanced at the director who rolled his eyes and shook his head. I felt like doing the same, but if this crisis was to be speedily resolved a calm demeanour was going to be necessary. I put on my best comforting reassuring smile and placed my arm around her shoulders and spoke in my quiet-voice-reserved-for-nervous-passengers.

“It was too far to go. She had never left Scotland and her comfortable house in the unpronounceable town north of Edinburgh. New Zealand was the other side of the world and all she wanted to do was go home.”

"It's going to be fine – you'll be very comfortable - we have a nice warm aeroplane with lots of people to look after you." Here I might add, I normally would have said *aircraft* but *aeroplane* might have sounded less formidable to a nervous old lady. "The weather is good. We're going to have a nice smooth flight. You'll be just fine," I continued.

She didn't appear to be convinced. Her voice became a little more quavery as her story quickly unfolded. She had a daughter and grandchildren in New Zealand who she was going to see. It was too far to go. She had never left Scotland and her comfortable house in the unpronounceable town north of Edinburgh. New Zealand was the other side of the world and all she wanted to do was go home.

There was no *positive* response from Mrs F. My mind feverishly switched between this little old lady who didn't want to sit down, losing my 'slot time' and suffering a late departure, with the possibilities of other passengers missing connecting flights somewhere along the route, when I had a brilliant idea. That is what I was paid for.

One thing about being the captain of an aircraft is that once the doors are closed you have overriding authority over who sits where and who does what. This is enshrined in law. A quick glance around the upper deck revealed

there were several empty seats. I realised that there may be a way out of this dilemma.

"Mrs Fraser," I said. "Would you like to have a nice comfortable seat up here in business-class – look, there are several window seats spare and I will get one of my young pilots to come and sit with you for the take-off." On long-range flights we carried four pilots, so I could easily spare one for a while to keep Mrs F happy.

Thankfully this brainwave of mine stuck a chord. After what seemed an eternity she quietly agreed that perhaps she indeed *could* sit there and it would be nice to have the company of a young man to reassure her that she was in good hands.

I quickly returned to the flight-deck in time to start engines and taxi out on time as planned. As promised, Mrs F was safely ensconced in a business-class window seat with young second officer Dooly alongside to hold her hand if necessary.



It was around ten minutes after take-off, the flight out of the London area was progressing smoothly, the weather ahead was fine and the French coast line passing underneath when, with the *seatbelt* and *no smoking* signs in the cabin turned off, Dooly returned from his take-off duties with Mrs F. He slotted into the spare seat behind me and tapped me on the shoulder.

"Mrs F is very happy captain – all is well. She's settled into her seat without any problem. She's very relaxed, just like a seasoned traveller. In fact, as soon as you turned off the signs she undid her seatbelt, pushed the call button, asked the steward for a brandy and lit a cigarette! I guess you've been well and truly conned."

And I guess I well and truly had. And that is not what I was paid for.



THE GIFT

written by Kim Shannon

My mother turned 100 in May, she has outlived all her close friends. It seemed like such an extraordinary event.

We gave her a party, there were plenty of flowers (she has always adored flowers) and balloons, and a huge cake. Her life has been about family and friends, and the children of friends.

I began painting some of the roses she had been given, after they had passed their best - initially just for their beauty, they become mellow and papery, (I have always enjoyed leaves and flowers when the colour is preserved in the mellowness of time).

I went on to think about the gift, for whatever reason it is given and how it is received.

“ The gift of life, the gift of being loved, receiving love... ”

The gift of life, the gift of being loved, receiving love, or the gift of the blue-gum blossom that appears in the winter, delicate and fine; some persimmons given by an old friend and arranged, by my son, on the perfect plate; or when a painting appears as if by magic after struggling with it for days.

I have painted pictures as gifts for my mother, mostly flowers; she gave her mother a small dish she bought with her first pay packet; she received a beautiful jacket from my father which he had made from an Obi he brought back from Japan. The letters we wrote to each other when I was in England; the letters I still send and receive from a close friend in France.

So, these pictures are about the gift in whatever form it takes; for my mother, with love and gratitude.



Across
Mum on her centenary celebration with the family
Clockwise
Small Gifts | Oil on Board, 2018
Glass with Roses and Persimmon 1 | Oil on Canvas, 2018
Centenary Roses 2 | Oil on Board, 2018
Mother's Day | Oil on Board, 2018

THE RECOVERY OF CARE AND YET ANOTHER ROYAL COMMISSION

written by Richard White

There's to be another Royal Commission, this time into Aged Care. The lead up to this latest investigation was again punctuated with personal stories of abuse and sadness.

What struck me were the photos of elderly women as young. 'This was my mother', the photos and the daughter or grandchildren said. A vibrant, smiling, interesting woman with a bright future and energy and hope. Later photos showed an ageing, mature face, a life lived and loving intelligence.

Children and grandchildren knew the story in the face and becoming and shaping of a person. They knew this woman; they cared for her as she grew older. With great reluctance and sadness they handed her into the care of people who did not know her and for whom caring was a profession not the normal and natural reward of knowing and loving.

The scandals of neglect and incompetence may well be balanced by the efforts of compassionate and dedicated staff. However, the painful outcry of families and the indignation and shock of most of us is that these revelations of cruelty and mistreatment strike at something that is central to all of us as human beings – the essential value and dignity of every human life.

This heart-stopping horror at yet another shattering of our beliefs and expectations can produce sinking despair and hopelessness, anger and grief. First, the endless stories of child abuse, now the equally distressing images of older people, their lives seemingly de-valued, their families distraught. May the shock and the accompanying grief grow in us all and reveal to us, if needs be, what we as a society are losing!



Grief is a blessed thing, painful and threatening as it can be. The blessing of shock and sadness is like seeing those family photos not as a statistic but a person, not a final decline, but a life-time of living. In the photos, the stories and the sadness we are reminded that 'not people die but worlds die in them'. And, in the words of John Donne . . .

No man is an island entire to itself . . .
any man's death diminishes me
because I am involved in mankind,
And, therefore never send
To know for whom the bell tolls.
It tolls for thee.

Do not ask whose mother or father, brother or sister was lonely of helpless or neglected or hurt. Insofar as this was done to anyone's mother or father, brother or sister, this injustice or cruelty was done to my mother or father . . . For, we are all connected, all related, all sharers in a story that includes all the particular, precious, quirky, tragic and courageous stories of every human being. This current sadness and grief can remind us of this.

Bur, 'remind' is too mild a word. Grief is not a 'reminder'; it is shaking, a rupture or breaking-in of our ordinariness, our hard-won settledness that protects and isolates us.

Our own losses and hurts open us up; if we are blessed, we become 'fellow sufferers' as Albert Schweitzer put it.

Our cries mingle with the cries of the people we've seen in the news and there is a groundswell, a growing and inclusive compassion and the possibility of a renewal of care.

Would that it would be so! One can only hope that outrage and recriminations will not lead simply to more CCTV coverage, more regulations and protocols, more supervision and training. The telling of stories and sharing of photos deserves more than that; we all deserve more than that.

I am reminded of Samuel Coleridge's poem of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. It is the story of a sailor who mindlessly killed an albatross, an action that disrupted the harmony of a world. Senseless cruelty led to discord and tragedy, innocent lives lost and suffering was widespread.

Only when the unfortunate initiator of this tragedy, at the centre of the chaos he caused, was caught for a moment by the beauty of some sea snakes, did hope return.

O happy living things! No tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed forth from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me
And I blessed them unaware!

'Sure my kind saint took pity on me, and I blessed them unaware . . . ' Whatever of 'recommendations' and resolutions, if we are moved by the emerging stories and photos, if our hearts and lives are pierced in some way, if a 'spring of love gushed from our hearts' and we blessed and felt for the suffering of others, then maybe there could be a rediscovery of care, a growth in compassion, an infinite gentleness and renewing of trust . . .

The rational, bureaucratic approach does not work. Something has to shift within each of us and within our culture. 'Aged Care' has to be a sacred thing, like 'Child Care'. Miracles do happen; senseless cruelty can be healed and only healing can transform the situations we have witnessed lately.

The ending of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' depicts a vision of compassion beyond our human concerns, to all of creation. The hope and the love that can emerge from grief can be sparked by the smallest of stirrings, cups of cold water, random kindnesses, glimmers of sympathy. Hearts are enlarged and lives are changed; nothing less than this.

He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

WHATEVER YOU DO WILL BE THE WRONG THING

These words were meant kindly. I was visiting a nursing home, looking for somewhere for my father; the director of nursing knew well the emotions experienced by families at this time. The recent decision to hold a Royal Commission into aged care and publicity surrounding and supporting the decision highlights the anxiety and unease and the grief around the ongoing care of people we love.

This anxiety has been exacerbated by images of abuse and maltreatment. What affects me most is the unbelievable absence of care. How can people do this?

Our hearts and our souls have taken a battering. The Royal Commission into Institutional Sexual Abuse is to be followed by a Royal Commission into Aged Care; the abuse of the young and the elderly, the most helpless and the most vulnerable. What is happening to our society?



HIGHLY STRUNG AND LIGHTLY PLAYED

written by Richard White

We have just come back from 'a cruise'. As I write this, 'come back from a cruise', I have very mixed feelings. It is a bit like saying, 'we've done the Ghan' or 'been to Kakadu'; it's a tourist cliché, a superficial, if not slightly embarrassing, throw-away line.

When someone said to us before we went, 'I wouldn't have thought you were the cruise types', we sheepishly agreed. How did we end up 'going on a cruise'? That's another story; we did go on a ship, from Circular Quay, Sydney, for nine days with about nine hundred people we had never met before and – we thoroughly enjoyed it.

However, when it came to explaining why we enjoyed the cruise, I found I was a bit lost for words. It was only when I reflected on 'Highly Strung Rock and Roll Orchestra', that I began to understand what had happened to me over those nine days.

It was our first or second night on board, we were walking through The *Blue Room*, one of a number of small venues and nooks on the entertainment deck; two

violinists, a young woman vocalist and a bloke on guitar. They were playing an Irish tune, vigorously, and we were tempted to linger, but we didn't.

Music isn't my thing, if truth be told. Our family was not musical. In fact, it was a big event when my mother bought a small record player and joined the Readers' Digest Music Club.

My mother was a lovely person, but there was a little of Mrs Bucket (pronounced, 'Bouquet') about her; she wanted to 'lift her game', and the family's; what we describe today as getting some culture. Hence the record player (not to be confused with a sound system or anything remotely sophisticated).

Nothing really happened. We remained, despite her efforts, relatively down-beat. I vaguely remember Brahm's 'Hungarian Dances', an early freebie from Readers' Digest, but my bread and butter LP's were 'Sound of Music', 'My Fair Lady' and Bing Crosby's 'Irish Favourites'.

The only songs I can sing, and I use the term loosely, to my grand children are 'Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ra, That's an Irish Lullaby' and 'Paddy McGinty's Goat'. So, it's no wonder I kept on walking when I first heard, 'Highly Strung'. But, the things was, this was not the first time I had heard the group perform.

A couple of years ago I had organised a Remembrance Service in the WN Bull Funeral's chapel in Newtown. Prior to this event, we had been offering these services to families at the larger venues at the Cemeteries and Crematoria. Then, we decided to have one in the smaller, more intimate setting of our own chapel.

Also, we thought this venue required a change from the organist and singer who had served us so well and so loyally in the bigger chapels, Sir Trevor Garland and Tanith Bryce. With this in mind, I contacted Bernadette and Justin McCoy from . . . 'Highly Strung'.

“ This is the sense that I understand 'Highly Strung's' music and playing as 'ministry'; they wanted our welfare and well-being, particularly our emotional and spiritual well-being. ”

I had heard them play before and I had met their daughter, Stella, who had sung in our chapel while her mother played the violin and her father the guitar. But, there was nothing like a 'Rock and Roll Orchestra' in their contribution that evening.

The night after that fleeting encounter on the cruise, we joined the crowd gathering in the *Blue Room*. Gradually, the light dawned, I recognized Bernadette, then Justin; Mary, the other violinist, was introduced as Justin's sister, classically trained like Bernadette.

Stella, the 'star', was Justin and Bernadette's daughter, flute and tin whistle player, as well as vocalist, and whisked from the midst of a music degree by her loving and enthusiastic parents, in need of a singer when their son,

Joey, another band member, moved to greener pastures. Night after night, the band played to an appreciative and loyal audience. Even I could see that the music was superb and the repertoire carefully crafted.

In conversation with Bernadette at a break, I began to make more connections. I realised that this was much, much more than shrewd, thoroughly professional cruise entertainment. Music was far too important for this quartet for it to be other than a vocation or, as became clear from our conversation, a ministry.



There was nothing preachy or condescending about 'Highly Strung', but there was a clear and elevated purpose; to offer quality live music to people who may not have experienced it before and to share with the audience their love of classical music and the work of some of the masters as well as familiar ballads and beat.

I use the word 'ministry' deliberately. To minister is to serve, even to be a servant. Our various and ever changing leaders of government are called 'Prime Ministers', an exalted title; one of the Pope's titles is *servus servorum Dei*, 'Servant of the Servants of God'.

My experience of the cruise was that the service was superb, gracious, generous and constant. Staff seemed to

delight in doing things for us, concerned for our welfare and well-being. This is the sense that I understand 'Highly Strung's' music and playing as 'ministry'; they wanted our welfare and well-being, particularly our emotional and spiritual well-being.

The carefully crafted repertoire included a mixture of swinging, popular tunes, like The Beatles; then, there was 'Roll Over Beethoven', which cleverly introduced us to themes and excerpts of the Master's works. One set began with J S Bach's 'Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring'.



There were haunting Irish and Scottish melodies which took the attentive audience to another place. Then, there was a favourite of mine, 'Taxi', a poignant reflection on a chance encounter, memories and youthful dreams, and the harsh realities of later years tempered by a nostalgia devoid of sentiment and self-pity, a clean sharp pain, so familiar and so human.

That was the source of their magic, their conjuring with skill and sincerity aspects of our humanity and our being human, so often lost and set aside in the busyness and self-preoccupation of non-cruise life.

That's what musicians do for me, they conjure, like magicians; and shapes and fancies become real and present. There was something special, too, about the intimate experience of live music and live musicians in the crowded *Blue Room*. Bernadette and Mary duelling with their violins, Justin, guitar-wielding, gypsy-like jumping onto a coffee table, and Stella, the star, swaying and filling a room with a lived-with song.

'Highly Strung' are, of course, highly strung, vibrant, in tune and ringing true or evoking and responding to the truth coming alive in their audience; the duelling was not only between the two fiddle players. We all danced or sang or swayed in our own ways. Then, to a Mark Knopfler 'Going Home' tune, we mused and settled and felt. A kaleidoscope of sound and personality, differences

merged into a common experience and then, at the breaks, released us into our individual expressions of appreciation and delight.



It may be a small 'm' ministry but it is the only way I can explain the impact and gift of the cruise, the gift of Highly Strung Rock and Roll Orchestra; if only I could sing a few bars of 'Roll Over Beethoven' when next someone asks me, 'how was the cruise?'

Mourning Stationery



as individual as your loved one

Order of Service Booklets - Thank You Cards - Holy Cards - Bookmarks - Visual Tributes - Framed Casket Photos

We offer a range of mourning stationery all designed and printed with a personal touch to help celebrate the life of your loved one.

We can meet with you in your home, a convenient location or by email. Once printed, your stationery is then personally delivered to your Funeral Director.

At Pure Light Collection we will help make things a little easier by taking the stress out of your mourning stationery arrangements.

You can contact Deborah from 9am to 7pm, 7 days
Phone: 8840 8545 ABN: 42 674 323 388 Mobile: 0423 737 022
Email: deborah@purelight.com.au



THE GREEN BELL

BY PAULA KEOGH

Reviewed by Richard White

It's early in the morning. It's quiet in the house. The birds are awake. Yesterday there was rain. Somewhere, today, there will be more rain. For some farmers, there is hope. All I have, at the moment, is the blank page and a whirl of thoughts around Paula Keogh's *The Green Bell*; I want to do the book and the author, justice.

The subtitle of this brave and moving book is 'a memoir of love, madness and poetry'. For the past twelve months, Paula's book has been on a shelf, in a pile of to-be-read books, on the edge, like a thought or an experience that waits patiently for due attention. A friend from Melbourne gave me *The Green Bell* after I had stayed at her place, last year, for the AFL Grand Final. I think she said, 'I know Paula Keogh. This is a beautiful book.' This year, around The Last Saturday in September, I picked it up.

I'm looking at the cover photo, finding it difficult to tear myself away from the image: the faces of two young people, the attractive, smiling woman and a long haired man, arm draped round her shoulder, kissing her. Above their dark and slightly blurred faces, there's a green haze,

fresh, living, protective. Like the story itself, the image holds a moment and a place that... says it all.

The two people are Paula Keogh and Michael Dransfield who first met in M Ward, the psychiatric section of Canberra Hospital, 1972; Paula was there after a second breakdown following the death of her friend, Julianne, and Michael, for treatment for drug addiction. Paula and Michael fall in love and within eighteen months or so, Michael is dead from an overdose.

These are the bare facts, only, there are no 'bare facts', no meetings, no livings that are not touched with magic and drama and beauty of that cover photo. Madness is when 'the facts' – illness, addiction, electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), anti psychotic drugs and all the demands

of 'normality', silence the joys and the griefs and the sheer wonder of living.

Paula was mad and Michael was addicted to drugs. Two broken human beings whose lives were fractured by their personal histories, in the context of the war in Vietnam, the massacre at the Munich Olympics, the excessives and excitement of the drugs and music of the 70's.

Despite myself, or, more truthfully, because of my own history and biases, I was instinctively critical: Mansfield was a druggie and Paula, a vulnerable, impressionable young woman; no wonder it didn't work!

Sounds terrible, doesn't it? So smug, self-righteous, self-protective. Even, horror of horrors, so sane, so normal a reaction. Paula's experience of madness was a struggle between this type of pseudo-sanity and a reality that involves a flowering of freedom and a cherishing and embracing of a unique human life.

The pseudo-sanity is where we sacrifice the wildness of our hearts to the need to fit in. This wildness is there in the depths and the spontaneity of our loving and friendships, in the neediness and desperation of our pain and the bewildering chaos of our thinking. Paula's love for Julianne, her friend from school, and the healing passion with Michael were both expressions of that wildness, claimed and celebrated in this book.

You *can* tell a book by its cover! There is something iconic about the image of Paula and Michael; iconic in the true sense, of an image that is a window onto reality.

What is real here is the captured moment of closeness, the connection our souls crave, that our bodies, that all of us, crave. In the words of the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, 'all real living is meeting'.

The poetry of the book is there in Paula's unfolding narrative, beautifully and evocatively written. It is there is Michael's poem, 'Geography III' at the opening of the story,

in the forest, in unexplored
valleys of the sky, are chapels of pure
vision, there even the desolation of space cannot
sorrow you or imprison...

It is there in the moments captured in words, as the moment captured in the photo and in the drama of Paula's ever-present quest-ion.

The experience and description of madness confronts the clinical diagnoses, 'schizophrenia', 'bi-polar' and so on, with the human realities: fragmented, alien, darkness, fear, helplessness...

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there...

“ Paula takes us into the experience of madness; she reveals a life – time effort to understand; she demonstrates a persistent and courageous determination to be real, to connect... ”

'Hold them cheap...', discount or dismiss this suffering those who know not the pain. Or, those whose pseudo-sanity is well protected, to our long-term and inevitable peril, to ours and to those around us. Gerard Manley Hopkins describes well the madness Paula experienced, 'the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall/Frightful...' So dangerous, so threatening... so human.

This is why Paula's book is so good and so necessary. Paula takes us into the experience of madness; she reveals a life – time effort to understand; she demonstrates a persistent and courageous determination to be real, to connect, to celebrate the whole of the journey, the whole of her life. I am so grateful for this beautiful book and for Chris who gave it to me.

ORDER AND CHAOS

I sit in my car
Watching the waves beating up the beach.
For how many aeons have they been washing up this
shore?
I look at the sky,
Blue over the blue ocean,
And out to all the hidden galaxies
Of the unknown universe.
I look for the maker and the shaker
Of the chaos and the order and the infinity.
I, in my car, am a little speck
In the face of this immensity and mystery,
Making tiny marks in ephemeral notebooks
And calling them poems.
I, who am here today and gone tomorrow,
Bow my head before the enormity and inevitability
Of all I see.

Marjorie Pizer

Copies of Marjorie Pizer's
books can be ordered from
Pinchgut Press
67 Diamond Street
AMAROO ACT 2914
www.pinchgut-press.com.au



Celeste CATERING — Est. 1991 —

ORGANISING THE WAKE

Delegate the venue, food and beverage arrangements to Celeste - one of Sydney's trusted Gold Licensed catering companies with 24-years' experience.

No function is too 'small' or too 'large' for us, ranging from catering for small groups to events for thousands of people, such as the Canonisation of St Mary MacKillop.

2-STEPS TO BOOKING A FUNCTION

(Contact Us 24-hours per day, 7-days a week)

- 1. Book a Function Room** - Phone (02) 9889 8455 to book your room and we will email you our Menus & Beverages
- 2. Select your Menu & Beverages** - Phone or email us to confirm your Menu/Beverages and number of Guests

ON-SITE FUNCTION ROOMS

Book a beautiful Function Room with Celeste at:

- Macquarie Park Cemetery
- Rookwood Catholic Cemetery
- Woronora Cemetery
- Liverpool Cemetery
- Frenchs Forest Bushland Cemetery

OFF-SITE CATERING

Celeste can also cater for Wakes & Functions at:

- Your Home
- Funeral Homes
- Church Halls
- Local Parks
- Any other venue of your choice



Phone: (02) 9889 8455 Mobile: 0438 126 125
Email: bookings@celestecatering.com.au
Web: www.celestecatering.com.au

WN Bull Funerals engages Celeste Catering to provide the services outlined above.



WN BULL
FUNERALS
Leaders in Personal Service

www.wnbull.com.au