



FOREST HILL HAPPENINGS

No 38

President: Stuart Williams

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STU'S SCRIPT

Let's hope that we will have a couple of pleasant week's of weather before winter sets in. The cold, wet, bleak weather we had for 4 days last week was difficult to cope with. Good for being inside but not easy to get outside for some exercise. I hope you are still going Ok.

It was good to catch up again on Zoom Monday evening. A big thank you to DG Shia for making time to join us. It was interesting to hear one of her reflections about visiting 50 Rotary Clubs. "The same but different." That I believe is a strength of Rotary. All strengthening their communities, but doing it in different ways.

Next week we will have a guest speaker for most of our meeting at 7pm. Don't forget to sign up for a District Assembly session. To all the mothers, have a great Mother's Day-- it will be different this year.

Stay safe, stay sane

Stuart

NEXT MEETING

Monday 11th May: 7.00pm in the Zoom Room. (Guest Speaker)

7.40pm in the Zoom Room. (Club meeting)

Two meetings this week.

The first, at 7.00pm, will be devoted to our guest speaker, Janette Etherington, from Interplast.

The second, at 7.40pm, will be our normal club meeting.

Links for both meetings will be sent today. Please make sure you use the correct link for each meeting.

People from other clubs are welcome to attend the Interplast presentation. Contact me and I will send you the link

Bill

Dear all,

I hope this finds you all well and keeping safe.

I have received information from Interplast regarding its activities during COVID-19, as follows:

- *Interplast staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to develop an online platform that allows partner hospitals and medical personnel across the Asia Pacific region to connect during this period of great need.*
Interplast will be launching a digital service that:
 1. *Allows medical professionals in developing countries to view essential training videos and resources on demand.*
 2. *Facilitates virtual conversations and case-planning between Interplast's volunteers and its partners*
 3. *Provides a secure forum for sharing of ideas, medical responses, mentoring and case-consultations.*
- *The impact of COVID-19 is significant especially amongst health services within developing nations.*

I thought you would be all interested in the above.

While most clubs are utilizing 'Zoom' within their clubs, it is good to know what is happening in the Asia Pacific region where Interplast's mission is in the countries they work in.

Take care all of you beautiful people, and your families, and stay safe.

Liz Guiver

Interplast Chair

CELEBRATIONS

This week Glenys and Rob celebrate their Wedding Anniversary. We were all going to the party, but alas.....!!!!!! Best Wishes and Congratulations to you both from all of us.



See!! 1.5 metres of separation

Wandering tales from a wandering engineer

I did makeups in 22 different countries during my years in the work force while I was managing a group promoting Australian sugar technology inc. rum, fuel ethanol, and waste treatment overseas. I was often seconded to World Bank, Asean Development Bank, and ESCAP. Every country has it's stories/incidents etc. So, I will just pick two countries.

Pakistan

I had recruited a great guy Anjum Bilgrami to be my agent in Pakistan. He was married to a doctor who did not cover her face, wore a sari and was a delight to talk to. Anjum lived in one of four houses in a high walled compound with a guarded gate. His parents and younger sister lived in another, his younger brother lived in another. At the time of this incident the younger brother an ex fighter pilot was "on leave" from his job as second officer working for Pakistan Airlines because the previous month the captain he was flying with landed a passenger plane (safely I might add) without putting the wheels down !.... but I am getting side tracked.

Anjum asked me to attend a meeting at his parent's house in the mid 80's. When I got there, I chatted to his parents about Australia (they were in their 60's). Father was a retired high ranking army officer. Their daughter then came into the room she was 18 and just about to go to university in Pakistan. She was dressed in western style, no headscarf. Then another couple came in of Anjum's parents age. They also were western dressed and I found out the man had been a junior army officer with Anjum's father and they retired around the same time at the same seniority. We all sat around the edge of the room chatting socially, drinking water. Water seemed to always be offered whenever you entered a room anywhere.

Finally, a young man entered, the other couple's son, and was introduced around the room. It transpired that he had just graduated and had a green card (a very valuable commodity) and was heading to the USA to do a postgraduate degree.

Yes, it also transpired that this was the first time that son and the daughter had seen each other, and yes, this was an arranged marriage! Later, talking to Anjum he explained that his father did not want his daughter heading off to university away from home and meeting someone "unsuitable". Likewise, the other couple did not want their son heading off to USA out of their control and perhaps meeting an "unsuitable" girl. So, the plan was, get engaged straight away, head off apart for three years, get their appropriate degrees, get married back in Pakistan, live happily ever after. Anjum said that the reason why there is little divorce in Pakistan is that couples are from the same social and financial backgrounds and at the first sign of any problem the families get together to solve the issues. So much better than leaving all these things to chance. It raised some interesting discussions.

China

I was lucky enough to first visit and work in China in 1980. Rather than give just one anecdote a better picture may be painted by listing some snippets.

- I flew CAC into Shanghai. I had to fill out a form declaring and showing my watch, biro, camera, calculator, and denim jeans. Women had to declare all makeup including lipstick. This form was stapled into your passport.

- On leaving you had to show you had them all. Who would have guessed that 20 years later all those items would be made in China and exported to the world. I remember some years later going to a museum in Shanghai showing how China had invented the biro !!! In 1980 all Chinese, men and women wore Mao uniforms of drab blue, drab green, or drab brown. But there was the first signs of private enterprise with small piles of vegetables sold on street corners. I was picked up by two guys in a black car with forward opening doors. There was only one hotel that took English speaking visitors, a different one for German, a different one for French etc as they concentrated their resources. My interpreter was a very old retired ex librarian lady as there was a great shortage of interpreters. I had strict instructions not to leave the hotel without these two guys but I snuck out once or twice for a walk and was surprised by the people who sidled up to me to practice their English (how did they know what language I spoke?). I practiced my extremely poor Putonghua (mandarin).
- I took an overnight ferry 12 hrs from Hong Kong to Xiamen which left at 9pm. I was the only non-Asian on the ferry. My individual bunk room of course had no door lock. I was told I would be met by someone from the Ministry of Industry (?). I disembarked and sat down on my suitcase at the bottom of the gangplank, and waited, and waited. About 2-3 hours later a van drove past. Two guys in it, spoke a little English and asked who I was waiting for. So I told them. They said please wait. About 2pm they came back, said they had spoken to the people who were due to pick me up but I was 2 days early. They gave me a lift to the only hotel in the city allowed to take foreigners. They left me there and told me to wait! I spent two days there trying to improve my Putonghua from books I had with me. Useful, as the hotel menu was in characters and nobody spoke English. Sure enough, 2 days later the people who were supposed to meet me turned up, no mention of the stuff-up, and I had some good meetings. Though the refinery I was hoping to design and build never happened as they expected us to finance it and get paid by the sale of the sugar we had to sell to the world.
- Had a World Bank job in Guangzhou lecturing for 8 weeks at the South China Sugar Institute on sugar mill and distillery waste treatment. Was told by the Chinese that I had to go via Beijing. First visit was to the bank to pick up money. It was literally a small suitcase full of renminbi plus a specially signed authority to allow me to spend this local currency as in those days it was against the law for a foreigner to have it in his possession and against the law for locals to have foreign exchange certificates. Foreign exchange certificates could only be spent in Friendship Stores which did not take local currency. The goods were higher quality made to be sold to foreigners. The cash was to pay for my hotel etc and was worth at least 5 years wages. I was concerned it might be stolen as there were no locks on hotel doors, no safety deposit boxes but I was told by my minders that stealing that amount of money was a crime against the state and an automatic death penalty. I was taken to every attraction in and around Beijing in that first week and out to a splendid dinner every night always with a large group of different local dignitaries and always with the same two minders. They said the government were thanking me for donating my knowledge and time to help them [they did not realise I was being paid by the World Bank]. I remember visiting the Forbidden City. In those days you could go into every room and pick up every object including solid gold

ones with no apparent security. My minders told me nobody would take anything as everyone knew what everyone owned and it would be impossible to

sell [how times have changed]. I had to travel to Guangzhou. Planes were full as it was the annual Trade Fair in Guangzhou so I went by train (36hrs or so). I asked how I would know when it got to Guangzhou and where to go when I got off. I was told it was the last stop, and I would be met. "How would they know me?" Silly me, I was the only non-Asian on the train! The toilet compartment was a long carriage with about 6 holes down the centre, no privacy, no sex discrimination. I drank hot water as nobody told me I was supposed to bring my own green tea leaves. We slept four to a compartment. I was given a bottom bunk as an honoured guest in the country. We were told when it was our time to eat. We stood behind four people who were eating. When they finished they got up together and we sat down. There were a pile of small chicken (?) bones by the side of each place setting. Meal was served (no choice). You spat out the bones increasing the pile by your plate (I wonder how many meals the pile by my plate represented). I survived. Was met by a delightful middle-aged lady, head of the Institute with a party of others including a PhD young guy, engineer who spoke English. I worked a 6 day week and every Sunday was taken out for the day to somewhere special. I could write a book on the experiences.

- I visited Hainan island with a view to building a sugar refinery. I can remember ducking out the back of the hotel one time to eat in a local café rather than hotel food. I ended up in a place with pressed aluminium "bento box" style plates. Obviously I didn't know any of the food heaped up in the bain-marie counter so I just beckoned one of the waiters over, pointed to a what another guy was eating and said "same for me" with a beer (beer is one of the first words you learn in any language). The beer was a \$1/bottle, the large tasty (unknown) food was \$0.50. I had lost my way so had to get a taxi back (always take a hotel card with you whenever you are in an unknown place) which turned out to be about a 3 min ride but I would never have found it.

I think that is enough. I have enjoyed reliving some of the memories. The years 1979 to 1990 were eventful. As I said, I did jobs in 22 different countries during that time occasionally coming home to check I was still married. On one of those brief visits returning from Western Samoa on Christmas Eve I remember there was one chocolate left after dinner and Robbie said "who should have it" and a 4 (?) year old Nicholas said, "the visitor".

Ron Brooks

National Trachoma and Eye Health Program

It was in 1974 that the renowned ophthalmologist Prof Fred Hollows toured parts of Northern Australia checking eye disease among the indigenous peoples. Out of that visit the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program was born.

Aligned with that Australia wide program was another scheme, funded jointly by the Department of Health and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, designed to collect data on trachoma, treat it and work out the best means of ongoing treatment in a concentrated Northern Territory area.

This region encompassed the home of human rights activist Vincent Linguari - Wattie Creek (now Daguragu), Wave Hill (Kalkaringi) and Hooker Creek (Lajamanu).

I was part of this program, visiting the NT for three weeks twice a year for eight years, working with Vincent, his Gurindji people and the Warlpiri people further South.

My First Two Days

In early January 1975, 10 days after Cyclone Tracy, a Federally funded Trachoma team met up in Darwin. It included three trachoma experts from Melbourne, a local air Medical Service Dr (and pilot) - and me.

We were joined by a Darwin based Leprosy doctor and nurse. Each of their homes had been cyclone damaged, almost blown away.

My brief: to be part of the testing and treatment team; to document all disease progress for ongoing treatment; and (specifically for the Federal Government) to document the team work and the local living conditions we encountered.

Every Trachomatous eye was macro documented, graded and the results sent to WHO.

It was decided the team would drive down more than 600 Kilometres to Wave Hill Aboriginal Settlement and 24 hrs later I was to fly down with the fragile equipment, ensuring it arrived safely.

The team, including the local nurse, was to meet me at the Wave Hill airstrip, some distance from the settlement.

I was ecstatic to have 24 hours alone in Darwin, photographing and viewing the Cyclone Tracy devastation (another part of my brief). Electricity and telephone poles bent at crazy angles, a car upended in a swimming pool, roofs and walls blown off, trees uprooted.

No power, water, gas. My hotel had its own power, but facilities and food were very limited. No air conditioning, 44° and very humid.

At dawn next day I arrived at the Air Med airport area. Airport planes were flipped belly side up - a view that was not reassuring at all.

I supervised the packing of the equipment into the small mail plane, which was the only undamaged aircraft I could see. The plane was doing what was termed the 'monthly Milk run', dropping mail and supplies off to remote settlements and cattle stations.

We took off at 7.00am and it took until late afternoon, pre sunset to arrive at Wave Hill. I was in the 14 seat cabin with the net secured and rope strapped equipment all around me and scoffed at the thought of the heavy equipment and boxes moving - until we hit an air pocket which felt we were plummeting from the sky.

Initially I was surprised to see two pilots in such a small plane. After a while the chief pilot came back and chatted and smoked for about an hour, finally saying he probably should get back to the cockpit as 'Charlie hasn't got his ticket yet'!

Over the years I grew to admire this laidback attitude, finding it quite refreshing after the red tape and rigmarole of the city.

The pilots navigated using a paper road map, peering out and down. The scenery was vast and amazing, landmarks were not easily visible. It all looked the same to me.

We landed a number of times that day. Often the greeters were outback station and settlement women, or even whole families, desperate for their mail, books, special supplies, a chat and news. There were lots of discussions and speculation about the Cyclone damage. They were especially interested in quizzing me on 'big city news' These dear, lonely women always brought gifts of home baked goods and looked sad to wave us goodbye.

Finally we arrived at the Wave Hill Aboriginal Settlement. The pilots buzzed the town to alert them we had arrived and then flew further on, quite a distance, to land at the airstrip. It was late afternoon, pilots were running overtime on their schedule and needed to drop me off and fly straight back to Darwin.

They unloaded the equipment, and waited 20 mins to see if someone was coming for me, anxiously scanning the far horizon. They then said they had to go, but would again buzz the township. They left - and I checked out 360° of simmering heat landscape. Nothing but flat desert, red sand, occasional spindly tufts of bush, no roads, just a couple of sand tracks and the compacted red dust airstrip. No sign of life or buildings. Fascinating for someone who had never been far from home.

It was hot, humid and dusty. I ended up sitting on one of the piles of equipment, just wanting someone, anyone, to come - a Jeep, a person. After an hour I would have welcomed even a kangaroo!

Then the sun was setting. This city girl was feeling nervous, tired and trying to think of what to do if it got completely dark. Questions formed in my brain...

Should I try to find my way to the settlement, leaving the equipment?

That was a no as if anything happened to the equipment the whole program was dead.

Also - were there snakes?

Yes - and I had on sandals, so walking anywhere in the dark without a torch was out. As darkness fell, way over on the horizon, I saw a couple of figures standing looking towards me. This was my first view of the wonderful indigenous people we were there to treat, and their first view of me. After a while they squatted, just waiting and watching.

I learnt later they were concerned and were keeping an eye on me. But from a great distance.

At least another hour passed (or so it seemed). The sky was inky black, studded with scattered diamonds. It was beautiful and deathly silent and actually quite cold.

Freaking out after at least three hours on my own in the desert, I was convinced someone would find me the next day, killed by some unknown animal or reptile. Then - hallelujah - twin pinpoints of light on the horizon, then noise of a vehicle - or two.

The team arrived and explained. The convoy had arrived at the settlement after an exhausting trip down from Darwin. They had met with the area nurse and the tribal Elders, planning the program timetable. Hot, dusty and exhausted, they drove out about 15 kms to a local waterhole for a swim. Then engine trouble. They finally got back - to be told by locals the plane had buzzed about three hours earlier.

I was so glad to see them!

We packed the jeeps, piled in and drove across the desert towards the settlement.

As we passed the two watching, silent figures they shyly waved a hello to me.

Glenys Grant.

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

We have been very lucky to have contact with a number of Exchange Students and GSE members who have been associated with the club over a long period. We have featured letters from various countries over the last couple of newsletters and continue today. These contacts have really demonstrated how the COVID-19 virus has spread world-wide and had massive effects on people and economies. It makes you realize we are not alone in this stressful time and that we are, in fact, better off than many other countries and communities.

Thailand

Thailand has done very well in managing COVID-19.. They closed the borders quickly. Put in social distancing, hand washing programs. Sprayed the streets with disinfectant. Fairly early on they shut bars, massage parlours, night spots, prohibited the sale of alcohol, closed department stores and cafes. That meant millions lost their jobs. Many people headed back to their villages and country towns and cities. Then they locked down provinces and major cities. Police had road blocks and would not let people through. If you lived 20 km outside a big city like Khon Kaen, you could not get in to work. After about 3 weeks they brought in a night curfew - 10pm to 7am. Their death toll is similar to Australia's. My friend Bum, has been able to continue to work in her insurance office. Another friend, owner of a travel agency has had no income for 6 weeks, and had to put off 15 staff. Another friend, a regional hotel manager is still working but most of the staff dismissed. The government has put in a smallish financial assistance program. A Rotary club in a small town has been providing small meals in boxes for the poor. There are many millions who virtually have no money. Most Thais have no savings. On Monday they lifted some restrictions. Hair-dressers were allowed to open. Department stores have not opened yet. Stuart

Uganda

COVID-19 majorly spreads faster in places with high concentration of people, in respect to this the world has adopted ways of curbing the spread of this virus one of them being imposing curfews, lockdowns and stay at home orders.

For the past one-month and more Uganda has been under movement restrictions, strict curfew time from 6pm to 7am, this has had effects on both the social, economical and physiological being of our lives.

We have been drawn back from our normal social lives that we had gotten used to, we now see ourselves adapting to new ways of socializing through video conference calls, in respect to rotary this has seen an embrace and rise of online fellowships which is something that most likely will not go away.

Since the biggest percentage of the population in Uganda is employed under the informal sector and the economy is majorly a hand to mouth economy, these restrictions have greatly affected the biggest numbers of the population, jobs have been lost and it is becoming challenging for them to feed.

In addition this being the first time we are going through such times in Uganda our mental health has with no doubt been tested, people have become anxious, worried about what will happen next after this defining period, anxious on whether this will come to an end and shall we surely return back to our normal lives.

At the forefront of enforcing these restrictions and lockdown measures is a joint security task force including the police, assisted by the army, local defense units commonly referred to as LDUs by the common person, to those who are found violating the lockdown measures, outside curfew time have unfortunately been given a test of their own medicine. Across the country those found contravening the lockdown measures have been arrested, some have been caned by the authorities, they have also been engaged in running battles with the authorities in the late evening hours with individuals trying to catch up with curfew time.

In conclusion I believe that all these measures regardless of the effects negative or positive are means of curbing the deadly spread of the virus which could have far

more devastating effects. With still a few cases confirmed in Uganda this indicates that there is light at the end of the tunnel, hope that within no time all this will be over and we shall surely prevail against the virus while closely following all the recommendations put forward by the relative authorities.

Alice Njeri Ngige RC Muyenga Sunday Sunset.

History repeats itself. Came across this poem written in 1869, reprinted during 1919 Pandemic.

This is Timeless....

And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.



Just in case you have forgotten me - Something for our golfers

In my hand I hold a ball
White, dimpled and rather small
Oh, how bland it does appear
This harmless looking little sphere

By its size I could not guess
The awesome strength it does possess
But since I fell beneath its spell
I've wandered through the fires of hell

My life has not been quite the same
Since I chose to play this stupid game
It rules my mind for hours on end
A fortune it has made me spend

It has made me yell, curse and cry
I hate myself and want to die
It promises a thing called par
If I could hit it straight and far

To master such a tiny ball
Should not be very hard at all
But my desires the ball refuses
And does exactly as it chooses

It hooks and slices, dribbles and dies
And even disappears before my eyes
Often it will have a whim
To hit a tree or take a swim

With miles of grass on which to land
It finds a tiny patch of sand
Then has me offering up my soul
If only I could find the hole

It makes me whimper like a pup
And swear that I will give it up
And take to drink to ease my sorrow
But the ball knows I will be back tomorrow.

Stand proud you noble swingers of clubs and losers of balls....

A recent study found the average golfer walks about 1,500 kms a year a year.

Another study found golfers drink on average 50 litres of alcohol a year

That means on average golfers get about 30 kms to the litre

Kind of makes you proud, you almost feel like a hybrid.

Sarge Bob

KEEP SMILING!!!

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