

Just Famous Enough not to be Noticed

Postscript

January 2021¹

Much to the surprise of my medical professionals, I persist. I have now had MSA for somewhere between twelve and fifteen years. The original management plan gave me a life expectation of five to seven years which is the average for the vast majority of MSA sufferers.

I've lost count of tests, scans, rehab sessions, specialists diagnoses and 'let's try' treatments. I hurt, stumble, careen and stagger supported by a stick, on good days, by a walking frame when not so great and, delight in frightening small animals and young children with an electric scooter, for longer distances. The car had to go early 2020. I voluntarily gave up my driver's licence before I became a danger to others.

Elsewhere on this website is a medical summary on my condition and its many facets – MSA or Shy-Drager Syndrome is a relatively rare condition (1:113,000) – should you be interested. My biggest challengers are balance, wildly fluctuating blood pressure, extreme fatigue, painful peripheral neuropathy, lack of ocular focus and, diminishing concentration and, emulation of Parkinson's Disease indicators such as tremors. I have driven myself to keep busy both physically but particularly mentally.

So, what has transpired since completing my autobiography six years ago?

The relationship with Business Mentors Noosa has been very professionally satisfying over some three-four years. This culminated in their endorsing my mentor training content which I converted into a hand-book/manual published in 2019, titled ***The Art of the Business-Mentor***.

I have distributed hundreds of free copies to mentors across Australia and serialised the material for free access on my website (<https://michael-donovan.com>). Licences to use extracts or whole chapters have also been given to assist the industry maintain high level professional development. The content now also appears in a government sponsored apprentice training manual and an SME version, titled ***The Power of Mentorship*** co-authored with Mark Jones.

Until 2019, I was still able to deliver a busy schedule of facilitated learning in mentoring and company directorship. As my physical and mental capability declines a number of these had to be done in partnership with some of my old mentoring team. A joy to work with given their high professionalism.

My principal reason for serialising material and offering it free comes from a desire to promote leadership excellence, support volunteer mentors and to assist start-up boards realise their commitment and obligations as a company director.

For two years, I was a judge of the Sunshine Coast Business Awards and the Regional Arts Development Fund; advisor to Innovate NOOSA and, participated in a workshop in Innovation for Local Member Sandy Bolton M.P.

My former Company Director contact, supposedly retired, Pauline Green, who has endorsed my mentor hand-book asked me to participate in a BIG Ideas Panel for the 2018 Australian Engineering Annual Conference and to be 'out-there' imaginative. A fun challenge. Now the broader challenge put to speakers (some twelve) was to pose ideas to address challenges in engineering. Oddly, I was the only one to pose pure engineering challenges. All others dealt with industry structure, legal and funding.

I had two ideas. One challenged engineers to use nanotechnology and airships to move water across and around the drought areas of Australia. The second was to invent a 'vampire app' that could draw upon or share a battery charge from another device in order to recharge itself in an emergency.

The airship idea needs to overcome a ballast retirement to gain traction. The app was released by Samsung a few months later. Not due to my idea. Simply co-incidental but again I was on-the-money.

But my biggest project was an invitation to deliver six one-hour educational on board the Cunard ship Queen Elizabeth II during an Australian and New Zealand coastal cruise. I submitted five outlines for subjects which were

¹ This Postscript is not published as part of the original book

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accepted, one being a two-hour special titled **A 4,000 Year History of Vampyres** an informative and fun piece accessing a subject of my own interest. The other topics covered leadership; NOOSA Biosphere v1.0; mentoring and, my biography.

At 2.00am, on the morning of departure, to fly to meet the QEII, New Zealand closed its borders due to Covid-19 and I was told not to travel to meet the ship. Carol and I went back to bed. As time goes on, I perhaps have become less physically and mentally capable of delivering such a series to the standard expected.

On the home front my experience in drafting constitutions was called upon to modernise and, bring into line with the new retirement village's act, our own village constitution. This, along with a Pet Policy, took all of 2017 to achieve but were both successfully adopted.

Our village has an active Social Group. Two activities I created and presented included a foodie group and an interview series. The latter called upon my NOOSA Biosphere Radio broadcasting experience.

The **YUM!** food group met eight times a year, decided on a three-course lunch menu, purchased comestibles, engaged in hands-on prep of the meal and, with wine, ate heartily. A great success such that two groups co-existed to cope with the interest and demand.

The interview series identified interesting private, work and experiences of fellow residents in our village. Titled **Anecdotes, Gossip and Tall-tales** over two years (2017/18) some 20 residents shared incredible life stories held in the format of winter fire-side chats on a Sunday afternoon. Two interviewees per session. Again, incredibly popular.

A renewed 2018 effort to recreate Biosphere Radio struggled to get sufficient trained announcer talent to be a goer. To assist I regained my broadcasting credentials, created a new format and sketched a new content outline. It just could not get off the ground with sufficient continuity of on-air talent to guarantee a weekly one-hour slot.

It was while endeavouring to revitalise this radio program I realised my speech and voice qualities were faltering. Coincidentally, the speech therapist at my rehab had just qualified as an instructor in Parkinsons Voice Training. I was her first graduate and practice the Speak Out lessons frequently.

Singing is part of the therapy so I also joined a group called The Sing Thing dedicated to assisting Alzheimer sufferers but appealing to MSA sufferers also.

So, there it is. An update. What might the future hold?