



Christmas party fitting finale to successful year

Christmas is almost upon us again, and by the time you read this Christmas Meridian (don't miss reading the Christmas memories of some of our members, pages 2-3) our Christmas party will have taken place. I have no doubt it will have been great success, as it always is. As in recent years we will have been indebted to chef Arnold Nordin (this year daughter Torva undertook the role of chief chef), and their enthusiastic, hard-working team (thank you to you all).

Our Christmas Fair, on 27 November - which raised more than \$3500 - proved to be an outstanding success, too, demonstrating yet again the spirit that exists in our club. As

Images from the Christmas Fair. Visitors were entertained throughout the morning, and enjoyed morning tea and a sausage sizzle as well as the wide range of goods.

President, I always find it gratifying that members are so ready to volunteer their services on these occasions. So many tasks undertaken by our members provide a sense of achievement and satisfaction and the club would not survive without them, but we must not forget that low-profile tasks such as setting up furniture, and putting away and cleaning when most of us have gone home, is hard work. As is the ongoing maintenance tasks about the club and surrounds that are undertaken by volunteers. Not easy, and time-consuming too.

So many tasks are undertaken by volunteers - for instance this Meridian will have been folded and prepared for mailing to you by a team of volunteers.

So, as another year draws to a close, let me as President, thank everyone for their support and participation in club activities over the year. And let me wish you all a very happy Christmas, and I hope that you will continue to support our club when activities resume at the club on 17 January. - Anne Murray

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Members write of Christmases past

The following stories of Christmases past were written by members when Meridian asked for their Christmas memories.

Fond farewell to Scotland

By Sue Barrett

I love traditional Christmases. Visiting family and friends, present opening, managing the food, drinking early, kitchens full of willing helpers, the sheer logistics of getting the meal to the table still hot, the silly hats, the corny jokes, the lazy afternoon and the mountain of dishes, the left-overs for tea and the rest of the week.

But the Christmas that sticks in my mind occurred in 1983. Our family was in Glasgow, Scotland where I was completing a year of exchange teaching. My husband was a stay-at-home dad and our two kids went to local primary and secondary schools.

The weekend before Christmas, we had a big "all the trimmings" Christmas dinner for all the other Australian and New Zealand exchange families. As it was held at our house we supplied the turkey, a 16-pounder, that I bought for about £15 as there was to be 23 of us. The other families provided all the extras – veggies, potatoes, pudding etc. We had a great time and, after a year of supporting each other and as we were all about to go our separate ways, it was a wonderful way to say farewell.

Our income that year was made up of my salary and Ken's half-pay leave that he had taken to cover the year. We couldn't afford red meat so mostly we ate chicken, chipolata sausages and the occasional fish supper.

As was usual, my salary at Christmas was paid in a lump sum to cover the holiday period and, with this larger than usual amount of money in the bank, a splurge became possible, so on Christmas Day, a week after we had entertained our friends, we had lovely big, juicy T-bone steaks for Christmas dinner. Four steaks cost me £27 and we enjoyed every

mouthful. Ken used to say we had discovered the combination for the safe at ASDA too late.

We left to come home to Australia the day after Boxing Day.

Christmas at North Curl Curl

By Neal Stevenson

I cast my mind back over many Christmases. Some I remember more clearly than others and I think of all the usual family festive times, pillowslips on the end of the bed on Christmas Eve, leg ham and eggs for breakfast, presents from the tree and huge Christmas lunches.

However my mind wanders back to 1943 when I was five years old. My dad was in the army and stationed at Victoria Barracks in Sydney and every school holidays Mum and Dad would pack up the camping gear and take us from Kingsgrove to North Curl Curl for the school holidays. It seemed like a very long way then to my five-year-old mind, but these days by car it would take 45 minutes. My Dad would still go to work and commute back and forth from Paddington during the week on the bus.

It was a wonderful time of freedom and adventure, in the care of my sister and her friends. We swam in the lagoon, caught tiddlers in a jar, explored the rock pools, got sand in our knitted swimmers, sunburnt running up and down huge sand hills, until falling asleep exhausted in our tiny tent at the end of the day.

Three things stick in my mind from that Christmas. One morning while up in the sand hills my sister discovered a bloated tick buried in my shoulder. She carried me screaming back to my mother (I thought I was going to die), who calmly applied methylated spirits to the offending insect and removed it from my shoulder. I was distraught and to placate me I was given one of my Christmas presents early, a toy carpenter's tool set which probably set me on course for my later hobby as a handyman.

The second thing was, and I have

wondered about it to this day, how did my mother prepare a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings on what was essentially a small methylated spirit stove?

Lastly, On New Year's Eve 1943 all us kids were down at the beach when we noticed huge storm clouds gathering to the west. We hurried back to the camp site just as a mini tornado hit. I remember clearly the man who used to collect the camping fees holding on to the centre pole of our tent in a vain attempt to stop it blowing away and being lifted off his feet by the force of the wind. Our tent was never seen again. Most of the tents were demolished and a lot of us were taken in for the night by the Humphries family next door who had a large army tent which had survived the storm.

So ended our camping holiday of 1943-44.

I had occasion to go back to North Curl Curl for the first time last year. Camping is no longer allowed on the reserve and the huge sand hills I remembered as a child seemed so much smaller!

A Christmas that was different

By David Griffiths

For the first 22 years of my life I never spent a Christmas away from home and family in the UK - let alone out of my country!

Now, Christmas 1961, I was nearly 20,000 kilometres from all of that (12,000 miles in those days), a member of a RAF detachment at a RAAF base north of Adelaide.

Four of us, who often stayed together as a group, decided we would visit (for the life of me, I don't remember why) the little township of Nuriootpa some 50km away for our Christmas Day lunch. One of our members had won a Christmas hamper in a raffle, and it was agreed that it was our comradely duty to assist him in dealing with it in a suitable manner.

Christmas morning, and off we set in my '39 Oldsmobile. We arrived at the open-air community swimming pool but were not allowed in with tinnies in our hamper. So, no lunch by

the pool, but never mind. We swam/cavorted around for a while and then moved off (outside) to the surrounding pine trees to enjoy the food etc.

During lunch, I recall feeling the warmth of the air, and hearing the birds singing, people splashing and laughing in the pool, and especially the wind sighing through the pine trees. We agreed that not being allowed to picnic alongside the pool had worked out for the better - it really was nicer under the trees. I felt really content and at peace, and yes, although I missed some of the aspects of wet wild windy Wales at that time, I was perfectly happy spending my first ever Christmas outdoors in the fresh air, in shorts and short-sleeves.

More importantly, Christmas was what I was making it, making the best of what there was, supporting and being supported by those around me. Symbolically it was a new birthing for me because looking back I think that was the day I started to think that Australia could be a good country to live in. It was probably the cheapest (relatively speaking) Christmas I've had. I've only just realised that - but it has made the memory even more enjoyable!!

A Christmas that was different.

A book for Christmas

By Margaret Wright

I saw it in the bookshop near my primary school in Sydney. It was 1952, and I knew that 12/6 was too much for the book that I so coveted. It was Famous Paintings for Young People, and on the dustjacket was the depiction, in colour, of an exquisite toddler dressed in rich brocaded silks with fur trim, holding a golden rattle in his tiny hand. He was a miniature king. Each day on my way home, I'd stand and gaze through the shop window at "my book". I mentioned it to my parents as a possible Christmas gift, but there was the problem of 12/6 for a large family. "One day the book was gone. I can still remember the empty feeling, knowing it was now completely out of my reach. There had been nothing else I wished for Christmas, as I sadly told my parents that the book had been sold." Christmas morning was filled with the delighted shouts of my sisters and brothers. My pillowslip contained... yes, my book! As I learnt many years later, Mum had had it put aside while she scraped a little each week to pay it off. "Now I could open it and see the pictures inside. Would they be as enticing as the prince on the cover?"

I found that he was On one page was a small black and white picture of a little girl peeping around a pillar, with the caption, "We wonder what she is looking at?" "I loved the book, and it was my constant companion for many years. I knew every page, paintings by Holbein, and would grow up to be King Edward VI, and die aged sixteen. The paintings were varied and fascinating. and I have it still." In 1964 when visiting the National Gallery in London, I came upon a huge painting by Carlo Crivelli. I was entranced by the fine detail and skill of the artist. Even though it was called The Annunciation, it was in fact filled with many other scenes, such as two men in rich robes holding a model of a building, some passers-by on a bridge at the top of the picture, a rich carpet hanging over the window through which Mary could be seen, with all the fascinating details of a Renaissance room. Imagine my delight and surprise when I saw my little peeping girl up in the far corner of the painting, looking down on the happenings in the street below. She is an eternal observer, and now I know where she is from, and what she is looking at. This little girl from the favourite book of my youth.

At the time, no posters were available of the picture, so it was not until 1991 that I was able to obtain one. It is now framed and hangs in our house, as a daily reminder of the beautiful book that my parents were so determined that I should have for my twelfth Christmas.

Ungrateful child

By Grahame Hellyer

When I was a child I used to put a pillow slip on the foot of my bed on Christmas Eve and in the morning there would be a number of small, inexpensive toys, which I would happily play with during the day.

One year my parents decided to get me my first two-wheel bike. As it was shortly after the war when bikes were in short supply, they located a second-hand one for sale. Unfortunately it was located in a suburb miles away from our house and my father had to walk it home (no easy task when bent over a small bike - even for an Australian walking champion - which my father was.) They then carefully repainted it.

My comment on waking up and finding nothing in the pillow slip - just a bike at the end of the bed - was, "Is that all there is?"

An angry rhino

By Ralph Wingfield

It was 1967, I was working in Tanzania and we thought that it would be interesting to spend Christmas visiting the Ngorongoro Crater. This is a huge extinct volcanic crater of 326 sq km with a small lake at its lowest point which serves hundreds of Serengeti game animals and their predators as a watering hole.

On a high point of the crater's edge is an elegant lodge where we stayed for two nights in a rondavel with a log fire as the nights were quite cold. The lodge was seasonably decorated and the dining room had an oversized garishly painted Father Christmas near the entrance which terrified our two-year-old so much that he howled every time we had to go past. There was no sleep-in on Christmas morning since game tours were most active. The driver-guides on duty that day were all Muslims, so that the tour schedule was as normal. We drove through large grazing herds of wildebeest, several species of antelope, zebras and a few giraffe and warthogs. Then the driver stopped and pointed to the body of a wildebeest lying only 10 metres beside the track. The driver looked all round, got out a knife and said "I'll cut the tail". The tail of a wildebeest made a very popular fly-whisk.

He got out of the vehicle but had barely gone more than a couple of steps when there was an angry roar and a large leopard sprang from a clump of bushes about 50 metres ahead. Our driver was back in a flash looking frightened and rather foolish. We left the leopard to drag his prey towards his hiding place and drove on. We saw a couple of hyenas and a pack of cape hunting dogs. We saw no elephants but were not expecting to see any as we had been told that they don't like the climb into the crater.

We had hoped to see lions but were disappointed not to meet a single one that day. However, towards the end of the tour we came upon a white rhino with her calf. The driver took the vehicle very close to give us a good view but kept the engine running. This was just as well because the rhino suddenly gave a snort and charged. Before our driver could get up enough speed the charging rhino hit the back of the Land Rover and we all felt the strong impact. That Christmas we'll always remember as the one when we were jolted by an angry rhino.

A house at Caunes Minervoises

By John Scheduling

My wife and I have a small house in the famous village of Caunes Minervoises in the south of France. It is 20 km north of Carcassonne and the Canal du Midi, in Languedoc province, nestling at the foot of the Montagne Noire, with the wine plains of the Midi stretching out in front of it. From our bedroom window, we can see Mt Alaric and, on a clear day, the Pyrenees. We have a website for the house, with lots of photos: it is www.myfrancehome.com

You didn't know we were famous? We are, not once, but three times over.

First, there's our abbey, founded around 790 AD. The crypt still contains parts of the original church, including a unique floor of large herringbone-pattern cobbles. The North and South towers were both constructed in the 12th century, but the abbey is principally famous for its large 11th century apse, a fine example of the simple Romanesque building style. Second, there is our marble quarry. Apparently worked since Roman times, the quarry has supplied blood-red and pink marble to such places as the Grand Mosque in Cordoba (Roman times); the Abbey at Fontfroide (medieval); and Fontainebleu, Versailles and the Paris Opera House (18th century). Old postcards obtainable in the village show a marble-dressing workshop employing many locals, but since 1965 the raw marble blocks have been exported to Italy, where it is dressed and on-sold, principally to Arab countries, Japan, and the United States.

Every June Caunes has a Marble Festival, during which each sculptor is given a cubic metre of marble. They sculpt whatever they choose, in public, and leave

the resulting sculptures for the town. You can see those from previous years in Esplanade de l'Europe and there is plenty of fine Caunes marble in various buildings in the village, particularly the Abbey, and local artisans produce marble objects for sale in their ateliers and Caunes shops.

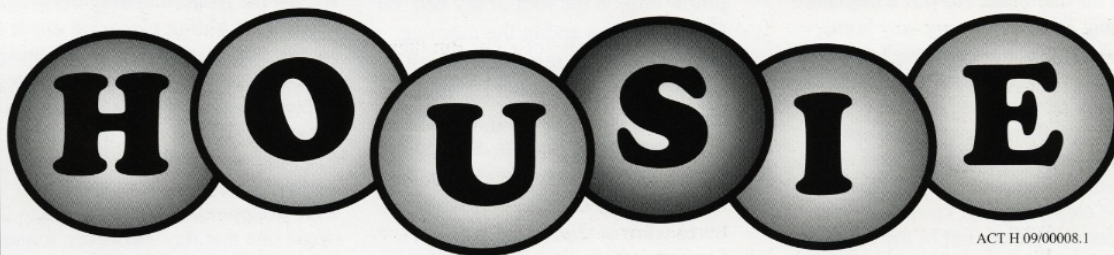
The third reason Caunes is famous is that the village, and several of its inhabitants, have been immortalised in Christopher Hope's piercingly observed but warm book *Signs of the Heart: Love and Death in Languedoc*. Christopher, a Booker Prize author, came to Caunes from England to finish a book he was working on, and has stayed. Okay, the village in the book is called Kissac, but all locals know it's Caunes; indeed, most of us know at least one of the people described in the book.

What to do if you visit? Caunes is a village of more than 1500 people, so everything you need is here. The tourist information office is in the Abbey; there you can get a brochure for self-guided walks in the historic centre. Perhaps have a meal in one of our restaurants, and sample the local wine – there are cellars dotted throughout the village. There's lots to do and see, and on the weekends there is always something on – a concert, a vineyard stroll and winetasting, a fête, and a produce market.

COMPUTER CLASSES

Computer classes will resume in February. We expect to be offering a six week beginner's course on Tuesday afternoons or Wednesday mornings and a four week Brush Up course (for post beginners) on Wednesday afternoons or Thursday mornings. We will offer a course in Word 2003 or Word 2007 if there is enough demand i.e. we can fill a class of four. If you are interested in any of these courses put your name and contact details on the relevant list on the Computer Class Notice Board. For further information contact Judy Henderson on 6286 8693.

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for the information of members and guests

In July this year Liz Teather (a member of the U3A recorder orchestra) and husband David travelled around East Timor in a party of 13, including local drivers, in three 4WD vehicles. The tour was organised for Canberra Friends of Dili by Ecodiscovery, a Timorese-owned company.

East Timor - rewarding, but disturbing

By Liz Teather

An up-country posting for volunteers in East Timor can be challenging, as we learnt from an Australian physiotherapist working for Australian Volunteers Abroad (an organisation that takes older professionals). His posting was at a Ryder-Cheshire Home just outside Dili, which cares for patients needing various sorts of rehabilitation, including leprosy. He said he was being well looked after on this, his first overseas posting.

When we set off ourselves into the uplands and mountains of East Timor's inland, we began to understand what he meant. Conditions are very basic in most places outside Dili.

We had accommodation varying from beds in a convent dormitory (the majority of East Timorese are Catholic, though animism dies hard we understand), to a former school seminary dormitory, to guest house/hotels that ranged from modern to pousadas-de-Portugal, reminiscent of colonial times. Beds were always clean.

It was a bit of a shock when a monkey jumped on me at midnight out of one of several holes in the ceiling in one place we stayed in, and I am not ashamed that I screamed, as I had no idea what it was!

Running water was rarely available, and water was provided in a large tub together with a ladle, which was also needed for flushing the loo. Towels, soap and toilet paper were not always provided. Electricity came on when the generator did, at best from 6pm to midnight.

However, the food was always good, although the same - rice, instant noodles drenched in soy sauce, fried chicken, fried vegies, eggs, salads (which we always avoided) and home-baked rolls or scones. We bought bananas and mandarin oranges from stalls along the roadside, so our diet was well-balanced.

For travellers everything was fine, but for a long-term posting I am sure it would not be easy.

We expected lots of mosquitoes

but we went in the dry season and they didn't seem numerous. The scenery was magnificent, with high mountains, deep river valleys, savannahs and rice paddies, coffee trees growing under tall shade trees, and some remnant tropical forests.

The people are dirt-poor and living on subsistence crops, but always smiling. The average number of kids is about 6-7 per family, which we found a matter for great concern, but a young Japanese member of our party found that particularly special as there are so few children in his own country!

Dili and other towns still show a lot of evidence of the devastation deliberately brought about in 1999 when the Indonesians left, and in the 2006 civil riots. The UN presence is huge in Dili, but less obvious in the countryside. It all feels very safe, but there is still potential for unrest as there are very few jobs for the young, and groups of young men frequently seem to hang around the roadsides with little to do. I imagine that's one reason why family sizes are large! Women are still expected, generally, to stay home. So we saw lots of lovely cheerful schoolgirls and lots of exhausted-looking women in their late twenties/early thirties. Villages still comprise simple thatched huts and water needs fetching from a long way away, often, it seemed, by women and girls. River water is preferred to water caught from the roof. But there is evidence of recent government spending in new schools and health clinics in many towns and villages.

Some of our time was spent visiting various massacre sites from 1975 (Balibo), 1991 and 1999. What terrible memories are carried by many East Timorese.

We spent much of the 14 days in 4WD vehicles on appalling roads and explored much of the half-island, from north to south and east to west. We also visited several useful initiatives to which Canberra Friends of Dili has sent financial and other contributions. Two of these projects were started up by young people of Dili themselves, and we found those particularly heart-warming and encouraging.

Don't mess with senior citizens

An elderly lady decided to give herself a big treat for a significant birthday by staying overnight in one of London's most expensive hotels.

When she checked out the following morning, the desk clerk handed her a bill for £250.

She exploded and demanded to know why the charge was so high.

"It's a nice hotel but the rooms certainly aren't worth £250 for just an overnight stop without even breakfast", she said.

The clerk told her that £250 was "our standard rate" so she insisted on speaking to the manager.

The manager appeared and, forewarned by the clerk, explained: "The hotel has an Olympic-sized pool and a huge conference centre which are available for use".

"But I didn't use them", the lady pointed out.

"Well, they are here, and you could have," explained the manager.

He went on to point out that she could also have seen one of the in-hotel shows for which the hotel was famous.

"We have the best entertainers from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen performing here", he said.

"But I didn't go to any of those shows", the exasperated lady said.

"Well, we have them, and you could have," the manager replied.

No matter what amenity the manager mentioned, the lady replied, "But I didn't use it!"

The manager was unmoved, so she decided to pay, wrote a cheque and gave it to the manager.

The manager was surprised when he looked at the cheque. "But madam, this cheque is made out for only £50", he said.

"That's correct", agreed the lady. "I charged you £200 for sleeping with me".

"But I didn't!" exclaimed the somewhat bemused manager.

"Well, too bad", said the lady. "I was here, and you could have".

POLITICIAN SPEAK

I want to make it crystal clear that it is totally unacceptable and, at the end of the day, we need to sit down and talk, and stand up and be counted. It has been a steep learning curve, and it is now time to move on.

You must remember this - Canberra in the 1960s

By Dennis Blewett

We arrived in Canberra on a bitterly cold morning in the winter of 1964. Lake Burley Griffin had just filled, Canberra's population was 68,000, and its extremities were Watson to the north and Deakin to the south-west (development was to expand to Curtin shortly afterwards - in those days, as we quickly found out, a popular weekend pastime was driving around the new suburbs inspecting "spec" homes).

There was one set of traffic lights - at the junction of Northbourne Avenue and Alinga Street. The Hotel Civic was across the road, and next to it the police station, a wooden building.

We had David Jones, Rogers, Marcus Clarke (we bought blankets there - our own, and the rest of our belongings, were en route from the UK), Eric Anderson (from whom we bought a Kriesler radiogram (the first LP we bought in Canberra was from DJs, Concert Sinatra, 12/6d)), J. B. Young's, and a traditional variety-style Woolworths at the corner of Alinga and Petrie Streets.

Our first home was in Torrens Street, a short walk to the Canberra Times, and we bought a Holden EH at Commonwealth Motors in Lonsdale Street (£1300-odd). Petrol cost 3/6d a gallon, and driveway attendants, unbidden, washed the windows and checked water and oil levels and tyre pressure. In those days milk and bread were delivered to the home, as well as newspapers and magazines, and Parks and Gardens mowed the nature strips.

Monaro Mall was new, surrounded by unmade car parks and on Friday nights (late-night shopping) many families took their children to the shops in their pyjamas and dressing gowns, putting them directly to bed when they returned home. Shops closed at lunchtime on Saturdays for the weekend. Taking children out already dressed for bed was a common practice too when going to the drive-in cinema (the first film we saw at the Starlight was *Guns of Navarone*).

There were two cinemas - the Civic in Mort Street, and the Capitol at Manuka. I forget the first film we saw at the Civic, but the first we saw at the Capitol was *How the West was Won* (and the first at the Star at Queanbeyan Robin and the Seven Hoods - I particularly remember that there was no heating, and the cinema correspondingly icy cold).

Our first "night out" was at the Ainslie Rex, and very splendid it was (in those days people "dressed", and opportunities to wear a dinner suit were far more plentiful). Resident band at the Rex was Bruce Lansley (on tenor sax) and the Presidents. The band also appeared regularly at the Queanbeyan Leagues Club and the Canberra Police Boys Club, where people also "dressed" to go dancing. Bruce was an announcer on radio 2CA, along with Graham McGuinness and a "just beginning" Steve Liebmann.

The Queanbeyan Leagues Club was new, established in 1963. At that time gaming machines were illegal in the ACT, so the Leagues Club was the leading venue in the region (at a time when Queanbeyan's population was fewer than 15,000, membership of the club was more than 15,000). The Leagues Club was destroyed by fire in 1972

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and when it was rebuilt a year later the dance floor had been replaced with a small horse-shoe shaped floor (a configuration that today also precludes the Southern Cross Club from being a serious venue for dancing). However, as part of the redevelopment at Queanbeyan, the Blue Room was built with silver service dining, and an auditorium that attracted top-class entertainers who performed before sell-out audiences. I particularly remember Des O'Connor, a superb all-round entertainer who never failed to leave his audiences begging for more.

The Queanbeyan Leagues Club, the Ainslie Rex and the Canberra Rex - and not a lot of other places to dine out. Happy's was the first (and for a long time the only) Chinese restaurant, and The Blue Moon Café in Civic was very popular. You could buy a prawn salad for 12/6d, and I'm sure that prawns do not grow as big today, or perhaps they do but find their way on to tables overseas.

Eating outdoors was not an option - indeed it was against regulations to eat outside in a cafe or restaurant. It was "Gus" Petersilka, who changed that. "Gus", an Austrian who arrived in Canberra in 1962, opened his cafe seven years later and fought a long, acrimonious battle to establish a pavement cafe in Civic - the first in Australia. "Gus" was 1978 Canberran of the Year - and a very deserving one. Since then Canberra's restaurant scene has become outstanding, although regrettably very much "eat and go", two "sittings" on Friday and Saturday nights whenever possible, the account closely following the coffee, and home in time to watch the late movie.

In the 1960s crime - certainly violent crime - was a rarity. I remember Kep Enderby, who was to become Attorney-General in the Whitlam Government, telling me of his leading role in "Canberra's murder trial" (just the one - there had been no other). Sergeant Ron Dillon had to dig deep for incidents to fill his weekly police report column. Ron also taught ballroom dancing. We had Mal Strahan's long-established dance studio in the early '60s, Gwen Wallace arriving via Wagga Wagga in 1969.

The Frasers dominated local politics - Jim was MHR for the ACT between 1951-70, and brother Alan held Eden-Monaro between 1943-66 and 1969-72. Both could be relied upon for a pithy comment on the maladministration, as they saw it, of the Federal Government (no ACT Government then, of course, or even an advisory body: the Advisory Council was established in 1969).

Another who had a deal to say, about Australia's declining moral standards and the encroachment of Communism, was A. B. Santamaria, in his weekly commentary on television; and Ann Dalgarno had a great deal to say about most things most days in the news and correspondence columns of the Canberra Times.

Television was still new. Graham Kennedy (Melbourne Tonight) was king, and he and his side-kick, Bert Newton, tested the bounds of propriety (and decency, according to the standards of the time). The Dean Martin Show was hugely popular (Dean making his entry sliding down a fireman's pole). The Mavis Bramston Show and My Name's McGooley soon followed, establishing a refreshing Australian identity.

At that time the threat to Australia was seen very much as the Sukarno-led Indonesia, and Australia bought itself the reassurance of United States military aid against

Indonesia, should it be necessary, when it hastened to get embroiled in Vietnam. These days few admit to having supported Australia's intervention in Vietnam, preferring to forget that people flocked to the airport to welcome Lyndon Johnson, and lined the streets to cheer as he went by; and to forget that Harold Holt was swept to an unprecedented election landslide victory! The sealing of the road to Tharwa was hastened in time for LBJ's visit, and so he was able to enjoy a smooth ride to the historic homestead and a Texas-style barbecue with Harold playing attentive host and no doubt laughing in all the right places.

Security in those days was minimal compared to today - there was no wall around the Lodge - and politicians much closer to the people they represented. A friend of ours who found that her fractious child was spoiling for her and others an otherwise enjoyable cruise on Lake Burley Griffin was grateful when a fellow passenger took the child from her and entertained it for the remainder of the cruise. The good Samaritan was Bettina Gorton, accompanied by husband John, then Prime Minister. Doug Anthony when Minister for the Interior lived in a "guvvie" at Deakin, and John Gorton lived in one at Narrabundah before moving to the Lodge. Less commendable was that Anthony and Gorton were not the only politicians to take advantage of the then generous first mortgage available in the ACT to tenants who wished to buy their Government-provided home.

One of the delights we enjoyed in those days was the outdoor swimming areas. A weir at the Cotter provided a very popular swimming area (the weir was removed following drownings). Kambah Pool, Uriarra Crossing and Point Hut Crossing were other popular barbecue and swimming areas, all reached by unsealed roads.

Going to the coast was an adventure, and all the more enjoyable for it. To reach Bateman's Bay we had to cross the river at Nelligen on a ferry winched across the Clyde, and the road down Brown Mountain to Bega was unsealed.

The road to Sydney was sealed, but the journey was tortuous, with the Lake George (the lake was full in those days) and Razorback Mountain stretches particularly testing. We used to stop at Goulburn for coffee.

There was little quality sport in Canberra. The Canberra Rugby League team included a second-row forward, Bernie Fraser, who was to become much better known in another capacity - Governor of the Reserve Bank. David Grimmond was a star wing for the Wallabies, Heather McKay was world squash champion and virtually unbeatable; and Ken Bradley became Australian featherweight champion (he lost the title to Lucky Gattellari, who was in the news recently for his alleged part in the murder of "businessman" Michael McGurk). The year after we arrived in Canberra I saw the MCC defeat the Prime Minister's XI by two wickets at Manuka Oval.

All right, Canberra was - how shall I put it? - a little raw in those days; still "frontier" - we had a migrant camp on the slopes of Mount Ainslie. We went to Queanbeyan for our weekly "grocery shopping", and when seeking something just a little out of the ordinary we were told "we'll have to order it from Sydney" (the emphasis implying that Sydney was somewhere beyond Outer Mongolia). The first two suits I bought after my arrival in Australia I ordered from a Leeds tailor.

But we loved Canberra, and we look back to those days with pleasurable nostalgia. Certainly during our first five years in Canberra we entertained far more often and were entertained by others far more often than in any period since, and people on the street said, "G'day".



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Frequently asked questions

answered by Grahame Hellyer

Question: I have seen ads for Home Theatre in a Box (HTiB). What does Home Theatre mean?

Answer: As mentioned in a previous answer, many televisions have poor sound. In addition, viewers often want not only good stereo sound, but "surround sound" (which many DVDs can provide.)

A HTiB is a complete package delivered in a single cardboard box. It provides two front stereo speakers (left and right) and a front central speaker (most of the dialogue comes out of that so that if you are sitting to one side, in front of one of the stereo speakers, it still appears as if the sound is coming from the TV screen where the person is speaking). In addition they provide two speakers which go to the sides or rear of the viewer to provide the 'surround' sound (so you feel you are

in the middle of the action.) Some of these surround speakers are now 'wireless' which means you don't have to run speaker cables around the room, although they will have to be plugged into a power point. There will also a sub-woofer (to provide the low frequency sounds.) As the TV does not have the power to run extra speakers, these come with an amplifier (this is the box with the volume, etc, knobs and probably with a radio built-in.) The latest models will incorporate a Blue Ray DVD player which will play ordinary DVDs, as well as the new Blue Ray High Definition (BD) DVDs. They will also play your CDs.

Although these don't meet the needs of real HiFi addicts, they will provide good sound and are easy to set up and use (as there is only one box of electronics and they are all

designed to go together). They are just connected to the TV with a cable and the speakers are hooked up to the amplifier/ DVD box.

An even simpler form of HTiB is a Soundbar which is like HTiB but it is just one long box containing both the electronics and speakers (perhaps with a separate sub-woofer), which sits horizontally in front of the TV and simulates surround sound. (This avoids speaker cables.)

An alternative, if you don't want surround sound and booming bass, is to buy a separate amplifier (ones designed specifically to work with TVs and DVDs are called AV (audio-video) receivers), plus a DVD player and two good speakers to sit either side of the TV.

The HTiB and Soundbar both have the advantage of reducing the number of remote controls!

Viewing the Melbourne Cup in club's lounge



It was wet at Flemington, and Canberra racegoers got wet too. But none of that concerned club members who gathered in the lounge area to watch the running of the Cup, and to enjoy afternoon tea and a selection of wines. As in previous years Barry Hogan organised the sweeps.

WORKSHOP 2011

Writing your life story

Woden Seniors is partnering the ACT Writers Centre and Southern Cross Club to hold a special writing workshop for members from March 2011.

Led by a professional writer, the workshop will be held for two hours every fortnight over eight sessions to help members write their own life story. Volunteers will be available to type up stories each fortnight if members need help in this area.

Individual life stories will be printed for members to keep and a group collection of stories put together and launched with a morning tea.

Numbers are limited for this workshop to ensure individual attention is given to each member. Participants will be asked to pay \$40 upfront to secure their place (\$5 per workshop).

Don't miss out on this very special event for members - call Polly soon to book your place.