

## News from Bill - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

Greetings to all family and friends, my thoughts and prayers are with you as always as we bunker down at this most unusual of times. Now that we are all practising “physical distancing” or even home isolating, I’m sure you agree that it is important to maintain social connection as much as possible. In that regard, many are turning to the old fashioned skill of letter writing and of course the telephone, amongst the many other forms of communication now available.

On 6 March, our dear cousin Maureen Campbell (nee Moore) passed away after a long illness. Regrettably, I did not attend her funeral on March 19<sup>th</sup> because I was suffering with a mild respiratory tract infection (self diagnosed) which could have been something worse. Considering, like me, the Moore cousins are now quite elderly I sent my apologies and a card. I am sure Maureen would have understood. However it would have been a rare chance to catch up with cousins I rarely see, apart from Jo and Terry, who I visited recently in Leederville to harvest some of their abundant grape crop.

Facebook is rather impersonal, although for many of you perhaps it is some assurance that each of us is keeping well. Being in the over-70 category in my 80<sup>th</sup> year, naturally I am doing the recommended things while keeping fit by lots of walking in empty streets or working in the church garden at St Lukes, Maylands. Surely we have an advantage in WA in that our streets are empty at the best of times. I am pretty much the only one using the community garden behind the church, which has become a serene and sunny refuge for me. Besides tending the crop of Kale, chillies, pumpkin, herbs, paw paw plants and sundry seedlings, I can meet people by arrangement there, singly of course, for a yarn and a cuppa, providing we bring our own Thermos and keep the required 1.5 metres apart.

I have many wonderful friends at St Luke’s and in the three 12 Steps groups I usually attended every week. All have gone into recess but in each case we have devised ways to support each other, so we don’t feel alone. In addition, there is so much to do at my unit 2, 15 Tenth Avenue where I have a lifetime of accumulated “stuff” to organise and a host of unfinished projects to complete (including this long delayed letter). All in all, I live by a four square philosophy that includes spiritual, social, mental and physical activity in equal measures.

I have been renting the present two-bed room unit for almost 14 years in a ground level, four-unit block at \$225 per week; less a \$45 weekly rent assistance deduction from Centrelink. The neighbours have invariably been friendly and have been an interesting mix of ethnicities as the tenants change over the years. At the moment we have a Kiwi and mainland Chinese couple and for the first time in 14 years an “Anglo”, being an elderly English woman in Unit 3. Unit four is owned by Sophie, a Taiwanese single mother whose daughter is studying at university. Claire, the English lady, has leukaemia which requires regular chemotherapy so we are all concerned for her. Naturally we are all confined to quarters but talk as we pass on the driveway. All have been very accepting of the odd bods who have shared my unit over the years. That is something which I do not take for granted, so I am very appreciative of their tolerant attitude. I also do all the gardening on the block, including vegetating the verge with native plants and growing a Tacoma hedge along the side fence which attracts a lot of birdlife when in flower. We are all mourning the passing of “Snowy”, a friendly white cat that lived in Unit 4 but did the rounds begging for mince if he could get it. Every year a family of magpies nest nearby and they also come to the door in season for a feed of mince.

I have only met the owner of my unit once. I guess he is very happy with me as a tenant because the lease has recently been renewed for another year. The pension comes into my account, and the rent goes out, all done automatically, and I seem to be able to live on what’s left over. So under the present circumstances I am **very blessed** compared to what others are going through. Not to mention the nice

bonus received today from the government. Phillip, the absentee owner of Unit 3 is a good friend, a Thai-speaking Australian who has been very helpful in the big breakthrough of 2019 when I discovered our long-lost Thai relatives, the descendants of Leonard Osborne Day. Leonard died in 1927, leaving his Siamese wife and their five children in very poor circumstances. It has been an almost 90-year estrangement for them. The surviving generation have a family legend of the Day connection but don't even speak English now. I have related that story on Facebook, or you can follow it at [www.drbilldayanthropologist.com](http://www.drbilldayanthropologist.com)

Phillip and I used to meet monthly for coffee at the Maylands Dome Cafe (Dome's head office is upstairs). I call the local Dome my office, where pre-Covid-19 I read the papers and arranged to meet whoever wants to discuss whatever. That is one other thing I do miss in these strange times, along with all the above mentioned and the gym, cinemas and libraries, now all classed as "non-essential" activities.

For the past 18 months, since 17 September 2018, a 31-year-old Darwin male of Aboriginal descent named Kyle has been sharing the unit with me. I worked closely with his grandfather Norman back in the 1970s in Darwin. His great aunt is also a friend, Mavis Waddell of Darwin. I did my best to give Kyle a new start away from bad influences in Darwin and his traumatic past (which I have documented in great detail elsewhere). For a while he got involved with local church groups and attended 12 Step meetings, Spirits of the Streets Choir and various groups but after a year he began to slip backwards. I can't help feeling that it was a very sad reflection on my isolation from family that in the 18 months while Kyle was sharing the unit, he did not meet a single member of my extended family.

The two of us spent a few days in New Norcia where Kyle socialised very well at the communal meal table and attended the daily prayers in the chapel with the monks. Despite some moments, at home his almost constant presence was becoming extremely stressful for me. All my church and AA family advised me that I was becoming an "enabler". This led to a crisis whereby I gave Kyle the options of living on the streets or returning to his mother's place in Darwin. Eventually, at my expense, on Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup>, he flew north leaving me with the exquisite luxury of living alone again -- as it turned out just in time for the corona virus lock-down. Then along came the \$750 bonus from Scom which nicely recompensed me for the airfare. No regrets, no self-pity from me, indeed I thank Kyle for the experience. Now I must "leave the results to God" and feel sure Kyle's taste of "normality" in Maylands will be of value to him going forward. As my sponsor used to say, "Put the money in the bank and you can draw on the interest when you need it". I have received no word since he left WA.

Finally, I attended the monthly Friends of Hollywood Reserve group, working on bush care several times in the last 12 months, including their annual general meeting at Trish Hewson's house, 13 Boronia Avenue, in March 2020. The members are truly dedicated in the work they do to maintain the bushland that Bill Day senior won for future generations (and their morning teas are fantastic!). I would like to attend more often, except the busy bees are always on a Sunday morning, which clashes with my church services. I hope this letter reassures you all that I am doing fine in the circumstances. Do not hesitate to phone me on 0472768654 or send an email to [bartlettday@hotmail.com](mailto:bartlettday@hotmail.com) "Likes" and comments on Facebook or photos on Instagram cannot replace personal communications.

Obviously we all have our own busy lives, but families are blood and cannot be torn asunder. I told Mark that if the virus should take me during lock-down, there will be no funeral. Be safe and hopefully we will meet again in better times. Lots of love,

**Bill**