

JUST FAMOUS ENOUGH NOT TO BE NOTICED

As told by
Michael Donovan

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1947 - 1968 Becoming Me | The Bank | Franquin

*I am not a perfectionist. My Mother was though.
I've run away to join a different circus.*

In true Irish Catholic tradition I am the third of five children. Not keeping with tradition, I am the only survivor in 2013 as I start to write. Tragedy took two at or close to birth. One, after whom I was named, succumbed to polio. The second born, my eldest brother Terry, is now also gone. I remain but am in decay. I have had an interesting, random and relatively unpremeditated life which has been a privilege to experience, hard at times but made easy by an incredible life-partnership with my wife Carol. So let's begin ...

May 26 in 1937 and 1947 are special dates. My brother Terence Sean Donovan and I were both born on this date, 10 years less five minutes apart. I was born on a Monday and he on a Wednesday. We survived all other siblings by many years. Michael, the first born in 1931, had Down's Syndrome but as can happen, he also

had an extra ability. I am told if you asked Michael what day of the week it was, on a random date in any year, he could name the day every time.

Unusually for the times, Michael was cared for and schooled at home for many years. It was peer opinion, neighbours and my father's work network who applied such pressure on my parents, Vince and Moya; they succumbed to the accepted standard practice of putting intellectually challenged children into a home. Moya searched for the best facility in Australia and chose one on the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales. However, her push-back and early success in keeping Michael at home were supported by Dr Ruth Cilento, mother of actress Diane Cilento. My brother, Terry and Diane Cilento were childhood playmates. I was told Dr Cilento bucked public opinion and her own profession's arcane views and practices quite a bit.

Apparently my father had some difficulty accepting the original Michael so the decision may have suited him personally. Basically my namesake brother was hidden away and his existence denied as was the practice of the day.

Although christened Michael Jerome Donovan I took my Catholic 'confirmation' name from my father's first name Vincent. I carried the first name of my eldest brother because the family knew he would not likely survive beyond early adulthood and was to be remembered in me. This was a nice thought but thankfully the family more commonly used my second given name of Jerome, shortened to Rome. I was bullied as Jerome at school as you will read, so I adopted Michael as my preferred common first-name outside of the family and into business life. I have never accepted Mike or Mickey as the short-form which is common practice in Australia. The original Michael was called Mickey by family.

The other three siblings were two brothers and a sister. One was still born and the other two also had Down's Syndrome. My father refused to have these children at home. They were left to die close to birth which wasn't uncommon in the late 1940s and 50s. Dad believed, as was also common in those days, that

Down's Syndrome came only from the mother when in fact the cause is shared. Moya corresponded with a Dr Judith Ford of the Down's Syndrome Research Unit at University of Adelaide Genetics Department in 1985 relating her experiences and feelings. The correspondence between them is moving.

Michael died of polio in 1951. Regretfully I have absolutely no memory of him nor any family photographs. I am told he was extremely loving towards me. The family never ever discussed Michael once he died or mentioned any of the other siblings. I can vaguely recall only one birth with me visiting my mother at the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital. Dark memories. Solemn parents, tension and crying. A stalwart father, squeezing my hand too tightly and pulling me away from the overpowering smell of that place with birth and death simultaneously sitting heavy in my nostrils.

My other surviving sibling Terry wasn't around much. More like a visiting stranger. Terry spent his teen years at boarding school at Nudgee College near Brisbane. Cadet uniform or rugby shorts are the strongest recollection I have. It would not be until many years later we became even remotely close in terms of brotherly affection.

Terry did well in the school cadet corp. Apparently, he was an excellent shot with a .303 rifle and had a talent for munitions disposal in the Army Reserve.

Dad was a Nudgee boy as well. I know this not because he told me, but because I found his 1921 Junior B class copy of *The Englishman's Pocket Latin-English-English-Latin Dictionary*. Grounding in the Latin Mass helped me learn French and get by badly in reading some Italian.

My mum (Moya) and my dad (Vince) came from opposite ends of the social spectrum. Both Catholic, both families migrating from County Cork, Ireland. My grandfather John, on Vince's side, was a 19-year-old jockey born in 1868 who lost a leg in a riding accident. He arrived in Australia in 1887, purchased Sweeney's Cordials in Warwick in 1891 and married Catherine Mannion

in 1896 in Maryborough but returned to live in Warwick on Queensland's Darling Downs.

He served as a Warwick Shire Alderman from 1902-10 and may have been Mayor of Allora. Grandfather was a member of the Hibernian Society, President twice and member of the society's Literary Club. I can recall him in his 90s speaking and debating in a beautiful soft Irish brogue. He built a hotel at Thane on the Darling Downs in 1904 but eventually moved to Brisbane in 1910 as publican of the Waterloo Hotel in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.

Terry's son, Myles, has granddad's gold fob watch which the Warwick town elders gave John on leaving public office. Soft pure gold, beautiful chimes and a long solid gold fob chain. John Donovan went on to become a seriously wealthy Queensland publican giving each of his children the latest grand-touring, open-top cars as a gift in 1929. The Donovans have connection to the families: Gilshenen, O'Sullivan, Chalk, King, Thiell and Gallaher. My mother also mentioned the Delahunty's but I've not found such a linkage in research.

John Vincent, was one of four children. May, Vera, Eileen were his three sisters. 'Vince' was the publican's handsome playboy son. Born in Warwick on 16 January, 1906, he became a very capable football player, yachtsman and racing car driver who twice held a US World Title in something like Uphill Dirt Racing. At one time we had an old photo of his car on such a slope.

While not a good publican, Vince was a talented cook. Apparently, Dad would sit with the hotel chefs and cooks, who were all European immigrants, watching, and then duplicating their dishes. I have inherited his ability but with a better palate for wines and sauces. When the Brisbane chapter of the *Beefsteak and Burgundy Club* was formed under his initiative Vince became its first President and was heralded for his food and wine knowledge. I had his food stained B&B tie for many years but carelessly misplaced it in a house move.

Moya Geraldine Johnson was born in Maryborough, Queensland to Julia Maud O'Sullivan and Thomas Johnson on

29 November, 1908. She and her sister Winifred 'Wynne' were talented duo-pianists of some repute. Mum's mum was a seamstress. Classical piano music was to be a large part of my life with a mother who thought nothing of getting up at 4am and launching into a repertoire of Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Liszt and Beethoven before returning to breakfast in bed some hours later, then going to work. Moya also spoke French. Piano and French lessons were to be a challenge between mother and this son.

The family acquired one of the new stereophonic record players in the 60s. The house was filled with music for much of the day. Moya chose piano recordings. I saved and purchased opera and ballet sets which I played when home alone as Moya objected to how loud I liked the volume. I still have many of these vinyl recordings, being strangely unable to part with them in exchange for their CD equivalents. My love of ballet came from seeing Fonteyn at Festival Hall in Brisbane in 1962.

Somehow the relationship between the two Johnson sisters became strained and it was not until much later in life it softened to the point where they would meet annually. Aunt Wynne went to work for Brisbane Radio 4KQ and years hence I would spend many an hour in the record library talking to her and expanding my interest in classical music, ballet and opera.

Her daughter Denise Redwood was a freckled-faced red-head with a stentorian voice. (She claims her voice is mellifluous.) On the few occasions we met back then we enjoyed each other's company immensely. The friendship has been life-long. Denise left Australia for Canada where she had a successful career with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as Business Manager of news. She owned a successful bookshop between 1986 and 2001 and apparently also the building housing it. She now lives in a lovely Toronto penthouse with fabulous views.

In retirement Denise edited a friend's archive of some eleven thousand VCR tapes down to a more manageable six thousand videos. Three thousand were donated to the Broadcasting Museum in Toronto. A further fifteen hundred went to the George

Brown College Film School. And one hundred of the best of the best joined Denise's own collection of some six hundred other records of news, culture (opera, ballet and the arts) and public interest items from the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s.

Denise's brother Tony also left Australia. Like my brother Terry, Tony attended Nudgee College. He subsequently worked as a Patrol Officer in New Guinea. Married, he completed his Masters in Economics under a scholarship to the University of Illinois, USA. His PhD dissertation on Papua New Guinea earned him a professorship. He settled in Kansas as a Professor of Economics and Labour Relations at the University of Kansas. He and wife Mary have three children Michelle Ann, Fiona Clare and Karen Louise. Now about to turn 80, Tony retired to Florida as Professor Emeritus, University of Kansas. He does occasional work as an Arbitrator when not playing golf.

Broadcasting seems to be in the blood. Wynne, Denise, Moya and subsequently I, spent time in radio. We have the texts of a series of speeches Moya gave on air on 4KQ and 4BK in Brisbane in 1956. In one she admits to having found motherhood very difficult and her business career more satisfying.

Her series of talks covered a love of ships called, *'The Romance of Sail'*; a paper on dual income families and another giving her observations on world change over 200 years. My mother, whom I shall now refer to as Moya, and I may not have got on but I have to acknowledge and admire her for what she achieved and her intellect.

Moya wrote poetry of which we have only four simple verses remaining:

The Fairy Child by Moya Donovan

*A fairy babe one summer's day
Was born where roses list;
Upon a rose's leaf she lay,
A child of dew and mist.*

*A petal of a rose was made
 Into a cradle bed;
 And there beneath a rose's shade
 Swung on a spider's thread.*

*Her nursemaid was the honey-bee.
 For her the thrushes sang;
 The streams for her made melody,
 While forest flow'r bells rang.*

*The fairies all came up and peeped,
 And laughed and sang and smiled;
 And all their sweetest gifts they heaped
 Around the fairy child.*

I do not know when she penned this lovely piece but it has been described to me as an allegorical cry from the heart. Moya was a contradiction. She had a definite creative flair herself, yet she lashed out at similar urges in me.

Moya Johnson saw a good catch in Vince Donovan. They married in Brisbane in 1930. She was 31 years old. Vince had been doing well in the printing trade in Maryborough in the late 20s. My sister-in-law is custodian of a collection of love-letters written by Moya to Vince from 1929 to 1930 but nary a one from him to her.

What is curious is a single page letter handwritten on Freemasons Hotel stationery, Sterling Terrace, Albany from a 'Jim'. I assume this was Jim McQuirk. There was, at least in my reading, a deep connection wherein he offers to help Moya but more pointedly, he suggests how he might be introduced to Vince at the wedding. There is also mention of trivial gifts. I suspect they were close and he knew he was losing Moya to another but could not openly express his true feelings to Moya. Surprisingly, he asks if she has given up thoughts of joining a convent. Her margin note simply says, 'Most certainly'. Were they lovers, perhaps?

The Great Depression of 1929-32 ultimately saw the dream vanish with the pub empire and print factory wiped out and the new family penniless. The loss affected Vince badly but not so Moya. Using the family's last few pounds she purchased a dress, hat, handbag, stocking and shoes, went looking and found that essential job.

I believe my father spent nearly a decade paying off all creditors so he would not be declared a bankrupt. He seemed to have come out of the experience a partially broken man but his network of business associates was still supportive and Vince survived.

Moya was talented, organised, determined and knew what she needed to do. She used her skills to be a damn good secretary. The seamstress's daughter from Maryborough was to eventually become a secretary to General Alexander on General Douglas Macarthur's staff in G-2 Intelligence during the Pacific Campaign in WWII based in Brisbane and with appropriate security clearances. She ultimately became secretary to Sir Julius Kruttschnitt and for a time to Sir George Fischer, both respected chairmen of Mount Isa Mines, although Sir George apparently found her directness and freely given opinion hard to handle.

Another of her roles is of contrary interest only because of my own future work in conserving and preserving the environment. In 1952, my mother played a senior management role in establishing the Tangalooma Whaling Station operation for Whale Industries Ltd on Moreton Island, Moreton Bay. I vaguely recall in the early 50s we would dine on whale meat occasionally. At the time it was a special treat.

During WWII, Vince managed the Rocklea Munitions Storage Facility in Brisbane. At the end of the war, he was appointed Secretary of the Queensland Rugby Union and Secretary of Queensland Amateur Swimming Association, two of the largest sporting organisations in the State. He had already been three times President of the Sandgate Swimming Club and the Maryborough Swimming Club.

Vince got a job with Goldsborough Mort and Co. as the company wine and spirits rep. He was certified to blend whisky in bond and was well regarded in wine circles. He was very proud of his Presidency of The Wine and Spirit Merchants Association. I remember many bottles of fine wine with Royal Agricultural Show *'The Ekka'* judging labels on them being offered around at functions well into the night, hosted by Vince and Australian Wine Judge, Jim Cook.

In the 1950s, on many a night there was dinner and good drink to be had at our stylish Newmarket, Brisbane home. I have memories of sitting at the top of the staircase overlooking the dining room as cigarette smoke rose then floated across the ceiling, crystal clinked, cutlery clattered and conversation rambled into the early morning. I was told never to come into the room when a party was in swing on pain-of-the-strap. Moya revelled in being the hostess although she could not cook to save her life. While she served, Vince had prepared these excellent meals - with my help before being banished upstairs.

Family finances were never strong but we got through well enough. I can recall I never wanted for the basics. In later years, the fine antiques, perhaps remnants of the past halcyon days, had to be copied so the originals could be sold for our schooling, rent, and food and to maintain social appearances. Social status was very important to Moya. Family photos show attendance at openings of this and that, especially events at Brisbane's famous Cloudland Ballroom.

In my persona of Jerome Donovan I have surprisingly few recollections of my childhood, except for some fleeting images of a disobedient boy refusing to take the obligatory afternoon nap at the Lady Gowrie Kindergarten on Saint Pauls Terrace, Brisbane. In the late 40s and early 50s, we lived close by in a mock Tudor style complex called Dahrl Court. The apartments are now heritage listed. I have mislaid a family photograph of yours truly sans pants in an imperious Churchillian pose in a vegetable patch - 'Willy' proud and hands commanding. The substitute isn't nearly as good.

A row of Willow Pattern plates high above on a picture rail is my only internal layout recollection of our home on *the Terrace* (St Pauls Tce.) I have. Worth very little but with seemingly a strong sentimental value to Moya they received pride of place in every house until when she died my sister-in-law vacuumed up as many family heirlooms as possible - ostensibly meant for her kids but to this day many of the spoils still adorn Christine's home.

There is a family photo of us all at a beach in 1949 at which I am told my father took my metal sand bucket filled it with sand and killed a shark which was in the channel near to where I was playing. Thanks dad.

Close to Dahrl Court on St Pauls Terrace was a food institution. *Mama Luigi's* occupied a standard wide Queenslander verandah of a house serving the most wonderful nightly specials of classic country Italian food. A favourite with the troops during WWII, the restaurant had long bench tables where you sat with complete strangers and served yourself from great bowls of pasta and trays of unctuous meats. Heaven!

Pipita Parer was a fellow kindergarten attendee who lived a few blocks away in another magnificent old Queenslander. I could climb up to her bedroom window using the branches of a huge ancient frangipani tree, much to her mum's annoyance and my mother's consternation. Pip and I were great friends and our families encouraged us to play and for some years almost forced us together. If I recall correctly the Parer family had coffee plantations in Papua New Guinea. I also believe a branch of that family may have included Damien Parer the famous war photographer.

Pip's mum was an odd case. She could not talk to you without looking directly at you. She really liked a chat and had to comment about anything and everything. No doubt it was compulsive behaviour of a kind. So what, you might think! When Pip and I were being driven around in Mrs Parer's tiny Renault we were not allowed to talk to each other because her mother couldn't drive and turn to talk to us which she could not resist doing. We'd

giggle to annoy her, not realising she took her eyes off the road to turn to face us. It was quite odd.

Our respective families encouraged us to stay in touch. When I met her years later in 1992 through a chance encounter, I got the feeling marriage(s) and family had not been as happy for her as she deserved. She still looked stunning but alas all I could do was wish her well.

The Donovans moved to Enoggera Road, Newmarket in the mid-1950s. A grand old house had been split into two large apartments with a doctor's surgery fronting the main road and the wonderful Brisbane trams clanking along. Another medical surgery was opposite being Vince and Moya's close friends Tom and Edna, Doctor and Mrs Edna Carroll. What full on socialites! If you were on the 'A' list with the Carroll's you were someone. Brother, Terry, went to school with their son lanky Adrian who never seemed to be a happy person.

At only five years but tall for my age, I regularly caught a tram into kindy on my own. Today such an excursion on a daily basis would be almost unthinkable. Moya thought nothing of it. Nor, for that matter, did I.

About this time my portrait was done in crayon by noted Australian portrait artist Lola McCausland. It now hangs in my study and depicts a young boy in a hideous ruffle neck yellow shirt. I was told I had my parents' good looks. As redheads, both my brother and I had freckles but I lost mine and Terry's were prominent.

Neighbours, Mr and Mrs Wren, occupied the large apartment between ours and the surgery of the road frontage in the several years we lived there. The Wrens had a private entrance on the opposite side to our apartment. Any coming and going, which I assume happened, was not open to my curiosity. I cannot recall ever seeing Mr Wren, a retired military man who I occasionally heard thumping around upstairs, but I got on well with Mrs Wren, running errands for her particularly to the chemist to pick up her prescription pain-killer Veganin, for two-bob a trip. Mrs Wren had terrible arthritis and Parkinsons.

Our home occupied the rear apartment's two floors. My room was downstairs with steps into the back-yard. Our dachshund, Brig, and I were close as there were no kids of similar age within close distance, that was until the Tweddle family moved in down the block a few years later. Their son John and I played after school to a strictly limited weekly timetable set by Moya. Why? Because for whatever reason they were not socially acceptable.

Our favourite play place was Newmarket Creek about 100 metres away; a deep bank drop off to a moderate waterway filled with wild mulberry trees, gooseberry bushes, lizards, snakes and junk, water hen nests and fresh-water crayfish - a paradise for energetic young boys; dangerous but magnetic. Despite all manner of insistence, threats of the strap from my parents, the creek was a domain of immense imagination and opportunity. In flood it was even more so. We took risks but instinctively knew the limits of this environment. After school, it was John's and my adventure world.

Moya didn't like other families knowing anything of our tight situation which extended to me not being allowed to invite others home. So the dog and I built cardboard box castles in my room, dug up the sandpit, fought monsters in the laundry and slept in the sun under a book or two which I was always reading. I loved reading and took to it voraciously.

My loneliness exhibited itself by my frequently hitting Brig out of frustration, crying with apologetic hugs of the bewildered dog, and throwing temper tantrums alone and lost. This, I believe, was the start of depression I suffered in later years. The dog was always forgiving but I feel guilty even now for the unnecessary tirades. I had no role-model from whom to learn. When my brother visited, he was remote by age and interests. We didn't ever talk much when together.

With working parents I was home-alone from 3.30pm until close to 6pm, sometimes 7pm weekdays. For a time I was provided with a minder, a nanny. I think I had three of them who all liked the bottle and with my encouragement always eventually found the sherry.

Vince cooked all meals so he and I were together in the kitchen preparing dinner each night. Moya read the newspapers and, after eating, the radio was the centre of entertainment or alternatively, it was a book. ABC radio broadcasts were to become both staple listening and an education. Programs like, *My Word* and *My Music* and eventually the legendary ABC Radio National programs *Singers of Renown* and *Music for Pleasure* both presented by John Cargher were favourites. The classical repertoire was an eagerly devoured learning experience.

My other most favourite radio programme was *The Goon Show*. It all made perfect sense to me. *Just a Minute* follows a close second. I would chatter my sixty second answer along with the experts.

I had a good musical ear even then but resisted being taught piano by my mother. Small wonder when your teacher hit your hands with a ruler to correct mistakes, to make a point or to highlight direction.

My local school was the Catholic St Ambrose Convent. An outwardly benign institution but haven to a covey of nuns who liked to strike students under their dominance. I cannot recall her correct name but let's call her Sister Cane which was her favourite assistant in administering sharp stinging pain. St Ambrose's has a substantial front staircase up and into the church. Each morning at 10am we were escorted two by two out of our class rooms to morning break then to prayers in church.

In the 1950s in Brisbane, perhaps Australia, milk was provided to all students in one-third pint glass bottles with silver caps. The clever crows and magpies learned to pierce this aluminium skin and drink the reward of cream which floated as a top layer in the neck of each bottle in the top crates. This left perfectly drinkable milk below if you were unlucky to be one of those who was first in queue to drink from the top crate.

By 10am our daily calcium ration was on its way to turning sour in the morning heat because the crates were delivered at 5am into shade which was full sun by morning tea. Anyway no one died of

this, as far as I am aware. With unwiped milk crusted upper lips resisting a tongue lick of soured protein we climbed the stairs into church for soul-saving prayers. Young pumping bare legs in shorts were just too much a temptation for the 'good' Sister and assistant cane. Flicking hard at our calf muscles encouraged the last two in the line to push forward against their fellows and get everyone into the church in quick time.

Having a birthday, almost mid-year in May, Moya took the opportunity to enter me in the latter annual enrolment for the education system. So I was older than my fellows and taller by a full head. And for some peculiar reason most often one of the last in the queue. I had had quite enough of the unnecessary switching and stings so one morning I drank all 18 bird aerated one-third pint bottles of warm-to-hot cow's milk from the top tray. Walking slower up the stair I waited for the first stinging contact, turned and vomited over the tormentor nun.

Being a hero can be fun but, in this instance, was short lived. I received a terrible thrashing from both my parents and was locked in my room for three days. I had to publicly apologise to the Sister at assembly. My new place in the morning line was then always first up. But, no other child was ever hit again. The milk delivery was relocated to a cool spot which frustrated the birds. But not entirely.

The only other occurrence of note at St Ambrose was a stint as altar boy. At the time church regulations only permitted taking of the Eucharist twice or three times on a Sunday. I forget the precise number but favour three due to what happened. Permission to take Communion beyond the limit had to be granted by higher authority which the priest giving mass obtained because I was the only boy available. I dutifully carried out the service motions and Communion assistance. Eventually it became uncomfortable, even painful, to kneel for so long on the short pile plush velvet carpet. The sharp hard follicles spiked through the fine cotton surplus gown which is part of altar boy dress. It really hurt.

By the end of the last mass I had very sore knees. My squirming only made it worse. As the Mass ended and as the priest began to turn toward the congregation he said those memorable words, "Go the Mass is ended." I placed my hands on my sore knees and hefted myself up, turned and displayed open palms on open arms to perform the sign of the cross. There were screams, shouts and consternation. One word arose, "*Stigmata!*"

The capillaries of my knees ruptured from several hours of velvet spiking and I had bled rather heavily through the very fine cotton. My palms were both bloodied from hefting myself up under my knees. Also, as I rose I had placed my left hand on my right side to hold in my surplice which and inadvertently transferred a bloody patch to the white surplice which in some minds seemed exactly like a spear wound on my side. What a sight it must have been for an impressionable congregation! Of course, I had no idea what they were looking at.

It took some time to gather the facts, explain away first impressions and calm some hysteria. That day I learned a very valuable lesson in human psychology. Vince felt embarrassed and made a donation to the church. Even then I could not see the rationale in doing so. Religious guilt is a strange and powerful influencer. Moya clipped me hard across the head when she heard, as though I had planned it. More's the pity.

The next year I was enrolled in the Marist Brother's College at Ashgrove as a day student. This too was to be short lived.

I came to the Marist College with some of my brother's Nudgee College sporting reputation attached. A misunderstanding, most likely through the process of parents telling less than the truth to get their youngest son into a respected school. The two schools were mutual trophy competitors. I was unmasked as a sporting fraud very quickly; neither did I swim well nor could I bowl a cricket ball. I can chuck or wildly throw a ball but with baseball not being a recognised Australian school sport in the 50s, this capability was of little value. Swimming, or rather drowning, was the next to fall. The worst was football.

It took almost one thousand pounds and a year to put my face back together again ... I had not quite got the technique of tackling legs and instead bit the studded heel of the opponents boot at speed and with full body weight behind the impact. I live with pins in my upper jaw even now. The plastic surgery was wonderful as there are no signs of disfigurement at all. Dentistry to preserve teeth took ages and was painful.

During the early period of convalescence Terry, Vince and I would go fishing to either Noosa or Redcliffe. The Redcliffe Pier at night was a favourite. This long pier had strong lights over the water which attracted bait fish which, in turn, attracted fish called a Long-Tom. A relative of the garfish the Long-Tom has a huge slender mouth lined with sharp teeth. Know-it-all, yours truly, told the small but curious crowd watching my brother land fish after fish to stand back or it would "bite your arse". No prize for guessing what happened next, to a roar of delight and laughter from the spectators. We went home with a fine catch. I was tender and sore and justly humbled. A legendary family yarn, for anyone who would listen, was birthed about Jerome and the Long-Tom.

For a single school term I became a weekly boarder at the Marist College until my disquiet at student night games had me refusing to go back. Not a subject back then that could be raised within the confines of a catholic family.

Eventually, we moved to Indooroopilly, Brisbane where I was enrolled in the local State School. Girls were a new distraction; however I was gangly, although slightly plump, shy and pimply. Bullying was rife and many days were unpleasant. It was pointless to talk about it at home as neither parent regarded it as anything other than character building.

Despite a poor report card of mainly Cs I knew more about the useful practical application of physics and chemistry than any other boy in school. As the new fat kid with the name of Jerome, I copped a fair share of verbal and physical abuse. Fighting to defend or resist was impractical. Enter my alter-ego, *The Professor*. I seemed to have a strong desire for revenge on bullies. I gave in to the impulses and

went about realising satisfaction by stealth. Strange and terrible things started to happen to the school bully group.

It was like the bully group was cursed. Mishaps during chemistry class became common. Physics class experiments were failures. I now realised some things were downright dangerous and stupid. Although bullies, these students were not stupid and soon realised who was behind their embarrassment and hurt. I was taken aside and threatened. I simply replied if they continued to hurt me and others that, at the most unexpected times, they too would suffer in return. The bullying substantially reduced. This reputation for pay-back was to follow me to two schools and be activated several times for my own well-being and interestingly on commission from others needing help.

Our new Indooroopilly home was another large apartment conversion being a rather grand Queenslander house converted into four quite spacious dwellings less than 300 metres from the busy railway station. We also happened to be some 200 metres from the Brisbane River near Indooroopilly Bridge. I experienced this river choked with Water Hyacinth to such compactness my school friends and I could walk on it. Stupid and dangerous but boys do these silly things.

One weekend, Dad took me on a river excursion to Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary along the river. This was memorable not only for the boat trip and the koalas but for my first experience of a dead body. The ferry boat to the sanctuary left a wharf in Brisbane and journeyed up river under the Indooroopilly Bridge and on to Lone Pine wharf. As we passed under the bridge I asked my father if many people killed themselves by jumping off bridges. In some amazement he asked me why I thought such a thing.

"Well," I said pointing to a corpse floating in the river, "he might have." The wheelhouse called in the discovery and we were met at the wharf by Police who wanted to question me. Dad refused. I was neither shocked at seeing the unfortunate fellow or unwilling to relay the details around the incident. I had a day's fame at school next day.

Four families occupied the Indooroopilly house. A Scottish couple and their son Neil were next door. Neil was a strapping lad who went to Brisbane Boy's College, played all sports well and tolerated the new neighbourhood kid. I can't say we were great friends but spent occasional afternoons just sitting in the back yard talking. At weekends the weekly washing was done and so the *copper* was fired up. Much to our delight we were allowed to place a tin of condensed evaporated milk each in the bottom before the clothes were added then water followed by soap flakes. Some hours later two contented and nearly sick lads would be scooping the last trace of caramel from our tins. The miracle of heat and pressure. No tin ever exploded.

Each Friday night we were allowed to go to the shopping centre across the rail line at 7pm until 9.30pm to watch an exciting entertainment called television. The local electronic repair shop had a set in the window and we sat transfixed watching *Sea Hunt*, *Perry Mason* and other shows in glorious black and white. Glued to folding camp chairs, a thermos and a packet of biscuits, it was heaven.

I particularly liked the *Roy Rogers Show* and went about assembling a model of the Rogers ranch. It was large and covered every feature of the real ranch along with models of stock, buildings, wife Dale, horse Trigger and dog Bullet. Jim Iliffe, the handle-bar moustached presenter of *The Channel Niners Show* was told about my hobby and model ranch. I was invited onto the show with the large model. Moya forced me into a coat and tie rather than casual wear and made the event a terror in my mind. I was so serious; my expression just flattened what was meant to be a fun interview. A photo shows Iliffe and me having no fun at all.

I always tried to save some pocket money from chores to go to the Saturday afternoon pictures. The stall seating area of this cinema was what we called "the passion-pit" - canvass sloping long deck chairs common to the era. Ideal for making-out or watching other kids doing it. I loved the Saturday Matinee Serials like

Radar Men from the Moon, Flash Gordon, Tarzan, The Phantom and Rocket Man.

I missed several final episodes of some serials because Moya, for some unknown reasons, would forbid me to go to the matinee on that particular day so I could do work around the house. Vince admitted years later it was her way to exert control and to dominate. This trait was to bring Moya and me into serious conflict because it brought out in me an equal drive not to conform due to the unnecessary unfairness of her approach.

Granddad on my father's side and grandmother on Moya's side lived with us for some years. An Irish Catholic gloom settled around us. I still remember the smell of old age, boiled bacon, the nothing taste of unsalted porridge and angry stillness around the dinner table. An aggressive old man and a matriarchal old woman, not his wife, challenged a dominant working woman/daughter and acquiescing husband/son.

On the first Friday of each month I was required to stay at home until the early part of mid-morning to set-up the family altar. The local parish priest would attend and say Mass for my elderly grandparents. John was in his mid-90s and Julia in her late 80s. A tithe was paid to the priest who would remove the money from the envelope, count it, place it in his pocket and return the envelope to me. It became dog-eared and yellow over time from reuse.

I had to actively participate in this home service as Altar Boy and received Holy Communion. What I did not like was Confession in front of my grandparents even if they were partially deaf. I was strongly of the belief the priest on the day was fishing for evil deeds I was assumed to be doing but not admitting. Did he know about my revenge on bullies or amateur masturbation? I was about 11 at this time and to be clear there is no suggestion of priestly impropriety.

After the Mass and paying the priest, I would get the old folks into a sunny spot, make tea, clean and repack the altar plates and crucifix, then go to school late without a note explaining why.

Moya saw no reason to explain our private business or offer me a valid excuse. My monthly regular absence created much unnecessary bad feeling between me and the school Principal. My report card registered me as a habitual truant. With acknowledgement on my record and no family defence, I formulated a plan to expand the opportunity to my advantage: create a personal haven.

As last and youngest son of an Irish family it was suggested to Moya by others Jerome should be considered for the priesthood. She started to speak about me as a potential future Australian born Pope. Why think small! Arrangements were made for me to be interviewed by a distant cousin who was a member of the *Redemptorists*, a partially silent order in Hobart, Tasmania from our respective ends of the east coast. It was a huge trip for me and I was filled with excitement. The meeting did not go well.

I met the ugliest man I had ever seen, due to an extreme case of severe acne which had left him with bad facial scars. Also I presumed his speech problems arose from the enforced silence of the order causing a lack of practice in enunciation and use of proper grammar. I was terrified as opposed to engaged about becoming a novice. Returning home I rebelled against any idea of entering the church so much so I was sent to a special home for *difficult* children for a week. After two days I was returned home as uncontrollable. Tension around the house was palpable. Moya and I could not converse unless it was a shouting match. Dad practised avoidance by going into the garden and smoking far too much.

I was led to believe the Donovan family had close connections to Red Hill Cathedral in Brisbane with parts of the high altar and *Stations of the Cross* being a family donation. An incident at this church would finally sever any remaining religious connection with me and Catholicism some years later.

During this period Vince developed a particularly serious stomach ulcer. Photos of him show a tired gaunt man, aging prematurely. I believe Moya had very low emotional connection at this point. Despite the difficulty, one was expected to just get on and

do it. What had happened to the beautifully love-letter writer to change her? Even illness received little pity.

My Brother Terry's long-term health seems to have been affected later in life by Moya administering him contraband penicillin as a cure for any ill from colds to upset stomach. In 1954 Terry got pneumonia. She self-administered to him with near terminal results. Terry went into a coma. When he did awaken he was being stood over by a priest administering Last Rights.

I recall the hypodermic syringes of the day as ugly metal and glass drop-top contraptions with huge needles. My bout with appendicitis similarly received no sympathy, a huge dose of cod-liver oil and I was sent back to school. Miraculously I still have my appendix. The indignation of half crawling back to class at St Ambrose in pain, with no love or compassion from Moya, really hurt. Naturally, one learned not to tell one's mother you were sick. That could be fatal.

To break the cycle, Vince suggested I be sent away on a holiday on my own so I spent a fortnight at a *Dude Ranch* near Mt Tambourine, south-east of Brisbane. As an adult I now joke there has never been a power cord long enough for me to go camping. But I look back on this time living in a bunk-house, rising before dawn to muster milking cows, learning how to use a milking machine and riding a horse, as a great time. I think I grew up a lot. It took some days to settle in and work out the peer pecking order but everyone there got on pretty well. Chores were hard but the camaraderie was there as part of the group getting everything done each day.

After the morning work, the hot summer days were washed away with skinny-dipping in the dam, fishing for crayfish and trips into the mountains before the evening milking.

Whatever Vince did while I was away, the subject of the priesthood never ever came up again. Some normalcy returned to family life. Thanks, Dad.

Under our part of the massive master Indooroopilly residence was a garage filled with our surplus furniture including Dad's

unused car and my brother's big fish tank. Terry had bred *Guppies* or *Neon Tetra* tropical fish for sale then lost interest. The tank was so big it was left filled in the garage. Two years later I found some occupants still alive in the green goo. I will get to the car shortly.

Between the garage and capacious under-floor storage space, utilising the natural hillside slope of the underside of the house, was a shower and toilet room. It was never used or visited and in poor condition, an added incentive to stay clear. Also the doors, one from either side space, were locked. I found the keys but told no one. I proceeded to convert the roughly three metre square room into my private cave instead of going to school at all on the first Friday of the month after the private Mass sessions.

I added flaps to the doors so no-one could look inside from outside, replaced clear louver glass with frosted (conveniently left over from our upstairs bathroom window modification), scrubbed, hosed, cleaned the walls, ceiling and floor. I fitted out the small room with a lounge chair, sideboard and other necessities, including lots of discarded books from our own library now in storage under the house. Of course, my public library card got a lot of use as well as my search for new subject matter expanded my reading repertoire immeasurably.

Some fifty years later I have downloaded all of Shakespeare, Verne, Stephenson, Poe, Twain, Melville, Lawrence and a few others. Slowly I am recapturing recollections of childhood reading which fired my young imagination in this sanctuary.

As mentioned the grand-oldies were partially deaf. The Youngs worked and Neil their son was at school so my conversion and fit out work proceeded without interruption. I never told anyone so my oubliette (forgotten place) was not discovered for two years until my brother went to work on Dad's old car.

At 12 years of age I had a secret domain where I consumed book after book, imagined and dreamed. I wagged school more often to be by myself until I transferred to high school. If the school ever contacted my parents about my truancy, neither ever discussed it with me. I assume the over-riding privacy around the

Masses masked the bigger extent of my missing the remainder of the day.

My move to Indooroopilly State High School was wonderful. A different environment altogether. The Prof's reputation followed me and I was surprisingly respected even when I joined in home economics (cake-making class), the debating team and art class. And, balancing this were my classes in wood and metal work, at which I excelled, topping the Form.

My Form 4a3 1963 report card from Indooroopilly State High School was, and is, an interesting read. I had forgotten I'd won the school Orator of the Year Cup and represented the school in the Schools Debating Society. For years, Moya made me read the Courier Mail editorial column aloud every day. She corrected pronunciation, breathing and timing. She was very pleased with my win. I thank her for that.

Shortly afterwards Moya enrolled me in drama, speech, breathing and movement classes at La Boite Theatre. Through this I performed in several Lady Mayoress Christmas Pageants in Brisbane City Hall, notably as the clock in Cinderella for which I developed a comic walk to Strauss' *Radetsky March*.

A month after I won the Orator of the Year Cup further recognition followed by my winning the top school arts award for sculpture. Following the presentation when Moya, Vince and I were leaving the school complex, I enthusiastically handed the award certificate to my mother. Without missing a beat she tore the paper in half and deposited it in a bin saying, "This will never put food in your mouth." I was shattered. I had sought a small paean from my mother but was rejected. This was the first time I ever saw my father take my mother to task in public, reducing her (and me) to tears. The house was an unhappy place for some days. She never did comment or apologise.

In fact, Moya took her apparent disdain to this part of my artistic talents further. I had drawn two small sketch pads of quite amateurish cartoons reflective of home life, school and other situations. She found them on one of her occasional searches of my

bedroom and destroyed them. She made no comment or gave any reason for her actions. She just did it and moved on.

I have hinted that my private domain was uncovered through brother Terry's wish to restore Dad's old 2.5L Riley made by the British Riley Engine Company. A truly magnificent vehicle with a diagonal wheel-base measurement of 17-feet in Imperial. I was able to convince Terry the room was probably used by the Youngs who had much stuff stored on the other side of the opposite door under the house. Anyway its purpose as shower and toilet room resumed. Alerted through dinner conversation he was to take over the space as a working garage to restore the Riley, I quickly removed all personal traces of occupancy for other than the intended original purpose.

The Riley had been stored on blocks over some years. Covered against dust but not mould, it was a mess at first look. Spending time on the restoration was perhaps as close as Terry and I ever got as brothers. He did the mechanicals, with assistance from me to re-ring the pistons and get covered in oil. I did the exterior duco and interior finish. Serious dubbing of leather, oil on wood, shellac where needed, glass cleaned, chrome polished and locks greased. It took six months part-time work.

It took extra time to source tyres and a new battery due to cost. The family was still not flush but that was about to ease. The big day came. Oil was added, fuel pumped through lines, the new battery was installed, all tyres replaced but the car left on blocks. A hand turnover of the engine using the crank handle to gently move stiff engine parts got underway. The deep black of the duco, chrome shine and polished Riley emblem made the car look great.

Terry turned the key with transmission in neutral. Once, twice and miraculously on the third crank the massive two and a half litre engine came to life. It was wondrous. The Riley has a system to reinflate tyres from a compressor on the engine. The tube was passed from tyre to tyre. Jacks holding the car on the blocks were raised and the blocks removed. Slowly Vince and Terry lowered the jacks and the Riley stood proud.

We took long journeys in this great machine at weekends when the budget allowed for petrol. My favourite place to sit was the dickie seat in the boot with the rear window wound open so I could talk to others in the back seat. A regular trip was the drive to the Gold Coast into Cavill Avenue to stay at a big house owned by Mac Whitehouse of Lennons Hotel fame. I took my first illegal driving lessons in this car, learning to park the monster, handbrake then clutch hill-starts and double de-clutching gear changes. I encourage anyone who likes antique legendary cars to read more about the *Riley 2.5 L*.

The car had two fold away 'dickie' seats in the boot for outside wind-swept passengers, 'aircraft' front seats, forward opening front doors and you could wind the dual panel windscreen out for ventilation when roaring along the highway. In first gear on the flat you could walk beside the vehicle.

My brother married in August 1959. He was 22 years old. His 20-year-old bride, Christine Richmond, did not get my mother's initial seal of approval. Terry met Christine in 1957 and encouraged her early nursing career with a stint in the Army Nursing Corp in 1958 in Heidelberg, Melbourne. Moya interfered in the marriage for years afterwards, with Vince running counter-interference to maintain peace and family cohesion. Moya started her games by sending me with the newlyweds on their honeymoon to Burleigh Heads, Gold Coast!

Christine told me they had ten pounds between them when they married. Terry took a loan from Warwick Bank for one hundred pounds and had disputes with the bank over repayment.

Despite the friction Christine excuses Moya for her cruelty in later years and now speaks well of her. This is remarkable given our mother dominated Terry, her husband, for his whole life. Until he was fifty, she still purchased much of his clothing.

Even newly married and on his honeymoon, Terry fished from dawn to dusk when the Taylor were running. I was invariably in tow at dawn's light, half-asleep and cold. A superb beach fisherman, his fresh catch fed us all. At this time, I had my second run-in

with a fish. Taylor is an oily fish best bled alive as soon as caught and eaten that day. These were big ocean Taylor and one took its revenge on me as I bled it by latching onto my hand. Me, nil. Fish, two. I evened the count in Hawaii some years later. I am not counting the shark and my father.

I am a hopeless fisherman despite the best training opportunities from many sorties to Noosa North Shore, Redcliffe and Fraser Island as a kid with Terry and Vince. I do however know how to catch pippies with my toes, live sea worms with fingers, pump for yabbies and catch sand and mud crab. I can just about cook anything which has drawn breath or sucked water.

The honeymooner's accommodation was a small flat with single beds and a spare room. When the lovers needed privacy I sat outside under the bedroom window listening. At this point my sex education had been gleaned from reading and male anatomy learned from a transparent model called the *Visible Man* purchased when I was eleven by my mother as an instructional aide. You could take out all internal organs and skeleton including the brain but it had no sex organs so it was of little use for the purpose of satisfying my interest at that age.

Sex was never spoken about in our household although occasional bathroom changeover nudity wasn't an embarrassment. I was 21 on the day the book titled *What Every Catholic Boy Should Know About Sex* appeared on my bed. I was told this would explain changes I could expect to experience in my body.

This small book had been secreted in the house for over 5 years and was much too late for my natural development. It had been already well read by me. Page 39 was obviously referenced marked but as neither parent was ever likely to open the book itself I was safe as the phantom masturbating reader. While not widely worldly experienced at 21, I was no virgin. I'd love to still have the book as a keepsake.

Moya's mum, grandma Johnson died in 1962, aged 92. Vince's father, grandad John died 26 March the same year. I can remember visiting grandpa in hospital and his long white hair which

Vince cut while they talked. At 91 this nuggetty old Irish jockey / publican / politician could still hop unassisted from bed to com-mode. For his burial, Grandpa was dressed in his Hibernian regalia and parts of the previously mentioned portable altar kit were placed in both coffins. What a complete waste of several kilos of fine silver church accoutrements.

On 20 November 1890, Grandpa John purchased cemetery plot number 14 in Warwick Cemetery for two pounds and ten shillings. The plot was adjacent to number 14.53 in which John buried Daniel Donovan aged just 29 on 22 May 1890. Daniel's 37 year old sister Margaret joined him on 19 March 1906. It is through Margaret the Donovan's are related to the Gilshenens (J.F.).

Relatives I have not traced but the dates of death are Jeremiah Francis Donovan, 12 August 1949, aged 76; Bridget Donovan, died 24 February 1945, 81 and Nancy Castle nee Donovan, 8 April 1920, 31. All are in Warwick Cemetery. Mum and Dad, Moya and Vince Donovan are in Toowong Cemetery. My brother was cremated and his ashes put to sea from the Noosa North Shore where he loved to fish.

My grandparents' small wills helped put the family modestly back on its feet. That inheritance, along with the sale of the Riley for an excellent price, meant Moya and Vince could buy their first owned home and a new Holden car, for the first time since the loss of the family fortunes in the Great Depression 35 years before.

I suspect the move was also encouraged by the landlord after I blew the glass out of the back windows of my Indooroopilly bedroom onto the street. There was no malice intended. I was experimenting with making *Chinese black powder*. Just a small amount of a couple of pounds or so! OK, a kilo! I had exactly the right mix. If the powder had been in an enclosed container instead of a cake tin for mixing I would have probably killed myself. As it was, some items in the bedroom caught fire, the door to the hallway was dislodged and the aforementioned glass panes shot out across the yard over the fence and onto the street.

I was found badly singed and absolutely delighted with the result. The consequence of the explosion lasted much longer within the household. The mess was quickly and quietly repaired. I was given the task of repainting my bedroom. I was grounded for a month.

My notoriety among neighbourhood youth spread and I was visited, after release from house-detention, to retell firsthand what had happened and how. I think it was how I met, and befriended, Peter Rudder who went on to have a very credible national radio career. Peter's dad set up Cosway Public Relations, one of the first PR firms in Brisbane in 1956, along with Keith Murdock formerly of Shell Company of Australia.

Our new home was a nearly new Cape Cod style bungalow in Brisbane's, The Gap. Our only neighbours then were the Greasley family. When Moya died in 1988, (her sister Winifred having preceded her in 1980) some forty homes could by then be seen from the front veranda of the family home. The trees had grown to soften the view but suburbia had arrived. The house was modern luxury in comparison to past accommodation. An inheritance of \$8,000 from grandfather eased finances and also permitted the purchase of a baby-grand piano, stereo and a TV.

I moved to The Gap State High School in Waterworks Road. My matriculation exam score at Indooroopilly wasn't good enough for Moya so I was sent back to repeat my scholarship year in 1965. Through sheer stupid stubbornness I aimed for and got exactly the same marking with German as an extra subject. I was not going to make it into university like my brother with just 2As; 2Bs and 3Cs.

Terry was bright but underutilised his gift through laziness arising from Moya's domination, directiveness and pushing to the point where one just stopped doing anything because nothing one did pleased her. Every gain was criticised. I was to flee this environment for my own sanity to a life removed from under her influence.

Christine recalls when they sought help for learning challenges for their son Myles, the adviser remarked Terry, who had answered all the test questions reading the test sheet upside down, was a

“waste of an intellect”. Terry studied veterinary science, industrial chemistry and did first year medicine twice; failing all subjects as he spent so much time absent from lectures because he was away with his mates fishing.

I share my brother’s ability to read text quickly upside down - an advantage in business.

Terry applied his chemistry knowledge with Redcombe Chicken Feed Co., moving to a cereal processing company in SouthBank, where he stayed for five years. In 1964, my brother became a medical representative for G D Searle & Co. While he had no formal qualifications his natural intelligence, book studying and employer training equipped him to move to Rhone Poulenc and eventually May and Baker in senior State roles. He was regarded as one of the top in his profession of advising doctors on medications. He trained his daughter Samantha similarly and she has stepped into his shoes with her own successful pharmaceutical representative career.

Between 1995 and 2002, Terry was the CEO of the Arthritis Foundation of Queensland where his knowledge of this disease was regarded as expert.

In later life, Terry said he regretted not getting a degree. Away from the stifling influence of Mother, we did better in our own ways. We seem to differ in one respect - maintaining friendships. Terry didn’t do this well. I do better and have friendships going back over 45 years.

I occasionally helped Terry build bits of their home in Kenmore between 1965 and 1967. It had the first concrete slab driveway in Brisbane. Apparently, people would come for miles around to see it. A daunting uphill walk and very hairy reversal for a car with a nervous driver.

My high school experience with metal work assisted me in helping with the exterior roof installation. In the overall story of my life this may seem a relatively minor fact, except the days were hot so we all wore boots and a hat. In my case, to stay cool, I was without underpants in very loose shorts. A day in hospital then

two days at home with sunburnt testicles followed as a result of the fierce reflection of the sun's rays off the metal roof. To this day my eyes still smart at the thought. I was given a new job in the shade around the construction site of installing all of the internal fibro-panel ceiling lining and then painting it.

My own interest in anatomy began by watching Terry dissect animals during his veterinary studies. The carcasses were stored in our home freezer, particularly a small grey nurse shark which took on a terrible odour by repeated thawing and refreezing. I was to use my anatomical knowledge of many animals to good purpose as my interest in food took shape.

In 2010 I attended the 50th anniversary of The Gap State High School. The old yearbooks record not only me leading the school fencing team to State level but also my artistic bent. Principal Brady gave permission for me and Gary Campbell, my best mate at this school, to paint a mural on the wall of the biggest stairwell in the complex. I have probably unreliable memories of bright colours and indigenous motifs but no firm recall as to content. The image was some three by two metres and took two weeks to complete. It remained in place for over a decade I am told. In its day, it was believed to be the first public artwork in any school in Queensland reflecting indigenous themes.

Gary Campbell was a larrikin (still is). We have remained in contact for 50 years. A brilliant pianist he uses the expletive 'fuck' in normal speech with the same frequency as the letter 'e'. This in a time when such language was forbidden and he continued to use it as mores relaxed. Its use now almost seems normal. Almost. Highly intelligent, a quick wit and with a great sense of humour, we hit it off immediately. However, *'the Prof'* emerged to intervene with the school bullies who targeted us.

Two inspirational events designed and delivered by 'the Prof' put the bully pack in place and actually were the last two retaliations of this persona. Looking back I have some pride in the execution of these activities but also realise they could have been very serious indeed. I apologise here to the victims.

Jack Wetzel was our science master and took the boxing class during sport. A bully himself he attracted that element to the boxing rink. Gary was unfortunate enough to have very brittle hair. One day Gary had us in fits with his quick wit much to Jack's annoyance. Jack's response was to try to pick Gary up by his hair. A handful came out, and without looking why his hand was free of his pupil's rising form, Jack made a second attempt to get a grip only to tear even more hair away. His response when he realised what had happened was to utter an astonishing word for a teacher, "Shit!"

What Jack was good at was teaching science. Meticulous and careful it therefore astounded his peers and Principal Brady when the science lab suffered two explosions in quick succession some weeks later. Hydrogen and methane are so unpredictable. It was also the last time anyone in science class was to bend over and fart into a Bunsen burner as part of a 'What do you think will happen?' experiment.

At this stage of my adolescence I was tall at 183cms, overweight and couldn't fight or defend myself from the schoolyard bully pack for love nor money. Gary was short, light and also not part of Jack's boxing team. We were prime targets.

One day in the sports oval latrine, which was a shed with a stainless steel trough suspended on a wooden frame, I was put upon by the school bully who grabbed me from behind in a bear hug. By bending forward I lifted him off the ground in hope of release. He hung on, so in panic I ran backwards into the brick wall knocking him unconscious and causing serious bruising to his back and spine. I got a massive thumping from his supporters for unfair tactics and lingering threats of on-going retribution.

A month later, during sports, this same group and two innocents happened to receive a substantial electrical discharge through their urine stream when using the toilet trough. The science lab Wimshurst Machine, connected to a freshly insulated stainless steel trough, was found as the source. With no direct

proof of my culpability the school let the matter pass. Fear of surprise retribution from 'the Prof' was sufficient to drastically reduce bullying towards me and my friends. Principal Brady gave me an excellent student reference when I left the school.

In our class we had a Maltese teen named Kaj. Big and fit from working in his father's concrete business after school and at weekend, he was a terrific guy. At the rear of the sports oval ran a creek with a good supply of freshwater crayfish. During lunchtime in the peak season a group would gather and entice the crustaceans out of their holes with liver on a string. You had to be fast to grab them when they lunged at the bait. Kaj found our efforts highly amusing, frustrating and ineffective. His solution was to plunge his finger into the hole, wait for the hapless creature to latch-on and pull it out. We were amazed as these creatures have considerable nipping power. Kaj's hands were toughened by concrete and he hardly felt anything. He was a very popular crayfish fishing partner. Doubly so as he didn't like the flavour and would eat his home-made stinky sausage instead as we feasted on our catch from the cooking pot.

My first school love was Yolanda. Blond, beautiful, smart and completely oblivious of my affection until we went on a date under the watchful eye of her father. I wanted to impress Yolanda on the school Open Day by singing an opera extract. This performance was a disaster for two reasons. Firstly, I was horribly off key and second, she was off with another bloke and not even present. Talk about an embarrassing display of unrequited love! She was at the 2010 school anniversary and I admitted my broken heart to her. She laughed and gave me a kiss for old time sake. She had married, divorced, had kids and back then lived in Hong Kong running her own education company.

Moya and Vince encouraged me to consider dating another school class student Leonie. OK classmate. Bright, studious but dating material of interest to me, no way! She felt the same way or worse about me. We make an unhappy couple in a single surviving photo.

Like most schools The Gap State High held an annual sports and activity day. The fencing team did a standard épée and sabre display but Gary and I got carried away with the sabre demonstration and proceeded to deliver a film version sword-fight bout. We moved up and down stairs, across open ground through class rooms and with too much encouragement across a roof top. Exhausted but elated we accepted the loud applause from our fellows and friends.

I found work in the Toy Department of David Jones in Adelaide Street, Brisbane during the Christmas Holidays of December '64 / January '65. I was 17 and appointed as junior's junior sales assistant. At home I was immediately charged rent which changed into an off-set deal whereby I did all the gardening of the acre home block; the weekly clothes wash and ironing, and washing the car, in place of my rent obligation. It was a small step up to doing it all as I was already doing lots to help Vince. We'd never had so much physical land area to keep in order. Our property bordered a nature reserve and a creek so Moya took possession of new land by mowing the reserve and rerouting part of the creek.

Each day at close of trade in toys the till was balanced by the manager and *unders and overs* distributed *parri passu* with status in the personnel pecking order. There were never any overs. By week's end I was down ten bob (ten shillings in Imperial currency) which was a chunk of my meagre weekly pay. By chance, in week two, I saw the female manager put a pound note into a pocket after passing change to a customer. With careful observation I saw the same happening during the next few days. She was 'tickling the Peter.'

One morning, as chance would have it, I was given responsibility to open the department and set up the till as the manager was in a senior staff meeting. She and I were on the morning roster for opening. I marked all notes with my initials. Sure enough by morning tea she had done it again. I took a break and spoke to the floor manager who was mightily displeased at me and ordered me back to work dismissively. However, at balance time

he attended the till and when our manager asked for contributions to balance the shortfall she was called aside and taken away. We never saw her again.

I was promoted with a wage increase and enjoyed the rest of my work in toys. While *unders* still occasioned they were much less and happily some *overs* also started to pop-up. My 'expertise' with cash took on a whole new meaning when I joined the English Scottish and Australian Bank Ltd in mid 1965. Moya found me the job and announced because I failed at school she decided a bank Johnny's job was the career for me.

My first posting was to the Adelaide Street, Brisbane branch. The usual new-boy pranks were played on me – sending me to the Commercial Banking Corporation branch down the road to ask for a ledger to make our ledgers balance. Unfortunately, I happened to be served by their new lad who happily handed over a huge book of customer account sheets for me to trot back to ES&A, proudly asking what was the next step in producing the daily 'balance'. All hell broke loose once the error was discovered by both banks and I thought my fledgling career was finished.

I may have gone on about bullies but they were a particular sensitivity of mine given I had one at home, Mother. Well this bank branch had a bad guy as the accountant who took delight in locking staff in the vault and turning out the internal lights. A distinctly unpleasant experience whereby the only sound you can hear is your own blood rushing around in your ears and disorientation through complete blindness. The only other such unnerving experience I have experienced was deep underground in a Californian cave near Carlsbad USA.

This twit thought that panic, terror and fright were hilarious. He was also vindictive if challenged. I had purposely retired '*the Prof*' and decided to keep him that way. Every month a Chubb technician would service the vault mechanism and reset the combination. I casually asked if there was any escape from being locked in. Yes, there was. He proceeded to show two of us if you could remove the mechanism access port using a six penny

piece; it wasn't too difficult to align the drop bar with the tumbler slot. As the door bolts were counter balanced a smaller wheel handle inside opened releasing the door bolts so the door swung outwards.

We practised our new skill well enough so even with lights out our minds-eye led the way to success. True to form the idiot tried his routine in due course. It was his habit to wait some time outside the vault area before releasing his hapless victims. On this occasion the branch manager came downstairs into the concrete basement, expecting to see a closed secure vault, as required by protocol. Imagine his surprise when the bolts withdrew and very angry staff filed out to dress-down the branch accountant. The idiot was demoted and transferred.

I too was transferred but to Head Office and into the Bulk Teller Department. Apart from preparing all teller floats my main role was to administer the destruction of old notes. What an insane sense of power that brought. But more on this later

Things at home and on the work front took a very serious turn in 1966. It was Vince's routine to leave work at 5.30pm, pick me up and pick Moya up from the Head Office of Mount Isa Mines on the corner of Adelaide and Wharf Streets. On this particular evening she got into the car flustered, red faced and clutching a handful of ticker tape. For those unfamiliar with ticker tape it is the paper strip tape from a telex machine which preceded facsimile machines.

Vince looked to her and asked, "What have you done?" He apparently had some insight into what was going on at the time. "Nothing, drive, drive!" was her only response.

When they got home I was told to go for a walk by Vince and stayed away for an hour. In my recollection, he had never been so dismissive or seethingly angry. I didn't find out what it was about for some years.

During Moya's service as PA / secretary to Sir Julius, Mt Isa Mines was locked in battle with the Australian Workers Union and a rebel fire-brand organiser Pat Mackie. I now believe Moya

was providing inside information to Mackie gleaned from high level executive meetings where she took minutes and was privy to other strategy conversations among MIM leaders. She was a mole who kept the union leader on-spot with executive thinking and planning, enabling the union to stay ahead of management. My Irish mum had Socialist and even Communist leanings which upset Grandpa and Vince no end. Grandma Johnson however sided with her daughter, Moya.

Home life at The Gap house was different. Not better, different. Moya had her baby grand and rose before dawn to play. During summer she would open the whole of the side of the house up and sit until breakfast some hours later, playing classical compositions full throttle. Apparently the neighbours loved it but they were 100 metres away. Vince and I were trying to sleep.

Terry had been sent to piano lessons. Got to year 4, stopped and was never known to play a note since or even like music. Moya had me in her sights and the home-tutoring in piano started.

Three things my mother could not teach me were the piano, French and German, tying shoe-laces and ties. Once mastered, the latter took on a particular refinement in future years as I became known for an excellent collection of silk bow-ties which challenged the fashion statements of James Strong (Qantas) and Edmond Capon (NSW Art Gallery). Minister Bruce Baird forbade me to wear a bow-tie in his presence when I worked for State Transit. This resulted in his and my staffs giving me a framed award when I moved on. They also signed a giant bow-tie as my card. I felt very honoured.

Famous hoax impersonator Campbell McComas asked me to tie his bow-tie one night at an event in Brisbane parliament. He was all thumbs and couldn't tie the bow, which can happen, trust me. I was only too happy to assist. Over the years when I did MC and facilitation, Campbell and I shared the stage three times. A real gentleman.

Such was Moya's frustration with the tie and lace lessons, when I was very young, she started to reinforce in me a feeling of

complete inadequacy. Coupled with my being none too enthusiastic or awake enough to recite French verbs at 2 am with her perched on my bed crunching an apple, my relationship with her took on added tension. She began to call me her "idiot lummoX". To this day the slurp and crunch of anyone eating an apple next to me is tantamount to nails scraping on a blackboard. Her words didn't encourage me to submit or learn either.

I had eventually mastered tying various knot styles with much kinder secret assistance from my father whose encouraging approach to a small boy had fast results. The same stubbornness years later with exam results has already been mentioned. I believe she and I had basically the same personality traits and just fought back against each other, both wanting our own way. But there were still the piano lessons to go.

Practising scales in time to a metronome with a ruler beating time on one's knuckles isn't conducive to loving an instrument. After a year she gave up. Why I still adore piano music nearly half a century later is a mystery. Perhaps I need to give it another go!

Gary Campbell visited our home regularly to play the baby and his world of other than the classics was also opened to me. He became one of the most talented club, cruise and variety show musical directors around. It was through him I met and become friends with Bernard King.

I wrapped myself in LPs – long playing records if you are old enough to remember. All manner of concerto, symphony, ballet and opera, plus my weekly dose of classical music and opera radio when doing the family ironing on Sunday afternoon. I cherish the rich experience music has given me and am thankful for inheriting some interest from my mother despite her seemingly best efforts to thrash music out of me.

Another curious trait of Moya's was for her to insist on Sunday breakfast in bed with the papers before Vince and I went to church. I would collect the papers from the delivery at the end of our long driveway. Vince prepared a full breakfast tray. Moya would sit up and be served just as we left for Mass. Her parting

words were always, "Pray for me!" I would think, "Why?" The only time she would go to church was Christmas Day, All Saints Day, Good Friday and New Year's Day and then only to wear something new and be seen.

I had less than no interest in Catholicism or any religion, finding it nonsensical, full of double standards, cruel and depressing. I had reached my personal age of reason many years before but out of loyalty to my father, I still attended Mass every Sunday with him without objection.

Back to work at the bank ... It is an interesting but virtually useless fact the old style cloth money notes (pre polymer) are one of the worst sources of germs. The composite of cloth and fibre is an ideal medium for transferring, holding and spreading microbes. This information was given me by the head teller Bulk Money on my first day on the new job. I supervised others drilling holes in wads of notes, packing them into suitcases (drill cores included). We were to burn a million pounds a go and feel nothing. I lost all respect for money in a short time and never seemed to gain it back.

The bulging bags of loot were half carried half dragged from Head Office to the Reserve Bank a block away where we watched the contents counted and dispatched to the furnace. It was a sombre walk back every single day. We were searched at the start of the walk and again on return. Apart from preparing all teller cash floats the night before and supervising the balance at end of day, the sorting, drilling and packing to supervising the burns was my day for six-months. Then I was transferred again.

Cleveland, Redland Bay is about an hour from Brisbane on Moreton Bay. Promoted to assistant accountant / head teller, I was driven by Vince to a boarding house run by the Harris's. Max and his wife Mrs H were Australian versions of Grant Woods *American Gothic*. Despite the austere faces they were kind, ran a clean house and Mrs H's food was great. Both chain smokers and long since past the point of redemption, Max had a horrible morning cough and Mrs H an evening tuba call. He was tall, she very short. They had three boarders.

Ainsley Cutts and I were the bank Johnnies. Ainsley went on to establish his own finance broking firm. The third, Scott, worked for the local agricultural research station. Ainsley was into body-building while Scott's work kept him superbly fit. Exercise was foreign to me so I was the flabby odd one out, yet we all got along fine.

Cleveland is a country town in a relatively wealthy farming area. Here I discovered a love for pecan nuts. There was a lot to see, new people to meet and the expansive bay to explore. As new staff and new faces the invitations from the town's folk, customers and others were frequent so socialisation was easy. With not a lot to do at night, the Harris's having no TV, I got involved in the local community scene and started a fencing group. My main reason for doing this was to be close to a stunning blonde gymnast Marlene Beutel the daughter of the local hardware store owner.

On Friday nights the bank boys from ES&A became 'extra sex appeal' and hit the town. During recovery we were simply, 'eat, sleep and argue'. Ainsley and Scott scored. I didn't. I was painfully shy with girls and too nerdy. So I was astonished to be invited to the drive-in by Marlene who had her own car. Whether she was offering an opportunity or not, I was just too inexperienced to handle anything other than conversation and a good-night kiss. Ah! Still my status rose considerably with Ainsley and Scott.

Our Vietnam War military call-up ballot result papers all arrived on the same day. Mrs H placed the envelopes on the dining room table. The mood was sombre as the reality of possibly being drafted to go to the Vietnam War lay before us. Scott suggested a drink and produced a carboy of experimental unfiltered strawberry wine from his room. We started to drink and discussed all manner of nothing to avoid opening the letters.

It was winter and a cold night which was dark early. Our avoidance of any bad news was so strong that when Ainsley suggested a night fishing expedition it was quickly accepted. We made thermos flasks of rum and coffee, prepared sandwiches and packed the gear into Scott's car boot. We rugged up and set out. The

envelopes stayed on the table unopened. Those envelopes remained un-opened for many days. I was passed over in the ballot.

We had no boat but found one moored at the end of Cleveland jetty. Bundling in with all our kit we organised to cast off and enter the pitch black channel still drinking the strawberry wine, consuming the sandwiches and spilling heavily laced coffee. Whoever was driving did so carelessly at first and at a burst of speed we hit a mud bank sending me out of the dingy flat onto my back in shallow water and ooze. The boys rescued me and threw me back into the prow. Somehow I was able to direct us to the channel close by. Suddenly, we saw the lights of a huge boat bearing down on us. Throttle wide we weaved back and forth in a desperate attempt to avoid collision.

Fear and alcohol took over and as the engine used what little fuel had been in the can we awaited death having fled the house under threat of no less a similar fate. Alcohol and cold came over us. An hour later the Police Boat arrived. We'd stolen the dingy and been reported. Catching us wasn't a problem but the circumstances of our situation were to get us off due to the embarrassment and no real damage done.

Technically, we had never left the jetty. At all times we were tied to the end of the structure by a long rope which had prevented us ever going far into the channel. The lights of death were the jetty lights. At the low tide around us we could simply walk to shore. The whole town thought it was the funniest thing to happen for weeks.

The branch manager and accountant were good guys. However, my inability to effectively dial in the second combination to the vault the morning of our 'rescue' saw the branch open late at 10.30am. I was still very hung over and in pain from the effects of the unfiltered strawberry alcohol. A mandatory incident report was filed with Head Office and I was put on a warning.

As second teller I was also the payroll master for the rutile (titanium dioxide) mine on Stradbroke Island, requiring fortnightly

trips to the island to deliver the cash payroll. As such I was granted pistol training permission and curiously issued with extra bullets for the return trip by boat. I had had no reason to use any ammunition on the journey over so why have extra for the return trip without a payroll.

The purpose, as explained by my manager, was to facilitate pistol practice at sea where shots were unlikely to hurt anyone. I explained his assumption was not sound giving him a quick lesson on land and naval gunnery techniques which result in cannon balls bouncing and stones skipping further. He must have thought me a real nerd. Instead, I elected to dutifully undertake my required practice by expending my allotted ammunition on a local farm using bottles on a fence.

Shortly after, one afternoon, an old Basset Hound was run down by a truck in the main street outside the branch. Its back was broken and the poor animal howled in pitiful distress. Everyone seemed indecisive as to what to do. When serving customers your pistol is in a handle under the counter. I locked my cash, took the gun, went outside and was about to deliver a mercy killing shot when it died. I removed the poor animal to the back of the branch building.

I had broken bank regulations by taking my firearm outside for a non-bank security purpose. Another report was made and I was called to account in Brisbane, severely reprimanded and demoted. When customers heard of the treatment they were not happy. It was the right thing to do and this was a country town after all. Submissions arrived to my manager defending my intended actions as a civic service. The bank relented and restored my position but transferred me to Imbil. At first I couldn't even find it on Dad's car map when he offered to drive me there. Damn! A backwater. I was being sent to Coventry but little did I know I was about to also lose my virginity in Imbil.

My transfer was to happen the week after an historic occurrence in financial terms for Australia. It was 1966 with the decimal currency change-over about to happen. All banks closed for the

conversion of every account holder's balances and sufficient time was planned to address any unexpected challenges to the overall currency conversion. Our ledger machines used a 'control number' formula. As test trial runs proceeded I noticed a quick and simple way to check if the amounts, control and conversion had been input correctly by looking at the new control number produced.

It proved infallible and the manager called Head Office outlining the process with a recommendation to advise branches. The big saving was time as a second person did not have to duplicate each transaction as a separate proof. Our branch finished its work, did some spot checks and closed out the conversion in half the time of others. We were all sent home early much to our joy. HO ignored the recommendation. Auditors arrived a week later to check why we had performed in half the time. No errors were found.

The Imbil branch had two employees, me and the manager. Our prime role was payroll for the timber industry, its company and contractors. It was substantial, done weekly and took lots of effort from the delivery of the cash, making up the pays, preparing company cash floats for on-site internal transactions, ledgers for deposits and payments to settle accounts and a host of other service functions for the roughest, nicest group of rascals I had met up until that time.

I lived at the Imbil pub, stayed some weekends and went to the movie house either Friday or Saturday when in town. Vince drove up about every two weeks and took me back home and to church on Sunday. It was at dinner one Friday I had company seated across the room. The publican told me she was from the government vet office and passed seasonally through the town servicing livestock on local farms. I introduced myself to Jo-Anne and invited her to the film screening that night. We finished up in bed in her room. I was no longer a virgin and felt very proud.

As it was Saturday I had no particular plans. Jo-Anne had to work later that day and invited me to accompany her. I asked what she did. She slipped out of bed went to the cupboard,

opened the doors to reveal arms-length red vulcanised rubber gloves. She was the government contract artificial inseminator for the area. We had a huge laugh about it. She had learned not to tell prospective bed partners until after sex as it had a definite performance reducing effect on many. It was a good week in Imbil.

I revisited Imbil in 2009. Very little looked familiar. The hotel and the cinema were there. The town looked less bare due to extensive vegetation. The people are as nice as they were back in 1966.

Even though I was only at home, at The Gap, two or so weekends a month the rent deal was in force but somewhat lopsidedly. Moya expected all lawns mown, washing washed and ironing ironed by the time Vince returned me to Imbil late Sunday. A four-hour round trip was a commitment I really appreciated from him. We got closer during the 10 months I was in Imbil due to the travel time together. Even so I had to go to my sister-in-law to check my recall about my father for this book. A sad admission.

In October 1967 I was on holidays and went to Her Majesty's Theatre in George Street to see a hypnotist act. Frank Harry Quinn, called Pat by those close to him, was *The Great Franquin*. Vince recalled that Franquin had honed his already remarkable hypnosis skills while a prisoner of war in Asia. When I asked how he knew, Dad revealed he had managed a munitions factory during part of the war. He'd seen Franquin when he had started his show after being released from the prison camp where he perfected his talents which included legerdemain.

Franquin called for volunteers from the audience during the first part of the program, to participate in the performance. I went on stage. As a stage participant, at the conclusion of the performance, we were each given a pass to return to see the performance from the audience perspective because we had been the show that night. I came back the next week but went on-stage again. The same *Come Again* card was given but mine had a

handwritten invitation to meet Franquin back stage now. I was invited to join the troupe as an audience plant.

I resigned from the bank but didn't tell family. Instead, on Wednesday 24 May, I announced I was going to New Zealand on 26 May 1968, my 21st birthday. Moya was furious. I think Dad quietly approved but was stern as a front. I took myself off for a mud crab meal that night and was stricken by food poisoning. Shots from the doctor in the right butt cheek enabled me to get on the plane next day. My parents had no plans for a 21st so I figured I wasn't missing anything by going away.

My pay for this secret role was much more than the bank; I would travel with all expenses met, meet interesting people and perform. Now whether I was ever hypnotised is between Franquin and me. I used what French and German I had to speak in tongues, and despite not being sports inclined I performed feats of physical strength on stage delighting the house every night. One act was to be hypnotised into rigidity, raised to the horizontal and with ankles and neck on the uprights of two chairs I could support three women standing on me. This was a show highlight. One of many.

Another act was to be blindfolded with a fifty-cent piece taped over each eye, eye shades and two cloth blindfolds on. I could then tell what other audience members on stage for this act had in their hands, even down to numbers on bus tickets. Remember, this was well before ear pieces, electronics and gadgetry. How was it done? Well, that's a secret.

I also got excellent training in stage management as we all chipped in to pack and unpack the set, do the lighting and balance sound (these were the days of large limited frequency hand-held microphones without any miniaturisation), transport the show in a pantechicon and publicise the show by putting up posters throughout each town on arrival.

While known as primarily a hypnotist Franquin's talents also encompassed mentalism which covered memory, recall and clever object and text reading skills. As a keen observer I came

to duplicate some techniques quite successfully including hypnotism itself about which I read much and practised on my fellows. I never intended to challenge the great man, rather to have some personal insight, experience and capability of his expertise myself. Years later, I did parlour tricks for my new wife's friends.

The gig lasted seven months. The troupe stayed together in digs on a rotating buddy system. Frank's second wife Beris was the tough but fair financial manager. I often assisted Beris as 'assistant' treasurer to validate me on the books for insurance purposes. But cross Beris and you were on a plane back home.

One of our buddy-group was under the NZ drinking age and upset at being restricted from joining us at the pub. Instead he secretly purchased a bottle of liquor for his own consumption. Upon returning to the flat we found him unconscious, shivering and blue from cold as the flat windows were open on a cold Wellington night. I surmised alcohol poisoning or near to and possible hypothermia. We stripped him put him in a bath to warm up and got him awake enough to sip water.

With some rehydration happening, we put him to bed where he vomited into a new set of boots proudly placed by him next to his bed. We had a performance next day so he was fed glucose and fruit. We lied to Beris it was a severe tummy upset. Next day, he wouldn't perform voluntarily so we had to throw him to the wolves to protect the remaining group interests. He was sent home 24 hrs later. Throughout the next months not a single performance call was missed by anyone.

During 1969 I did a number of one-night special appearances in Australia and New Zealand for Franquin. Flying in late and leaving next morning. Arriving with a freshly grown beard for one performance then shaving for another. I performed an Opening Night for the NZ Governor-General. I had incorrectly paced out the space between the footlights and my place on stage. Consequently, I fell into the pit among the musicians much to the dismay then delight of the audience as I was retrieved unhurt.

Franquin had nearly as many returns to the stage as Nelly Melba. After some 200 performances he 'retired' for the first time in 1950. I was working for him nearly twenty years later in yet another of his revivals.

While in NZ for one such special performance I didn't go home immediately but flew to Picton or Blenheim on the north of NZ's South Island. I recall flying low over the wreck of the *Wahine* which had just happened in April that year. I was to go pig hunting with dogs; something I am less enthused about now than I was then. I bungled the kill due to being shit scared and suffice to say I got covered in blood in the only clothes I had. I also fell into the local river fully clothed when the soft bank gave way as I was throwing-up from the kill.

Channel O was the forerunner of Channel 10 in Sydney. Franquin and Beris flew me to Sydney for a single on-air live engagement. I was to be hypnotised NOT to be able to push a wheelbarrow the length of a cricket pitch and across the line with \$10,000 in cash as the prize if I could break the hypnotic command not to do it. Supposedly chosen at random from the audience, no glasses, a beard and new hair style, I won a prize of \$1,000 for failing to complete the barrow run. The choreography of the run and the mental conflict on my face heightened the audience excitement to an extreme. I wonder if a tape still exists of this event. It was all theatre and staged.

Later that year Franquin sent me a nice handwritten note saying he had no further plans for me and best of luck. The risk of my being recognised and exposed as a plant was too great. Fair enough!

Back to NZ for this close. If you worked for less than 12 months in NZ you could apply for a refund of nearly all of the ten percent flat tax rate one had paid during employment. I did so and received a nice cheque which I cashed. In those days NZ currency wasn't accepted in Australia so one had to spend the money thereby stimulating the local economy. I spent several days in a

suite at the Auckland Intercontinental sharing alternate amorous encounters with twin sister nurses from the local hospital. The night before my return flight to Oz they altered their shifts to have a last night off all together.

I arrived home in Brisbane unannounced at 7pm on the day before Christmas Eve 1968. I had a key and walked in saying, "Hi! I'm back." Moya looked up and said, "Shut up, the news is on." Dad came over and gave me a big long hug. I had written monthly to Vince during my absence. Moya wasn't over my leaving the bank and doing something, which was unforgiveable and, in her opinion, an embarrassment. The next day was Apollo 8's famous lunar orbital greeting and message. Moya refused to allow us to watch it such was her snit at me.

The following Sunday I was ironing and enjoying the ABC classical broadcast. I had hung up Vince's gardening shirt, a threadbare, sleeveless, old business shirt with no collar. There was scant fabric to iron so a quick glide here and there was all it received. Moya appeared to take what had been ironed away to cupboards. "Again! Do this properly you lazy lummo!" she exclaimed, throwing the tattered wreck back at me. My anger erupted, "Bugger off, there is nothing there to iron." Not a nice exchange between mother and son. I acknowledge my fault in handling the exchange badly.

I turned to take up another item from the laundry basket and was struck a blow to the back of my head with the hot iron. The following week I moved to a flat in Red Hill. My mother and I didn't speak for some years. She took to calling Terry at 6am insisting he come over to help Vince with the mowing. These commands were to continue until her death. She simply moved from me to Terry to fulfil her wants. Bette Davis' movie *The Anniversary* could be based on Moya. My mother's imperious nature gained her the nickname of the Duchess.

I made the arrangements to move out quietly, no threat and no communication. On the day, I just packed two bags and some

boxes, ordered a taxi, told Vince I was leaving and walked away. I now realise I hurt him terribly. Unintentionally, but without realisation my actions were so unthinkingly cruel, I had selfishly thought only of myself. Apparently Moya's only comment when Vince told her I had left home was, "He'll be back." I never returned.

To my father's credit he called me a week later saying he would pick me up for Mass early on Sunday. What a day it would turn out to be!