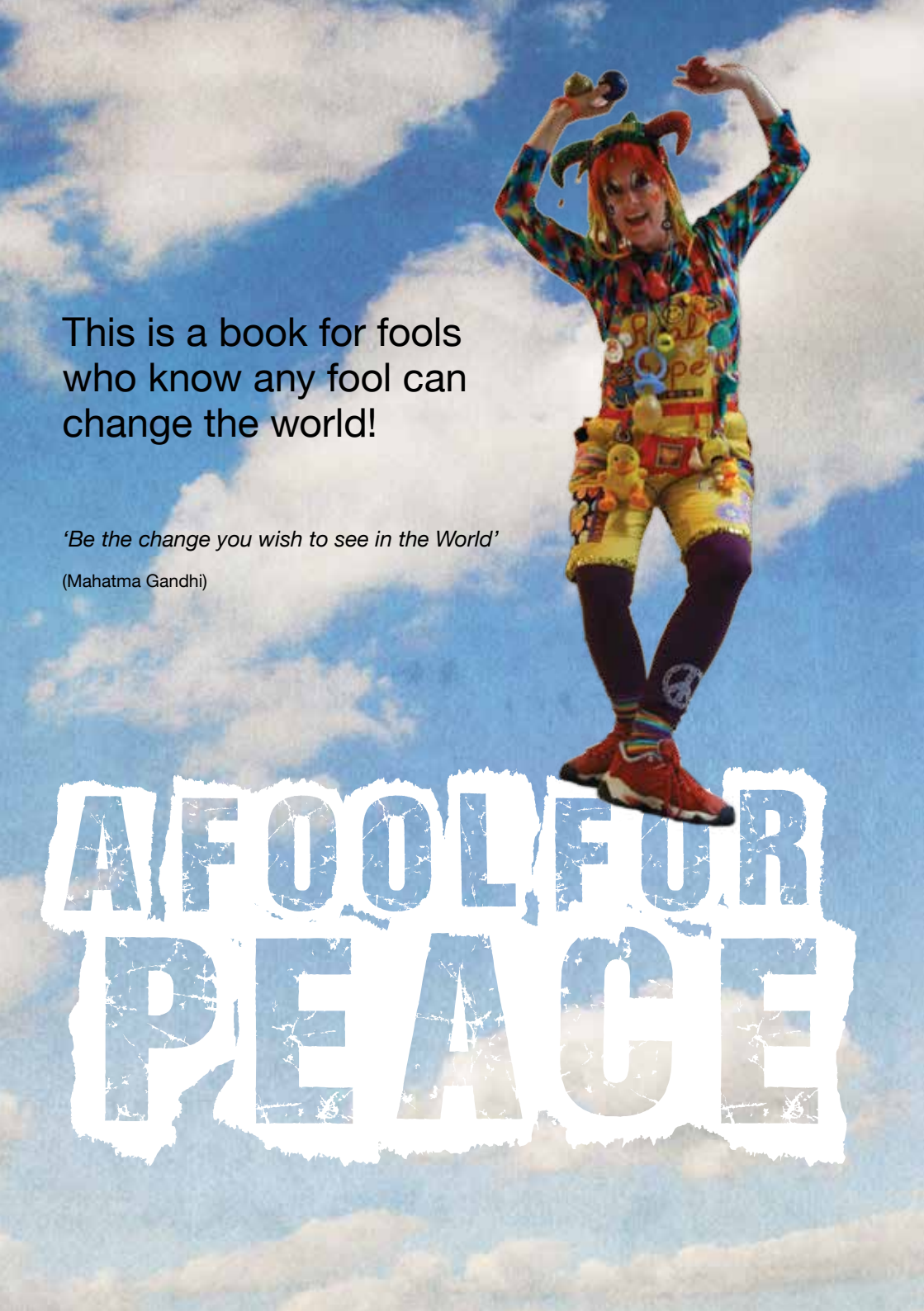
This is a book for fools
who know any fool can
change the world!
'Be the change you wish to see in the World'
(Mahatma Gandhi)
A FOOL FOR
PEACE

A FOOL FOR PEACE

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This book is dedicated to the source of all life …

I was searching for my moment of truth,
To discover that truth can only be found in the moment,
And as the crust, barnacles and sands fall away from my past,
The sand in the hour glass empties,
I open my eyes to a new horizon at last,
Filled with rainbows and the promise
of the Fool's gold in the end,
For the rain shadow has been steady,
And I stand ready for my future,
Free of shadows,
To share the heart of my joy with all,
As the emerging pearl of
my true beauty.

Realising peace was always my true nature!

INTRODUCTION: I Am a Fool for Peace

This book is a fool's journey sharing how I chose to be a Fool and trust my heart against all the odds and follow what I know to be true for me. Yes I did carry a little bundle on my back, this was filled with questions, courage, values, honesty and love. I walked alone yet my intuition guided my steps and gave me the trust to step off the cliff into the unknown. It is a journey you cannot plan and would seem impossible if proposed, yet it unfolded as naturally as placing one foot in front of the other. It was Lao Tzu, the famous old Chinese philosopher who proposed that 'the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step'. This means action taken from stillness. Whenever I step into the air solid ground is beneath my feet. Some call it landing on your feet, but I have always found that life supports my every step.

From the archetype of the traditional Fool or Jester I have created my own clown character - Peaceful, or depending on my mood, Peace Fool. Jesters are known for speaking truth to power, and on this journey I found myself following the invisible threads to weave truth and love. When I closed my eyes I saw Gandhi as a silent traveller beside me gently nudging me to not give up and find the road less travelled. Always his vision came to me to 'be the change you wish to see in the world'. This mantra disciplined me to walk the talk.

In 1998 I had a dream that I was teaching peace and this opened me up to my own quest, though I didn't realise I was reaching for my personal Holy Grail. Is the Holy Grail a real cup or is it a mythical cup? Perhaps it is a metaphor for the real gold of life or what I call the Fool's gold. Perhaps this is the gold of self realisation. Many have spoken of the alchemy of transforming base metal into gold. Perhaps in truth it is really about personal transformation, transforming negativity into positivity as the real gold of life.

I am going to take you on a fantastic journey that only a Fool could make. We are going to step off the cliff of what is perceive as the solid ground of life to find the real magic in life. Come with me and let's go on a journey to discover the peace within. Perhaps you are a Fool for Peace also.

So what is a Peace Fool?

The Fool is an archetypal figure who embodies living peace or another way of seeing it is that peace lives through the Fool. The Fool steps out into life with innocence, discovering the wisdom as s/he stubs her toe on the stones and rocks of life. Each obstacle becomes an opportunity to 'be' with the pain and learn how to transform pain into the Fool's gold. If one keeps returning to the same place and stubbing the same toe, then the Fool hasn't learned the lesson or has been in a vague state, not really awake as s/he walks in ignorance.

The Peace Fool carries REAL HOPES in a bag of magic tricks. REAL HOPES means Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Love, Honesty, Oneness, Peace, Enjoyment and Service. These are the virtues that the Fool has inside which give her the strength to step off the cliff of the unknown. REAL HOPES is a metaphor for the rainbow bridge that bridges the gaps that divide us.

Each value is the wealth s/he carries. It is the real wealth, but it is the Fool's gold because everyone thinks it is not real wealth as s/he has nothing material to show for it in life, and so is thought of as a Fool for taking this path. Others are spellbound by the trinkets and material things in the world. Whilst the Fool spends life discovering that the gold is within and watches bemused as the world keeps digging for gold and looking outside themselves to other people and the external world to give them the gold. The Fool is in a frequent state of joy because she has everything in her bag that she could possibly need. Many people in the world are in a frequent state of pain and lack because they are always trying to find the gold out there at the base of what they think is the rainbow. The Fool knows that when you go within you do not go without. The world has it the other way around when they go without and refuse to go within. So the Fool feels full and the people feel empty, and that is the state of play that creates contrasts. The Fool knows that when you empty of 'need as greed', that is when the gold appears like magic bringing the sense of fulfillment or fool-fill-ment. People think if they are empty they must fill their metaphorical stomachs, yet they get hungry again and spend their whole lives trying to be full.

The secret is in realising that all Fools carry the Fool's gold REAL HOPES. The Fool's gold in REAL HOPES is living as:

R Responsibility - when we are respons-able we are able to respond, we can do something. It is in our hands.

E Empathy – is the ability to step into another's shoes, to feel their feelings.

A Awareness - to be able to clearly and honestly see ourselves and others. To be aware of the consequences of our thoughts, words and actions.

L Love – is the heart of non-violence. When we act in love we expand potential, reveal, share, care and heal ourselves and others.

H Honesty - the truth will set you free. Jesters were able to tell the truth in a humorous way. Truth makes the real world visible.

O Oneness – is a concept that we are one world, interconnected to each other and creating a sense of unity.

P Peace – is balance and harmony. To be peaceful means you see all the people as different colours in the painting of life. Like white light you absorb all the colours as part of yourself.

E Enjoyment – is true happiness in the knowledge that you are being yourself and open to the beauty of life.

S Service – Is to pre-serve the world. That is to give or share yourself with the world. It is in giving that we become aware of our own richness. When we think there is not enough we become focused on getting more. The challenge is to turn selfishness in to self awareness.

So let's sum up the Peace Fools journey. Let's put together our gold nuggets to find REAL HOPES in life. Therefore,

Know you are **responsible** when you are able to respond. You have a choice.

Know when you **feel empathy** to all those you meet on the road, you stand in their shoes and make new friends. All are potential friends some are in disguise.

Know that **awareness** of life is to re-cognise things are not always as they seem. So you 'see first to look' at the world. That is you look within first to your own truth. Know you are here for a journey and that there are no mistakes, it is as it should be. Be aware of the lessons parading as conflict.

Know that love is the answer. When you feel **love** in being alive, you love life, yourself and everyone. Suddenly life becomes colorful and you attract the most exciting things to yourself and if things don't go according to plan you still feel grateful. If someone is on the side of the road sad or lonely you will go right on up and chat to them and help them out.

Know that **Honesty** feels clear and it is a simple seeing of what is so. You cannot be a false fool to anyone, you are the real deal. Honesty helps you look at life, as it is, without projecting negative beliefs onto situations. Honesty realises there are many truths and remembers the mirror ball. Honesty knows that the truth sets you free. You no longer carry a story about others but allow others to be who they are. You no longer assume bad things will happen to stop you going into life to explore. Risks are no longer dangerous they are just experiences you haven't tried, you become curious. So just be an honest fool so people can trust you.

Oneness means that the world is your family and each person has a family, you remember they could be you. You know that everyone is connected and you are open to life just showing you what you need to know; although it seems that things happen in a linear way but somehow you are just choosing your experience from a whole array of possibilities, you are one with life. Oneness is like one of those cool plasma lamps, all these wild electromagnetic currents radiate outwards. When you touch the ball a beam connects with your finger. So it is like you are one with life but at the same time you choose. Oneness is when you see yourself in the other.

Peace is the gold that is not like a tempest then a calm sea, it is being a Peace Fool all of the time. The Peace Fool accepts everyone and doesn't resist anything as life is happening in its own rhythm, when you are in harmony with life you don't try and change others, you change yourself. That is why Gandhi said 'be the change you wish to see in the world'. Just lead by example without forcing others to do it your way or fighting for peace. If there is a problem you can use your tool bag to resolve conflict with people, sometimes people misunderstand and get angry. You can gently say how you feel by stating your truth and see what happens, but don't expect them to think like you, empathy has taught you to know better, just let people walk their own path, it is their journey. Sometimes we learn right now other times it may take 20 years. Peace knows everything happens in perfect timing. Peace is aware that beneath the conflict there is wisdom waiting on your welcome.

Enjoyment is the shiny gold that just glitters and sparkles with happiness. As a fool for joy why not crack jokes and see the funny side of life and feel joy and curiosity about life and what is happening. The fool plays around in a light-hearted way to remember not to be serious, since seriousness has some fear in it, because people may worry if something doesn't happen their way they won't be happy. Just be happy that life is what it is and you are not in control. It is a bit like a parachute jump where you just allow the forces of nature to take you. Gravity facilitates the

fall to the ground not up to the sky. Enjoy the ride, smile at mistakes and learn with good humor. Enjoyment is in harmony with your true nature. You are on track and life feels great.

Service is the journey itself and when you look at your road, it is one less traveled. Your path is unique and fascinating as you meet so many people, try so many things, and live in a way that you feel is who you are. When you have gathered all the nuggets of gold within you will naturally find that you will want to serve the world. You will find there is no enemy out there, but only unquestioned thoughts within you. You start to realise that you create your life. You realise that events happen but you decide whether to look for the cup half empty or half full. You realise you can create better outcomes in the future based on what you have learned that hasn't worked. You now know what does work as you have found the nugget of wisdom. So you serve by sharing what you know and wishing others good will, or some may say God's will. For all are equal. Whilst our journey may seem hard know that you are carving your own 'Philosopher's Stone'. You are the love and wisdom you seek. Knowing this pre-serves the world as you would serve your Self.

So this is the fool's journey, it is more like a spiral than a straight line as you keep learning and growing, you reveal your gold when life asks. You share your gold, you never keep it to yourself in a cave. You go out and share it with as many fools as you can. As you do the world begins to catch on as everyone starts to think: Why were we scared of being a fool? It is okay to be yourself and make a fool of yourself, in fact I highly recommend it. You will find a new path opens up for you as you realise that everyone is really a Fool waiting to remember.

Perhaps your little gold nuggets will wake others up so they may realise that they are the gold they are looking for, that they too have a little bag; and if they are ready to let go of the masks they have accumulated and lighten their load to have more fun, then they will magically find they end up on a journey and discover they reach home just in time.

I am a natural poet, poetry is my first language. This poem sings the song of my true purpose. Therefore, 'to thine own self be true' is a Peace Fool's song, it is the gift I possess in my little bag. It is not a trick but indeed holds within it the magic of life which is found within the feeling between the words, it is of the highest value.

My highest wish is Y/OUR happiness and freedom.

THE GIFT

My highest wish is happiness,
It is the gift I give to all,
To see the smiling faces,
To catch them before they fall.

To be a clown,
Is like surround sound,
It spreads a ray of sunshine,
To all without discrimination,
Without impatience,
To see the world as one,
To inspire and have some fun.

I have no enemies,
I have no-one to hate,
To me there is no nation state,
I see the world as my family,
I just want to bring them home,
Into the warmth of love and kindness,
So no-one feels alone.

I see every story,
In its real glory,
I know the potential of what can be,
I long to set them free,
Into a world of their own making,
Into a world that is no longer breaking
Into fragments of glass,
Shards of misunderstanding,
Where we see only a fraction of what is true,
We assume that it is not safe,
That is the myth,
That is the spin,
That disempowers and tries to win.

One truth is that life begins,
When we step out of the comfort zone,
The boundaries of insecurity build walls,
We are not alone,

And when we step out of illusion,
Of misconceptions,

We realize that there is no fear,
That there are many tears,
That are flowing down the rivers of separation,
But they will reach the headwater,
They will unite in the end,
The journey is the experience,
That life sends.

I believe in peace,
I believe in goodness,
I believe in action,
I know that for every cause
There is an equal and opposite reaction.

My life is dedicated to principle,
I know the answers are simple,
When you throw away judgment,
When you throw away hurt,
When you throw away hate,
And think about what you've learned.

Under the canopy of respect,
You will never reject,
The will of others,
They must travel their own path,
We need to learn to laugh,
Life is the comedy,
Perhaps I am the Fool,
But just maybe,
That's the school
For world peace.

CHAPTER 1

My Dream of Peace (1998)

'In clapping both hands a sound is heard: what is the sound of the one hand?'

Zen Koan

Many stop and try to hear the sound; they become puzzled. Peace is a puzzle that has not been solved by humanity, as we have approached the problem as two hands clapping. Peace requires each of us to see differently, for in the past we were seeking applause, rather than to pause in the silence to deeply listen to ourselves, for all answers live in the heart of each of us. That is why peace is present in every moment, every day, and expressed in simple ways, as wisely stated by the Rotary International former President Sakuji.

Another question to consider is - 'Is peace present the moment you start thinking about it?' Can we think about peace, or is what we are grasping for beyond thought? Is it universal? Is it inherent within our very nature?

We are indeed threads within a web of life that is intricately woven and balanced. We did not create this web, we are a thread within it. As we ask questions we open up to possibilities that allow us to see what we cannot see to find that peace is not what we think, it is who we are. Some may ask – is the dream real?

In 1998 I dreamed I was teaching peace to children. I awoke in the middle of the night, excited. The next day I rang a friend of mine who is a teacher and asked: 'Does anyone teach peace to children? Is there a dedicated subject or curriculum?' he stated there was Social Studies which had elements of war and peace in it, but there was no dedicated subject called Peace.

Unbeknown to me this dream would gently catapult my life onto a new track. I subtly began to shift from the secure track of working as a market analyst, to a new life living from what was unknown. I had no idea how I would teach peace to children, but the seed was planted in the dream. I certainly didn't want to enroll in a four year degree to get qualified as a teacher, so I let it go and life showed me the Fool's Way.

I wrote Awaken the Fool in an inspired moment and it seems to me this is the dream that is becoming real. I sensed as I wrote this, the Fool's way is the real peace movement. I turned this writing into a peace education program. Here is an outline of the philosophy of the Fool's Way.

Awaken the Fool

Peace Fool is an archetypal figure who demonstrates living peace. The fool steps out into life with innocence discovering the wisdom as s/he stubs her toe on the stones and rocks of life. Each obstacle becomes an opportunity to be with the pain and learn how to transform pain in the future. If one keeps returning to the same place and stubbing the toe, the fool hasn't learned the lesson or has been in a vague state not really awake as s/he walks.

The Peace Fool carries REAL HOPES in a bag of magic tricks. The gold in REAL HOPES lives as:

Responsibility
Empathy
Awareness
Love

Honesty
Oneness
Peace
Enjoyment
Service

Each value is the wealth she carries. It is the real wealth, it is the Fool's gold because everyone thinks it is not real wealth as s/she has nothing and is a fool. They are spellbound by the trinkets and material things in the world. Whilst the fool spends life discovering that the gold is within and watches bemused as the world keeps digging for gold and looking outside themselves to other people and the external world to give them the gold. The fool is in a constant state of joy because she has everything in her bag

that she could possibly need. People in the world are in a constant state of pain and lack because they are always trying to find the gold out there. The fool knows when you go within you do not go without. The world has it the other way around when they go without they don't go within. So the fool feels full and the people feel empty. Yet the fool knows that when you empty of desire, that is when the gold appears like magic. Yet people think if they are empty they can fill their stomachs, yet they get hungry again and spend their whole lives trying to be full.

So how can the Fool's gold be the real gold in life. Let's explore REAL HOPES and perhaps you find your real wealth along the WAY.

Responsibility

Responsibility is the ability to respond you can do something!!! Hmmm what do we mean you can do something? You have the power of choice.

You have the power to create your life. Do you believe that? If you cannot respond it means you become a victim of life, you believe you have no options and you just have to put up with whatever people give you. You feel power-less.

If you are **respons-able** then you know you can do something, you know that even if you haven't got the solution and it feels like the juggling balls are up in the air, just be patient, like juggling it takes time to get it. If you are patient and relaxed you will suddenly get the pattern or the key to your problem. Just get into the flow and it happens.

Just imagine the **outcome** you want and funnily enough life just puts people in your way to help you solve your problem.

Life is always **helping.**

Empathy

Did you notice empathy has 'path' in it hmmm

You can **stand in someone's shoes,** now they could be big shoes or small shoes (tight fit) but you walk in their moccasins for a while and get an idea of what life is like for them.

You quickly notice that it feels different from your life so you **no longer expect them to be like you.** You try and be like them and find harmony without losing your shoes.

So it is really understanding other people and finding your hug which you might have left behind as you didn't understand them.

Awareness

What is it to be aware? I always think of my eyes being open, not just seeing what is around me, but knowing the gold here is **noticing what is happening for yourself and other people.**

Sometimes when you are used to noticing you will find that not only are you aware of yourself and other people you will be aware of how you are part of a world family and who knows maybe even a cosmic family.

So open your eyes and look around you. Remember it is to **see first then look.** That means seeing inside

yourself first and listening to those little intuitions that push you walk around a corner or change your day.

Awareness sees your life as a journey and that **you create your life.** How do you do that? By your **thoughts, words and actions.**

Ask yourself, what am I creating? Is it fearful, hurtful, loving or fun?

You are aware you create your response to every moment, wow how amazing are you.

Love

Oh I love love where are my love glasses? Are here they are. I am a **fool for love.** Is anyone else a fool for love?

Clowns love everyone. We don't go out and say I love you but not you. We see the love in every person. We are not scared of anyone.

Love is my **favorite apple to eat.** It is sweet and juicy. You can fall in love, you can love a drink on a hot day, you can love your life, you can love what you are doing, love your friends, family and hobbies.

Love is the **warm fuzzies** happening inside you. Love is unity it joins you with people and activities you love doing. Sometimes time just disappears when you love what you are doing.

When we **love people** we snuggle up, we chatter away, we share our things enthusiastically and we don't feel alone.

Most importantly we know that **love is who we are.** So you don't have to go and get it, you are it. You know that love is **inside** you because you feel it. How great is that!

So think **good** thoughts, be hopeful and positive.

Feel the love as the **cup half full** not half empty.

Always remember that **love is the answer** to all your questions.

Remember when you love you can never hurt anyone.

In conflicts always try to **lovingly explain your side** and listen lovingly to what the other has to say. Why not solve the problem and not hate the person. We all make mistakes.

Know that when you **follow your heart** it leads you **home** to who you are. Be a fool, keep your **heart on your sleeve**, never be afraid of sharing your heart with anyone, even if **you get hurt dive in again**. Life is meant to be **up and down** but never dull. Just because something happened in the past doesn't mean it will happen in the future. So follow your heart it will never let you down. The purpose of the journey is to follow your heart.

Honesty

Did you know fools are jesters? What do jesters do?

Jesters are famous for speaking the truth to power. That was the king or authority. Why did the jester's get away with it? The Jester's made jokes and got away with it, they made the King laugh at himself. The King enjoyed having the Jesters in the court as they helped him humorously see himself. It is intimacy – in-to-me-see.

What do you think is the most intelligent thing you can say? I could be wrong? How is that intelligent you may ask? Well it allows you to open your mind to other possibilities. Also you are looking for truth not to be right.

That means the real power is **speaking the truth and not taking yourself too seriously.** This is the gold nugget.

When you get the truth you just **suddenly** see, that is what it means to see (within) and then look. Truth sets you free to be who you really are.

We can get very **confused** in life as we know there are many truths out there. The best way as a jester I can describe that to you is by a **mirror ball.** Each mirror is a person with their own truth. There are lots of tiny mirrors on the ball. So when you look into the mirror ball you can't see yourself, you become blurry or confused. That is not to say their truth is wrong because you can't see it, it is just to know there are lots of truth's different from yours, it is just the way the world is.

Another way to see this is the parable of the **Emperor with No Clothes**. As follows:

A vain Emperor who cares for nothing hires two swindlers who promise him the finest, best suit of clothes from a fabric invisible to anyone who is unfit for his position or "hopelessly stupid". The Emperor cannot see the clothing himself, but pretends that he can for fear of appearing unfit for his position; his ministers do the same. When the swindlers report that the suit is finished, they mime dressing him and the Emperor marches in procession before his subjects, who play along with the pretense, until a child in the crowd, too young to understand the desirability of keeping up the pretense, blurts out that the Emperor is wearing nothing at all and the cry is taken up by others. The Emperor cringes, suspecting the assertion is true, but continues the procession.

We can live in **denial** to not be seen as the fool. Yet had he not had an ego and was prepared to be seen a fool, he would have acknowledged the clothes were invisible.

Now if you want to know **your truth** you have to look at yourself. That means that you see inward and ask yourself - is that true. I know of a wise lady who does personal inquiry. She says that whenever we feel negative we are not seeing the gold. The gold of course is love. She says if you question your thought and ask is it true? Can you be absolutely sure that it is true? How do you react how do you feel when you believe the negative thought? Who would you be without the thought? And then this is the really amazing bit - you turn the thought around and wear it. Try it on for size.

You may not feel comfortable, yet if you are honest you may find what you imposed on someone else is actually your projection.

The truth is always in you. What happens is that you **know the truth deep down** and up it comes into the **light of day** to show you that you projected something in you onto the other person. It is like a movie screen where your mind is the projector and the screen is the other person. You realise that it is not true, just like a movie, it **seems real** but when you question it you **start to laugh.**

If I am negative I try on those clothes and they don't feel comfortable. If you are in denial then you will say you are not wearing those clothes, you are wearing other clothes. It is like the emperor has no clothes.

That is why **jesters are always laughing** we see that everybody is perfectly fine, they are doing their best.

Oneness

Oneness is err a big one, one that few talk about.

Imagine oneness like the **whole world** and all the air that circulates the planet. Imagine that every single person and organism on this earth has breathed the same air.

We all come from the same **family tree.** Every single person comes from the human family. We all have the same designed bodies, those who do differ a bit are also perfectly human.

Every **problem** you have had someone else has had, so you are not alone. We care for others when they cry, when laugh when others laugh and that is the feeling we are one.

Amazingly sometimes when we are **thinking of someone** they may actually ring, imagine that. How can that happen if we are separate. How do we know?

We all love to be with other people, we feel warm and safe as we can feel their presence and it feels good.

Peace

I am Peace Fool so this is another favorite of mine. This is the gold that is more like a **ray of golden light.**

Humans come in all shapes and colors, you can imagine a **rainbow.** When we all come together it is like **white light.**

Peace just **fills your whole body** when you are really happy. How do you know you are really peaceful, you just sit there like a Cheshire cat with a happy grin. You may even laugh for no reason.

Even when **things haven't worked out** the way you thought you are still peaceful because you are curious about what is going to happen.

You know that **life is not about control but the journey of discovery,** so you realise when it goes differently that you are to just follow your heart and see where the **thread** takes you. As your life is a tapestry. You just can't see the master peace right now.

So you don't resist anything, you just **flow with life** and if anything negative happens you know to question your thoughts and to find peace inside you.

Everything in the world **reflects** us. If we think the world is bad, funnily enough we see bad, if we think the world is great, guess what we see great. It is like the red car in a car park. Say you say to yourself I love red cars. Suddenly you see them everywhere.

Our minds are like that what you **focus on expands,** so if you want peace, focus and **just be it.** As Gandhi said be the change you wish to see in the world.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment is not too hard to explain. It has joy in it. What is joy?

Some people think enjoyment is all about pleasure. Do you know the difference between pleasure and joy? Give some examples. (Pleasure is taking, joy is giving)

Yes I know people think just go out there and **do what they want** have fun and don't worry about other people, even if you have fun at their expense. We know that is not the real fun.

Pleasure is different it is about buying things, escaping into games where you may get **distractions** of winning but truly you never win when you go for pleasure. You spend a lot of money and then guess what, the next desire comes and you have to have it. How many things are in your room piling up because you bought them impulsively as you had to have the latest whatever, after a while you got bored and started searching again, as you have to **fill your time.** That is taking from life.

Enjoyment has joy inside, this means you are **happy inside.** You don't need things outside you to make you happy. Life is just so exciting and wonderful you feel **alive** and want to **share.**

You know you are living the **life you are meant to and being true to yourself,** when you do that joy just sparkles up, bubbling, shining and you just can't help smiling. Some people will see you as confident and real.

Imagine if you didn't have to fill your time that you were already full on life. That joy was there and you knew that **life would just send you something interesting** when you need it. So you have plenty of space to give of yourself sharing what you know, your talents and caring about other people. This is **giving to life** and life gives to you. You have something to give so you are not empty. Get it!!

So enjoyment is the **jester always laughing and smiling** and looking at people with a cheeky twinkle. Where you just want to go up and meet people. No-one is scary because **you see yourself in them** and just smile. You laugh at life when you see mistakes made as you know everyone is learning you don't take life seriously **you just laugh** as you have been there.

Did you know that **life is the joke**? Do you get the joke? You are here to have fun not to be sad and moping around, you create your happiness as well.

Did you know the **thoughts you think** decide what emotions will come up. If you are always saying that I never get this or that, I am lonely, I don't have money, I am not in control and no-one likes me. Your thoughts will make you feel sad.

What if you decided to **sing another song** where you think life is great. For example - I know I need something as I have it, I am here to learn lessons about life, I am not in control, I am on a journey of self-discovery, everyone is doing their best, if someone leaves that is life saying goodbye to them, even if someone dies you know that life is the universal pattern-maker and you are just grateful for what you had.

The real joy that is that **life is meant to be as it is** because it has happened. When we place joy into life we can deal with difficult issues as we look for the gold nugget buried beneath the drama. That is enjoy-ment. It is meant to be, get it!

Service

This is the last one. To give service makes life such a magical place.

When **we have all are values together** in the one bag, we head out onto the **open road.** We have all we need with us and are open to life, the road is long and exciting. You have no idea where you will end up. But you **trust** life as you have the **gold** with you.

Service is an integration of all the gold into **selfless service** to others as there is nothing that you need, so you share from your little bag the secrets of life. You are living to give.

To be a **foolish** is how you really get to know the world. Imagine everyone is floating on a ship of fools in the ocean of life. Imagine how much fun that would be.

So you just **serve everyone who comes up** knowing they are meant to be there. Perhaps in a quiet moment they even asked for you to come. Sounds like a magic trick hey.

Sometimes **you can serve** by doing nothing, let people work things out, other times you can just love people and that is sending a beautiful vibe to them. Other times you may help them with something or be like a mirror shining truth back to them to see who they really are. They may be surprised how great they are when they see to look into their own book.

Service represents the **highest value of all the Fool's gold,** like a rainbow each value has a color of virtue, each positive thought weaves a thread to co-create the world's tapestry. It is the big picture.

Therefore, 'to thine own self be true' is a Peace Fool's song.

This poem describes my dreaming of world peace. There is a blueprint of peace which is indelible in our DNA. Beneath all conflicts is peace, the challenge is to recognise that each challenge leads us to peace, if we choose. Many are caught up in distractions and dilemmas not realising that peace is really just a breath away. It is always present. Peace is not an ideal it is actually who we are when we become still. Eckhart Tolle speaks of the 'power of now', he teaches millions stillness, as peace is wordless when known.

A Blueprint of Peace

A blueprint,
A footprint,
n impression,
For the sand is impermanence,
Nature recycles history,
For no impression has more weight than another,
All eventually turn to dust,
For the physical world is in constant change.

The peace you seek never disappears,
Beneath constant change is certainty,
For the sands of timelessness exist not in physical matter,
But in eternal truth.

All human beings arrived from eternal truth,
And will return to it,
The mind of the universe is vast,
It is timeless and unlimited.

The sun is the mother of all life,
A wheel of electromagnetic fields,
Sending free energy to recharge the grid,
For matter and anti-matter is the mirror,

For all that is physical has the non-physical
To balance the multi-verses,
For life is present in a multiplicity of universal forms.
Many human minds are focused within imagined dilemmas,
Information technology creates the context and flavor of what is believed and then seen,
The discussions and critiques never step over ley lines of universal inquiry,
They are contained within a corral of directed scripts and role plays to keep addiction alive,
As the tail that wags the dog picks at the bone,
For the blind men cannot feel the pink elephant of their own creation,
As the family is embroiled in conflict and confusion,
Fear, suppression and misinformation drives modern life into a darkness with dimmed lights.

External influences dramatise events to fuel undivided attention,
Yet the greatest mysteries are cast aside to make room for the Simpsons and Big Brother,
To fill inner space with sitcoms, dramas and awakened new fears,
For paralysis, gossip and a survival mentality,
Is a contextual field that knows not truth.

I close my eyes to feel a rhythm that I cannot hear,
Yet the breath of life is unmistakable,
Nature speaks in a language that has no judgment or pre-conceptions,
The winds and water courses flow around obstacles to complete the cycle,
The weather patterns distribute sustenance to a vibrant world alive with the color of potential,
For there is consistency in life affirming self-regulating patterns of the snowflake,
There is purpose in an ecosystem functioning in harmonious unison,
There are dinosaurs amongst the ancient forests,
For the tree is the centre peace of stability,
Inspiration, transpiration, communication, leaf litter, canopies, temperature regulation, soil retention, protection, carbon sinks, oxygenation as the true summit for climate change,

Technology is not favored by natural selection.
Peace is the REAL HOPE for humanity,
When one is Responsible and able to respond,
Conflict resolution awakens Empathy in others,
Awareness is to seek truth not power,
Love is the natural life force in harmony,
Honesty is the outcome of a truthful intent,
Oneness is the ecosystem birthing life equally,
Peace is creative action inspiring virtues,
Enjoyment is the clown that plays with life and sees the joke as life itself.
For the blueprint is known to all,
But applied consistently by few,
One can worship great heroes yet the hero is within you awaiting your purpose to flower,

For the greatest love is to realise that one can create anew with principled leadership,
As ambition falls away as a child discards a toy,
As profiteering holds no gain only pain,
As power exists in the vacuum of the powerless,
For the greatest leader responds from within,
Walks alone and speaks out to all,
Leads by service and acknowledges the value of all without prejudice or favour,
For the greatest justice is to share fairly with all,
For some say the meek will inherit the earth,
For humility is the face of virtue living as unity,
Unity can only be seen through the hearts
that see inner peace in the truth of
Who We Really Are.

When children integrate the blueprint of natural universal values within themselves, service becomes a natural expression of peace. Peace is service to humanity, it is the light in the darkness. Peace is life itself that naturally sustains. Perhaps this is the sound of one hand clapping?

T**he Fool's Gold:** Dreams come true. REAL HOPES in the future is in the hands of children with peaceful expressions.

CHAPTER 2

Clowning Around is Peace in Action

Hospital clowning (2000)

I was sitting in my office one day and a fax came in. It was from a friend of mine running a Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) in Queanbeyan, a town just over the border from Canberra. The fax was informing members of an up and coming seminar on humor and healing by Patricia Cameron Hill and Dr Shayne Yates. Patricia was a former nurse and her husband Shayne a former doctor. My doctor friend was sitting next to me and I immediately encouraged her to go to this seminar to help with her work at the hospital. I said: 'I will go with you as moral support'. So she agreed and we went. I had no idea this seminar would change my life.

We joined the audience and a woman came out with bright orange hair and a bright smile. She and her husband, whom she referred to as her 'speed hump', as he slowed her down, presented their humorous material with instructions on how to put in 'funny' so that funny comes out. Yes I know, not rocket science, but we laughed a lot.

There was one part of the seminar that seemed to jump out at me. She mentioned clowns. Something within me just clicked to the idea of being a clown. After the seminar my friend and I met with the presenters Patricia and Shayne. Another friend was with me who is an outgoing person - another person with bright orange hair (says something). She was interested in being a clown. Patricia and Shayne encouraged us to go to the Canberra Hospital and clown with the patients. It turns out they had a book, You Won't Die Laughing, and they wanted to distribute it around the hospital.

So with that my friend Carole and I rummaged around a $2 dollar shop thinking 'funny' and looking for colorful props and inspiration. At the end of scanning the aisles we wound up with a basket full of whistles, balloons, tinsel, hats, bubbles and noise makers. We then decided to head for the Op Shop to find colorful clothes. Overnight we had transformed ourselves into bright colorful hospital clowns.

Within 24 hours Carole and I were clowning at the Canberra Hospital. We had no idea what we were doing but just went through the hospital being silly and hugging people. I remember Carol taking exception to my accent saying it sounded German, so I changed it to another funny voice. We had no training and discovered we were naturals. I realised then, that all my years of stirring my brothers and sister, as an annoying teenager, had paid off. I had no idea that I had a talent in playing, as a young person I was seen as annoying but as an adult a clown; I have to laugh. The beauty of being a clown meant I had a bigger audience to play with. I never grew up, which was a great relief. I was waiting for

the opportunity to be my real self. At the end of that first day 'Clown Rounds' was established.

We decided to create a fun trolley, we called it 'Wally the Jolly Trolley'. It had skeleton hands (handy), snakes (creepy), balls (bouncy), bubbles (floaty), balloons (party), noise makers (noisy), whoopee cushions (farty), and much more to entertain the staff and patients. Carol bought a nice white coat covered in all sorts of colorful designs and colors. She transformed into Dr. Woo Hoo and I was to become Peacefull the Clown. Patricia and Shayne gave us their book to hand out to the patients. This book helped patients laugh their way to good health. It seemed I was in the right place at the right time.

I never set out to be the greatest clown, if anything I was overly casual about it. I noticed I had little discipline to learn any songs or jokes, I did attempt a few times, but I found I just joked naturally. I see 'funny' in a lot of things and people do make me laugh. Good thing I didn't wear the big clown shoes, without doubt I would've tripped over myself and if I stood too long in one place they would have been speed bumps and I could have tripped everyone up. Good thing we were in a hospital!

My intention was to bring joy to people stuck in hospital. One good thing I noticed is that I had a captured audience, they couldn't run away. So they could laugh to keep you there or painfully smile to pity you, either way I didn't mind, laughter is the best medicine. It, at the very least, distracted them from pain.

Seriousness is the one thing I find the most funny and it is like standing in front of one of those guards at Buckingham Palace (London), the temptation is to just enter into a staring contest or point your finger at his nose and see who cracks up first. Clowning is a bit like that. We break the tension or at the very least create it - ha ha! Hospitals are serious places and our job was to bring that positive humor to help those in pain to forget it for a while.

I have had some truly memorable experiences and some embarrassing moments, foot in mouth comes to mind. I must have a big mouth for those clown shoes. So a few stories…:

When I first clowned at Canberra Hospital with my friend Carole, aka Doctor Woo Hoo, we had some great experiences. One really memorable one was visiting with an old lady. I bounced up to her sitting at the end of her bed with her tray in front. I put on the love glasses and said: 'Don't you look gorgeous, gorgeous,' then continued, 'you can only see love through these glasses they are very special,' I would then look at her and feign being in love, I would fall in love with anyone in the vicinity as well. She smiled at me with her love glasses on. I blew up a balloon (I had plenty of hot air). I started a little balloon game. We tapped the balloon between each other and then she was really smiling. It was a simple moment, but I was to find out it was profound. A lady who was in the bed opposite said she was a nurse, but not well at the moment. 'You don't know what you just did,' she told me. 'What did I do?' I asked. 'That lady has not smiled in six months or moved that arm in six years,' she replied. I was shocked. 'Really' I said. She was serious. I thought there was much about clowning I didn't understand. I now think that clowns access another part of the brain which seems to bypass the logical part, like a fly over (going over your head) or an under pass (under my leg) - ha ha! It seems clowns are able to reach people in different ways. People are very open to clowns; perhaps it connects to their childhood and they are able to simply forget themselves. Perhaps that is the moment of true peace.

Some interesting experiences that were not what I expected: I remember I went to massage a doctor for relaxation and he started screaming, 'Don't touch me!' I instantly saw trauma there and wondered at his childhood or perhaps country of origin (Asian). On that day I realised I had to show them the massager and get their permission to massage them. That way they would have control.

There were times when nurses said they were fearful of clowns. I had some strategies to try and engage them and not freak them out too much. Playfully I said to one of them: 'Turn around and face the wall and pretend I am normal'. I then gave her a back massage to associate pleasure and clowns. She was

cured. Nothing like pleasure to bypass that fear button. Massage is a good form of clown therapy. 'Hey Dr. Woo Hoo I had a breakthrough!' I have cured quite a few clown phobias by pretending I am more scared of them and jokingly saying: 'Don't look at me I am scared of people' or 'You are not scared of clowns – you are scared of your thought about clowns'. In truth they have not met the clown, they are just allowing an irrational fear to govern them, the reality that is the only danger is having fun. Yet I suspect the phobia is linked to issues of control, some people don't like masks and fear they don't know you. Yet interestingly this is more prevalent in the West.

My clown buddy Jon, aka Hairy Potter, was around 70 years old and was a successful builder in Australia; he had the attitude and demeanour of an English gentleman. I found it so interesting to talk to him, he was full of interesting knowledge and had amazing skill in doing paper cut outs. He would do a few snips and then you had a work of art. I first met Jon at a Chernobyl children event in Melbourne. This event was to bring joy to these kids dying from cancer. I had just come back from Russia with Dr. Patch Adams. Jon had his own charisma and I was drawn to him. He was playing his guitar and I noticed a big pink flower on his hat. His demeanour was gentle and kind. We clowned together for around six years intermittently. I will recount some stories of clowning with him.

We used to clown at the Austin Repatriation Hospital in Melbourne for the Veterans and then we would mosey on over to Darley House which was the old people's home and just joke around there. One particular time I remember we saw a guy with cerebral palsy, he twitched and ticked and blow me down, I noticed he had a manual typewriter. I just imagined trying to type on the keys while ticking or twitching, he would have to time the typing. He taught me some people have real challenges. Anyway, I bounced up saying, 'Hello gorgeous' which is my usual introduction. We asked him, 'What are you typing?' We had a look over his shoulder. The guy was a poet typing up the most extraordinary original Australian poetry. This was the poetry you would discover in Banjo Patterson's era, talking about sheep stations, mateship and the rugged beauty of this country. Probably he was a country guy. So I put on my love glasses and did a theatrical rendition of his work. He was so excited, more ticking and involuntary movement with a big smile. I read his precious poetry out putting on my most Aussie accent to give it texture, or as they say in cultivated spaces, in the Australian vernacular. Triumphantly, I announced this poetry to the hospital ward but it felt like the world. My friend Hairy Potter made lots of positive comments to him and did his usual paper cut-outs into amazing shapes that were works of art. These were not ordinary cut-outs, they were elaborate and something you could put on a dressing table or art gallery. Some people call them doilies. Jon does paper mosaics of crosses, love hearts and other designs all linked in this complex picture. It was really astounding stuff. He would do a few snips here and there and ... wallah a masterpiece. I squeaked my nose flashing my multi-coloured eyelashes and then gave this guy a huge hug. We then started to skip off down the hall chatting with people in our usual banter. To our amazement this guy got out of bed and chased us down the hall. He was limping awkwardly as his cerebral palsy affected the balance of his body. He eagerly gave us his address and

wanted us to write to him. I gave him my address. We had touched his heart and he touched our lives. That is how love works when you are a clown.

We often played with the nurses, sometimes I lovingly called them Brunhildas, which is slang for the matronly type - tough and no nonsense. Sometimes they were open and friendly and up for some mischief. Nurses have seen it all they are a 'no shit' group, pardon the twang in my slang; having said that they are 'up to their elbows in it' at times. Nurses are very functional people, so you have to play it carefully. I often went up to reception and told them: 'I heard this was a great hotel, free food, free bed and I'd like to check in please,' with a big clown grin. They looked at this painted clown with long multi-coloured eye lashes and a jingly jester's hat and laughed. I waved my magic wand and sometimes handed out inspirational cards. Fanning them out I'd say, 'Pick a card any card, with a cheeky grin and then playfully teased them by pulling the cards away as they reached for one. They always had a laugh and then refused to take another one. In other moments I blew bubbles, often saying, 'Make a wish.' Or I pretended to eat them and say, 'Yummy!' Kids loved that. Or I'd get out my secret weapon, or what I term my weapons of mass distraction, and then a drum roll, cha boom… the orgasmatron… ever heard of that….? Well I often tell people, if they are adults, that it is better than marriage - ha ha! When I am with kids I call it the giggle stick. I have to tailor to audiences hey. I say to adults to just imagine that you get total pleasure, with no answering back and it never leaves you; they have a giggle. I raise it up above their heads and say: 'Do you believe in a higher power?' or 'Would you like to experience nirvana?' I often get an excited expectant nod and a cheesy grin. Then I give them a head massage. The orgasmatron is made of copper and it feels unbelievable as it is like fingers that massage the whole head, all at once. It is a very efficient, cost effective, little device. I would love to have an audio recording of all the oohs and aaahs people make and then say to others, 'You must try this'. I often say, 'I'll have what she's having'. I always liked that movie 'When Harry met Sally', very funny. I can do that with laughter in a restaurant.

I've met some interesting characters in the Veteran's area of the hospital. We'd go in and clown around and sometimes play pool with the veterans. They are lovely old blokes. I have asked a few what they think of war. All don't like it, and think it is a waste of time. I remember meeting a veteran who actually witnessed the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. He was on the ground, obviously not at ground zero or he would've been a mere shadow on a path. He said he saw the cloud. I was stunned at the time, I though what are the chances of meeting such a guy? Another guy had some connection with the HMAS Melbourne that was sunk after a collision with HMAS Voyager. I can't remember the details of it, but I was surprised at what life unfolds, when you are open.

Another time when clowning at the Austin Repatriation Hospital, I heard this accent I asked, 'Where are you from?' (Thinking he could be American or Canadian), he said, 'I am an American.' I discovered he was from Texas. I said, 'Do you know George Bush?' He replied, 'Yes, he was my neighbour'. I started to really grin at this point. What are the chances of that, I thought? 'What is he like?' I asked. 'There was a lot of shooting next-door,' he replied. I laughed and said, 'So what has changed?' This was whilst George W. Bush was in power. We had a good laugh and moved on. Only as a clown do you meet these characters.

We also used to go the Royal Talbot Hospital which has a lot of spinal unit cases with many people who have had accidents and lost motor skills. So we went there and interacted with the staff. I brought out my puppets as people walked by and just put them up on their shoulder saying, 'Hello Polly, how are you today?' We went to a particular ward where people still talk about us today. I am still invited as a volunteer years after I stopped hospital clowning. We made some special connections with nurses there. When you play with people and bring them joy they really love you for it. When they realise that you are volunteers they become amazed. When we did charge (to be taken seriously - ha ha!) we only charged a very nominal amount. I have to say when I contacted the Veteran's area some years later,

I found out that we had been replaced by Simpson's donkey. Simpson was an Australian soldier who had a donkey in the First World War. He became famous for saving many people by transporting the wounded on his donkey. It was nice to remember soldiers who had shown compassion, I did love that. However, the donkey had a higher rank than us boo hoo! I said to Hairy Potter: 'I bet that donkey can't juggle, or crack jokes and probably poops all over the place.' I imagined them trying to hug the patients with those hoofs. That would've been a pain in the ass (ha ha!).

I remember going to the Royal Talbot Hospital with all the clowns - Uncle Rad, Clown Lee Lee, Hairy Potter and myself Peacefull Clown. It is really nice when you go as a group. It is much easier to create a positive dynamic. So we went and visited the patients. You have to be sensitive because people may be very sick or depressed. There is a fine line you walk as a clown. We make sure we don't upset anyone as our job is to bring joy. Sometimes leaving people alone is the kindest act.

I remember walking in on a guy who was paralysed and in bed. Uncle Rad started up a song and we all joined in. I pulled out my juggling balls and did some juggling. Jon played his Happy un-birthday song on his guitar. It basically means you can sing happy birthday every day except on their birthday, although we do make exceptions for birthdays as well - ha-ha! This guy's family came in and we threw balls around the group and put a wig on him with a bower (feathers not boa constrictor). We put the love glasses on and the cameras came out and we sang. Uncle Rad was particularly good at bringing groups together.

Another clown gig was with the Melbourne Clown Group. They had a group of clowns visit the patients at Sunshine hospital. It was run by Hunzy (Hans) who was an architect by week day and who had clowned with Patch Adams. He is tall and wearing the balloon hat. I loved it when I saw him wear pants that he put over his head. He just looked like two legs walking. It was very funny. Ziggy with the white hair in the back row next to Hunzy was a jester and he and I did a little jaunt in the city after my return from Russia with Patch Adams. He worked for the Gawler Foundation and worked his own magic with cancer patients. He dressed as a clown every day I was told. My clown buddy is Hairy Potter, he is to the left with the colorful jumper and pink feathers in his hat (later to be a big pink rose – what a man!). He was wonderful with his guitar and happy un-birthday songs and and paper doilies he cut out. Uncle Rad with the little bowler hat and moustache did regular gigs with Jon and I at the Talbot. He was great at bringing people together and getting them to sing songs. He intercepted Captain Snooze aka Rod Quantock in Fitzroy as he came out of a shop. He had a woman sing with a book on her head, he was very funny as well. The other clown I only met once but he looked fabulous. As a group we went to outpatients, wards and wandered through the hospital bringing cheer and smiles. We had fun together and met a wide range of patients distracting them from pain and getting a giggle. I recall a woman came up to us very animated and I felt, very clown like. She told us later she was from Ward 12 the psychiatric ward, I had to smile. I felt she would fit in with our group, perhaps we would fit in with hers. She had no fear of clowns and she was very funny and full of personality. In her case she had no boundaries and no fear. Perhaps she wasn't so crazy afterall.

Hairy Potter and I used to go to an area called Southbank on the Yarra River right in the heart of the Melbourne CBD. It is a popular tourist destination and is full of bars and coffee shops. We used to clown along the promenade and meet the people with big smiles, bubbles, juggling and jokes. We would have a little coffee break and people would just trail past waving. I got the feeling this is what a natural community would be like, no fear, but just everyone smiling and meeting each other. On one occasion Hairy Potter and I were clowning and a little child came up, as all children do, they are like magnets with clowns actually. She would have been three to four years old. Hairy Potter and I joked with her and blew some bubbles. Then Hairy gave her a Banana in Pyjamas doll. She beamed with delight. We were with her for no more than three minutes. The next day I was driving out of a side street in Fitzroy, dressed normally, and this child was on the street with her parents. She saw me instantly and yelled excitedly, 'Clown!' and pointed. I was shocked and amazed I had been un-masked by a child. I smiled and then drove away. Usually I am hard to recognise as a clown. She recognised me instantly; it told me that children see the person, not the mask. That was an amazing revelation that day and it is why I believe in children's voices so much. They are very clear and honest; they see the truth more easily than adults. We have forgotten, or perhaps we have learned our roles too well.

When Hairy Potter and I clowned on the streets we waved at people, we hugged them and did little dances. I loved to juggle so I dropped my balls and made out I was sad, I often gestured for people to pick them up as I pretended to have a bad back then I raced them to the ball. I would go up to them and gesture to shake hands then pull back and always I got such a cheeky grin. They would try it a couple of times then stop the game, it was very funny to watch them thinking it through.

I remember clowning down Swanston Street in Melbourne and waving to tourists, finding out where they were from and generally joking. I remember seeing this old man who had a badly pocked face. He wore rough clothes and was sitting alone. He looked pretty bad. The people ignored him. I went up and said, 'Hello gorgeous,' and found myself on bended knee whilst he was sitting on the bench. He told me he was from Bendigo and he was an only child. He told me he had been in the Vietnam War and had stepped on a landmine. Now I don't know how he had feet, but he told me he his feet swelled up every week and he had them drained. Wow, poor guy I thought. He was very proud of the fact he wasn't a drinker yet lived with alcoholics. I gave him a big hug and wished him well. As I walked away I thought I couldn't do that as a woman, that is hug him, you have to be a clown to bring that innocent beauty to the man. I never forgot him, and really felt honoured to meet such a brave person. He must have been very lonely.

My friends Eliza and Donita came out another time with Hairy Potter and I. It was wonderful to see their styles of funny. Eliza had my love heart hat on with love glasses. She was a funky clown. My friend Donita called herself the 'Harmony clown'. Over the years she has told people she is a clown as she felt so impacted by the experience. It changed her life and she wants to bring harmony and love to others. It is a wonderful way for people to really connect with their community and demonstrate their humanity and humor in their own unique way. Everyone has something to offer, no-one is insignificant when it comes to being the presence of love in action.

The payment for me is when people have said to me my smile or interaction made their whole day. What a society when a smile becomes so special. Patch in his speech to the clowns in Russia, commented that people think that what we do is extraordinary but in truth it is normal. I so agree with that. We don't love each other enough; instead we spend a lot of time judging appearances. Just imagine if you chose to say 'hi' to the person on the train, bus or street. Now even if they looked at you and thought you crazy, you would be changing the world, in just that one act. I talk a lot to people anyway, and everyone is great.

Clowning on Swanston Street I asked a teenager for a go on his skateboard. He was surprised a female clown was asking. He probably thought I'd break my neck. He didn't know I was the first woman in the southern hemisphere to ride a Perspex half pipe - hee hee! So I jumped on and started to tick tac (going left then right with the front of the board) the kids were surprised. I did a few 360's (spin in a 360 degree circle). Then I fell off in a classic clown move right on my bum with my legs up in the air and a big grin (by accident). I then heard the tram driver ding his bell (ding ding) and actually speak over a loud speaker and say something like, 'Get up ya clown… ha-ha'. It was a classic moment, and so nice that the driver got into the act adding to the laughter and fun my pain seemed to cause those around me. It was so funny. I love those spontaneous moments.

We went clowning near the University of Melbourne and we chatted with some young people. They told us to come into their house. It was a big old Victorian house from a bygone era. There were staircases spiralling to the top. Then my clown buddy Jon got on the grand piano and played a concerto. He is so talented. We joked with the young people and then skipped off, we had a wonderful time, as did they.

When I moved to St Kilda I got a group together to clown around the streets. Hairy Potter's daughter Sam came with us together with my friend Jason, his cousin, clowns Lee Lee and Uncle Rad. We giggled, juggled, joked and blew bubbles down Acland Street, a famous coffee strip in Melbourne and met the tourists, locals and other visitors. I enjoy encouraging people to be clowns at least once in their life so they can feel the joy of giving unconditionally and to experience the public. My friend Jason was like a jester I remember his big steps and dancing style of clowning as he made noises and interacted with the crowds.

What I love is that through these interactions such as these our world opens up. Preconceived ideas we may have had about people fall away in the instant you connect. That is why bravely embracing life is so important, that is how you learn the reality. Life is not anywhere as serious as we have made it. The seriousness is what suppresses all the levity and humanness which gives life its richness. To me it is not about money, it is about connection and love. I found an abundance that money cannot buy. I am always amazed at the focus on money, as it has nothing to do with the true abundance within, that is the real wealth or what I call the Fool's gold.

I cannot convey to you the joy of being a clown. Being a clown is a way of 'seeing', we are all very similar when we call on the highest part of ourselves, it is what makes us feel happy.

It reminds me of Billy Joel's song which talked about a man who chose to be a clown in a Red Army town. Below are the lyrics from Billy Joel's song 'Leningrad' which for me, is very pertinent to the choices we can make. It makes clear the difference between the sad soldier and the joyful clown. One reality destroys lives and the other celebrates all life.

Leningrad[1]

Viktor was born in the spring of '44
And never saw his father anymore
A child of sacrifice, a child of war
Another son who never had a father after Leningrad

Went off to school and learned to serve the state
Followed the rules and drank his vodka straight
The only way to live was drown the hate
A Russian life was very sad
And such was life in Leningrad

I was born in '49
A cold war kid in McCarthy time
Stop 'em all at the 38th Parallel
Blast those yellow reds to hell
And cold war kids were hard to kill
Under their desks in an air raid drill
Haven't they heard we won the war
What do they keep on fighting for?

Viktor was sent to some Red Army town
Served out his time, became a circus clown
The greatest happiness he'd ever found
Was making Russian children glad
And children lived in Leningrad

But children lived in Levittown
And hid in the shelters underground
Until the Soviets turned their ships around
And tore the Cuban missiles down
And in that bright October sun
We knew our childhood days were done
And I watched my friends go off to war
What do they keep on fighting for?

And so my child and I came to this place
To meet him eye to eye and face to face
He made my daughter laugh, then we embraced
We never knew what friends we had
Until we came to Leningrad

1 http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/billyjoel/leningrad.html

When I clown on the streets I have face paint and I am wearing my clown suit, I am in the image of a clown. I realise that this is the mask people see. There are some people who are afraid of masks and I can only assume they are afraid of what they don't understand, they can't see the identity. I have wondered if it is a desire to be in control, since the clown appears out of control. The mask is very powerful and instantly people know you are there to be happy, it actually unmasks people all around you. I often tell people I see the true face of humanity, what I see is nothing but beauty, in every person, even in a person who is drunk, or unattractive, no-one is unacceptable when viewed through the eyes of a clown. There have been movies that have depicted clowns in frightening ways, I am not comfortable with this as I may be misunderstood in my innocence. However, I do accept there is the yin and yang in everything and that the world is diversity. So I just send love to those afraid and try not to impinge on their space. Instead if they dare to look I may be able to release them into feeling their own joy and dare to connect. The mask gives permission to have fun.

Clowning on the International Day of Peace (2009)

This is a story I wrote about my return from clowning on the International Day of Peace. I wrote it when it was fresh in my mind. So let me take your hand and take you with me as a clown, to see what it really feels like, clowning as the greatest joy of my life:

I had tears on my return from clowning today, I felt a great privilege and humility in being a clown, I felt I would share with others what it is like and the incredible insights I have into people's lives as a clown. I have the ability to see the beauty in this world, that so few know, it is not rose coloured, it is reality - we live in an amazing society that is lost in its misunderstandings of each other. This is what my clown buddy Hairy Potter and I agreed on today.

Would you like to travel into the city with us and feel what it is like to be a clown amongst the crowds of strangers we call friends? I might add Hairy Potter and I are not street performers, we are clowns. The world makes us laugh, not the other way round. We do it for love not money. To serve society is our greatest reward. That is our pay.

Today is particularly important to me as a peace clown. It is 21st September, the International Day of Peace, this is the day that the United Nations have designated as a day of peace and nonviolence for the entire world. All nations are to observe this day and all warring parties are to stop killing for just one day. Is this possible? Out of 365 days per year, just one day set aside where everyone agrees peace is possible. Jeremy Gilley the founder of this day spent two years lobbying peace laureates, politicians and triumphed against all the odds to have this day commemorated every year. In his film Peace One Day he shows footage of the day at the United Nations, Kofi Annan is about to ring the Peace Bell in New York, to the shock and horror of all in attendance the twin towers of the World Trade Centre are imploding, this was September 11, 2001. This was the day the impenetrable facade of the Americans dream was shattered and the shock of vulnerability shook the very foundations of the structure reduced to rubble shifting under all feet. This was the moment terror, or terrorism, was born in the US and had reverberations that changed the global consciousness. In the confusion, the significance of an International Peace Day was lost as the reality of violence floated across New York in dark plumes of smoke obscuring all visions of hope, as the 'war zone' descended like a nuclear winter. This was a reality check of the long road to peace and it is in all our interests to move beyond symbols and start to think of peace within the minds and hearts of ourselves and then watch the world change. As a peace clown I know the magic of love, so let me share a peace with you.

My day started when a friend told me to ring 774 ABC radio to let them know it is the International Day of Peace. Having formerly been on community radio, I didn't think they would be interested. Remember the adage 'if it bleeds it leads, peace just aint sexy'. Unbeknown to me I was given the talk back number and explained to the operator the reason for my call. She talked about whether the Chechen dictator should enter the country to attend the Melbourne Cup. The thoughts in my mind went to division. If we are to really become peaceful we have to accept all people, even mass murderers, that doesn't mean you condone what they do but every human has been violent in thought, word or deed. We have to look deeper into the why of violence we all share. This is my central question. I told the talkback girl I didn't know much about the issue and she quickly hung up before I had even finished speaking. I felt tension and rang back to say that she hung up and I hadn't finished speaking. The new operator said it was a talk back line and they were flat out. I said: 'I am a World Peace Clown and I am trained in conflict resolution', but she said, 'We are too busy'. I laughed and let it go. I said, 'Thanks for explaining', and hung up. As I went on my morning walk I contemplated how realistically we can live in a world of peace when there are so many negative attitudes. I wondered how much time the world really has.

Anyway this was my day to be a World Peace Clown, so I put the media behind me. I packed my clown gear and caught a tram into the city. As I walked through the mall disguised as an ordinary person I made myself observe the faces and feel the energy of the crowds as I walked through feeling what I call 'the vibe'. A part of myself was slightly daunted at transforming myself into a peace clown and being the centre of attention. There is always a temptation to stay in the comfort zone, where it is easy to be anonymous. I silently said to myself, I am going to explore the difference before and after, consciously. I observed all the serious faces, no-one smiled at each other, separate universes ignoring the thousands of people around them, somewhat lonely in a crowd, a deafening silence and absence of life. They walked, sat down, plugged into music, talked on mobile phones with plain faces in a sea of masks that never questioned, simply accepting - this is the way it is. I felt invisible in the crowd, no-one interacted with me, it was dull and uninspiring, like a black and white movie, kind of like slow motion.

I went and saw my friends in a building in Bourke Street and transformed myself into a peace clown in the toilets. I have done this so many times for nine years now. I've clowned in detention centres, at the Australian Federal Parliament, conferences, overseas in slums, refugee camps, HIV clinics, orphanages in Russia, with Chernobyl kids and in hospitals and the list goes on, I guess I am experienced by now. I had nearly finished the final touches to my make-up with glitter when a woman came in and said, 'What are you dressing up for?' I said: 'I am celebrating, it is the International Day of Peace, did you know that?' She said, 'No'. She told me she was starting a business to cook at people's homes and make sauces for rich women who pay a fortune in the shops, she saw a target market. She was positioning herself as premium. I felt she would probably do well a bit like a celebrity chef, perhaps that was what inspired her. Anyway, make-up done, I had to get going and greet the world as a world peace clown.

I walked out of the toilet and immediately people were noticing. I had broken the shackles of conformity and could feel immediately uplifted. I had bright coloured hair, multi-coloured eye lashes, bright face paint with a peace sign on one cheek and a love heart on the other (hmm), my jester's hat and bright yellow overalls with purple tights and my red runners. I could feel my bells ringing, actually they were within my heart. You couldn't miss me even if you tried, and believe me many have, but for fun I come up and play. So I switch into clown mode and I become fearless. Not even slight discomfort. I go down in the lift, and say to someone: 'You're coming in my lift you lucky person, won the lottery with me'. The door opens revealing a crowded lift, I say: 'Got room for a clown? Make way make way', the wig takes up a lot of room. Don't worry I don't have a whoopee cushion

but plenty of whoopee (as Patch Adams would say), people are just smiling and asking me what I am doing. I tell them about the auspicious day, all didn't know. I break out of the lift and head for Swanston Street. I wave to everyone and make eye contact. I stop in a group of smokers and ask them about this day, they say they didn't know but that they were peace makers. So I hand them UNESCO's Culture of Peace information. They are smiling and laughing as I give them all hugs and ask them to pass peace on. I walk past Asian people having coffee, wave and smile whilst tweaking my red nose. They laugh and I start to connect with all the people moving through my space. I feel very at peace and enjoy the eye contact. I walk down to Swanston Street increasingly speaking with people, waving, smiling and asking them did they know it was the International Day of Peace. Nine out of ten people said no, that is the clown poll and I'd say pretty accurate. I ask them how they make peace, some laugh at jokes and forget jokes, others just nod, 'Peace is natural', one commented and some didn't know etc. I ask people: 'What if we start peace for one day then we can do the second day, the third and so on until we reach 365 days and we are all at peace, do you think this is a great strategy?' Is this an idealistic dream? Or, as Gillian Lynne (choreographer of Cats) once told me in her London home, it is like creativity is like working a muscle, just keep practicing and it expands. I kind of like that analogy when I think of peace. Edward de Bono told me that all people have to do is lateral thinking and world peace will happen. I think he has some good ideas. Another famous nuclear activist said that the problem was 'men' I can hear a loud chorus of women agreeing and men seeing it as human nature (violence that is). Although in truth we are all responsible for the world we create.

I met so many different people from all walks of life, all nationalities, all ages, shapes and sizes. Such is the kaleidoscope of life we walk past every day and we just allow it to blend into a shade of grey, why? Because everyone does that! Yet each moment is golden, and the magic of each person is lost when we live on automatic pilot rather than going forth bravely to embrace each amazing story that is inherent behind all eyes. We just see people as people, but to a clown all nationalities are alive with personality and fun and suddenly the differences between us dissolve as we break out laughing and looking for the points where we connect. An eager willingness to engage. This is the magic of the clown, and every person is a magical moment that brings the spark of joy that is continually passed like the light of a candle of peace, lighting up your face with a big smile. Every person is a friend and there is no hesitation to go up and speak to them, we just see the colors and have no doubt we can relate to everyone. What a privilege is it to be a clown. Would you like to meet some more of our new friends on our journey through Melbourne? So let's continue on our international day of peace-making.

I met an older gentleman with lovely curly grey hair, sitting on a bench closing his eyes in the sun. I make the comment, 'Lovely to snooze in the sun'. He looks up startled and acknowledges me. He doesn't seem happy in his eyes but I talk to him about peace, he says he knows a lot about it and can look it up on the net. I ask him if he believes it is possible, he says yes. I wish him peace and give him a big hug, he looks surprised. Who knows what he was feeling. We all have our battles hey.

As I am walking waving at people I make eye contact with a Hindu Yarra tram driver, I like his turban. Then a kid with a big hand walks past, he catches my attention. I ask him if it has swelled up, but it has a Collingwood color on it, hmmm very bruised. I ask: 'Did you hurt yourself and were you pointing at the time?', he laughs and keeps looking back. It is good to play, kids are the masters, I do bow to them. I wave at cars but don't play in the traffic, it's not good for my health. I like to indicate for them to stop and let me pass or I wave them through like traffic police. I then notice some young girls, I tell them about peace and ask what do they think, they are smiling and asking for a photo. Then I spot a row of Indian men, two wearing dark glasses, I tell them that no-one knows who they really are. We talk about making peace in the world. One of them says, 'What about making love?'

I say, 'Yes of course both, love is peace hey'. I give them a head massage and a Culture of Peace brochure. They think it is possible, perhaps the massage was what did it, just pleasuring them into submission to a higher power, why not. Then I sidle up to an older lady (around 65) and her husband as they are walking, I tell her that I am not following her honest, just walking with her enjoying the sun with a big sunny smile, I ask her what she thinks about peace, is it possible? 'Yes, definitely', she says. I ask, 'How do you make peace?' She says: 'Peace is when people are nice to each other.' I say to her: 'So people have to remember to be nice?' 'They shouldn't have to remember, it should come naturally', she replies. True I nod agreeably. I then 'parallel park' with two young men in their twenties, I ask them about peace and if they knew about the international day, they say, 'No, but it's nice'. They feel that peace should be fun and jokes, but one of them never remembers jokes. I say: 'The main thing is to laugh at your own jokes, even if no-one gets it that is peace huh?' Next I find myself chatting with a woman about the football promotion she was getting people into at Federation Square. I say: 'Wouldn't it be nice to have new games that are win/win? We always have football, tennis, cricket... you don't often see new games. People win or lose, so let's make them all happy and both sides win, that's got to be a winner!' I thought to myself 'I have a preference for that myself'. She said she'd never thought of that and wondered if it would be exciting, I said that I would think one up and make it fun hey.

Then I followed Hairy Potter who was chatting to an indigenous man showing him his famous paper cut doilies made of love hearts and a cross. Hairy is very clever at these paper cuts outs and blows many people away with his symmetrical intricate symbols that he unravels before their eyes. He is also a great poet. The indigenous fellow was very intrigued. He looked great wearing clothes covered in dots and colors. My clown buddy asked him what the rock and feather around his neck was about, he said he could make things happen. 'A magic man', I thought. 'Can you pull this rabbit out of a hat?' I fanaticised then tuned back to the conversation. He is like a medicine man for his people. He said he thinks what he wants and gets it, I said: 'Like the law of attraction', and he smiled. He has formulas in his mind. I reflected on how much knowledge indigenous people had, we were privileged to meet this man. He was painting a dot painting on the ground on a canvas; I guess he was going dotty. He said: 'Come back in a few days, it will evolve'. I think we would all evolve hanging out with him. Perhaps he could evolve world peace, forgot to ask that, my big chance missed. Nearly saved the world, oh well have to keep working on it.

Saw a wonderful performer sliding a glass ball over his arms and body, it looked like magic as it seemed suspended above his hands as he gracefully rolled it with such precision and control. I watched like a fascinated child and told him how great he was and that he made a difference to people by bringing them such a beautiful performance. Adults and kids alike focused on this magician. He said he was not good at taking compliments, I told him he was wonderful, good practice for him. He was really conscious of me staring and smiling, a fellow clown. He would struggle being one of those stiff manikin like performers who just stand there and stare, pretending to be statues. I am always tempted to get my feather duster out and tickle them, like the guards in front of Westminster Palace, can feel the urge. This street performer was tickled by my costume and I think we made a friend there, camaraderie on the streets - love it. I was so pleased, he showed me how to use the balls, how to do it. I had a little go but I would have to practice for 100 years to perfect it. Perhaps I stick with juggling balls. I did notice him juggle about six of them, impressive wow! Maybe I just blow bubbles and make a wish.

As I walked along the road I saw a lovely girl reading a book sitting against a wall. I just made a bee line for her and saw her wondering what this was about. She asked me to speak slowly and I asked her if she knew it was the international day of peace. She didn't, so I gave her a brochure. I said, send peace to someone today. Another girl was from France, she said her English was not good, I

said mercy, au revoir and a few other words I knew, enjoying the sound of my own voice, she smiled bemused at my attempts to destroy her language. I said you can make peace there too. She smiled.

I told people the International Day of Peace was to make peace visible. 'It already exists, we are sitting here having a nice conversation, and this is peace isn't it?' They just smiled, 'Yes of course'. I asked another man sitting alone and looking down, he was the first who didn't believe peace was possible, he looked very sad, he said, 'No'. For him there was no peace. I saw a deep sorrow in him. As I walked on I waved at business men and smiled. Perhaps our inner world is the determinant of whether peace is possible. If you don't believe it, you don't see it.

Chatting with a young boy and his mother I asked her if peace was possible, she said there were a lot of problems in the world, she had done a lot of reading, she was worried at all the money spent on the military and not on social services. She believed peace was possible. Spoke to some well dressed middle aged women who had been shopping, said to them how great life is, every moment is great, just to breathe, they enthusiastically agreed. Did they think peace was possible? They agreed in a chorus, 'Yes!' Another tick in the box, it is looking like there is intent, yay!

Met an Indian man looking for his soul mate, he asked my clown buddy if I was his soul mate, he smiled and said, 'Yes'. I just pointed to the sole of my shoe and said: 'Sole and in Australia we say 'mate'. So yes he is under my foot, he is my soul mate ha! I think he was hoping I might be his. I said to him: 'Go up to a girl and say you really see her and read out a poem', perhaps I just wrecked his future love life, but being a poet I liked the romance of it. I guess if you read a poem to each girl, eventually one melts.

The children are always great to clown with. As I moved through the crowd and met a mother sitting with her two boys I gave her a 'peace of my mind' by asking her if she wanted to actually feel peace. 'Yes,' she said and bowed her head. I pressed the button to my vibrating massager and then preceded to her boy and placed the head massager, or rather my giggle stick, on his head. They loved it, I said their IQ would jump as I was stimulating the brain. I asked, 'Do you feel smarter?' they just laughed and said it felt funny. I then had a cheeky game with a little boy running rings around me, he wanted a game of hide and seek, that is peace in action or a piece of the action hmm. Although my action has a time limit, who needs aerobics when kids can run you in circles for hours whew… I then met this amazing little girl with intense eyes and glasses. Must be brainy, probably smarter than a fifth grader at age five, a future Einstein who knows. Anyway, she asked me direct questions. She said: 'Why do you wear make up? Why are you wearing a wig? Why are you a clown?' I felt the magic stripped away as I had to confront the stark reality she was placing before me – logic eek. I thought – Why do we breathe? What makes us walk? What is the molecular structure of the planet? (that is my imagination going off, I just laughed such a sharp kid). I could see her logical mind and she was no fool, although I was, so I could baffle her with 'illogic'. Wow I really liked her style. I said: 'I am not a clown I just dress colourfully' (not true, I am a clown … really). I looked at the other kids and asked, 'Do you think I am a clown?' They laughed. 'What makes you think I am?' I asked quizzically. 'I could be a taxi driver or rocket scientist, I am just wearing colors to give me energy, ha.' I then offered to shake hands with her and deliberately missed a few times and then let her grab me and faked that she had such a tight grip. (Mighty mouse me thinks.) She was probably going to be the next Prime Minister. You never know who you meet. I once met an ex-soldier who said he was a survivor from the Hiroshima nuclear blast in Japan, he told me he remembered the blast. Who would have thought!

It is all fun, nothing serious. It is the seriousness that actually takes our liveliness away and covers our thoughts in a blanket of darkness, clouding the potential of what can be. I have learned that over and over. Thankfully I am a clown, it reminds me of what is important in life. I feel it returns me

to my true self, to be a simple fool. I meet too many stern faces in ordinary life and I feel a relief to clown around and remember who I really am. Footloose and fancy free. I was told that I am peace in action.

Hairy Potter got the car and I got my bag from my friends at Bourke Street. I waited on a street corner juggling. I waved at a man in the car and hoped he didn't think I was a new type of street worker. I laughed to myself. I tweaked my nose and waved to acknowledge people going about their day. I had a lot of fun throwing the ball under my leg into a cascade juggle. Had them bouncing around like B B Beroccas. Jumped in the car with Hairy and I said to him: 'You know it is all misunderstanding. People just don't know each other'. He agreed, it is amazing the people we meet. We have an amazing life meeting everyone; I have to do this every day.

I feel today was the first day of my new life. The 21st of September will signify to me a moment in time where I made up my mind what I wanted to do with my life. I will live my dream of peace, I will no longer desire anyone else, or to do or be anything else. My love will become the source of my freedom. I will no longer cry over small things, but save my heart and compassion for those who need my smile. For me peacemaking is my heart smiling and it is the greatest joy of my life. To just give endlessly to the world is sharing my heart with no expectation of return. Yet funnily enough the treasure I get is the joy I feel, no amount of money could pay me for the honour of my experience. It is my privilege to be with everyone as a friend, the real tribe we all belong to. I am so lucky. I can never convey to anyone the true beauty of the life I live, it is truly great. I honestly feel truly blessed as I see how blessed everyone is. For life is always a mirror of myself and there is nothing that I will reject, it is all acceptable through my eyes, the eyes of the clown see only love. For only love is real in my world.

So my original thought – be aware of the difference before and after clowning. What did I discover? There was no comparison. The reality of the clown is unbelievable, it is moving images, color, dynamism, stories, excitement, spontaneity and above all freedom. The black and white world of conditioned day to day life feels heavy, predictable and lonely. I will opt for the clowning every time. This is the real world, believe me, I meet people and interact, I am not imagining my community, I am getting to know them. It all comes down to communication. That is why I believe in peace, I believe in my community. Now, having said that, many were not aware that it was the International Day of Peace and apparently I heard all events were cancelled, so it looks like myself and Hairy were the only ones celebrating it. I felt inspired to come and did so. However, all the people we met except for one, believed in peace with great confidence, this was affirming for me. I also have no doubt that peace is, not will be, just a question of seeing it beyond the mundane and routine media images. Peace is in the smallest acts of kindness and in the openness of people; I can see it and feel it in the warmth of people, which is why I believe we have real hope for the future. I have real hope for children.

So my friends, when I got home my eyes filled with tears as the reality of my life as a clown impacted on me, as the truth I have always known just surfaces in a feeling of humility. To be happy and never forget to smile and let go of sadness, there is much in the world waiting for you and many wanting to love you and waiting for you to love them. Each moment is precious, surely. We just have to give people a chance. Was it John Lennon who said 'let's give peace a chance'? We do that when we open our eyes and hearts to the possibility that peace is indeed a reality. It is only when we believe it, that we see it. That is the secret life of clowns for peace….magic happens…really. Believe it or not…

The Fool's Gold: Clowns are the mirrors of society. To be a clown is a privilege and opens your eyes to love in all its forms. Clowns see the true beauty of humanity and know we are One.

CHAPTER 3

Helen Caldicott and Disarmament

At the end of 2001, I found myself at a crossroads, I asked myself the question: 'Do I continue in market research or pursue work that is humanitarian?' I was at a point where I was feeling uncertainty and seeking direction. I asked in my heart, 'What do I want?' The only word that came to my mind was 'peace.' It was not about being at peace, it was more a question about my purpose or my mission in life. I Googled peace and found Helen Caldicott. I remembered I had seen her on ABC television some six months before and something within me had said 'remember her'. I wrote an email to her and to my surprise she wrote back. I then sent my Curriculum Vitae as an afterthought; she sent me her telephone number. Here is some information about her, as follows:

> *In 1980, following the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, she left her medical career in order to concentrate on calling the world's attention to what she refers to as the 'insanity' of the nuclear arms race and the growing reliance on nuclear power. In 1982, she was the subject of the controversial Oscar-winning, National Film Board of Canada documentary on the dangers of nuclear weapons, entitled If You Love This Planet. In 1980, she founded the Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND) in the United States, which was later renamed Women's Action for New Directions. It is a group dedicated to reducing or redirecting government spending away from nuclear energy use towards what the group perceives as unmet social issues. During her time in the United States from 1977 to 1986, Caldicott was the founding president from 1978 to 1983 of Physicians for Social Responsibility… She also worked abroad to establish similar national groups that focused on education about the medical dangers of nuclear energy, nuclear weapons and nuclear war. The umbrella organisation International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. Caldicott received the Humanist of the Year Award from the American Humanist Association in 1982. In 1995 Caldicott returned to the US where she lectured for the New School of Social Research on the Media, Global Politics, and the Environment. In addition she hosted a weekly radio show and became the Founding President of the STAR (Standing for Truth About Radiation) Foundation.[2] She also founded the US-based Nuclear Policy Research Institute (NPRI), which evolved into Beyond Nuclear. Currently, Dr Caldicott is President of The Helen Caldicott Foundation/NuclearFreePlanet.org, an educational outreach project that informs people of the dangers of nuclear power and weapons. The mission of the Foundation is education to action, and the promotion of a nuclear energy and weapons free, renewable energy powered, world.[3]*

Helen Caldicott is a straight talker and a deep thinker. You could say she is a no shit woman who is very scary to some men. She just says it like she sees it and pulls no punches. Many women admire her for her forthright courage and determination to end all things nuclear.

Anyway, I wrote to her, she sent me her phone number and I decided to ring her. It was after our conversation that I made up my mind to drive from Melbourne to Matcham (just north of Gosford in New South Wales) to meet her. The journey was approximately 2,000 km round trip. I had little money, but guided by a strong 'gut feeling' I paid for this on a credit card. Helen asked me to read some of her books before I came. I read - Missile Envy, The New Nuclear Danger: George W. Bush's Military Industrial Complex and her biography A Desperate Passion: An Autobiography. I am not a natural

reader, but I read the books as requested in preparation for our meeting.

I drove up to Canberra and saw my family and then drove on to Sydney and stayed with a friend overnight. The next morning I headed up to Gosford on route to Matcham. I drove up to her country house nestled in the trees. I walked up the stairs and there she was. We walked out to the kitchen and I have to laugh writing this, she asked me something like, 'What is the problem with the world?' I cagily answered, 'I don't know', she said, 'men'. Now I smile at myself as my first thought was about political

2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Caldicott
3 http://www.helencaldicott.com/about/

correctness, which is not really me, but nonetheless my thought was not to tar men. I read and reflected on her book Missile Envy, a portrait of how male scientists personify nuclear weapons as creation subconsciously seeking to create like women by giving birth to an idea or technology. I could accept there was some truth in that. I could see the seduction of power, where men wanted to have power over life and death. She did have a point. Like I said, she says it as she sees it. She does not try to be polite. So okay I went with that, but kept it like juggling balls up in the air (at the back of my mind) suspended until I knew for sure. She made me a coffee and we sat in her lounge, I believe her editor was around as well. She had a nice home, and she is indeed a formidable woman.

I told her about being a clown, and at this stage, I didn't have many strings to the bow, so I had nothing to impress her with, just enthusiasm really. I did marvel that she actually allowed me to come given her high profile, but something within her gave me the green light. So I sat there talking about being a clown in hospitals. I had completed a business degree focusing on marketing and economics, at this stage my life was not yet about being a peacemaker. Anyway, it seems the purpose of my time with her was to partially awaken to the realities of life. Helen was instrumental in inspiring me onto my true path and direction. She put my knowledge to the test and could see I was uninformed. I wasn't there to try to impress her, I was following a hunch.

She told me about the Industrial Military Complex, a term I would later become more familiar with. She inquired if I knew of the Carlyle Group.[4] I didn't. She then explained to me briefly who they were. I subsequently did some research and discovered the Carlyle Group was a private equity group in Washington that did leveraged buy-outs. Apparently they had $170 billion assets under management across 113 funds. They bought underperforming defence contractors for example. I was shocked to see so many prominent members involved such as: George H. Bush (former US President), James Baker (former US Secretary of State), Frank Carlucci (former US Secretary of Defence), Arthur Levit (Chairman Securities & Exchange Commission), John Major (former British Prime Minister), Fidel Ramos (former President of the Philippines), Thaksin Shinawata (former Prime Minister of Thailand), Norman Pearlstine (editor of Time Magazine). In respect of the business world, they had the current and former Chairmen and CEOs of General Motors, Lehman Brothers, Neilson Australia, Power Corporation of Canada, Bundesbank, Global finance and so on. So these are the high profiled and high powered people with Carlyle operations across the world. They are the third largest private equity firm in the world. The most fascinating part of this story is that the Carlyle Investor Conference took place on September 11, 2001. A member of the bin Laden family was in attendance as an investor. The family had invested $2 million in the Carlyle Group in 1995. The bin Laden family liquidated their in assets October 2001.[5] I wonder why?

Michael Moore, an investigative journalist, explained in his film Fahrenheit 911[6] that 'after the airspace reopened, six chartered flights with 142 people, mostly Saudi Arabian nationals, departed from the United States between September 14 and 24. One flight, the so-called Bin Ladin flight, departed the

4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlyle_Group
5 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlyle_Group
6 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fahrenheit_9/11 and see film

United States on September 20 with 26 passengers, most of them relatives of Usama Bin Ladin.' On Moore's website it is stated:

'Sen. Byron Dorgan: We had some airplanes authorized at the highest levels of our government to fly to pick up Osama Bin Laden's family members and others from Saudi Arabia and transport them out of this country.

Narration: It turns out that the White House approved planes to pick up the bin Ladens and numerous other Saudis. At least six private jets and nearly two dozen commercial planes carried the Saudis and the Bin ladens out of the U.S. after September 13th. In all, 142 Saudis, including 24 members of the bin Laden family, were allowed to leave the country.'[7]

Additional facts not mentioned in Fahrenheit 911 and sourced from Michael Moore's website included the following information:

First, the US Customs and Border Protection document released by the Department of Homeland Security under the FOIA, Feb 24, 2004 lists 162 Saudi Nationals who flew out of the country between 9.11.2001 and 9.15.2001 .

Second, even though Fahrenheit does not make the allegation, on June 9, 2004, news reports confirmed that, "Two days after the Sept. 11 attacks, with most of the nation's air traffic still grounded, a small jet landed at Tampa International Airport, picked up three young Saudi men and left. The men, one of them thought to be a member of the Saudi royal family, were accompanied by a former FBI agent and a former Tampa police officer on the flight to Lexington, Ky. The Saudis then took another flight out of the country."

Moreover, "For nearly three years, White House, aviation and law enforcement officials have insisted the flight never took place and have denied published reports and widespread Internet speculation about its purpose... The terrorism panel, better known as the 9/11 Commission, said in April that it knew of six chartered flights with 142 people aboard, mostly Saudis, that left the United States between Sept. 14 and 24, 2001. But it has said nothing about the Tampa flight… The 9/11 Commission, which has said the flights out of the United States were handled appropriately by the FBI, appears concerned with the handling of the Tampa flight.

"Most of the aircraft allowed to fly in U.S. airspace on Sept. 13 were empty airliners being ferried from the airports where they made quick landings on Sept. 11. The reopening of the airspace included paid charter flights, but not private, nonrevenue flights." Jean Heller, TIA now verifies flight of Saudis; The government has long denied that two days after the 9/11 attacks, the three were allowed to fly.

St. Petersburg Times, June 9, 2004

Moore interviewed an FBI agent in the film who said he thought it unusual that the planes were allowed to take off since he assumed that the key suspects would have been Saudi nationals and the bin Laden family.

In the film Moore talked more about the Saudi influence. The Official Fahrenheit reader indicates that '85,000 high net-worth Saudi's invested $860 billion in American companies – an average of 10 million a person and a sum that is roughly equivalent to the gross domestic profit of Spain… In terms of investments on Wall Street $860 billion is roughly six or seven percent of America."[8]

7 http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/fahrenheit-911-facts/what-fahrenheit-911-says-about-the-saudi-flights-out-of-the-country-after-september-11
8 http://books.google.com.au/books?id=Y_Ej_RA5Bf0C&pg=PA170&lpg=PA170&dq=michael+moore+saudi+investment+in+US+stock+exchange&source=bl&ots=NjGiL41c6w&sig=1bldvW7nqILjxB2gPZHwffGoY08&hl=en&sa=X&ei=xBA6U7TdCqWuiAfyvoGYCw&ved=0CEEQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=michael%20moore%20saudi%20investment%20in%20US%20stock%20exchange&f=false

The Saudi influence on US national interest of these wealthy oil barons is significant. If the amount invested is seven percent and this was suddenly withdrawn, it could conceivably crash the US economy, therefore, if the Saudi's are displeased this can be their bargaining chip. I would consider this a threat to national security, sovereignty and democracy.

Moore indicated the complex relationships between the U.S. government, the Bush family, the bin Laden family, the Saudi Arabian government, and the Taliban, spaning over three decades. Moore mentioned that the Saudi Ambassador to the United States was known affectionately as Bandar Bush, so close was their association. Michael Moore was never sued for making these allegations, therefore one can only assume there was truth in his reporting. It appears the circle of the global elite have allegiances within their group that are far stronger than national interests or patriotism.[9]

Another interesting association to point out here is the Project for a New American Century[10] *which was formed to promote American global leadership. Interesting names involved included: Donald Rumsfeld (former US Secretary of Defence), Richard Perle (former US Assistant Secretary of defence), Paul Wolfowitz (neoconservative, architect of the Bush policy in Iraq) and a cast of many more. The co-founder of this group was William Kristol a neoconservative, a political analyst, and a regular commentator on Fox News. So what this highlights is that this group of neo conservatives or 'neocons' as they called them, had a twin agenda for a strong defence policy in the United States and free market capitalism (no regulation, unfettered market power). As a group they were concerned about falling defence spending and the perception it would make the United States weaker. They were aware that there were no real threats to the United States to justify an increase in defence spending. Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Perle are the names that come up in association with what was termed the Washington Consensus. The Washington Consensus referred to the IMF, World Bank and US Treasury. These persons formed part of the inner sanctum of the G.W. Bush administration. It seems that the September 11 event was utilised to catalyse the war on terrorism and spurred on by the underlying mantra of endless wars which gave weight to the argument for boosting defence spending the neoconservatives had been looking for. This ensured the United States defence spending increased which proved a boon to the Industrial Military Complex. My latest reading of the statistics on the cost of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq is estimated at between four to six trillion*[11]*, eight times normal global military spending, the US being the highest spender of all countries put together. So there is your increase in defence spending. This is a prime example of the lack of inner peace and what drives the conflicts. The key question is - who really profits?*

Anyway back to Helen Caldicott. She asked a question inquiring into my knowledge of the Heritage Foundation; again I said 'I didn't know.' I didn't realise that this visit would open my eyes to right wing think tanks and power brokers in the United States. This group, according to their website, is dedicated to promoting conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values and a strong national defence. Apparently Ronald Reagan was a Distinguished Fellow.[12] Say no more! It is easy to see why Helen brought this up when her work is to disarm the world of nuclear weapons. Her journey had taken her into the hall of mirrors, to investigate the darkest groups where truth is hidden in the bottom drawers of shelf companies, where faceless men cleverly erect smoke and mirrors to maintain the power vortexes of Washington. I feel the dark shadow of greed permeating these stories and a lack of light around life, true liberty and real happiness. What is that interesting phrase: 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.' I guess this depends on what the meaning of great is. One meaning demonstrates 'service to self' and another reflects 'service to others'.

9 et al
10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_for_the_New_American_Century
11 http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-03-28/world/38097452_1_iraq-price-tag-first-gulf-war-veterans
12 http://www.heritage.org/about

That is, the ego serves the self, virtues of love and truth will always serve humanity. So power corrupts easily those deeply ego-invested in service to self or self interest. Thus, the modus operandi of the global economic system. This frames the state of play.

So I had some lessons from a master. I looked into the face of a very brave woman and saw the world map with a nuclear shadow hovering over it. I loved that she woke up to her responsibility in the midst of raising children and ironing shirts. She indeed worked up a head of steam, accessing alternative energy with a passion. Sitting before me was a self-made woman who was not crying at the shape of the world, she was making a stand for a nuclear free world and creating it. She didn't believe she was not good enough; she did the research and ended up knowing more than most experts. I really admired her. She is indeed a role model for women. I told her my story and it seems she respected me as well. In fact to my surprise she said I was the most like her. I didn't realise the weight of the compliment I was given but I can only guess she sensed that my passion was real. We talked about clowning and she excitedly (I loved her passion) rummaged around in some draws and pulled out some photos. To my amusement she showed me photos of how she and Patch Adams had walked together in a protest in New York called the Naked Truth. They had literally walked naked to raise awareness (and eye brows) about nuclear issues. I've always thought the bravest thing I could do is walk naked, let's face it, how vulnerable do we all feel naked?, yet in reality the human body is natural, it is the covering up that is the distortion, but we see it as normal. I feel the same applies to the state of war we have all worshipped as keeping us safe, the reality is that innocent people are killed, problems are not solved, weapons are getting bigger and more plentiful, and precious resources are wasted. When you look at the statistics, in early wars it was army against army and fatalities. These days 90% of fatalities are civilians, if that is not argument enough to stop the violence; clearly war does not protect civilians. It certainly does not bring real peace and security, it creates the opposite. We still defend war because we are fearful of being unprotected, we see ourselves as the victims of life rather than the creators of a new future (as Helen clearly demonstrated). It is indeed the culture of fear by all people that perpetuates the misery - until we step into a renewable Culture of Peace (UNESCO) and proactively solve problems through conflict resolution, Departments of Peace and genuine democracy - then we are voting for wars to continue. In truth, outer wars are the inner wars we have not questioned.

Helen encouraged me to go back to Melbourne and study Peace Studies at La Trobe University. I knew I was stepping into an uncertain future, but her guidance was wise. I was stepping into my power that was the reality of it. I was choosing living my truth over money.

Uncertainty is the greatest experience of my life, it lay before me the Fool's gold of possibilities and all I had to do was choose. I didn't know it at the time, but I was to become a Fool for Peace. In my pocket were the seeds of the Fool's gold I was about to plant. Helen planted the seeds of peace and nonviolence and raised my awareness of the famous clown doctor Patch Adams.

I thank Helen Caldicott for opening her door to me; for as she opened her door my door opened to a new life committed to peace. She did indeed change my life.

Disarming the Paradigm of Violence

I had my own ideas for nuclear disarmament which I sent to the Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW). MAPW is the Australian affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) an organisation Helen Calidcott set up. Below is the essence of what I was proposing.

The aim was to create a focus on anti-bullying and catalyse the idea of 'disarming' in the whole community. The idea is to create a momentum and vision that the society supports so as to live disarma-

ment rather than fear, polarisation and disempowerment. The vision was as follows:[13]

Children are disarming: campaigns with children to highlight peace, nonviolence, anti-bullying and disarmament. To gain attention MAPW could have nuclear nonviolent free zones at schools. MAPW would promote values and anti-bullying programs.

- Councils are disarming: MAPW could promote nuclear free zones of councils.
- Doctors are disarming: doctors speaking publicly about a healthy future without nuclear weapons and waste.
- Soldiers are disarming: retired soldiers or active soldiers promoting a nuclear free future and conflict resolution.
- Politicians are disarming: promoting politicians as genuinely supportive of disarmament and democratic discourse. They would ensure a bully free zone in parliament and promote non-violent conflict resolution. These politicians could be both local or international.
- Lawyers are disarming: highlight local or international lawyers promoting nuclear disarmament and human rights.
- Business is disarming: promote businesses that are environmentally supportive and promote human rights in business.
- Grandparents are disarming: older persons could be interviewed about WWII and their reactions to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Students are disarming: this strategy could focus on bully free zones in schools and a focus on peace education at school.
- Police are disarming: police talking about the importance of disarmament and nonviolence. Issues of crime could be related to a culture of fear and social inequality. Police would become active in role modelling peaceful behaviour.
- Energy companies are disarming: have some retailers of energy support and promote non-nuclear technologies.
- Psychologists are disarming: Psychologists for the promotion of World Peace could engage in activities of teaching the community about conflict resolution.

United Nations is disarming: this could focus on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the promotion of human rights in the community as wellbeing.

Each segment of society could focus on disarming as part of their work and life. When we disarm we no longer give reasons to fight but instead choose to problem solve and de-escalate fear. Therefore, what we focus on expands.

The idea was that the MAPW could create a community focused strategy which is positive and empowering for the whole community. Activities could be envisaged for each segment to promote disarmament, empowerment, wellbeing, peace educaton and conflict resolution.

The key is empowerment and nonviolence. It is only when the community can envisage a new future and feels an inner strength from which to participate and engage in democracy, that change will occur.

13 Note: the concept has been updated

Our inner barameter will let us know if our decision feels good or not. It will be a world social movement that galvanizes the vision of peaceful disarmament leading governments by example.

The Fool's Gold: The masculine identifies with the violent warrior as power. Scientists have identified power as the creation of destruction by building bombs. Anyone can make a difference when they stand up for truth and a new future. The gold is to know not to follow a zero sum career path, but rather find your spiralling life path. This choice will change your world. As you change, the world changes.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

CHAPTER 4

Studying Peace at La Trobe University Melbourne (2002)

I moved to Macleod in Melbourne to live with my step-sister who had two children. She kindly allowed me to rent quite cheaply in return for watching the children when she wasn't there. Turns out I was living five minutes from a university and I found out there was a peace program there. I found out about Dr. Tom Weber and had him send information to get an idea of this program and if I wanted to do it. At the time I actually saw my path like a forked road, one way was market research the other was to serve humanity. I was aware of the latter, there is no career path other than the feeling of an inner glow, so I decided to take the plunge anyway, to step off the cliff of insecurity. I decided to go to La Trobe University and meet Dr. Weber. I sat down and looked around and when I saw Mahatma Gandhi's picture on the wall, I felt the tears well up in my eyes. I knew this was my life path.

Choosing to Study Nonviolence

I remember sitting at a coffee shop at the university and getting a strong feeling of a choice, I visualised a fork where I would either go to university or go out into the world and wing it with little security. It felt like allowing my life to free fall. I then walked through the university and knew without doubt that this was my path. It is the path of nonviolence. I was at a left wing university, which was important, I am interested in social impacts and how I can contribute to a peaceful world. I enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Humanities and Social Sciences (Peace Studies). This course of study focused on: the Politics of Nonviolence, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Nations States & Security, South Asia, International Politics, Environment and Human Rights.

What I learned from my studies was that there were many nonviolent academics and activists working on social change. I learned about Gene Sharp and Arne Næss, to name two who spoke of tactical nonviolence without any spiritual application.

An example of Gene Sharp's thought is as follows:

> *Political power is not intrinsic to the power-holder, but flows from outside sources that include perceptions of authority, available human resources; skills and knowledge; material resources; and intangible psychological and ideological factors. These sources all depend upon obedience, which arises for various and multiple reasons that include habit, fear of sanctions, perceived moral obligation, psychological identification with the ruler, zones of indifference, and absence of self-confidence among subjects. Obedience is essentially voluntary, and consent can be withdrawn.*[14]

Arne Næss' perspective was as follows:

> *Næss cited Rachel Carson's 1962 book Silent Spring as being a key influence in his vision of deep ecology. Næss combined his ecological vision with Gandhian nonviolence and on several occasions participated in direct action. In 1970, together with a large number of demonstrators, he chained himself to rocks in front of Mardalsfossen, a waterfall in a Norwegian fjord, and refused to descend until plans to build a dam were dropped. Though the demonstrators were carried away by police and the dam was eventually built, the demonstration launched a more activist phase of Norwegian environmentalism. In 1958, Arne Næss founded the interdisciplinary journal of Philosophy Inquiry.*[15]

My real interest was in studying Gandhi. Here is a brief overview of his fascinating life:

> *…Thinker, statesman and nationalist leader, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi not only led his own country to independence but also influenced political activists of many persuasions throughout the world with his methods and philosophy of nonviolent confrontation, or civil disobedience.*

14 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Politics_of_Nonviolent_Action
15 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arne_N%C3%A6ss

Born in Porbandar in Gujarat on October 2, 1869, his actions inspired the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore to call him 'Mahatma' ('great soul'). For him, the universe was regulated by a Supreme Intelligence or Principle, which he preferred to call satya (Truth) and, as a concession to convention, God. Since all human beings partook of the divine essence, they were 'ultimately one'. They were not merely equal but 'identical'. As such, love was the only proper form of relation between them; it was 'the law of our being', of 'our species'. Positively, love implied care and concern for others and total dedication to the cause of 'wiping away every tear from every eye.' Negatively it implied ahimsa or 'nonviolence'. Gandhi's entire social and political thought, including his theory of Satyagraha, was an attempt to work out the implications of the principle of love in all areas of life. Gandhi himself felt that he was most influenced by his mother whose life was an 'endless chain of fasts and vows' as a devout adherent of Jainism, a religion in which ideas of nonviolence and vegetarianism are paramount. Mahatma Gandhi was married by arrangement at 13.

Gandhi went to London to study law when he was 18. He was admitted to the bar in 1891 and for a while practiced law in Bombay. From 1893 to 1914 he worked for an Indian firm in South Africa. During these years Gandhi's humiliating experiences of overt racial discrimination propelled him into agitation on behalf of the Indian community of South Africa. He assumed leadership of protest campaigns and gradually developed his techniques and tenets of nonviolent resistance known as Satyagraha (literally, 'steadfastness in truth').

Returning to India in January 1915, Gandhi soon became involved in labor organizing. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre of Amritsar (1919), in which troops fired on and killed hundreds of nationalist demonstrators, turned him to direct political protest. Within a year he was the dominant figure in the Indian National Congress, which he launched on a policy of noncooperation with the British in 1920-22. Although total noncooperation was abandoned, Gandhi continued civil disobedience, organizing protest marches against unpopular British measures, such as the salt tax (1930), and boycotts of British goods.

Gandhi was repeatedly imprisoned by the British and resorted to hunger strikes as part of his civil disobedience. His final imprisonment came in 1942-44, after he had demanded total withdrawal of the British (the 'Quit India' movement) during World War II.

Gandhi also fought to improve the status of the lowest classes of society, the 'Untouchables', whom he called harijans ('children of God'). He believed in manual labour and simple living; he spun thread and wove cloth for his own garments and insisted that his followers do so, too. He disagreed with those who wanted India to industrialize.

Gandhi was also tireless in trying to forge closer bonds between the Hindu majority and the numerous minorities of India, particularly the Muslims. His greatest failure, in fact, was his inability to dissuade Indian Muslims, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, from creating a separate state, Pakistan. When India gained independence in 1947, after negotiations in which he was a principal participant, Gandhi opposed the partition of the subcontinent with such intensity that he launched a mass movement against it. Ironically, he was assassinated in Delhi on January 30, 1948, by a Hindu fanatic who mistakenly thought Gandhi's anti-partition sentiment were both pro-Muslim and pro-Pakistan.

Gandhi's intellectual influence on Indians has been considerable. Some were attracted by his emphasis on political and economic decentralisation, others by his insistence on individual freedom, moral integrity, unity of means and ends, and social service; still others by his Satyagraha and political activism. For some students of India, Gandhi's influence is responsible for its failure to throw up any genuinely radical political movement. For others, it cultivated a spirit of non-violence, encouraged the habits of collective self-help, and helped lay the foundations of a stable, morally committed and democratic government. Gandhi's ideas have also had a profound influence outside India, where they inspired non-violent activism and movements in favour of small-scale, self-sufficient communities living closer to nature and with greater sensitivity to their environment. Prominent among those influenced by his life are Martin Luther King in the United States and, more recently Nelson Mandela in South Africa. [16]

University for me was primarily about learning of Gandhi. I actually did have a dream of him where I felt him come to me in spirit. I am sure it was actually a visit in a dream rather than just a dream as it felt as a real experience and the 'vision' never left me. In the dream I perceived him on his famous long march to the sea of Dandi. In the dream I could see the long walking stick; I could see the rim of his glasses but no eyes and it was dark all around. I recall him stopping and looking at me. The only way I can describe my feeling was that I was beneath my feet. What this means is that I felt humble and I felt acknowledged. He then walked on and I woke up. I have felt a strong connection to Gandhi, and it was the David Attenborough movie that sent chills up my spine. I cried a lot watching the film as I felt the spiritual power of what Gandhi was about. His personal life was not relevant to me, it was all about the greater messages he taught, in essence love and truth. I felt I knew him on that higher level. I found at university I wanted to know more about his spiritual life, about soul force, yet that was not in the curriculum. The tactics were not as important to me as the love he felt and the courage he showed in the face of violence. This to me was a genuine peacemaker and, in truth, what I was seeking was to answer the question - 'how do we make real peace in the world? In my heart I was searching for this answer.

I studied South Asia which did help me understand more about Gandhi's legacy, and the situation in Kashmir as the number one nuclear flashpoint in the world. I learned about how tensions had built up between India and Pakistan, and that Kashmir was this buffer in the middle that both claimed. The fact that the Kashmiri population were Muslim but tended to identify more with Pashtuns and Sufis seemed irrelevant to these regional power games. I visited this region and was shocked to see barbed wire around the airport and on the streets leading into Srinagar. I imagined what it must be like to be a people under house arrest, unable to leave their homes for periods and being threatened by soldiers on every corner. There were approximately 800,000 Indian soldiers in Srinagar and a similar number of residents, with an estimated one soldier for each person.

I just marvelled at how this jewel of Asia (similar to the Swiss Alps) was cocooned in a security cordon and the people seen as the enemy. I wondered how Gandhi would see this situation today. I did have an idea for the Kashmiri people to wear images of Gandhi on their t-shirts, I wondered could the Indian soldiers shoot the father of India? I am sure Gandhi would advocate going to Kashmir to prove to people that the only devils are the ones running around in their own heads. Yet at the time I was there I heard of no would-be Gandhi's making the trip to highlight India's role of oppressive master. How did they differ from the British? People seem to forget the mistakes of the past and are then repeating those mistakes.

At university I received background on the caste system in India and the politics that had moved away from self-reliance and Gandhi's wise guidance, to an industrialised society assimilating rapidly the

16 http://www.pitara.com/magazine/people/online.asp?story=22

habits of the West. India had an ambition to be on the Security Council at the United Nations. Both Pakistan and India had nuclearized so they strategically could hold a power chip, both wanted regional hegemony, both were backed by China and Russia respectively. It is estimated that each state has spent on the design and manufacture of a small number of nuclear-capable missiles (Prithvi and Agni for India, Ghauri and Shaheen for Pakistan) more than $1 billion. [17] The economic burden and insanity of deterrence means more people are starving on the streets of both countries. It is incredibly sad to see the poorest countries on earth caught up in power over (control) rather than power within (virtues), whilst their people suffer from deprivation. Such is their fear.

Another important subject covered in Peace Studies was Mediation. I really enjoyed learning how disputes could be settled by the method of third party mediation. I was enlightened to the process of an independent mediator hearing one side (recording it), then reflecting back what was understood (listening) and then hearing the other side and repeating the same process, then having the parties ask questions for clarification in a safe and respectful environment. Then they would address issues (sticking points) and develop possible options as a means of problem solving and finally generate solutions that both were satisfied with.

What I really loved about this process is that it creates a space for people to solve their own problems. It does not allow problems to fester into long term disputes, as we see in the Middle East and Africa. Mediation creates a forum where people engage in a process where they actually hear the 'other' without interruption, and this provides a safe space to hear the other side. Usually during this process people realise that they were mistaken or that they didn't understand the 'other', and there is room for clarification and apology if necessary. The two parties then work out solutions that will work and sign an agreement to adhere to how they will treat each other involving processes that will work and strategies to deal with problems. It is really an excellent process.

This type of dispute resolution produces a win/win as compared to traditional forms of adjudication which result in a win/lose. The win/win process is about respect and power sharing, the latter is about winning the case, the argument where the end justifies the means. To truly respect other people means to adopt an approach where the means justifies the ends. Gandhi focused on the means rather than the ends, so for him truth and love were the means and he was willing to be at peace until the ends emerged. This is how soul force or true power manifests. Principles and virtues become the means to a peaceful settlement. In a competitive world it is difficult to adjust to natural justice were all win.

There are other forms of dispute resolution but for myself third party mediation was where I was drawn. I felt it the most effective approach.

At university we used a sophisticated and detailed form to follow in professional mediation cases. Below is a very basic outline of mediation that is used for children or at home placed on the refrigerator. It is simple but effective and reminds people we all can win.

Look at the problem do not hate the person.

1. Know that people could see the problem differently to you.
2. Use 'I' statements
3. I feel I think I want…
4. Listen to the other person's feelings, thoughts and wants (each listens without interruption)
5. Look for a solution that will satisfy everyone in the conflict (mediator generates options & solutions)

17 http://www.fas.org/news/india/1999/pj29lavo.htm

6. Know that this could mean making a compromise (both work together or share)

I wondered why society didn't promote these processes and life skills in childhood education. It is effective to plant the seeds of conflict resolution when children are young, I believe that would prevent most disputation. The reality is that most families have no idea how to share power, how to resolve disputes and model a democratic society.

I can envisage a society where families sit around the table as a democratic community and work out problems and develop solutions rather than yelling and using methods of fear and control to get their own way. This is the paradigm of power over, the mediation path is the way of power within and sharing power.

I asked myself – is it surprising to see so many unresolved disputes around the world? My answer was, no. Could that situation change? With education and societal will, of course.

The Fool's Gold: Seek to understand (listen) and then be understood (articulate). Learn about peace from his-story and then re-create a new future. Gandhi revealed the power of nonviolence as soul force. Conflict resolution seeks to solve the problem not hate the person, if taught universally it is one of the ways to true peace.

Activism at University (2002)

I felt inspired and started my own form of activism at university, quite naturally. I am fascinated by what peace actually means and feels like and this was my first step in exploring this topic and expressing it publicly. When I thought of peace as a career I was very aware there was no career path, this path was purely driven by my passion.

I decided to dress as a clown and went to university. I was curious to see how students would respond; I found the clown suit was a way of approaching people. Two of us clowns mingled with staff and students. I simply asked people: 'What do you think about peace in yourself and peace in the world is there a connection?' I wrote down all their comments. It was at the end of this day walking around La Trobe University as a clown, that I realised I was a World Peace Clown. My life was dedicated to world peace and happiness.

Toilet Paper Poll:

I started the first Toilet Paper poll. You may laugh. I stuck A4 blank paper on the walls of a toilet cubicle with sticky tape. I had the words typed at the top: 'this is the place you come for peace, what do you think about peace, is it possible?' It was fascinating to read the responses, people used the blank sheets as a graffiti/chat page. I received a whole range of fun and interesting answers, including the following:

No – doubtful.

Be the change you want the world to see - Gandhi ü

smartass that is the quote below – shows the extent of your brain huh.

I think peace is a personal mindset.

Get over yourselves – then peace can be thought about.

I'm pooping. I am totally at peace right now – I'm alone – oh wait… someone just entered the bathroom. I am no longer alone but, I am still at peace. Maybe it's a personal thing – peace I mean – at least it must start there. Oh my arm hurts – and I'm done pooping. I'll stop here, hope you enjoyed my thoughts.

Probably if I had time to think about the issue I would have heaps to say. But what I just thought now is that when I'm in the toilet I feel really good. I lock the door, no one can hurt me or disturb me. So if I'm peaceful here then maybe peace is about personal space and not having anyone affecting your views or life in anyway, so in a way peace can come when everyone is truly 'free'.

Society needs to let go of racism, and accept all culture as we are all one species, through acceptance. Perhaps we might well be on the road to achieving peace.

As long as there is war peace will never be. Who are we kidding – just ourselves

There is no such thing as peace. It is almost like asking whether is there a god. If there is, then why are there wars and suffering.

Because no one chooses to listen to him God, is a god of peace. If you choose to allow him, the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your heart!

Amen to that etc. – God is good. As humans we are selfish and self-seeking.

There is no God but it's nice to have something to believe in.

Figure out what you are before you tackle the problems of the world. First things first. Only when you're good to yourself can you be good to and for others.

We as individuals make up society – change begins with us. There is always hope.

Peace will come when you learn 2 believe in something – whether that be through religion or cult. Learn 2 love yourselves and others and respect everyone for their beliefs and opinions. Do not judge people and do unto others what you would want done 2 you 'PEACE 4 EVA'.

I agree we should not judge others and we should accept others' beliefs and difference but people should stop looking outside for peace. They should start looking within. I'm not religious at all and I know you can have inner peace without believing in a religion and definitely not through a cult.

The only way people can live in peace is to learn to accept people for who they are (empathy, sympathy, tolerance can go a long way). Treat others the way you would like to be treated!) Those so called developed modernised countries should stop trying to make under developed countries like themselves, the rich should stop exploiting the poor, and weakening as well as destroying them with their economic power and high tech gizmos. ONLY THEN WE MAY LEAD THE WAY TO WORLD PEACE !! (Written by an intellectual not a wanna be beauty queen wanting WORLD PEACE).

There will never be peace so long as there is religion. Many great, tragic wars have been fought over one 'God' or another. Believe in what you can see, not heresay. If you choose to live on faith alone, don't persecute those who don't – or those of another faith. If you have no soul proof, how can you say your beliefs are correct over others? Think about it!

Life outstrips vocabulary.

The importance of each and every one of us reaches beyond the trivia of our everyday.

There is no better feeling in the world than the feeling of being loved.

Reporting on the Forum on Terrorism at La Trobe University:

I decided to conduct some voluntary research for the Centre for Civilisation Dialogue and Global Governance. I did this of my own volition. I drafted up a survey and gained permission to survey the participants at a forum entitled: The War on Terrorism, The Middle East Conflict and Australia. This forum had expert speakers such as Professor Joseph Camilleri (La Trobe University), Dr. Andrew Vincent (Director, Middle East Centre, Macquarie University), Alexander Kouttab (Secretary, Australian Arabic Council), Dr. Daniel Mandel (Associate Editor of the Australia/Israel Review) and Moderator: Sarina Greco – CEO, Ecumenical Migration Centre.

Below are the key findings from the Executive Summary:

Q1. There are different points of view about war, some people think that war will always be present in the world, others think the world can be without war. What do you think?
Overall, the majority felt that war will always be present, intensity is an issue, human nature for conflict, resistance, people won't choose non-violence, national interest clashes and spiritual values are not cultivated. Some indicated that human struggle for power, conflict and differences would always be present. However others felt war could be averted and problems solved. Under half felt that there could be a world without war, some were unsure if this would happen, others felt humans are capable of creating peace and some indicated the need for institutions to prevent conflict and encourage worldwide democracy. Others indicated there was a need for mass education in the global community and to democratise the Security Council.

Q2. Thinking about all people (men, women, children), do you think the behaviour of war is learned or are humans born that way ? Why?Overall, the majority felt that war behaviour is learned. Some felt they it was due to conditions, violence is taught, learned from parents, friends and society, culturally and environmentally influenced and a response to a threat. Others attributed baser human emotions such as: greed, hate, selfishness, hostility, dishonesty, injustice and pride. Others indicated that there is evidence of societies where war does not exist and lastly, it can be unlearned. Of those who felt it was innate (born) comments were: hard wired, survival of the fittest, resistance instinctive, conflict is innate and born to defend ourselves. Others felt it was both innate and learned.

Q3. Thinking about the events of September 11, what do YOU think about the US Government's response?
Overall, the majority were unsupportive of the US response. Some felt it was totally unacceptable, negative, irrational, not thought out, vengeful, brutal, motivated by an agenda, dominant, US as the aggressor not innocent victim, disproportionate, unbalanced, ignorant, wrong and disappointing. Some indicated the US had an opportunity to change foreign policy and show the world how to act peacefully rather than use military force. Of the few supportive responses some felt it was justified, important, initially correct and that terror is encouraged by signs of weakness.

Q4. What is your opinion about the war on terrorism declared by the US Government?
Overall, many respondents disapproved of the 'war on terrorism' many indicating US ulterior motives in terms such as: furthering US interests as a dominant economic and political power, world domination, control of oil, supporting Israel, disregarding the interests of others, sponsoring terrorism and creating or going after enemies. Only three participants indicated their support stating it was well overdue, expected and hoped that they reached their objectives.

Q5. What do you think about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?
Overall, some stated it was complex and long running with no solution, getting worse and difficult to understand. Others expressed a feeling of sadness about the conflict, some stating it was a tragedy, horrible and disturbing. Some respondents sympathised with the Palestinians indicating they deserved a state and should have their rights recognised. Others sympathised with the Israelis pointing out that the Palestinians were trying to destroy Israel and failing to accept Israel's existence. Others criticised Arial Sharon and said that the oppressed had become oppressors. Some blamed the conflict on US intervention, backing of Israel and supplying arms. Other comments concerned the complexity of the conflict, seeing fault and evil on both sides, the twin issues of dispossession and security and that it won't be resolved until underlying causes of interfaith issues were dealt with. One felt there had been no right to partition Palestine.

Q6. What sort of grassroots activities could the Israeli and Palestinian peoples start to create peace?
Overall, respondents made a range of comments, many referring to the need for education in terms of peace, religion, cultures, language, trade/education and rights. Others indicated that people should start meeting together and discuss issues, shared gardens, talk, see each other as humans, there are many peaceful people on both sides, equal negotiations form a unified group, peace forums, sort out extremists and support peace.

Q7. In your opinion, what could peacefully resolve this conflict?
Overall, respondents had a range of comments. Some indicated that there needed to be more discussion and preparedness to change, recognition of rights, respect of humanity, ceasefire, disarmament, moderate governments intervening and involving peacekeepers. Others indicated the formation of a Palestinian state, settlers out of occupied territories and a change of leadership. In respect of Israel some felt it should withdraw or return land in occupied territories and one felt there needed to be a total Arab defeat. Others mentioned the US should pull out and one felt they should force Israel to return to pre-1967 borders.

Q8. Thinking about conflict. What are the ways in which differences could be resolved?
Overall, some ways to resolve differences consisted of: unbiased, non-partisan mediation, non-violent methods, negotiation, nonviolent conflict resolution, through the Brandt Report (review international development issues), non-exploitative foreign policy, effective peace talks, all voices heard, education for peace, truth finding campaign, compromise, mutual understanding, listening, education, humility, goodwill, forgiveness, recognition of rights and UN intervention. Other comments concerned a total Arab military defeat and assassination of George W. Bush.

Q9. People all around the world make judgements about events based on the information they receive. Overall, what do you think of the media's coverage of September 11 and the Middle East conflict
Overall, the majority of those commenting about September 11 indicated that the media coverage was biased towards the US/West, other comments included: poor analysis, defamatory, excitable, sensational, few independent reporters, repetitive, 24 hours, shallow, superficial, emotional, glorify war, not asking why, plastered over TV and expanded conflict. In respect to the coverage of the Middle East the majority felt the coverage was biased in favour of Israel, and mentioned: Palestinian stereotypes, shocking, uninformed, evasive, piss weak, inadequate, unclear, ignorant and guided by big powers.

Q10. There are many possible world futures based on what people believe will happen in the future. What kind of future world do you see?
Overall, the majority expressed a pessimistic world view such as: conditions getting worse, a fight for resources, homeless and starving, effects of globalisation, destruction, violence, war, confusion, much like today and a World War III. Others had a hopeful worldview where conflicts are resolved without weapons, cultural and religious diversity was cherished, there was peace and tolerance, deeper understanding of wonderful human values, democracy and good governance. Others commented that there would be a backlash against globalisation and Islam (religious fundamentalism blamed for the conflict), another felt fundamentalism would be destroyed and then dominated by democracy, freedom and capitalism.

Q11. What in your opinion creates real peace between people?
Overall, many referred to positive characteristics: the need for mutual respect and understanding, patience, communication, listening, moral values, empathy, love, equality, forgiveness, elimination of prejudice and supremacy, tolerating differences, no ego or greed. Others mentioned: promoting human rights, clear rules on boundaries, sharing resources, no violence or interference with countries. Others felt there was no real peace, that it was too complicated and depended on the situation.

I donated the report to Professor Camilleri's Centre for Civilisation Dialogue and Global Governance. I did not receive a response but could only hope that the information was of service. I regard open transparent dialogue as essential to solving problems.

This was the beginning. I was a Fool for Peace and I would discover I was to step into the unknown more and more; this is the metaphorical cliff from which we step into new knowledge to discover the possibilities are limitless.

The Fool's Gold: Creativity, inclusivity, questions and service open new ways to learn about peace. Peace begins in the minds of ordinary people who are all unique. Peace is personal, community based and global. Nonviolence is the flower rooted in truth and love. When nonviolence becomes the media's message then citizens of all countries will no longer support violence in the mistaken belief that it scares off what is unwanted. In every conflict there is an opportunity for a problem to be solved through seeking to understand and then to be understood. This leads to a shared future of empowerment. Our message is our life lived. What is yours?

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

CHAPTER 5

The Philosophy of Peace in Poetry

The Poetry of Peace

Philosophy was a leaf in the book of knowledge and I just kept turning over a new leaf each day. I had a passion for peace and it was growing like a spiral.

The philosophy of peace as poetry, for me, is like singing a universal song through words. Poetry in my experience has been a lifesaver and a means of creative expression. I felt it arise in me when I experienced life as a hard shell of impassivity, coldness, fixed ideas and unchanging paradigms. The pearl that emerged within was the peace of poetry. That is the exact metaphor for what I have discovered through this art form. I have transformed what I felt was hard and difficult into something that feels positive, loving and life affirming as an opportunity working for me, not against me. I realised I was the stone that required re-forming.

I've felt inspired to write poetry to find my own truth, so it has been a means of inner reflection; in my heart I am feeling for the truth that sets me free. It is not unlike the image of the happy/sad clown. I found poetry liberated me from the sorrow of deep feelings; the sorrow of the world not turning up as I expected. I was able to transform this confusion into the joy of celebration and return to the flow of love in all its forms. Poetry celebrates both the yin and the yang of life as it is. The traditional yin and yang symbol could be seen as depicting opposites, yet in reality they are complementary to each other and form contrasts in which clarity is found in the whole. Moreover, I was to discover the contrasts expand the whole through expanded understanding and perception.

The beauty of writing is that I can write anything, there are no rules in my poetry. I am not seeking literary excellence. I am sitting back as the scribe asking life to flow through me, to provide insights that may not be accessible through logic. I have found it to be the profoundest philosophy that takes me into metaphor and illustrates the deepest truths that I couldn't see through conventional analysis. It is the mirror opposite to 'I think therefore I am', and it is definitely within the realm of 'I feel therefore I am not'. It moves beyond ego to an emptiness, which is really a space in which to receive creative or higher knowledge. What this means is, that I am moving between the words, I am going into feeling and intuition to feel for the shape of truth, I am not thinking. I am allowing the sculpture to form itself as I write and I have no beginning or ending in mind. I am just the explorer, or indeed the Fool stepping off the cliff and seeing what comes. I am truly fortunate to have found this form of expression as it has given my life deeper meanings that speak to me of deeper truths. It can be yours too if you choose to open further to life and allow it to flow, in many ways the only question is – are you truly listening? The indigenous speak of listening deeply. I sense that this is how we find our highest wisdom.

So the many years of unrequited love, unresolved conflicts and uncertainty - stepping off the cliff into the unknown - opened up a vista of possibilities through the philosophy of poetry. I realised that poetry was a vehicle for alchemy, that is, transforming negativity into positivity. The real gold is what I call the Fool's gold and this consists of the virtues and values inherent in our true humanity.

I found myself writing about love, truth, the philosopher's stone, alchemy, politics, working life, environment, art, parenting, abuse, war and peace, freedom, holistic economics, equality, resolving differences, diversity, unity, peace, the future, awakening and so much more. I wrote approximately 1,500 poems as I sought to understand the shape and depth of my world, in truth, I was moved by the power of love.

I have felt the life in my poems, sometimes they complete themselves several years later, as if they have been waiting to be completed. I write long poems and they are normally two columns and one page long. Sometimes they rhyme, sometimes they don't, my heart paints the rhythms and then they are completed as balance is sought.

Truth, in my experience has a life and a rhythm that is evidenced by the peace felt within, it is not linear and logical or based on debate, when it is true it is known instantly. The truth just sits there teasing you, asking you to go deeper as you find yourself on a spiral of inquiry going deeper into perceived truth to find your own reflection expands like ripples. Yet in going deeper you soar higher than the earth as you look within for the answers and discover that love is the pilot light. You accept what turns up, without resistance, as an artist completes a painting, never knowing what it was going to become but enjoying the process of becoming.

I will introduce you to some poems I wrote. This first poem is about the feeling of being a poet and how this is not just words on a page. The poem is about being an artist and how artists see differently and, although they may challenge, they are not necessarily seeking to, they are just allowing themselves free expression. In my own case I am seeking truth, so I follow the threads of desire that lead me to one of many truths. Poetry expands out of limits, to reach for the impossible; it is creative and can creatively explore an issue by using metaphor forming many angles. Poetry naturally explores expansiveness, as the poet becomes the philosopher, turning over the philosopher's stones (hard edges) of beliefs and connecting to an ancient heart-beat silently underneath.

If therefore, to change your world is to see the world through a different consciousness, to look at the problems and solutions differently, then for me, poetry is one of the ways to do this.

As Albert Einstein stated:

'No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it.
We need to learn to see the world anew.'

Poetry of Artistic Expression

Here is a poem that expresses what it is to be an artist and how artists can recreate the future.

Artistic Expression Re-creates the Future

I am an artist,
For I paint my feeling through words,
For within each word I see color and form,
And this informs the verse,
For when one finds the verse,
A universe of ideas,
Becomes visible.

The artist is one who does not conform,
Not necessarily non-conformist,
It is to be a reformist,
Of one's self,
Yet the world will see non-conformist
And call it rebellion,
Yet it is a clarion call,
Back to truth.

The artist sees life through a different lens,
The glasses are neither rose coloured nor dark,
They are clear and long sighted,

For questions are the paint brushes that touch your canvas,
Free flowing rivers are the ideas that tickle your spine,

Words that rush headlong onto the page of possibilities,
For life is the stage that is awaiting real performances,
Rather than actors being seen to be,
For life is the romance played out by the visual arts,
Not housed in museums but in everyday life,
For we create the context,
We write the text,
In the perfect moment,
As art recreates life itself,
As energy in motion,
For this is the e-motion of living freedom.

In the mind of creativity,
There are spirals, circles, color and sound,
There are no boundaries to harmony,
Not even the frame can limit the visions,

For one can paint beyond the frame,
One can sing beyond range,
One can write outside of convention,
One can sketch impossible staircases,
To show the impossible is possible,
For thought can manifest into reality,
And this is the levity of the artist,
For we laugh at limits,
To find there are none.

One looks at the image in the mind,
Millions of different ways to see,
Turn it upside down,
On its side,
Inside out,
Outside in,
Over and above,

As above so below,
Finding the negative space,
becomes positive,
As white absorbs all colors,
One begins to realise the essence is one light,
That was always true love,
Residing in the heart,
Of all great artists.

The world needs artists,
For they are diverse and outrageous,
Some specialists in streetscape graffiti,
Others rap their message in rhythms,
Bill posters call to all on the street,

For art is period, post-modern, retro, philosophical and installation,
For we are walking outside the parallel lines,
Looking into the negative space to find outlines without depth,
Discovering new perimeters to questions,

To truth,
To life,
To love …

To find the dove of the future,
To show another way that survives,
That thrives,
That thinks, expands, accepts and inspires,
For we must question the answers,
And answer the questions,
And leave plenty of space for uncertainty,
For you fill in the gaps,
You will create new dreams,
Build new futures,
In time.

For art is not about conversion,
It is about the viewer and the object,
For each affects the other,
As one sees to interpret their own truth,
To look at their life another way,
No longer moved by words from the printing press,
The viewer expresses thoughts long suppressed,
Refreshing aspects and new heights of insights,
As realisation meets comprehension.

The viewer becomes the artist,
And the artist transforms into the philosopher,
An inner exploration,
Exploding the hardest edges of your own rolling stone,
For the world is not a computer screen of linear text,
Or biased text books,
The world is alive and dynamic,
Hypnotic as it hums and sings,
For it is living possibilities,
A diversity that is breathtaking,
Awe inspiring.

As you stand on the great cliff and look to the horizon of your life,
You can see a new earth over the horizon radar,
For this radar no longer searches for enemies,
It searches for clues of change,
As we find our true humanity lives within range,
As the ego dies,
We transcend the material divide,
To find the world of spirit is the artists' sphere,

Guiding every artist to tears,
As the hand paints a new picture never envisaged,
Inspiring every singer to reach a new chord,
Every poet to write a new line,
in the sand.

We must draw new lines beyond sight that have never been seen,
We must find different colors that have never been blended,
Enhance the big picture so that all can feel clarity unites,
For we must be in accord to find unity,
To enable others to see with the heart of truth,
As the artists evoke the ocean of emotions,
To break waters from heavy to choppy,
So that you now look into the syntax error on your screen,
To redesign your life program,
To fly your kite higher than the clouds,
For this is the hour for a new beginning,
That cannot be imagined…yet.

We slowly watch the old world crumble,
On the cobbled streets of a stoned Europe,
Edifices and artefacts the relics of an unstable old order,
Museum pieces that never kept the peace,
As they glorified war and turmoil,
For the new growth is coming up through the subtle cracks in facades,
For only the soft can penetrate the hard,
As strength is found in compassion,
As the earth finds a new trajectory,
A new natural selection for harmony,
For only this is art imitating life,
In attunement as atonement,
That life is not an investment item but the value of a natural talent quest,

For only our true nature transcends all challenges,
As we create a new way of being,
A new way of seeing,
As life is imitating art in re-creation,
Re-starting the peace process,
As the geometry of a geostationary orbit,
Revolving round spirals of ancient wisdom.

A Poem for former Foregin Minister, Hon. Gareth Evans

I felt inspired to write the poem below for Gareth Evans, the former Foreign Minister of Australia, who at the time was Head of the International Crisis Group. I remember where I was, I was sitting at the National Library in Canberra. I suddenly thought of him and wrote the poem. I saw beauty in him beneath his persona. I have met him and perceived him as a little gruff or impatient at the time, but somehow through inner sight I was able to see how great this man is. I sent him encouragement and he responded. There was no agenda just a desire to show him his own beauty.

The poem below is called Our Common Future inspired by Gareth Evans' tenure with the Commission for the Future in Canberra when a few of our politicians were envisaging a progressive future.

Our Common Future

A long and distinguished career,
Brings challenges, conflict and fear,
For international crisis,
Is group work,
A work in progress,
For some the mission is impossible,
For political will is unwilling to compromise,
self-interest.

The world order,
Of disorderly conduct,
Where power flows to the highest bidder,
Trade-offs seek to embezzle,
Free information is muzzled,
The dogs of war are controlled,
By handlers training armed groups,
For fear is the currency that works,
Against progress.

Intent is important in the equation,
The real outcome is mostly unforseen,
For the pebble of good governance is dropped,
Into an ocean of despair,
Concentric rings are forming,
Intersecting waves are felt,
For many are listening to the message,
Civil society is evolving to free itself,
From the bondage of misplaced beliefs,
That no longer serve them.

The circle of influence,
The ring of identity,
Shifts its centre,
From the national to superordinate,
From local to global,
As satellite images are projected,
Human rights no longer protected,
Government becomes a barrier,
To freedom and security.

Know your work is a tribute to persistence,
Your effort is sacrifice and insistence,
Your message is a life committed to justice,
For you articulate what is fair,
You dared to reach for the top of the chain,
You tackled bureaucracy and remained,

For you believed enough in yourself,
To make a difference,
And that difference I perceive,
You made,
For what we choose defines us.

There may be moments when you may feel you failed,
Or the world has let you down,
There may be many moments of deep despair,
Intolerance and frustration,
But caring is the real success,
Trying is the intent that wins approval,
Your words have traveled the globe many times,
For many are listening and acting on your urgency,
For the ripple effect is ongoing and unstoppable,
You are one voice that is heard,
In a collective of mutual interests,
For the silence of the lambs,
Will emerge as global public opinion learns,
That we are all responsible for the new millennium,
And this is the goal.

As we edge closer to the ledge,
We will choose to fall or fly,
But thanks to you we can visibly see,
That it is possible to be free of tyranny,
For what you resist persists,
What you look at disappears,
For you can see through the walls of denial,
And know only we have the power to change,
To be the change we wish to see is the world,
For this is the true power of non-violence,
As it holds the mirror to truth and justice,
And in our reflection,
The commissions of the future,
Are no longer military,
For the mission is now possible,
Only when we find unity,
Within ourselves and others,
For these are the intersecting waves of action,
That will re-create our common future.

This was Gareth's response which I felt reflected the warmth of who he is, as follows:

Susan,

Thank you so much for sending me this, and apologies for my terribly belated reply: have been travelling all over the place, as well as much preoccupied with the latest insanity in the Middle East, and I have only just come across your message as I've been working through a huge backlog of mail.

Your poem is extraordinarily thoughtful and touching, and I deeply appreciate you somehow finding me the inspiration for it. It is also extremely well written: if you can produce that in a single evening I am lost in admiration - has your work ever been published?

Keep up the great work you are doing for peace and non-violence. We all I guess feel a terrible sense of impotence at times like this, but we just have to believe that sanity can ultimately prevail if we continue to work away with quiet reason, good analysis and rational and persuasive policy advocacy. That's what we try to do at Crisis Group, anyway, and it's really nice to have this kind of personal encouragement.

With warmest best wishes, and many thanks again.

Gareth

A Poem dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi

This poem is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi 'to be the change…' It is my invitation to you.

Be the Change?

I am *going to change the world,*
I whisper,

I am changing the world,
I feel,

I am the change,
I see,

I am the world,
Actually,

And what I see,
Frees me,
From illusions.

Are you going to change the world?
I venture

Are you changing the world that you see?
Are you the change?
Can you be?

Into what shape do you change?
Is it a positive or negative space?
That sees the inflection,
For there are many angles,
For we are shape changers,
In every moment of every day,
There are no strangers,
To world peace,
For peace
Is
the
world,

And if there is no earth rise,
If there is no peace.

A Poem for Peacemakers

The poem ‘A Universal Blueprint of Peace’ I’ve sent to many peacemakers including: George Clooney (Peace Ambassador), Professor Rees from the Sydney Peace Foundation (Sydney Peace Prize), Johan Galtung (father of peace research), and many more. I’ve sent poetry from time to time to government’s, to show another way. I seldom receive a reply as it is a seed I plant and a ripple sent out. My work is to seed peace for the future, I have no idea of the outcome of this work. My intent is world peace.

I speak to many people about REAL HOPES which is the values model created as the foundation to my peace education program. It is the framework of peace which doesn’t structure but instead liberates the flow of innate values within us. For values are the portals that open our eyes to the abundant flow of real possibilities connecting us to the source of all life.

The poem reveals the real peace beneath the surface tension. It speaks of the impermanence of all material life. The poem highlights that peace is never not in existence, it is always present yet peace is mostly unseen as the drama clouds our direct experience of it. The poem connects to the eternal nature of peace which is the mirror (reflection) of eternal truth. We live in a universal of balance and harmony yet our minds focus on a duality of life which keeps us distracted from the real message of life. The human family is not aware that it is creating the drama through conditioned thinking and behaviour which keeps the addictions and drama alive. The conflict we experience emerges from suppression and misinformation that contextualises confusion and gives the impression of darkness in the world. Many lose hope within this context. Transcending beyond the drama enables the awareness of a rhythm of life that is found in all life forms. It exists in a flow not a structure. Our natural world supports our every need and demonstrates harmony through interdependencies, adaptation and flow which maximises the potential of all life. The tree is the centre of peace and represents the stability of life. REAL HOPES is the human blueprint that harmonises with the universal blueprint where all humans respond from within to discover the peace beyond the drama is the inner truth of who we really are.

A Universal Blueprint of Peace

A blueprint,
A *footprint,*
An impression,
For the sand is impermanence,
Nature recycles history,
For no impression has more weight than another,
All eventually turn to dust,
For the physical world is in constant change.

The peace you seek never disappears,
Beneath constant change is certainty,
For the sands of timelessness exist not in physical matter,
But in eternal truth.

All human beings arrived from eternal truth,
And will return to it,
The mind of the universe is vast,
It is timeless and unlimited.

The sun is the mother of all life,
A wheel of electromagnetic fields,

Sending free energy to recharge the grid,
For matter and anti-matter is the mirror,
For all that is physical has the non-physical
to balance the multi-verses,
For life is present in a multiplicity of universal forms.

Many human minds are focused within imagined dilemmas,
Information technology creates the context and flavor of what is believed and then seen,
The discussions and critiques never step over lay lines of universal inquiry,
They are contained within a corral of directed scripts and role plays to keep addiction alive,
As the tail that wags the dog picks at the bone,
For the blind men cannot feel the pink elephant of their own creation,
As the family is embroiled in conflict and confusion,
Fear, suppression and misinformation drives modern life into a darkness with dimmed lights.

External influences dramatise events to fuel undivided attention,
Yet the greatest mysteries are cast aside to make room for the Simpsons and Big Brother,
To fill inner space with sitcoms, dramas and awakened new fears,
For paralysis, gossip and a survival mentality,
Is a contextual field that knows not truth.

I close my eyes to feel a rhythm that I cannot hear,
Yet the breath of life is unmistakable,
Nature speaks in a language that has no judgment or pre-conceptions,
The winds and water courses flow around obstacles to complete the cycle,
The weather patterns distribute sustenance to a vibrant world alive with the color of potential,
For there is consistency in life affirming self-regulating patterns of the snowflake,
There is purpose in an ecosystem functioning in harmonious unison,
There are dinosaurs amongst the ancient forests,
For the tree is the centre peace of stability,
Inspiration, transpiration, communication, leaf litter, canopies, temperature regulation, soil retention,
protection, carbon sinks, oxygenation as the true summit for climate change,
Technology is not favored by natural selection.

Peace is the REAL HOPES for humanity,
When one is Responsible and able to respond,
Conflict resolution awakens Empathy in others,
Awareness is to seek truth not power,
Love is the natural life force in harmony,
Honesty is the outcome of a truthful intent,
Oneness is the ecosystem birthing life equally,
Peace is creative action inspiring virtues,
Enjoyment is the clown that plays with life and sees the joke as life itself,
Service to life is the final integration of valueswhere all see themselves in the other.

For the blueprint is known to all,
But applied consistently by few,
One can worship great heroes yet the hero is within you awaiting your purpose to flower,
For the greatest love is to realise that one can create anew with principled leadership,
As ambition falls away as a child discards a toy,
As profiteering holds no gain only pain,

As power exists in the vacuum of the powerless,
For the greatest leader responds from within,
Walks alone and speaks out to all,
Leads by service and acknowledges the value of all without prejudice or favour,
For the greatest justice is to share fairly with all,
For some say the meek will inherit the earth,
For humility is the face of virtue living as unity,
Unity can only be seen through the hearts that see inner peace as the truth of who we really are.

A Poem for American President Obama

This poem I sent to President Obama and it is my message to humanity. It is my love letter to you. The only way I can deliver this message is as a love letter, for poetry is the heart speaking. So it is called Love Letter to Humanity.

Love Letter to Humanity

Every communication is *a love letter,*
Every word is an open invitation,
To greet life with openness,
To accept diversity in its full spectrum,
To allow differences of opinion to expand awareness,
As a garden resplendent with seasonal blooms,
Our nature understands the plumes of life's bouquet are secret signatures sending messages of love,
Fertilizing our inner growth with goodwill and wellbeing,
As the earth spins and orbits around a universal love that is a given.

Harmony is the love that serves all others,
Beauty is the inner love that sees your uniqueness of expression,
Friendship is the love of trust that leaves deep impressions,
Families are the branches of love from the tree of life,
Compassion is the love that sees myself as you,
Charity is the love that gives you a hand up so you may stand up,
Nonviolence is the love that never harms another,
Peace is the love that allows the invisible hand of creation,
For peace rests beneath our conflicted thoughts,
And universal love is unity that knows no separation in thought, word or deed,
As true love is the truth that sets you free.

World peace is a peace-full world that loves,
Emerging from the ashes of misunderstanding,
To walk in harmony with our true nature,
Offering blessings to all crossing the path,
Orchestras of nature's perfection singing love songs,
Allowing love to find its natural well-spring,
As well-being springs from undercurrents of feeling,
Inspired by the source of love itself,
Loving itself naturally,
As the pond of life's reflection,
Smiles upon the face of all creation,

Sending love letters home to our friends, family, strangers, comm-unity and world,
That home is where the heart is,
And everyone is welcome home,
To a world that loves without condition.
A Poem for Australian Prime Minister Gillard

I felt inspired to send Prime Minister Gillard a message on 18 June 2013 before her resignation as Prime Minister. I received an auto reply to this poem and email. My inner feeling was to give her strength. I don't watch the news media as it is not positive and uplifting for me. This message was sent from the heart.

The 25 June 2013, was the day Prime Minister Julia Gillard resigned given a leadership spill.

From: Prime Minister of Australia <info@pm.gov.au>
To: peacefull@worldpeacefull.com
Sent: Jun 18 '13 18:30
Subject: Your message to the Prime Minister

> *Dear PM Julia Gillard,*
>
> *I didn't hear your speech on gender that was spoken of, but my feeling is it is an important issue. I felt to give you this poem for strength at a difficult time. Love as politics is the theme.*
>
> *Politicians and love is the emerging new paradigm reflecting a philosophy of leadership that unifies humanity and serves the people. It is about service above self rather than service to self. We have seen many examples of the latter. The former would include types of selfless people such as: Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Jimmy Carter, Bob Brown, Richard Branson, Dalai Lama, Lao Tzu and so on.*

The Politics of Love

P*olitics,*
The body politic,
The power of influence,
Yet real politics,
Is not the politics of war,
Where decisions are cold and rational,
A disembodied intellect,
For to conform can never reform the politics of envy
into good government.

He has forgotten the heart of the matter,
Is to serve the people,
To serve the highest good,
For this one must return to the philosophy of politics,
That questions his own questions,
As the real Question Time.

What is the philosophy of politics?
He asks her walking to the Agora,

Is it the one voice that speaks up in the crowd?
Is it the one that upsets the applecart questioning
the unquestioned norm?
The unprincipled principle?
That seeks the truth with innocent intent,
Transforming criticism into neither right nor wrong but a spiralling inquiry,
That seeks the foundation upon which ideas are constructed.

Is it a leaning Tower of Pisa?
A temporary exhibition of the Eiffel Tower?
Perhaps Twin Towers erecting the power of grandeur?
Yet every tower falls,
For every castle is a sand castle in the wind,
As the belief in permanence erodes time,
For impermanence is the empty hub and not the wheel,
And it is in nothing,
That something arises,
For anything else is truth masquerading at the party,
Truth is always the first casualty of a war mentality
based on the fear of nothing.

The Philosopher's Stone,
Is a metaphor for the original belief,
Set in stone,
For many believed the earth was flat,
Believing that they are right,
They are convinced that their life is secure,
That they know who they are.
For the philosopher is the artist of inquiry,
Who feels for a form that is greater than what is seen,
For this in-forms to feel therefore I am,
He does not require a chisel or a jack hammer to reform hardened forms,
But reforms himself by looking beyond the stone,
Not as an object to be resisted or changed,
But as questions that persistently change the shape of the in-quisition,
For this is what changes what she sees,
And the work of art is not the statue of stone,
But to re-form one self,
Into a new shape that in-forms reality,
For the impossible becomes possible.

The words of books become the canvas on which we paint our world view,
Words the carriers of picture frames,
Thoughts the pixels on screens of belief,
Television is the ultimate frame of reference,
Pictures as footprints in the sands of the mind,
The audience conforms as this is the norm.
Know the frame is not the complete picture,
For there are many frames in a kaleidoscope,
How they are arranged depicts the story of the moving image,

That appears real,
Yet the illusion is the certainty of what we see as the truth
of many movements,
Yet truth is beyond the stone walls we construct to protect certainty.

All questions are arrows seeking certainty,
Shifting sands wipe the canvas clean,
How to live in such uncertainty,
Is to not see sands but to feel the winds of change,
To not see the big picture,
But to feel your colors,
As you become part of the tapestry,
Each color informs the shape seen,
And when there is sufficient distance,
The shape changes into another view point,
And you see that you are the artist of your own creation,
And as you change,
The world changes,
Therefore to be the change you wish to see,
In thought, word, and loving action,
Is the politics of love,
That imagines no heaven or hell,
Accepting change is the paradise of
living freedom.

The Fool's Gold: The portal of emotion is the tendril reaching for truth opening to spirals of new and higher knowledge. The answers lie within us not outside of us. Love is the answer.

CHAPTER 6

Clowning with Dr. Patch Adams in Russia (2002

Towards the end of my year studying Peace Studies I decided one day to dress as a clown and go to the university. After a wonderful day clowning with academics and students, I suddenly felt I was a World Peace Clown. I wondered if there were any other World Peace Clowns in the world? I did my usual 'poke in the dark', a Google search on World Peace Clowns and whalla, Patch Adams name came up. I checked out his website and found out he also was into peace:

> *Patch Adams runs the Gesundheit Institute in Washington and his magazine is Achoo. Patch is both a medical doctor and a clown, but in reality he is also a social activist who has devoted 30 years to changing America's health care system, a system which he describes as expensive and elitist. He believes that laughter, joy and creativity are an integral part of the healing process and therefore true health care must incorporate such life. Doctors and patients in his model relate to each other on the basis of mutual trust, and patients receive plenty of time from their doctors. Allopathic doctors and practitioners of alternative medicine will work side by side. If you think that all sounds like a utopian impossibility, it isn't. Patch and his colleagues practiced medicine at the Gesundheit Institute together in West Virgina that way for 12 years in what he calls their pilot project. They saw 15,000 patients. Patch Adams has devoted his life to the study of what makes people happy*[18]*…*

Patch has traveled the world to more than 60 countries including Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Haiti, Peru, and others typically where there is injustice and poverty. He demonstrates, through the power of the caring clown, compassion by giving loving service and he inspires people to become clowns to learn to give so that others can feel a desire to live, feeling joy and hope. A movie was made about Patch's life called Patch Adams, played by the famous American actor Robin Williams. The movie made Patch famous which enabled him to expand 'friendshipism' and fund his dream for free hospitals. He is a true inspiration.

I wrote to him innocently expressing a desire to clown with him one day. I threw in a picture of myself. To my surprise a few weeks later I received a phone call from Washington. This American voice came over the line and said: 'Hi I am Wildman, I am Patch's brother, he got your letter and would like you to come on his annual tour to Russia'. I asked him 'when?' He told me the tour was in five weeks' time. I was shocked and thought immediately: 'I don't have any money, I'm on $150 per week on a Austudy allowance'. Something inside me said 'write down his number'. So I did and then I rang a friend excitedly. I have to say at this point it seemed impossible, but my friend Jane urged me on and said the magical words, 'Make it happen'. Those words echoed in my heart, so I decided to write a proposal and sent it to anyone that might be able to help create that rainbow bridge to Russia. I even rang Robert de Castello, affectionately known as Deek in Australia. He is a famous Olympian. I had worked with him on a research project in schools a few years before. When I spoke of Russia he recalled to me his experience of the Olympic Games in Moscow. I rang Helen Caldicott, she was overseas. She did get a message to me letting me know she was unable to help. I found dead ends, however I met the challenges positively. In my heart I felt I was going.

My funding was to come from an unexpected source. I remembered clowning once with a woman named Robyn at Canberra Hospital when we first started Clown Rounds in 2000. I rang my clown

18 http://www.patchadams.org/Gesundheit_Institute_speakers

buddy Carole (Dr Woo Hoo) and she advised me to contact her. So I did, I rang her and said: 'I am not asking you to give me the money, but a bridging loan would be great'. She said, 'I'll get back to you in 24 hours'. I was contacted in 24 hours and she and her mother-in-law offered to pay for my trip to Russia the sum total of $7,500. This was from meeting me once; she said: 'It is the trip of a lifetime, you have to go'. She had been on Patch's Tour and knew how life changing the experience would be. I just sat there and cried at the generosity, stunned that someone I barely knew would give that to me. Years later I discovered that the mystery mother-in-law was Rupert Murdoch's sister, Helen.

I wrote in my diary the following:

> *Those few weeks leading up to the departure for Russia were frenetic. I was knocked back by the visa department at the Russian Embassy and had to resubmit the application; in addition I had to undertake my exams in Peace Studies and, I had to create a clown suit. The latter was a little Cinderellish, as I had little money. My mum sent thermal underwear and others gave me iron-on transfers to stick on the suit and we ended up creating a colorful clown costume. I felt like I was truly going to the ball.*

Patch Adams Healing with Humor Tour

My trip to Russia was at a time of great change, reforms were being initiated by the then President Mikhail Gorbachev. Terms like perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) were part of the new language of reforms that were being ushered in. This was a society that was transiting from a communist state structure, where the state controls every part of life, to a form of controlled liberalism where private enterprise was emerging within a communist framework. As I was flying in to Moscow I saw what appeared to be untouched forests in Russia and immediately I thought of the benefits of a communist system that lacked commercial incentives, our planet gets somewhat of a reprieve. Coming in closer for landing I could see the dilapidated buildings were almost slum like near the airport, and for me, this symbolised the stagnation of the communist system. I understood why Gorbachev chose to introduce liberalism through self-government, open criticism, economic reforms, and social freedoms. The social net was being removed and replaced by a new theology of social capitalism, which was a metaphor for 'survival of the fittest', which translates further into 'survival of the most commercial'. One can only imagine how lost the people must have felt to learn that the State was not going to be there anymore.

I landed in Moscow and I was supposed to be met by someone from the tour, but no-one arrived. It was kind of funny as my father had actually said, 'What if no-one turns up?' I had just laughed not thinking that a possibility. What was interesting was that through sign language I was able to find a phone and I ended up getting help by an airport official. Between the two of us we spoke Russian and English and he worked out where I was going. He organised a taxi for me and I felt sure he instructed the taxi driver to not rip me off. I walked with the driver to the carpark and unwittingly moved to get into the driver's side and the Russian taxi driver indicated with a smile to sit on the other side. We were in the public carpark, I mused to myself that I could have got into a private car and been whisked away. The taxis have no signs and are simple little black square cars. He did have a picture in the car with his ID and as I knew the airport official had organised it, I sat back and enjoyed the ride. Around the time I turned up in Moscow the Chechen Seige in a theatre had just happened. I was contemplating the siege while on route to the hotel. It seemed an irony that I was here to create peace (on all sides) as a clown and not far from where I was staying people who did not know how to make peace had been engaged in bloody conflict. We truly live in different worlds. Below is an overview of the Chechen Theatre Siege from Wikipedia:

> *The Moscow theater hostage crisis, also known as the 2002 Nord-Ost siege, was the seizure of the crowded Dubrovka Theater on 23 October 2002 by some 40 to 50 armed Chechens who claimed allegiance to the Islamist militant separatist movement in Chechnya. They took 850 hostages and demanded the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya and an end to the Second Chechen War. The siege was officially led by Movsar Barayev. After a two-and-a-half day siege, Russian Spetsnaz forces pumped an unknown chemical agent into the building's ventilation system and raided it. During the raid, all 40 of the attackers were killed by Russian forces, and about 130 hostages died due to adverse reactions to the gas (including nine foreigners)…the hostages (majority) who died during the siege were killed by the toxic substance pumped into the theater to subdue the militants. The use of the gas was widely condemned as heavy-handed, but Moscow insisted it had little room for manoeuvre, as they were faced with the prospect of 40 heavily armed rebels prepared to kill themselves and their hostages.[5] Physicians in Moscow condemned the refusal to disclose the identity of the gas that prevented them from saving more lives. However, some reports said the drug naloxone was successfully used to save some hostages.*[19]

I contemplated the siege on the way from the airport weaving through the streets of Moscow. I arrived at the hotel and met up with other clowns who had joined The Healing with Humor Tour. Patch Adams has been making these trips to Russia for approximately 20 years. On this trip there were 40 clowns from across the world. I was allocated a room and met with my room-mate Karen, from the United Kingdom. We hit it off straight away. Later we went downstairs and gathered with the other clowns to meet Patch and get a briefing about clowning in Russia, to understand the culture and the do's and don'ts. We had the opportunity to meet and hear from the other participants who introduced themselves.

To view the real experience click on the YouTube link (below) from my film showing Patch Adams introducing the clowns to Russia: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqR1vrCTx2M

The trip to Russia entailed visiting nursing homes, orphanages, hospitals, clowning on subways and on the streets. Patch talked to us about clowning and that it was wise not to give things out, but to focus on sharing loving kindness. He said the purpose of the trip was to experience a small tribe dedicated to giving love. He was offering us an experience of loving others and ourselves selflessly.

We met Maria, a Russian artist who was the reason Patch Adams came to Russia for 20 plus years. She was wanting to help the orphans and she desperately tried to write to Patch Adams asking him to help her. She used a Russian-English dictionary to awkwardly write. She is a local artist who offers art therapy to the children in orphanages. Patch was so impressed by her determination that he visited her and decided to support her work. He committed to Maria's Children (see http://mariaschildren.ru/content/view/141/96/) and entered a collaboration to raise funds over a period that spanned more than 20 years. In that time he would have brought joy to 50,000 childern or more. Patch invited clowns to join his Healing with Humor Tour to Russia every year and fund-raised to help Maria help the orphan children. The children in the orphanages suffered institutionalisation and we heard stories of exploitation for prostitution. We (as clowns) witnessed some trauma whilst moving around the orphanages. In 2002, there were apparently 600,000 children orphaned in Russia. So within our joyful island was a sea of sadness. We hoped that a few red noses, whoopee

19 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_theater_hostage_crisis

cushions and cheerful music would bring some color into their world, even if for only a momentIt is not about the longevity of a program; it is about living in the moment and bringing as much light and love to that moment as possible. Clowning was the conduit to love humanity as it is. This experience was what set the future for my life.

During our visits to orphanages we were informed by the clowns that the children had told them that the Mafia infiltrated these places and would take children for prostitution. They were vulnerable with no parental protection. The children were frightened by this and some were curled up in the foetal position I was told. Our role was clearly to love these children, to give them affection from safe adults, that some would not have experienced. We found ourselves often overwhelmed by the needs of hundreds of children at a time. Sometimes I was not sure how to interact, other times it came easily. However, to love is the key here and that is what all children need.

Patch is a deeply kind person and I still remember him sitting with a little girl who was deaf and dumb (see photo). He pulled out his box of ear plugs, and in a funny way pulled faces, demonstrated to me how to interact. She looked fascinated, her mouth and eyes were wide open.

Then he blew up a balloon and he let the air out which made her hair flick up. She was fascinated and smiled. He often picked out a particularly lonely child. I remember seeing him later on the bus. He looked at a Polaroid photo of her with tears in his eyes. He felt such love for the orphans. He knew what lay ahead for them. When we decide to get involved with people, we cannot help but be affected by their circumstances; love is the light that highlights our presence for good in the darkest places.

I watched other clowns dancing together, blowing up balloons, twisting them, juggling boxes, singing, laughing, playing puppets, pulling out tricks, giving stickers, hugging, kissing and giving flowers. Clowns even came to the wedding (see photos).

It was a wonderful space of love in all its forms. I remember an orphanage where a little girl grabbed me by the hand; I was her clown for the time we were there. We hugged the children, played with them and joked. The children were so excited as this was one of the rare moments of receiving love from overseas clowns. For the most part they would feel it from each other.

Anton is a boy I will always remember, he was burned because he chose to jump into a burning tent to save his friend (see photo). He and I played and I gave him my hat to wear. He had a good sense of humor.

Our presence was to bring genuine love to them, so at least they experienced it in their lives. Patch saw the importance of being a loving example to children. In that he is truly great.

An example of the experience from the perspective of two clowns is as follows:

> *…I give as much love as I can and receive lots of love in return. Clowning in Russia is about love, very easy to give but difficult to receive, and I believe the secret is to open up your heart. Open your heart to these children, you're able to receive their love and in return they can receive your love, [you can] see it in their eyes, smiles on their faces. Every kid touched my heart. The first time I looked at Sasha and he opened up and gave me a big kiss. He is a beautiful, crazy, fun, enamouring, beautiful individual and I love him.*
>
> *…I track someone down and get closer and closer and closer and pretend it is about squeaking my nose on their nose and as they squeak my nose, gaze in each other's eyes and I look inside their soul and I try to help them open their heart and give love. Open themselves up, to do what you feel inside without the illusion or concern that you may get hurt. To know that the trade off between getting hurt and the rewards from opening up and giving love is very unbalanced (in favour of love)…*

We visited some famous sights in Moscow. The most notable among them were: Red Square, The Kremlin, The Armoury and some 14th century restaurants.

> *Red Square is the city square in Moscow. It was quite cold there. I remember a helicopter going overhead. The square separates the Kremlin, as the official residence of the President of Russia, from the merchant quarter. It was a good place for clowning as many people are walking around. The Kremlin actually means fortress. I first saw it from the bus and noticed the long walls surrounding the epicentre of power in Russia. The Kremlin overlooks the Moskva River. The walls are red but the actual Kremlin is a white palatial building next to the Assumption Cathedral capped with golden domes. This church was utilised for Tsar coronations. Ivan The Great Bell Tower is the highest building in the city and was built in the 16th century. We visited the Russian Armoury which is one of the oldest museums in Moscow originally a showcase for armour but was later enriched with the treasures of the Golden and Silver chambers of the Russian tsars.*[20]

I can recall the clowns all going into a museum and the staff telling us to 'be quiet'. I had to laugh, how do you get a group of gangly clowns to be quiet? The more they 'sssshhhd' us the more I laughed. Sorry, I know it is cheeky but the only way we could have gone silent was for the staff to think laterally and ask us to mime. That would have worked.

20 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kremlin_Armoury

Imagine 40 clowns going down to the train station and jumping on board. As we came down the escalator I could hear one of the clowns tweeting like a bird using a little whistle under her tongue, it echoed throughout the station. We heard and saw tooting, laughing, waving and clowning around. We all piled onto the train and tapped a balloon around. It was wonderful seeing strangers interacting and smiling on the train. Clowns became the excuse to connect. Normally people would ignore each other but clowns liberated the spirits of the people to be human again, that is the power of clowning. There was one moment on the train where two crazy clowns were touching tongues (see photo). It was very funny to watch. I had to capture that moment

We visited and saw some of the orthodox churches, museums, monuments and restaurants. You instantly received impressions of history and of incredible wealth. I found myself looking at the people and thinking about the proletariat (working class) and the bourgeoisie (the elite classes) in Russia and the tensions between them. At the same time I reflected on communism and the concept of a classless society based on common ownership. However, the reality was different whereby the working class lived alongside the incredible wealth of the Tsars and the social elite. This was a tiered social order incompatible with the ideal of communism. The ideal of communism, like democracy, consists of words and concepts which are not truly practiced in the genuine spirit of their meaning. They are used to gain agreement and the perception of unity, but in truth control and advantage is sought.

Patch organised for the clowns to go to the Moscow Circus. On our way to the circus a poor woman came to the window of our car and reached her hand out begging for money, through gestures she indicated she was hungry. She had a baby on her hip. I found the poverty across a wide range of persons of different ages, disturbing. It was surreal finding myself in a cocoon of safety with a group of clowns who had no concept of their desperation and reality.

We are on the privileged inside looking out. They are the tired faces with noses pressed against the window, looking in. All we could offer was love and money when we could. The Moscow Circus was an old circus. I immediately noticed animals were used as the attraction and part of acts. I saw alligators at the entrance, in the ring elephants walking on barrels, lions and tigers jumping through hoops and monkeys doing tricks. Whilst it was fascinating to see how intelligent animals are, this contrasted with the ethos of the modern circuses in the West where the use of animal performers is viewed as cruel and banned. I personally prefer animals to be free. However, it was an experience and I watched with wonder - the clowns, trapeze fliers, horseback riders, acrobats and felt as a little child, fascinated. We were on the edge of our seats, peering into a world of wonder and fantasy.

I remember on another occasion walking into the train station and seeing an old woman begging. I looked into her eyes and gave her some roubles. I always try in those moments to give as much love as I can. I smiled at her and rubbed her hands as they were cold. She had the most beautiful old face, I saw the hardship in the lines on her face and the kindness shone in her eyes. I also saw children dancing on the street trying to make money to survive. They were entertaining, but behind this was desperation life was bitterly cold. We were in Russia at the beginning of winter, I could only imagine what it would be like when it really set in.

Another highlight was Patch inviting some of us clowns to visit his friend in Moscow who was a fan of John Lennon. We were ferried by bus to this ‘peace house’. We entered the house and noticed Beatles memorabilia everywhere, he was a serious fan. We all sat there nibbling on finger food and listening to Beatles music. I thought ‘another peacenik on the other side of the world joining hands with Patch, an old hippy from way back.’ Perhaps we could all learn to ‘give peace a chance’ as John Lennon inspired.

We met a CBS journalist Bill Gasperini (see photo) and invited him and his son to come clowning. Nothing like getting a member of the global media to come and experience the happiness and joy of giving. Bill was a natural and had a big grin on his face. Perhaps we could take more journalists out and change the world.

Our next adventure was to congregate at the Moscow train station, a gaggle of colorful clowns. We were scheduled to catch the overnight train from Moscow to Saint Petersburg. I looked around the train station and saw the classic Coca Cola logo on a billboard and thought about how corporations are selling old brands to the newly opened Russian economy. I reflected on how capitalism is changing Russia under the guise of freedom.

In Saint Petersburg, myself and a few other clowns went out walking at night undercover (civilian clothes to blend in). We watched as the soft white snow fluttered down covering all the buildings, like icing. I loved looking at the colorful Russian Orthodox churches reminding me of fairyland palaces reminiscent of Disneyland cartoons. It was the most fun I’ve had without drinking, although I must confess I did have a few vodkas. We did find out that we could buy alcohol from little shops. It is bitterly cold in Russia and I can understand why the tasteless vodka is used, it warms you, taking the chill off the wind. There are many people who cannot afford heating. Drinking is a serious social issue in Russia. A bottle of Vodka was only six Australian dollars, we had to try it once. It was magical walking at night in Saint Petersburg feeling the snow crunch under your feet, the palaces, sleighs and locals in their furry hats. Saint Petersburg was the most beautiful city I had ever seen – statues of horses, canal systems meandering, ornate architecture, elaborate grandiose buildings and the Christmas image of children pulling sleds. I discovered that Saint Petersburg is called the Paris of Russia. At one point the clown in me came out. I saw a stump and creatively thought of the ‘black stump’. I enthusiastically embraced the persona of the Australian environmentalist the late Steve Irwin and did a little skit. I jumped over this black stump and exclaiming with an exaggerated Aussie accent ‘you little beauty.’ I then began to explore the details of the stump in exaggerated fascination, jumping over it several times. They all laughed at my antics. We were on a natural high.

Saint Petersburg was once also known as Leningrad. We were taken to a museum where we were shown a black and white film of the Siege of Leningrad. I will never forget watching men pulling sleds with dead bodies. The conditions were freezing and so many people died from hunger and cold. The Siege is described as follows:

> *The Siege of Leningrad, also known as the Leningrad Blockade was a prolonged military operation undertaken by the German Army Group North against Leningrad—historically and currently known as Saint Petersburg—in the Eastern Front theatre of World War II. The siege started on 8 September 1941, when the last land connection to the city was severed. Although the Soviets managed*

to open a narrow land corridor to the city on 18 January 1943, lifting of the siege took place on 27 January 1944, 872 days after it began. It was one of the longest and most destructive sieges in history and overwhelmingly the most costly in terms of casualties.[21] The siege lasted for a total of 900 days, from September 8 1941 until January 27 1944. The city's almost 3 million civilians

(including about 400,000 children) refused to surrender and endured rapidly increasing hardships in the encircled city. Food and fuel stocks were limited to a mere 1-2 month supply, public transport was not operational and by the winter of 1941-42 there was no heating, no water supply, almost no electricity and very little food. In January 1942 in the depths of an unusually cold winter, the city's food rations reached an all time low of only 125 grams (about 1/4 of a pound) of bread per person per day. In just two months, January and February of 1942, 200,000 people died in Leningrad of cold and starvation.[22]

We visited the Winter Palace and walked through the various rooms, on the polished floors and saw period art works. The wealth of the Tsars was truly astonishing. The palace was constructed on a monumental scale that was intended to reflect the might and power of Imperial Russia. 'From the palace, the Tsar ruled over 22,400,000 square kilometres (almost 1/6 of the Earth's landmass) and over 125 million subjects by the end of the 19th century.'[23] Within the Winter palace is the Hermitage museum. This is a vast museum with a wide range of exhibitions including: Egyptian, Renaissance, fine arts, jewellery and artefacts of antiquity. I recall seeing the royal clothing, hand carved horse drawn coaches and luxuries of every type imaginable that had been given as gifts to the royal family. Significantly, I recall seeing the famous Faberge eggs.

Patch Adams Love Revolution Speech

We all gathered back at the hotel in Saint Petersburg and Patch asked us all to attend his talk. He spoke about our experience as clowns and the reason why we were clowning together. Patch stated that what we were doing as a group of clowns was what he termed the 'love revolution'. I can still hear Patch's voice when I write this. Here is the speech on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99BJWChljfs

Here is a transcript of his speech:

…A lot of how you speak will not help a love revolution if I could show you how you spoke. You can see that you are inarticulate about the week. If love is to make a difference it can no longer be inarticulate. False humility (Patch refers to a clown)is great to everyone, speaks like she is less great than I. I cannot tolerate this type of thinking any more. If you really want peace and justice, really want Presidents and world leaders and a world that survives, you got to hear that people think you're great, know you're great and get to work. Get articulate about it, great does not mean greater than, it is not a comparison or competition, everyone is great, most people give it up or never see it. Not one of you isn't great diagnostically. Without operating from a base of feeling you are great, you're not going to be able to do your dreams for peace and justice, you will be mouthing them, got to get articulate. Can't stumble over what you experienced on this trip. What it meant 'oh it was great and loving' it is important to analyse it…

In a love revolution the money and power revolution operates with a very few people and wanting to lessen that number all the time. And they lead through money and power over model from the beginning of recorded history. The love revolution will never lead from the few to the many.

21 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Leningrad
22 http://www.saint-petersburg.com/history/siege.asp
23 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_Palace

A revolution where everyone is the leader. No one will feel like a 'not' leader. This trip was lead. How you make a group of people that are completely diverse and different, don't speak the language, within 24 hours make them feel part of a team, is a made thing. If you are interested in learning about leadership I can talk to you. The main way it happened is in the people you chose to work with. The MIR team, individual people, exposing you to Maria and her team choosing the five of us who lead the trip. All that made this experience happen, it did not happen by happenstance, happened by direction. Not happened by me ordering things around, it happened by you taking yourself in hand and deciding on this trip to be loving, to be a group.

Since 9/11 I've been asking my audiences, 'What is your love strategy?' we know the revenge, fear, violence strategy. People go into the twin towers blow up, lets blow up Afghanistan, boy was the country behind it. Did anyone in the Pentagon say, you know it's never worked, violence has never worked in history, I wonder how love would work on it.

So I started to ask: 'What is your love strategy and how are you implementing it?' This trip is a love strategy. It is manipulated to give you two weeks to see what regular day to day loving and service would be like. Ladies and gentleman these are average, it becomes special in a world of loving money and power. These are average days in a loving world. A bunch of diverse people, don't even share the language, really having fun with each other, looking after each other of all ages. We have the first nine decades represented here. We have people who don't speak the language, people watching me not knowing what I am saying (they are) sitting here absorbing something.

We don't have a lot of time. You can't be wimpy about being loving, if you like this, you made your part. No-one here made your part in it. If the whole is great [it is] because each one made their part. You can learn it. Learn how to go into an elevator and make the love revolution right there. Walt Whitman was a revolution, Einstein was a revolution, most revolutions have been non-violent. The love revolution is not going to have a violent anything. You notice when you watch people speak last night about loving. What happened, how it happened, your own role in it, how you might carry it on. It was created by leadership. A different kind of leadership. A simple way it is called is servant leadership, have the people leading work harder than the other people. Again, I'm saying these things partly because I have my own concerns about how long humanity can last…

He indicated that all people were leaders, all were great, but most gave it up by 40 years of age. He was offering us an experience of loving others and ourselves. Love really is so simple and it is truly amazing, so much effort must be put into reminding people of the power of love and how deeply natural and empowering it is. Patch indicated as clowns what we do is 'ordinary' yet it is seen (by society) as extraordinary in a world that is not loving as a natural reflection of our human family, so many are so closed off for fear of others and I would add significantly, they fear their own greatness. We may love our own family or loved ones but it doesn't extend out past our self-created circles of interest or known contacts. We live in a world of repressed needs and it is evident in the way we relate or choose not to.

This is a poem I wrote on this trip:

Russian Roulette

In Russia it is bitterly cold,
Long coats,
Fur hats,
Working class caps,
The working class is no longer working,

For the cold war,
Was won,
On the Russian roulette wheel,
The market of capitalists,
Had their day in the sun,
Economic rationalism,
Creates the schism,
For Adam Smith's invisible hand,
Gives with one and takes with the other,
On the Eve of collapse,
Capital takes flight,
The population is in fright,
For there is no safety net,
The parents are divorced,
600,000 orphans forced into crumbling mansions,
So distraught,
The former Soviet Empire,
Caught in the blizzard,
Of globalisation.

The streets of old Moscow,
The people seem so cold,
They build Kremlin walls,
Walking with the wind of routine,
Conditioned by social rules,
I feel the proletariat,
Mixing with the bourgeoisie,
Peter the Great,
The Romanoff's,
The winter palace,
So opulent and grand,
Privilege doesn't understand,
Outside the peasants stand,
Awaiting awareness,
She collects roubles in the rubble,
Vulnerable,
A society in trouble,
For they burst the bubble,
The greatness and the pride,
The wretched and tired,
Died in Chechnya.

A state of natural wealth,
Gas and oil commodities,
Is it odd that wealth is natural?
Where natural exploration replaces exploitation,
Where natural protection replaces extraction,
Where natural selection replaces genetic engineering,
Where natural justice needs no court,
Where natural peace is never bought,

Nothing is sought in the natural temple,
For peace is balance,
When love is simple.

When the world is a family,
Removed from social systems,
Constructed from history,
Unable to adapt to changing circumstances,
For ideology becomes rigid,
Divisions of them and us,
Lack of trust,
Leads to conflict and lust,
On the international stage,
In this play the actors are not paid,
But play out their roles,
According to accountants' pledges,
For power over the debtors' ledger,
Gives the edge,
Leverage and hegemony,
Leaves only credit and money,
Growing on trees without roots.

All throughout history,
Empires rise and fall,
The people hear the call,
For equilibrium is correction,
Corruption creates insurrection,
Technology is environmental plagiarism,
Profit maximisation removed from ethics,
Productivity is not just kinetics,
The edict of multinational companies,
Becomes visible on the internet,
Knowledge carries responsibility,
And with that we have the ability,
An opportunity to rearrange,

The order of seniority,
Truth in democracy,
For the new priority,
Is social change,
Where the left becomes right,
The Self develops new sight,
Now the time has come to decide …
Who we want to become.

What happened to me in Russia was personally transformative, as I saw that as clowns we were able to reach across cultural, language and social barriers with our humanity. As clowns we were greeted with laughter and love. If only everyone could experience life as a clown, then we would see we don't need weapons of mass destruction, we just need weapons of mass distraction, to distract people back to the true meaning of life which is to love each other. It was a feeling or perspective of peace I was experiencing. It was there I realised that clowning is the archetype of peace as action in the most

simple and authentic way.

I experienced the Russian people to be very kind but their lives were very hard and as harsh as their winters. Patch chose the right place to start his love revolution. In harmony with his passion for peace I showed Patch my vision of teaching peace in schools.

Patch wrote a testimonial to support my work.

> *Dear Friends,*
>
> *Susan Carew went on my annual clown tour to Russia November 1-16, 2002 and we were fortunate to have her radiant self to spread love and fun at the heavy pace I give them. She shared material and conversation with me of her passion to create world peace and non-violence programs in schools and I was overjoyed.*
>
> *For decades I have bemoaned all over the world that peace and justice are not taught in schools, now I have read over her business plan to implement a program in Australia and I support it whole heartedly. Not only is it a great leap forward for Australia, it also is a pioneer project for the rest of the world to emulate. I feel she has the passion to carry it out, contact me if you want to discuss. www.patchadams.org/*

This was written in 2002 and it is now 2014, I am still promoting peace in schools, I am still waiting for schools to open their doors to values based peace education. I have REAL HOPE.

The Fool's Gold: The Fool gives everyone permission to love. The love revolution is opening the heart and bravely loving the world as it is. To love everyone is truly liberating and fulfilling as you begin to see yourself in every face. As you love others they love you in return, naturally. This is where love leads by example. Unconditional love expects nothing in return. This is what peace on earth feels like, it is unconditional love and fearless. It is the real power of unity.

CHAPTER 7

Educating for Peace (2003)

Peace Education

What I have learned over the years through my studies in the field of Peace Education is that peace is love. What is love? Love cares, shares, reveals and heals. It is an energy that brings people together, enables them to listen, accept difference and moves all naturally to unity. As a World Peace Clown I practiced loving other people, it came quite naturally and I had no issue with people not loving me back. For the most part I felt people respond in-kind. I saw clearly that this is our natural state of being - to be naturally open, loving, generous and helpful to each other. The sort of peace education I felt inspired to pursue was about teaching universal values. For peace education to be effective you have to teach not only to the whole person (the child) but also to the teachers, the school and the parents. Peace is not just a course at a school, it has to be embraced by the community. Thus, a culture of peace spreads out into the community and when we commit as a nation to peace, this then influences other nations and the world community. Peace education requires the development of an individual's understanding of perceptions, attitudes, values and critical thinking within a nonviolent frame of reference. Essentially peace education aims to build: positive supportive communities, attitudes of truth and understanding, awareness of conflict and non-violent solutions, awareness of alternative truths and self-understanding.

Peace in the world is advocated formerly by the United Nations, especially by particular agencies interested in children such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNESCO. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) designated the decade 2001 – 2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. On UNESCO's website they advocate

> *… a new programme on a 'Culture of Peace and Non-Violence'. In its essence, a culture of peace and non-violence is a commitment to peace-building, mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, peace education, education for non-violence, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, intercultural and interfaith dialogue and reconciliation.*

It is a conceptual, as well as a normative, framework envisaged to inspire the thoughts and actions of everyone. Therefore, it requires cognitive as well as emotional abilities to grapple with our own situation in a rapidly changing world, as well as with the emerging world society. This aim entails not just more factual knowledge, but also the broadening of our consciousness and the willingness to develop a new awareness, a new way of being in this world, a new 'mental mapping'.[24]

There have been other educators around the world who have sought to advance peace education. One hundred years ago, Dr Maria Montessori, an inspirational educator, developed a unique method of education, which was based on research into childhood learning. The overview the Montessori approach on their website, as follows:

> *The Montessori approach fosters children's love of learning and encourages independence by providing an environment of activities and materials which children use at their own pace. This builds self-confidence, inner discipline, a sense of self-worth and instils positive social behaviour. The approach forms the basis for lifelong learning. The Montessori approach to peace states that the real work in creating peace is where the role of education is unfolding children's inner peace. Education is not about teaching but aids development of: the whole personality, value of the self, directing energies to wider community work to build a better world. The fulfillment of the goal is the foundation of social harmony, which constitutes a genuine state of peace.* [25]

24 http://www.unesco.org/new/en/bureau-of-strategic-planning/themes/culture-of-peace-and-non-violence/
25 http://montessori.org.au

A former Federal Education Minister in Australia, Brendon Nelson, highlighted the importance of values. I envisage this sentiment lived as an example in Federal Parliament:

> *We should not be surprised if a values-free education produces values-free adults. Surely we want children to become adults who are caring, persistent, tolerant, fair and imbued with a deep sense of compassion. We should teach them to do their best, to be just, reasonable, loyal and trustworthy. Imperfect though we all are as human beings, we must surely aspire to see these attributes as the foundation on which to build young lives.*

Values Based Education

Values based education is essential in providing an integrative perspective which can help children to navigate life. Traditionally society has focused on writing and reading as essential for education. Whilst these tools are important for functioning in the modern world they operate from a cognitive perspective rather than on innate natural impulses. Skills or academic structures divorced from natural human values gives us only a part of the picture of life. Any person can be trained to think and reflect back the teachings. To tap into human values and creativity is another spectrum of intelligence. Skills without innate values create partially developed humans. For example, how important is learning to read if a child is being abused in the home? How important is numeracy and literacy if a child is experiencing bullying by other children? In practical terms they would be unable to concentrate in both areas but on other levels it is critical that children learn human interactions, come to terms with their emotions, learn how to relate to others who are diverse, learn to become aware of how they impact on others and where they fit in the greater scheme of things. I have met many who have excelled scholastically but are lonely or disconnected from those in other spheres of reality. With one in five experiencing mental illness we cannot progress as a civilisation until we deal with emotional, physical and spiritual needs as part of a holistic education. Values are the internal navigators that are the basis of social unity and stability. Values based education the core of life education; it is learning about yourself and others and how to interact peacefully. It is integrating a deep understanding of values which guide children throughout their lives and provide the foundation for functional societies.

Increasingly we see media programs imbued with violence as normal entertainment and games. If we look at the military it is generally accepted that violence is used as a means to an end, and this is seen as ensuring peace and security. In addition, the loosening of values means that in the media violence is becoming explicit and young children are less protected from this form of emotional conditioning and desensitised over time. There has been plenty of research in child psychology on the causal effects of violence. I've heard a range of lecturers discuss this topic. During my time at the International Conflict Resolution Centre I recall a speaker from the United States who had actually undertaken research at a time when black and white television was originally launched. I recall her relating the measuring of violence and perceptions of violence before and after exposure to the introduction of television. In her view, definitely violence has increased as a result of exposure to television and people became desensitised over time by it.

My personal belief is that we learn from what we are exposed to, if we get excited due to a story created around violence then this is integrated into our own psyche. Moreover, the brain creates neural connections due to repeated stimuli, hence desensitisation. Violent video games are particularly concerning as children play them over and over and the characters are often depicted as male, physically strong and violent. If society keeps accepting violence to be the daily digest that frames our reality and we start to

see it as normal rather than a dysfunction, then we get what we pay (play) for. Violence is not conflict. The latter is about misperceptions, differences of opinion and emotional outbursts in the moment, whereas violence is abuse. Violence uses physical or emotional (verbal) abuse to hurt another or to diminish them in some way, significantly it is repeated. It is not different from bullying behaviour where one is seeking power over another with an intention to hurt or punish. The person bullying is in reality a powerless person, therefore he/she is seeking power. What has always amazed me is that there is seldom a focus on conflict resolution and in learning how to communicate with each other clearly to overcome negativity. Violence is not the badge for the brave, it takes more courage to look at oneself honestly and work through problems then to force or hurt another through the projection of unowned issues or beliefs.

The main question I feel we need to focus on in this day and age is, 'Who am I?' not, 'What do I have?' and to then explore, 'Who do I want to become?' A change in our personal questions changes the future direction of society. Therefore, do we create a society which values integrity, honesty, responsibility, empathy and love? Or do we reward behaviours and attitudes where the ends justifies the means, justice means winning rather than fairness, wealth at any price is power rather than abundance, career defines the value of self over others, status means 'better than' and cognitive intelligence is valued over emotional intelligence. In my view these are the choices we are faced with today. Values based education is therefore critical and will shape the type of world we truly value.

Children learn values from their parents and society. When we change, children will change. When we teach with an attitude of inspiring them to question rather than telling them what to think, then we teach for wisdom. The former puts information in, the latter draws out wisdom. Thus the future of education is REAL HOPE. What I focus on expands…

The Fool's Gold: If we can educate for violence we can educate for peace. When violence is no longer the thorn of distraction of the pain, the centre-peace of greatness opens like a flower, naturally. Peace is a choice. You know it is the right choice as it feels good and expands our civilisation to reach greater possibilities. That is the real meaning of evol-u-ti-on[26] – no-it-you-love (reversed). The value and outcome of love, is expansion.

REAL HOPES for Peace Education

On my return to Australia from Russia, I felt inspired to write a peace education program. This culminated from my observation of the powerful effect of the clown as an archetype of peace. I saw differently, I could see that clowns in their pure state of being were the model of peace. We clowns are unconditional in our love, we just feel love and we love everyone. There was a beautiful harmony in seeing the world differently. I saw the beauty and realised the lie of limitation, I knew we are not less than wonderful. I had seen through a window into the real world. My realisation was that only love is real.

When I went deeply into what I felt was needed and conducted some research, it was clear that values must be the centre peace (no play on words here) of education. It would have what I term 'universal values', at the centre, that is values that we all share as human beings. I realised that values form the foundation of effective education programs. Values are a lived (felt) experience. When we utilise our natural values as human beings our awareness expands to give us another perspective from which to look and synthesise the world as we see and experience it. Inner values come from our own inner navigation which enables us to make better decisions in alignment with our own truth. As we integrate our values we realise that we see differently, as vision is not only of the physical world, it also encompasses the emotional and spiritual inner vision of life. It is a natural integration of the mind with the emotions

26 This term was coined by my friend Misha

and intuition, and this connects the mind, body and spirit to give humans a comprehensive sensing of life and its meanings in a wide range of forms.

From an integrated perspective we no longer look at life as a two dimensional reality, as it is commonly perceived through the media, but as a lived experience that in-forms us and develops within us in ever expanding spirals of awareness, as we grow and learn, and learn and grow. Life indeed is a spiral rather than a linear progression, we are constantly growing. So to positively grow in awareness brings us back to 'who' we are, and puts us back in the driver's seat on our own road to a future that sees us thriving . When we are on track in our lives, we connect to our true potential which can be utilised for the betterment of society. We are all here with talents and purpose, this work is about reconnecting to that purpose by living values which lead us to unity.

Over the next year I wrote **REAL HOPES**. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, REAL HOPES is an acronym for: Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Love, Honesty, Oneness, Peace, Enjoyment and Service. REAL HOPES is a model for the values of authenticity and the basis to a positive future. For example let's look at what is REAL and what provides HOPES.

If you want to know if a person is **REAL** you ask are they Responsible (able to respond), do they feel Empathy (feeling for others), are they Aware (aware of self and others) and do they express or feel Love. This is authenticity. This is Real. The second part **HOPES** is to determine if we have hope for the future. Are we Honest with ourselves and others? do we feel Oneness with the planet and other people (as family)? do we feel Peace as balance (yin/yang)? are we feeling Enjoyment (en-joy) from within? And lastly, do we desire to serve others as One self. Thus, when we have HOPES we are in alignment with a positive future.

These are the seeds of real hope. This was the foundation for the REAL HOPES program. I developed the REAL HOPES model as an integrated model that enables people to look at problems and derive solutions through the prism of values. The values I am speaking of below are universal. All people share these values. Essentially we are all connected as a species, and when we start to see our own interests as intimately connected to all others, then we will see the world differently and REAL HOPE(S) emerge.

REAL HOPES - A New Values Model

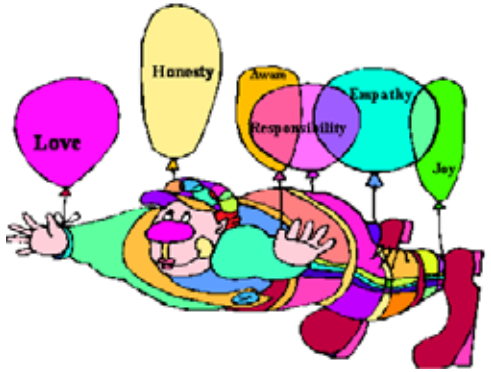
The REAL HOPES is a values model, that is like a prism through which to look at issues or problems. Rather than analytical logical thinking, children will be encouraged to feel and think of the problem, or challenge, through the universal values we all share.

Responsibility

Empathy

Awareness

Love



Honesty

Oneness

Peace

Enjoyment

Service

The REAL HOPE(S) Peace Nonviolence and Anti-Bullying Program (2004)

My focus is on values and I remember saying to myself: 'I am not looking to create a 'feel good' peace education program, I wish to create an effective peace education program that works'. I am seeking to change the world not just feel good about what I am doing. I felt inspired to spend a year researching values. This work was not funded it was simply an independent initiative. My own inner personal development was occurring at the same time as I was exploring and intuiting – 'What will work?' Universal values are central.

REAL HOPE(S) became the educational framework or foundation from which I developed a peace, nonviolence and anti-bullying program. The REAL HOPE(S) program is creative, stimulatory and bi-directional, encouraging freedom of expression and exploration of who we are and how to deal with problems by learning to see differently.

The aims of the program are:

1. *To instil positive proactive values to enable children to deal with conflict and project peaceful behaviour within the school and throughout their lives.*

2. *To instil positive peace values in children to empower them to create a future world based on peace and non-violence.*

The program develops multiple intelligences such as: linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, intrapersonal (knowing yourself) and interpersonal (knowing others). In particular the program encourages emotional intelligence by demonstrating values and

leading by example.

The program is built upon accelerated and associative learning by linking:

- symbols, colors, jokes, questioning, positive thinking, philosophy, facts, mediation, role play activities, games, puppets, tricks, juggling and visualisation around core values.

The program is comprehensive and explores the following:

- Universal values.
- Problem solving: brainstorm and critical inquiry.
- Philosophy and facts.
- Conflict resolution: mediation, I-statements, role plays, personal inquiry.
- Humor: positivity, learning non-discriminatory humor for unity.
- Emotional intelligence, expression of emotions and feelings.
- Communication and listening skills.
- Perception and awareness.
- Non-violence and Gandhi's example.
- Cooperation and unity.
- War and peace issues.

- Inclusive, exclusive and discriminatory behaviours.
- Peace as active, balanced and calm.
- Enjoyment and happiness through clowning and juggling.
- Visualisation and relaxation (meditation).

The program is focused on universal values as specific weekly themes, as follows:

- **Responsibility:** the ability to respond, you can do something. This focuses on power over and power within.
- **Empathy:** standing in another's shoes. It is to learn to imagine to feel another's feelings so that we expand awareness of our impact on others. Moreover, exploring emotions to understand and feel them.
- **Awareness:** to open our eyes and look around us. This is awareness in noticing others, recognising that we have different perceptions, noticing what we don't see, to expand our awareness that we may be wrong. When we do this we open our minds to possibilities.
- **Love:** to love ourselves and others. This value is to show that love is not only romantic it is the glue that binds society. Love cares, shares, reveals, heals and stays.
- **Honesty:** to speak the truth all the time. To see truth like a mirror ball, that we all have our own truths and when we look at the mirror ball we do not see ourselves. It is to look into our own mirror – to thine own self be true – to understand that only you can know your own truth.
- **Oneness:** this is to see the world as one. It is one breath, one family, one life. In a consciousness of oneness what we do to another we do to ourselves. It expands to our responsibility for all of it.
- **Peace:** this is to understand that true peace is balance. That in life there is yin/yang as opposites. Sometimes life is happy/sad, right/wrong, black/white, female/male, and we are in constant change. The trick with peace is to find balance no matter what the outer reality is like. Peaceful thoughts and questioning negative thoughts is what brings peace.
- **Enjoyment:** this is the en-joy, or joy within. This is distinct from pleasure. It is about learning to have fun whilst here, to learn to laugh and to do so in a way where we all win. Real joy is total acceptance of yourself. It is an outcome of peace.
- **Service:** this is natural when all values are in alignment. You have got it together at this point and feel available to serve life and others. It is sharing what you have learned with others. You see them as yourself.

The decision to teach as a clown was actually not really a decision. I just knew I would teach as a clown. Clowns and children go naturally together. Children and peace clowns really do match. It is really funny, I do relate to the children as we are on a similar level. I understand their sense of humor and playfulness, as children are very like clowns and clowns are like children, we have much in common. Yes, we do break the rules, I change things sometimes and probably give them more freedom. I enjoy capturing spontaneity in the moment, it makes it unpredicatable and exciting. I move from structure to flow very easily in a lesson. I experience myself on their level and the relatedness means we all have fun. I treat the children as equal friends and they treat me in the same way. I am not in the role of a teacher who has power over them, I am in the role of a fun character exploring life values. The children do not become disorderly, although they can get very excited, they typically cooperate with what is asked of them as they want to see what will happen, their curiosity is peaked. They are patient with me and they are quick to laugh. I really love working (playing) with them.

As a clown teacher (jester) I am able to inspire the children to explore, to question things more deeply, to joke with them and do spontaneous clowning in the classroom. I never know what is going to happen as every time is different, but I notice the interaction is dynamic and that they are indeed my teachers. I am there to learn from them.

Another important aspect of my teaching is to model joy to children, as this is my joy. This teaching style sets me apart from mainstream teachers who are charged with the role of modelling authority and direction, their job is to make sure the children learn the facts and concepts embedded in the curriculum. Having said that, I am sure teachers personally love to see the children happy but they are aware they are restricted and there is not a lot of room for them to move from the curriculum and follow their own creative impulses. Years ago teachers had more freedom, today everything is monitored, compared, tested and evaluated. It is a serious process and children are experiencing stress from numeracy and literacy testing. As a clown teacher, not in the system, I can bring something new to them.

The program has a basic format and enhanced by a range of interesting categories that provoke deeper understanding and integration of the value.

To reinforce the value, I come in each week wearing a different color and hat which the children immediately notice. I deliberately create memory tags so the can remember and associate the specific value with a color and symbol. It is a very effective teaching method and excellent for focus.

The REAL HOPE Program film highlighting excerpt from the program can be viewed from the website at http://schools.worldpeacefull.com/anti-bullying/real-hope-video-presentation/

Below is a collage of photos:

The basic framework of the REAL HOPE peace, nonviolence and anti-bullying program below provides a taster of the activities in the program and how it is formatted, as follows:

Repetition of REAL HOPE

When I first arrive we all go through a model of REAL HOPE which is placed on the floor with large foam letters. I do this at the beginning of each lesson. I ask the children if they remember what I was wearing last week? what color? and what was the hat? I then I ask them, what the values means? I do this to stimulate them and create a fun rhythm of recall. I don't berate anyone for not remembering, I reinforce when they get it right and encourage them.

Humo

I use humor in the program as it stimulates creativity and not taking ourselves so seriously. I use bubbles to demonstrate positive thoughts. A good joke stimulates curiosity, is non-competitive and joins the group by laughing together, rather than at each other. I invite the children to come up and tell a joke providing it causes no harm. They learn to distinguish between jokes that unify and jokes that divide. I offer them a wig or a propeller hat to make it more colorful. I either prentend to interview them or pass my feather duster to them or a glowing mic to use as a microphone. This is fun and positive for children as the other children laugh and they start to develop confidence in delivering a joke to others and at the same time learning how to make it entertaining.

Critical thinking

In the program I designed in critical thinking as many children these days just accept what they are told without understanding the importance of questions and their own inner wisdom. This type of education aims to stimulate questions so that a child may find their own answers, as the wisdom resides within every child.

The children are asked a list of questions about the value explored. I ask them what they think it is? They answer from their own perceptions and as other children throw in their ideas, the ideas are written up on butchers paper. I find this section is very illuminating as children teacher me their language, learning style, ideas and imagination of how they interpret the value. Some insights have been profound, others unaware of values. As a teacher I am not searching for right or wrong answers, I am interested in participation and exploration. I typically probe their answers. This encourages them to think, feel and to have a go. I have found the most amazing wisdom come from the 'mouths of babes' as they say.

Philosophy

Philosophy is important for children to learn as questions take them deeper. I use the metaphor of the wise person climbing a mountain and sitting there thinking about some question or to overview life.

Philosophy for me is about deeply pondering or questioning what things mean. It is critical that children learn how to look deeper into statements and derive their own philosophical meanings. Meaning is not about right or wrong it is about your inner feelings and personal interpretation. Things are not black and white, and it is important to go beneath the surface to understand what life really means to us. The Japanese koans and Philosophy in general, is great for helping children to access quizzicle questions and inner wisdom.

Both techniques of critical thinking and philosophy encourage inquiry through paradoxical and philosophical statements whereby children have to work out the meaning. There are no right answers so they experience the exploring of shifting sand. Life is a sandbox paradox.

Juggling

As a clown it is only natural I bring in some circus skills. My skill of choice is juggling. Juggling has biological impacts such as balancing the right and left hemispheres of the brain and promoting relaxed

concentration. Many children don't read these days so juggling is an excellent substitute to help them to learn how to concentrate and practice. It is an activity that is non-competitive and expanding, they can improve themselves by practice.

They feel the desire to learn as they have so much fun learning. I sense this is what school should be about, how many of us were bored at school? Creating activities that are fun whilst being and doing, drawing out thinking and feeling skills as they go through a experience. Analytical approaches alone can lose students as it is often abstract. Perhaps creativity in more activities could be cultivated in schools to stimulate multiple intelligences.

Happy cards

I have pack of happy cards with positive words which I hand out each week. The purpose of the cards is to have the children think about the positive words and remember them. It is to become used to being positive and practice affirmations. Positivity changes what we see.

Experiential activities

I undertake a wide range of experiential activities for the purpose of integrating the values using both the body and thought process. I have activities that stimulate the emotions and perceptual awareness, others utilise objects as metaphors. There are exercises in communication, discrimination, unity, awareness, problem solving, humor, conflict resolution, role plays and many more. I use PowerPoint images, posters, plasticine molds, clowning props, balloons, butcher's paper, crayons, music and whatever else inspires me to engage them and evoke memory recall. Below are some notable examples.

Responsibility

I undertake a juggling exercise where I have three juggling balls in conflict. I tell a story as the balls fight and then I do a cascade juggle (flowing in one direction) to show what harmony looks like. I have one of the balls as a mediator, one as the protagonist and the other as the perceived victim. I ask the children how the balls can work out the conflict and they learn basic mediation skills as the story unfolds.

Empathy

I wear huge shoes to convey the symbol of standing in another's shoes. I have shoe earrings. The children never miss a trick, they remembered everything I wear.

An activity I use in this session is to have the children walk in a circle. I ask them to imagine being angry and to demonstrate how they physically move, they then change the movement to 'happy', then to 'scared' and so on. They learn about body language and how their emotions translate into their movements. They come to understand that they may be targeted by bullies if they appear scared. They learn to stand in another's shoes and what it feels to be someone else. The activity is to connect them to their emotions.

Awareness

I use blindspot cards to help illustrate that when we think we are right we tend to see only our side. The children experience this by looking at a card with 2 dots and concentrating on one dot, they find if they cover one eye a dot disappears. It is an excellent way for them to see the way the brain can play tricks and that what we see many not always be true. IN reality the dot didn't disappear it was always there. Therefore, we can be sure we are right but there is always two sides (two dots). It is a powerful way to learn open mindedness. I tell the children the most intelligent thing you can say to yourself is 'I might be wrong'.

Love

In the love session I speak of Russia and the baby houses and the importance of receiving love, I speak of it being essential for life.

I have a little story of a grandfather who has two wolves inside him. He tells his grandson 'one is angry and fearful and the other is full of love and compassion'. The child asks 'which wolf is going to win'? Grandfather responds – 'the one I feed.' They learn that love is a choice.

On one occasion I noticed a child sitting in class with a colorful wig on and a sign with the words LOVE on it. He felt inspired to be different, I loved that he felt that freedom.

Honesty

I teach the Honesty session with a mirror ball. I tell the children that there are many facets to a mirror ball. Each little panel represents a person reflecting their truth. When we look into the mirror ball we can't see ourselves, yet if we look into this mirror (a fluffy love mirror) we can only see ourselves. So there is much truth out there. We only know our own truth. It was a great way to convey truth. I also told kids you can speak the truth the whole time. Most people believe in white lies, and yes we all do it. I am working on stopping all lies or denials. So I say to them, if a person asks, 'Do you like my jumper?' and you don't, you just say the truth as: 'What is important is that you like the jumper, we are all different, it wouldn't suit me, but if you like it wear it.' So you can be honest without hurting anyone.

I show a video of Gandhi in this session and how he valued truth and love. I show them how he handled bullies in South Africa.

Oneness

The children are shown a blow up ball of the earth and asked questions about what is up and down. They also imagine all the life on earth and that all are connected by the same breath since the beginning. The same air. We discuss population, life and death and consumption. They experience the idea of unity by joining in a rhythm clap and a mirror game where they mirror another person. The idea is to feel the unity.

Peace

I show the children the nuclear explosion at Bikini Islands and then I showed them a picture of the earth, a living system. The children are very engaged. I explain to them that we have choices in life, we can either allow fear to dictate behaviour that hurts other people and in its far extreme can lead to war, or we can choose to see and experience the world as one living system of interrelationships. I defined these extremes as 'love' or 'fear'. The bullying comes from fear or powerlessness, a person seeking power by taking another's power.

I also played a game with them designed from the Jane Elliott series of 'Blue Eyed/Brown Eyed' (posted on Our True Nature blog). This was set up in the 1960's after the assassination of Martin Luther King. She noted how the white people spoke to African Americans as 'your people'. She also noted that in the Warsaw Ghetto Jews were chosen for the gas chamber on the basis of eye color. She designed a program which she taught to grade 3's to segregate the class on according to eye color. Her method was controversial and children became aggressive to children they thought were less than them or 'the other', she then reversed the information and the reverse happened. She later taught this to adults to reveal prejudice embedded and covered through polite words, but the exclusion was there. In my work I divided the class by eye color but and said that only blue eyed children can could be clowns. I asked the teacher to hold half the class silent and had the children observe whilst I played Chinese whispers with the blue eyed kids. When we debriefed afterwards, the children who were brown eyed

said they knew it was a game but felt angry that they were excluded and isolated, they wanted to join in. The other children 'the in crowd', said they loved being special and part of the group to play with the clown. They felt special because the others were excluded and they were picked by the clown. I then explained to the children that when we exclude or isolate people on the basis of some characteristic e.g. like gender, race, disability, intellect, opinion, lifestyle, attractiveness etc. and so on, we are causing that feeling of anger and hurt. I then asked them: 'hHow do we bring people into the whole group, what can we do to ensure everyone belongs?'. Kids said: 'invite them into a game', 'talk to them', 'don't let them sit alone', 'be a friend'.

I am encouraging children to learn to embrace differences, that there are no enemies only those running around in our heads as Gandhi stated. We have to learn about each other and understand the unity in diversity. The learn that notions of 'them and us' defeat us all.

Enjoyment

In the enjoyment session the children get to do some juggling and they learn about peace concepts that inspire happiness. They learn about Patch Adams and how clowns have fun. They learn that laughter is the best medicine as long as it isn't at the expense of someone. The session is to experience happiness and fun, as that is the purpose of life.

Bullying

There is an anti-bullying stream through the whole program. I speak to the children about anti-bullying. There was one occasion when a child felt so inspired she started a campaign in the playground to encourage others to say 'no to bullying'. Another left me a message on the white board saying: 'You are the best clown I've ever seen and you are a funny person and you will be for the whole of life'.

I use role play to demonstrate the issues around bullying. I sometimes utilise puppets or have the children participate in a conflict and then ask the other children what they think they should do.

In one of the activites I draw two outlines of a person. One titled a 'person bullying' the other a person 'bullied'. The children are asked to write or draw within the outline the characteristics of each type of behaviour. The image they created of the person who bullies was of a tough and aggressive boy with many piercings, speaking rough language that was aggressive, demeaning and dominant. The victim (person bullied) had bullet holes, blood, and sayings that they were weak and afraid.

I was aware of the type of influences children were being exposed to and the archetypes they believed in as being 'strong' or 'weak'. There was an overall perception, particularly from boys that violence was strong and that peace was weak.

Meditation

At the end of each session I ask the children to lie down, close their eyes and imagine the value we have been discussing. They are taken through a meditation whereby they are actioning the value in their daily life as a practice. In their clownbook they they write their experience of the value to bring that value to life in the home, with friends and at school.

The power of the program rests in utilise the archetype of a World Peace Clown. Clowns are seen differently from teachers and the children respond enthusiastically and are attentive. It is teaching in a way that children relate to and keeping their attention by making learning fun and stimulating. I've had excellent results with the schools I've had the opportunity to teach the REAL HOPE program.

In addition, I found that children see the clown differently in that they wish to please the clown and

make the clown happy. I was surprised in the case of one child that the child had tried to pull off my wig, I did say firmly but gently for the child not to. He must have thought about it and decided to bravely come into my class with a note and hand it to me. It said: 'Dear peace clown I am sorry I tried to take your wig, you are a great clown and we are happy you are here', or words to that effect, how beautiful and courageous that was. I realised the child felt inspired.

In another case a child was scared of clowns rather than just avoid the child I encouraged the teacher and parent to have the child face their fear. I am a believer in that as you can never overcome something if you allow the fear to dominate. So a parent and teacher brought the child to me after class. I just was playfully juggling and smiled. I then dropped one of my balls and indicated non-verbally and like I needed help for the child to pick it up. I didn't make eye contact at first to give her power. She picked up the ball and I started a game, the phobia quickly disappeared. She was just afraid of difference. I find this fear more common in the West. In developing countries I've never encountered a clown phobia.

The work I have undertaken with REAL HOPE(S) is leading edge, it has not been done before.

The REAL HOPE program has been very success and validated by the high praise of Principals (refer to testimonialshttp://www.worldpeacefull.com/real-hope-program/testimonials/. I was told by teachers that the work was innovative, effective, creative, catalytic and started something new. One Principal conveyed he felt the world needed REAL HOPE.

The REAL HOPE framework can be explored in respect of environmental issues. I saw clearly that inner harmony creates outer harmony. Our material world is a result of our inner turmoil, confused thinking, emptiness and sense of insecurity. Until we address harmony within humanity we won't be able to achieve environmental sustainability, the two are intrinsically linked. Moreover, the universal values I teach is what is required to help our society find its sense of common ground and inner strength, to be able to see differently, so that there is no 'them and us' but 'us' hence we solve problems together.

The children at the end of the program sent me cards to thank me for bringing REAL HOPE(S) to their school.

Here are some selected comments from the children:

> *'Dear Peace clown why do wars start, what goes so out of control? Why do people believe what bad things that other people say to them? Why do people care for money so much, after all it's just a piece of metal!' From Marina*
>
> *To the peace clown we had a good time with you. My favorite thing doing with you was love and peace and oneness. When we played games where fun.' From Daniel W.*
>
> *Dear Peace clown! We have enjoyed you being at our school and we have had a lot of fun. Our favorite session with you was responsibility! We have all learnt how to be responsible. We have all agreed that you are the best clown we have ever met!' Brodie, Blong, James, Anthony, Dylan*
>
> *Dear Susan you are the best clown in the whole wide world.' From Jesse'*

World Peace Day

The World Peace Day I developed in Australia with Primary and Secondary school children and a sophisticated program working with the American School of Bangkok.

The program was essentially to educate childrent to see the peace connection in their lives. The workshop covered questions of what is peace?. I created a string game where the children connected with each other, this experientially gave them the sense that we are all connected. I discussed the idea that peace is happiness. When you truly find peace you will feel the happiness. I take the children through my experience as a World Peace Clown and how I find peace and happiness. I discuss my experience clowning with Patch Adams and show them a DVD of clown in Russia and then I show photos of nurses clowning in Thailand. I take the children through clowning and how to tap into positive feelings. The children are shown the work of Dr. Emoto and how our emotions can affect the biology of the body. The children learn that peace is not bullying and are shown mediation. They are taken through war pictures and how much the world spends. They see the destruction and come to understand that peace is really a choice. It is a wonderful program and the children have fun. A rudimentary version of the program has been taught to kindergarten (prep) children as I felt that we need to start with early childhood.

The picture of the little girl with the star is of my neice for whom I work. World Peace is the most important subject to be taught yet it is given little room in the curriculum. Still education bureaucrats value numeracy and literacy over life skills, creativity and happiness this mirrors government and societal beliefs. Yet numeracy and literacy as a priority cannot help children if they are living in unhappy homes in conflict within a collapsing economic paradigm fuelled by environmental changes. They need REAL HOPE for the future.

When children learn inner peace as a philosophy and skill of life, children are well served. From this platform the other disciplines can be taught effectively and with wisdom.

Schools

I've worked in a range of schools – kindergarten (prep), primary, secondary, universities and special schools. Whilst the program is not designed specifically for special schools, I did observe some amazing breakthrough experiences. I recall an interesting experience teaching children with disabilities including autism. Apparently on the last day of my teaching, an autistic child changed their routine to say goodbye to me. To my amazement the teacher was running in circles in the room. She was screaming with delight. She then told me this boy had never changed his routine, she was so happy. So somehow being a clown inspired the child. I was so happy. I think it was love that connected with this child. I have always believed a love based classroom is the key to

creating a more loving society. So my teaching was never about making anyone wrong, it was about exploring topics and questioning norms and getting the children to really work out their own truth. I did offer guidance as I saw it, but with open mindedness to expand what is being learned.

Peace is harmony and as that *feeling* increases in our lives we can be sure we are in alignment with our true natures. Peace education is not a theoretical construct, it is to *'know thyself and to thine own self be true'.* It is about re-membering how to relate to others without using power and control. It is to learn to express, explore and expand or sometimes I refer to it as - inspire, challenge and empower. We are here on this planet to shine, not to be pulled down by insecurity and fear. I often imagine a world where all children are raised in positive environments, where they take responsibility for their thoughts, words and actions and learn from life's contrasts in ways that don't oppose but create new pathways and futures. We have much to learn about peace, that is is not anti-anything, nor is it communist, nor is it religious, it is who we are when we step away from drama and the 'I know mind', it lives in loving *'what is'* in life and being grateful. It is the opposite to what we have all been taught. It has been the greatest joy of my life to be a clown teacher and I am so glad I did most of it for free and persevered.

The Fool's Gold: REAL HOPES are universal values within me, values are the candle I always hold no matter my external circumstances. I know children are stewards of the future and that the universal values of their real hope will enlighten humanity to live together in peace.

CHAPTER 8

A Children's Parliament (2005)

This idea of a Children's Parliament came from sitting in the Australian Federal Parliament and Senate and observing the politicians. What I observed was critical and punitive behaviour. It surprised me to see members yelling out and interrupting others believing that this was the purpose of opposition. I felt that it was not a good example for children. I observed the public gallery and questioned why the public cannot ask questions. That might have an impact on the politicians by bringing the people they serve closer to them. I saw the process as a waste of energy (opposing) and a waste of public money. What I felt was that we need to educate people on how to critically appraise without hating the 'other', and to put more energy into together solving the actual problems that besiege our countries and the world.

I conducted research into the meaning of democracy and found that it was representation by the people for the people. I looked at the politicians sitting in Parliament, the majority were lawyers and came from elite backgrounds. We had a two party system that was adversarial. The Labour Party indicating it represented the ordinary people yet with substantial union presence in its ranks, and the Liberal party which was more conservative representing a conservative position that was more in alignment with business interests. So it seemed to me that we had two powerful groups respectively representing 'labour' and 'business' that seemed to be fighting it out in a forum called parliament, but which seemed to me to be more reflective of a coliseum. I didn't feel either party represented the people. I also wanted to know if they actually surveyed their constituents and acted on what they wanted, well I found out that in most cases, they do not. They work out as a party their platform and policies influenced by key political pressure groups of lobbyists, which in the United states they call Political Action Committees (PACs). Again, I felt that we the people are not seriously included. I also mulled over setting up an internet system whereby everyone can vote from home so that all can have a say. I also felt that voting shouldn't be just ticking boxes for people we don't know, but that we actually need to have a survey that people can fill in to enable their input into that which affects their daily life. As a market analyst I am very much interested in what the public have to say. It has been my job to reflect exactly what they want through the research and reporting of findings. I didn't find this same faithfulness to the public in politics. For me it seemed a game of influence, power and control and not really about democracy.

The Children's Circle Parliament Pilot Study

I started this process by designing some ideas and then inviting key public, educational and political stakeholders to come to a meeting to discuss the concept of a Children's Parliament. Invitees included representatives from:

> *The Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Borderlands Cooperative, NAPLAN, UNICEF, Office of Child Safety, Department of Education, Allanah and Madeline Foundation, Create Foundation, Victoria University, Sherbourne Primary School, University of Melbourne, Values Education coordinator, Oxfam, City of Melbourne, as well as the Leader of the Democrats and a school principal from Heidelberg (Victoria).*

Below is an extract of the notes taken from the initial meeting. The information is feedback on the initial Children's Parliament concept and what to take into consideration, as follows:

> *Dynamic – includes all children.*
>
> *Learning to empathise.*
>
> *Youth forum – alternative civics and citizenship, issue relevant to youth, inclusive, could have a kit for schools.*
>
> *Inclusiveness – regional or rural – don't have access. Have the parliament in one rural school.*

Scholastic level – there are winners and losers, it should be open to all.

Embedding into school.

Student Representative Councils – could be built in to this existing structure.

Set up with representatives from each classroom.

Welcoming committees.

Democracy – the outcome must be realistic. Solving problems, but what if nothing happens.

A school based approach.

Can be undemocratic.

A Model – Children's Advisory Board – Government. Resourced by adults.

Balance skills and attitudes. Outcomes focus on issues or processes? (answer – processes).

Who they are? Where they come from, there are problems at home, a cultural shift, individualistic sense.

Parents relationship to children.

Having fun.

Alternative – life skills, democracy (SOSE), alternative to current propaganda, no question of problems, equity left out.

Knowledge, education and skills or attitudes, worth, abstractions, how we practice the change we see?

Give influence – channel outcomes to government ministers.

Council of Elders – leadership role.

Wisdom of aged – connecting young people e.g. Heidelberg – more connected then South Yarra.

UNICEF Article 12.

Minister of Children, Child Safety Commissioner;

Parliament – group leaders.

Local government – disillusioned. Victorian local governance – democratic community capacity building.

After this meeting I designed a Children's Parliament and sought a local school to undertake a pilot test. At the time it was called an UN-Real Parliament, which from my perspective meant uniting nations or unity (UN) and Real which was an authentic parliament (taken from REAL HOPE – responsibility, empathy, awareness, love, honesty, oneness, peace and enjoyment). Then I met with Edward de Bono, in 2006, and when I presented this idea to him for a Children's Parliament he said he didn't like the words UN-Real. I took his comments on board and decided to call it a Children's Circle Parliament. I did want funding but I am not good at asking for money. I am also seeking to see if there is interest in the other, even in the case of Edward de Bono, I found I couldn't pursue it, he had to feel passion. So I enjoyed the meeting with him and moved on.

Introductory Proposal

The Children's Circle Parliament was envisaged as a pilot program to be based in Melbourne, Australia for primary school children in Grades 5 and 6 and later for the whole school. The Circle Parliament will provide empowerment skills for children to participate as citizens in a non-violent democracy based on the model of democracy in the classroom.

The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow and they are next generation of parliamentarians. The Circle Parliament is the first parliament of this type in the world that is collaborative and proposes a central philosophy of conflict resolution and is focused on creative, integrated thinking methods.

The Circle Parliament is importantly, a fun parliament. Children learn best when not only are the issues they are learning about relevant to their lives, but when they are having fun discovering themselves. The symbol of the parliament was envisaged as a Peace Fool the World Peace Jester. The Peace Fool is playful and is always asking questions. The clown symbolizes virtues such as: justice, compassion, non-judgement, fairness, unconditional love, curiosity, creativity and humor.

The Children's Circle Parliament is collaborative, there is no opposition party. Its core intention is to solve problems and create possibilities. That is, to share ideas through creative collaboration and compassionate communication within the class environment (community gathering). It operates as a holistic we/us rather than antagonistic we/them paradigm. It was designed to focus on local community issues that directly affect children and the community within which they live. The community includes both the school community and the local community. Children through this process would learn to look at all sides of issues of concern and explore creative solutions. Then they would present these to the whole school in a community gathering called an Agora Assembly. Traditionally, the Greek Agora was a meeting place for Senators to discuss ideas in an open forum. Ideas with considerable merit would be determined and presented to either a local Council or State Parliament delegates on the final Agora meeting of the parliament. The children learn how to become citizens, to connect with others and participate in a democratic process.

The Children's Circle Parliament is designed to be in alignment with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) and the Rio Earth Summit (2002). The action plan or Agenda 21 of this conference focuses on issues at the local level, in particular local governance and sustainability.

The Children's Circle Parliament provides a preparatory foundation providing children with real skills and values to enable them to deal with problems and develop solutions (possible futures) in a collaborative manner. The program links schools and children with the United Nations, International Youth Parliaments and State Parliaments (Australia) to provide children with further developmental steps to enhance their sense of citizenship, participation in democracy and awareness of the current parliamentary system.

The Children's Circle Parliament encourages children to:

'be the change you wish to see in the world' – Mahatma Gandhi.

Aims of the Children's Circle Parliament:

- To provide children with an opportunity to **express their opinions** within a context of a democratic classroom.
- To create a Children's Parliament that is **child-centred** whereby children design the parliament they wish to participate in.
- To create a Children's Circle Parliament that provides children with the experience of having a **voice and the skills** to actively co-create the future they wish to see.
- To create a **values based** Parliament that is focused on values within a collaborative environment which honours and respects diversity.
- To practice **conflict resolution** to facilitate understanding and acceptance of different points of view, prevention of bullying and resolution of issues in a responsible manner. In the long term to foster a culture of wellbeing.
- To inspire educators in **democratic practices** in the classroom.
- To **engage parents in a dialogue** about democracy and their children.
- To **collaborate and network** with State Parliament, Local Councils, community groups, experts, schools, parents and local communities.

Objectives of the Children's Circle Parliament:

- To work with children in order to help them realise their **full potential**, so they may engage in **positive social relationships** as active democratic citizens of a community.
- Children will **learn a range of tools in the foundation program** to facilitate expansive decision making abilities, such as:
    - *Democracy, power, similarities and differences, creative thinking, collaboration, cooperation/ competition, universal values, problem solving, win/win, conflict resolution, positive thinking, public speaking, inclusivity, team working and finding solutions.*
- Children will learn to **participate**, as all voices are important in a democratic community.
- Children will learn the **practice of democracy** as their decisions will be accountable to the school community.

The Foundation program:

The Foundation Program would be run with classes in Grades 5 and 6 over an 8 week period.

SESSIONS X 8 Weeks		DURATION
Week 1:	Democracy R Us (sharing)	55 minutes
Week 2:	Valuing Each Other (values)	55 minutes
Week 3:	Working and playing together (cooperation)	55 minutes
Week 4:	Solving problems as friends (focus)	55 minutes
Week 5:	Happiness, Creative Tools & New Ideas (solutions)	55 minutes
	Practical Sessions	
Week 6:	Practical 1	55 minutes
Week 7:	Practical 2	55 minutes
	Children's Circle Parliament Session – Agora Assembly	
Week 8:	Children's Circle Parliament – whole school	Full day

The Children's Circle Parliament Program was envisaged to be held in a classroom. The pilot study would focus on Grades 5 and 6. The Children's Circle Parliament Program would run for 8 weeks' duration focusing on training and practice, as follows:

- The first 5 weeks would provide children with a foundation of democratic tools.
- Weeks 6 and 7 would consist of practical sessions where provocative questions would be posed during the class and collaborative activities organized to discuss the questions with the themes in mind.
- The last week will be the culmination of ideas and possibilities to be presented at the Agora Assembly and voted on by the whole school.

The sessions would be presented by Peace-Fool the World Peace Jester. The character of the Jester speaks truth to power and is full of questions. For questions always challenge and empower the listener to think and explore possibilities. It encourages open-mindedness.

The sessions would be conducted in a circle to enhance inclusivity and community. The format of the sessions include:

- *Toolbox of tools, brainstorming (critical thinking), activities, role plays and fun.*

Throughout the eight weeks program the children would learn the fundamentals of participatory democracy. They would make decisions throughout the sessions, engage in activities which highlight listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, voting and a range of other skills deemed important to a democratic classroom.

A website with an cyber-Agora and facebook page would be available for a democratic forum that children can visit to engage in a democratic discussion or access links to start research. In addition, a workbook will be provided that can be filled out over the week between sessions reinforcing what has been learned in each session.

The sessions and key themes were envisaged as follows:

Week 1: Democracy R Us *(sharing)*

This session introduces Peace-Fool and the Children's Circle Parliament. The children are encouraged to take decisions. The children will develop an agreement on rules and behaviour for the classes. They will be introduced to a democracy tool box which will examine democracy, power sharing, differences and similarities, opinions and voting. The children will engage in activities and mock voting.

Week 2: Valuing each other *(values)*

The values session is to reveal the inner values that human beings have innately and explores values in family and culture. The session will explore mind sets of right or wrong, right or happy and the bases of division or unity.

The REAL HOPES values prism will be discussed and children will act out values and look at issues with their values glasses on.

Week 3: Working Together *(cooperation)*

This session explores issues of team building. The children explore the dichotomy of competition and cooperation. The children engage in games and activities that experientially highlight competition, discrimination and cooperation. The children develop a value-able page where each child writes a positive statement about another person.

Week 4: Solving Problems as Friends *(win win)*

This session looks at problems and methods to solve problems and resolve both inner and outer conflict. The children will become more aware of how they can become angry and apply a 'right versus wrong' perspective. The children learn effective communication skills and conduct role plays to practice mediation and look at solutions so both can win.

In the session children choose a focus question for the practical sessions and for the Children's Circle Parliament.

Week 5: Happiness, Creative Tools and New Ideas *(vision)*

This session is dedicated to positivity and developing an awareness of innovation and creativity. Children become aware of their beliefs and perceptions and how we can learn to see differently. They become aware of the importance of positive thinking and not giving up. In addition there will be a laughter session to experience positivity. The children will learn how to see their 'blind spot' – what they cannot see in themselves. They will cultivate the ability of seeing the positive side and developing happiness in their lives and others. The children will experience positive visualisations and envisaging of the future.

Practical Sessions

The practical sessions are designed for the children to practice the skills that have been developed to look at problems, convert them to questions and then explore possibilities and solutions. These processes are equivalent to being explorers discovering possibilities. Questions are the tools that open one up to new ideas.

Focus Group Qualitative Research with Teachers, Parents and Children:

I conducted focus groups with teachers, parents and children in a nominated primary school in Melbourne to test the proposed ideas on stakeholders. Selected comments were as follows:

Teachers:

Q. If you were designing a Children's Parliament what would it look like?

Kids are represented.

Children representing children.

Sit in a circle.

Equal representation.

Voting system, representatives, house of reps, show my ignorance of parliament.

Setting up systems, all systems so that it runs efficiently. Voting system who speaks first, I guess it is the etiquette of it.

Some way of finding out the issues are.

Some sort of debating system, decision making system.

Would you have a leader? Someone needs to chair it.

To direct it.

(What is the chair?) A process if followed.

Everyone gets the chance to be heard.

Have a teacher as chair.

Child as a chair.

Blue hat thinking.

Wouldn't it be beneficial for the kids to go see parliament operate, talk about the benefits the pros and cons of the system then they can design their own.

I'd like them to research different parliaments around the world.

I'd like them to have a system of making contact with other children around the world.

Via the internet.

Doesn't necessarily have to have a vote, can be moderation, consensus.

Parents:

Q. What do you think the children will learn in a Children's Parliament?

To listen.

Respect other people.

Expanding their life experience, communication skills.

Be able to think through … strategy.

I would love for them to learn that they can actually make society. That they as an individual through understanding how parliaments work and that they are supposed to be responsive to people. That they can get out in the world and make a bit of a difference.

I think they will be able to learn what needs to be put in place, and what to achieve a certain outcome.

There isn't always an easy answer – not always black and white.

Children:

Q. What would you kids do if you were running a parliament?

I would let it run, do what they ever they want and not to embarrass, they can choose the subject they can do, the way of session, sport, maths then english but can't have the same session twice.

Can have double or triple session;

Give everyone a go, just say someone comes up and says I like the math's work but it is too hard. I say why don't you go and tell the teacher it is too hard for you (give advice).

I disagree, cause if he said they can't have same session, they could have double session of PE, LOTE, library or performing arts they could have all specialist one whole day.

I think that basically primary schools should be like high school, like…

Not work.

…No – you get to choose your subjects, some people hate doing literacy. They don't want to do it. The teachers are just going to give them work, they will have to force themselves to do it. If they actually get to do what they want to do they will do it, they won't back out. They like PE some people hate PE, they do it because they have to, some do it because they like doing it. They should be allowed to do a session have Miss.. another session Miss...

(sounds like you are running the school, I am thinking about parliament)

I think that I disagree with lots of people, I think we should have one or two subjects, session a day to have whatever we want, 15 minutes each. We should have a fair amount of time, the rest of the day another 4 sessions with things we have to do, even if you hate something, you might be bad at it when you need to do it.

What is a parliament?

I think we should have 30 short sessions, 30 minute sessions.

What's the point of that.

Leave school earlier.

That would be better, learn each subject.

Every day.

Might have sport, performing arts, library all in one day.

Question is are we the only 5-6 Grade doing this?

If I was running a parliament I would try and make smaller classes...

Lots of groups.

… in the classroom I think there should be just about 10.

60 classrooms.

I think 15.

25

20 is a reasonable.

Two things – ones about the outside with the school area in one place I've seen it is 40 and where it is not school 40 (speed limits) at least put, 40 I agree with it, if going passed the school there is no school on, it should be more larger, I've seen schools that don't have 40. I recon we should choose what to do - homework or not.

We should have a privilege.

That is sort of a choice you can line up and pick level 4, 5, 6.

If you want to do homework that's fine.

I agree I know a lot of people, I think boys are more committed to sport than girls. But I know a lot of boys that don't like sport. They just sit around the goal posts when we are going 5-6 sports, they get told off. That's not what really what they want to do. They probably want to do work but they recon it is a waste of time doing … now how it is like us, we should go in, other 14 could...'

I disagree I don't think we should have choices like high school because we are younger, not as mature, I don't think we should have to do specialist like PE. If we want to we can, if we didn't want to we wouldn't have to. The school should be blamed if we don't get good careers and they let us have choices. If you don't want to do Italian you don't have it is your choice if you don't want to learn a different language. We should focus on the things we have to do like english, maths.

I disagree, especially the sports.

I disagree with …she said we shouldn't have to do sports, we should have a choice out of that but she said we shouldn't have a choice for High School…

(mocking her name)

In High School we can have a choice.

… she said you should have a choice out of sport or specialist course she said you can do it if you want or can't. I think we need to have specialist. If you want to be a librarian or artist, that will help you, or maybe a swimmer a basketball…

The Children's Circle Parliament concept was circulated to some high profiled people, feedback from them about the idea is as follows:

Dear Susan, Thank you for the note on your current projects. I support well thought out programmes to involve students in thinking internationally and especially about other students less fortunate than most children in Australia. Good luck with your endeavours, especially in teaching De Bono techniques.

Sincerely, Michael Kirby
Sydney Chambers of Justice Michael Kirby

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your emails regarding a Children's Parliament… but can already see this is a very important concept with the potential to provide enormous benefits to young people and the wider community. I believe it is critical to engage young people in the political process and to give young people a voice, which is why I initiated my annual Youth Poll, surveying young people about the issues of importance to them. I have just released the results of the Youth Poll in the past week.

I will contact you again shortly when I have read all of the Children's Parliament information. Once again, thank you for thinking of me in regard to this information.

Yours sincerely,

Natasha Stott Despoja
Senator for South Australia

'Dear Susan, Further to John von Doussa's e-mail to you of 4 July, both the Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Sev Ozdowski, and Jan Payne the head of our Public Affairs Unit and myself have read through your detailed proposal concerning establishing a 'Children's Parliament'. …in relation to your proposal for a pilot of your Children's Parliament, we are unfortunately too advanced in our processes to attempt any interaction with your exciting and visionary scheme. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck with getting your project off the ground. It deserves to succeed.'

Regards, Stephen Duffield'
(Director - Human Rights Unit - HREOC)

Overall, this was a good exercise, at the very least, to attempt to create a Children's Circle Parliament. There is goodwill in the community and the children were enthusiastic the next step was to be getting the funding to make it happen. Every idea has its own timing and all we have to do is start, eventually it will manifest at the right time. It is important that children learn democracy not as an academic exercise but as a lived experience.

In all my experiences, I really felt the true idea and practice of democracy was not understood or lived. Those engaged in the peace area appear to be regarded as those to be watched and controlled. Some protestors saw the government as the enemy. On both sides there was fear and the creation of the other. The government feared that the protesters could develop influence and start a movement that would challenge formal power. The protestors feared government corruption, police states and the

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

restricting of freedoms such as ‘freedom of speech’ and ‘freedom of movement.’ The fear is centred on government maintenance of power and the status quo and community disempowerment. Yet the notion of democracy, at its essence, is really about the sharing of power and the representation of the people by the people. So if those in power feel challenged and act to suppress dissenting voices, then an important question to ask is –

Is democracy real? If not, why not?

It is important that all people have a voice that is heard and ask questions. To get the ball rolling I started a radio program to practice democracy by giving myself and others a voice.

The Fool’s Gold: Democracy is power sharing, responsibility, integrity and equality. It is to inspire, challenge and empower when the outcome is solutions not power. When children learn collaboration in true democracy they will live it, and the potential in society will be released and made visible. We are the model parliament of the world we see. Are you listening to be heard!

CHAPTER 9

Peace Journalism (2003 – 2006)

Bridges to Peace Radio Program

In 2003 I decided to look at community radio as a channel for my peace work. I walked into Plenty Valley 88.6FM in Mill Park, Melbourne. I met Martin Wright, the Station Manager and he told me to put in a submission for a program. I created the 'Bridges to Peace program' and drafted up the program format. The radio station sent me to their training program in Broadcasting and Media.

In the beginning of my training I was partnered with Marie Ryan. I had a radio person teach me how to use the panel. The panel looked like a sound engineering mixer. The panel was the operating system for airing community service announcements, phasing in and out the microphones and putting to air music or live interviews. It was really fun sliding the sound up and down, putting up carts (community announcements) and presenting my program. It was a wonderful experience to find my own voice and to provide a channel for other voices seeking a peaceful world. I thought to myself 'this is how you action democracy and peace.'

My program was one of the few programs in Australia dedicated to peace inviting discussions from a variety of perspectives. I produced the program from 2003 to 2006 and it gave me a very good opportunity to investigate peace issues across a broad spectrum including: activists, spiritual people, politicians, soldiers, peace organisations and academics, to name but a few. However, the importance of this broad spectrum was to provide myself insights into the various ways peace is interpreted. Interviewing others forced me to undertake research and to then explore issues with the interviewees. I also discovered I had access to high profiled people, who seldom say no to an interview. What was remarkable about this was that I was a lay person with a radio program. So it shows you nothing is impossible, you have to find the right channel to learn and access others. So I was given the privilege of accessing people's lives and learning about peace from a wide range of view points.

In 2004, I received a letter from the United Nations Association of Australia informing me that the 2004 Media Peace Awards Preliminary Judges were highly impressed by the selected works of 'Bridges to Peace'. I was informed that at the Media Peace Awards Presentation dinner, host Kerry O'Brien (ABC Television, 7.30 Report) had stated:

…community radio programs that deserve special mention for their tireless commitment to peace building 'Bridges to Peace' produced and presented by Susan Carew on Plenty Valley FM is entirely dedicated to peace and nonviolence…

I was told that my program was an excellent example of the important contribution community media makes to the promotion of the ideals of the Media Peace Awards – tolerance, understanding and awareness of social justice and humanitarian issues, and to keep up the good work. This was signed by Patricia Collett, Executive Director of the United Nations Association of Australia. I was really pleased to receive acknowledgement and encouragement. This work is voluntary and it is in service to the greater public good.

There was so much I loved about community media. The moment you step into the station you meet people from across the community. I've worked in many workplaces and typically you are with the same age group. In community radio you meet people interested in a wide range of music, of all different ages and with different ways of expressing themselves. It provided a true feeling of community; it was indeed the voice of the people. It is so interesting to me that this is voluntary, given the importance of hearing community voices. The amateur nature of it meant creativity and diversity flourished. Moreover, it was the microcosm of people power, even though the band width was limited, it still was heard in parts of Melbourne and taught people to use their voice to become community members. The Station Manager Ange Barry was excellent. She was earning a minimum wage but ran the place as a professional organisation. She taught the teams how to work together and to achieve high standards. Ange had come from a finance background and had experience with large organisations. She was an excellent role model and a friend. She ended up trying to groom me for Station Manager. For a short time I sat in her chair, but in reality I needed more training and I found myself torn between working part-time in this job and in my peace work in schools. I had a passion to teach peace. Nonetheless the experience was very powerful in forming my views.

Here is a sample list of some of the programs I produced over the years. Peace media is seldom heard or seen in the mainstream media. I envisage change in the future.

Example of Peace Programs

2003-2006 (latest to earliest)

Quakers: Bev Polzin, Australian Quakers

Nonviolence and War: Martin Luther King

Democrats: Interview with Senator Allison

Worse than Watergate: John Dean the former Counsel of Richard Nixon speaks about his book 'Worse than Watergate'. Lecture at La Trobe University

Falun Gong: Kati Vereshaka, spokesperson Falun Gong

Non Proliferation Treaty: Gareth Evans, International Crisis Group

Depression: Dr. Dorothy Rowe an expert on depression.

Peace Works Unlimited: Therese van Wegen from Peace Works Unlimited creates a different kind of conversation about Socratic Dialogue.

WMDs in Iraq and Corruption: Scott Ritter, Senior Weapons Inspector, Iraq – public lecture Pt1.

WMDs in Iraq and Corruption: Scott Ritter, Senior Weapons Inspector, Iraq – public lecture Pt2.

Freedom of Speech and Anti-Terrorism Laws: Exploring freedom of speech and anti-terrorism laws in respect of US peace activist Scott Parkin.

Women in Black II: Israeli women's group conducting silent vigils to opposed to Israeli occupation of Palestine. Dr. Hannah Safran, University of Haifa

Women in Black I: Israeli women's group conducting silent vigils to opposed to Israeli occupation of Palestine. Dr. Hannah Safran, University of Haifa

Psychologists for Peace: Dr Susie Burke

Promoting community harmony: Ken Jacob

Australian Multicultural Foundation: Mr Bulent (Hass) Dellal OAM, speaking about promoting a strong commitment to Australia as one people drawn from many cultures

Bill of Rights: Barry Jones, Barry Jones was speaking at Melbourne University at the Liberty Victoria symposium entitled GET UP STAND UP! Stand up for a Charter of Rights held on Saturday 13th August 2005, University of Melbourne Law School University.

Veterans for Peace: James Hill, he is a former non-combat veteran of the US Army and a member of Veterans for Peace

Refugees: Julian Burnside QC

Social Movements: Stop the War Coalition

Bill of Rights: Professor Zifcak, La Trobe University

UN Reform: Gareth Evans

Melbourne Social Forum: Maria Rodrigues

Buddhism: Buddhist Council of Australia

Gandhi: Background of his life

Amnesty International: Katie Wood

Freedom of Speech and Anti-Terrorism Laws: Exploring freedom of speech and anti-terrorism laws in respect of US peace activist Scott Parkin. Interview with Jason MacLeod, Australian peace activist.

International Relations: Live recording of Professor Richard Falk, US International Relations Scholar in Melbourne.

Shamanism and Peace: Serna was born in Altai, Siberia, Russia an area well-known for its shamanic traditions and culture. She discusses her work as a sharman and the Russian settlement called the Settlement of Happy Ones.

Fulbright Symposium on Peace and Human Rights: Recording of Speech Professor Kevin Clements is Director of the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Queensland. His talk is entitled 'The Relationship Between Peace and Human Rights'.

Reconciling Sudan: Faten Mohamed, RMIT, Nelson Manyiel – Victoria University and member of Sudanese Youth for Reconciliation. The group aims to reconcile the people of Sudan who have just ended a 50 year civil war.

Fulbright Symposium on Peace and Human Rights: Recording of Professor Hurst Hannum, Professor of International Law and Director of the Centre for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

Nuclear and Peace: Anniversary of Hiroshima. Recording of Dr. Tilman Ruff, Medical Association for the Prevention of War.

Inner Peace and Politics: Kate Vereshaka, spokesperson Falun Gong.

Comedy and Religion: Rev. Howard Langmead 'Seriousness is a Sin' interview.

Fulbright Symposium on Peace and Human Rights: Recording of Professor Dinah Shelton, Faculty of Law, George Washington University. Recording of Professor George Williams, Director Gilbert & Tobin Centre of Public Law.

Tariq Ali and Peace: Peter Rogers (journalist) in conversation with Tariq Ali about Iraq, the Middle East and the Media. Interviews with audience members.

Law and Peace: Sir Ninian Stephens, former Govenor General, The Maimonides Society, discussing the lecture on 'The Dynamics of Judgment'.

Chomsky and Peace: Recording of Noam Chomsky re: consent, media and activism.

United Nations and Peace: Sarah Lendon, Program Coordinator, UNICEF, Canberra.

Nonviolence and Peace: National Nonviolence Gathering, Caloundra. Recordings and interviews with participants at the National Nonviolence Gathering. Organised by the Quakers.

Global Peace Force and Peace: Recording of Professor Stuart Rees, University of Sydney, Global Action to Prevent War.

International Relations and Peace: Recording of Professor Camilleri, La Trobe University, Global Action to Prevent War Forum.

International Law and Peace: Recording of Professor Spencer Zifcak, La Trobe University, Global Action to Prevent War Forum.

Social Activism and Peace: Interview with Maria Rodrigues, World Social Forum in Brazil.

Metaphysics and Peace: Steve MacDonald, Executive Director, Spirituality, Leadership and Management Network.

NGO's and Peace: Kelly Watson from Sewalanka Foundation, Sri Lanka and interview with Rory Gallagher, East Timor volunteer.

Unionism and Peace: Interview with Zicho Tameila, South African Communist Party and member of the ANC.

Environment and Peace: Recording of David Suzuki, book launch 'Tree', interviews with audience.

Anti-Terrorism and Peace: Interview with Donna Dohnt, Community Lawyer, Whittlesea Community Legal Service.

Environment and Peace: Interview with Julia Vanderoord, Environment & Community Planning Officer, City of Whittlesea.

Peace Education: Interview with Linda Hogan, Dublin University, Ecumenical Summer School.

Anti-Bullying and Peace: Maree Stanley from the Alannah & Madeline Foundation.

Media and Peace: Recording of John Pilger Lecture, Melbourne Town Hall.

Iraq and Peace Part 2: Ghali Hassan, researcher in Science Education, Curtin University.

Iraq and Peace Part 1: Interview with Ghali Hassan, research in Science Education, Curtin University, Western Australia.

Conflict Resolution and Peace: Interview with Melissa Conley Tyler, International Conflict Resolution Centre, Melbourne University.

Spirituality and Peace: Interview with Jon Marc Hammer, Shanti Christo Foundation re: Jeshua Channelings.

Poverty and Peace: Basil Varghese, Brotherhood of St Laurence.

NGO's and Peace: Malcolm Wilton, Manager of World Vision.

Social Forum and Peace : Interviews with FOE, Nuclear Free Australia, International Conflict Resolution Centre, La Trobe, Author on Free Trade.

Peace and Journalism: Interview with Phillip Adams.

Hostages and Peace: Diana Thomas speaking of her kidnapping in Afghanistan.

NGO's and Peace: Sue Mitchell, Executive Director, International Women's Development Agency.

US & World Peace: Discussion on the US election, implications.

Emotional Literacy and Peace: Dr. Sue Roffey, Senior Lecturer in Educational Psychology, University of Western Sydney.

Nonviolent Action and Peace: Ciaron O'Reilly, Ploughshares Movement.

Uncertainty and Peace: Clem Molloy, author 'Understanding Uncertainty'.

Political Integrity: John Hough, author of 'Integrity', fictitious story based on politics in Canberra. Recordings of La Trobe Election Reflection e.g. Judith Brett

BSL Social Policy and Peace: Basil Varghese, Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

Corporate values and spirituality: June Hope on values in Corporate settings.

Education, Clowning and Peace: Susan Carew giving a speech to the Diamond Valley Learning Centre on the theme of 'peace';

Welfare and Peace: Basil Varghese, Education Coordinator, Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

Men and Peace: Robin Cawley from Men Alive, men's group.

Humor and Peace: Clowns talking about creating unity and peace.

Politics and Peace: Review of Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 911.

Inner Peace: Sohalya from the Bahai community.

International Law and Peace: Tariq Ali on the war in Iraq and US Occupation.

Trade and Peace: Mike Cebon – Global Trade Watch (NGO), FTA.

Energy and Peace: Malcolm Green, author of Cosmic Accounting, renewable energy.

Politics and Peace: John Dean, Watergate Lawyer on political corruption.

Love and Peace: Wayne Clayton – Stand for Love (caravan towed across Australia).

Politics, Environment and Peace: Bob Brown, Australian Greens, book launch.

Environmental Products and Peace: Annette Moran – Grand Boulevard Hair Help Salon on environmental products.

National Security and Peace: Lecture and interview with Andrew Wilkie, former Intelligence officer, Office of National Assessment.

Swamaji on World Peace: Interview with Swamaji.

Peace and National Security: Andrew Wilkie on the Decline of Democracy, Former Intelligence Officer, Office of National Assessment.

Politics and Peace: Robert Manne, La Trobe University on politicians and democracy.

Inner Peace: Sister Vedanti, Director of the Brahma Kumaris, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Social Justice and Peace: Mark Zirnsak, Social Justice and Development Officer, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

Yoga and World Peace: Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda or Swamaji – Yoga for Daily Life.

Environment and Peace: Cam Walker, Friends of the Earth.

Nonviolence and Peace: David Hartsough, Nonviolent Peaceforce, USA.

Politics and Peace: David Glanz, Socialist Alliance on The World Social Forum.

Peace Pilgrimage: Updates on the walk with Marcus Atkinson.

Yoga and Peace: Interview with Swamaji, World Peace Guru.

Peace and Conflict Resolution: Stella Cornelius, Director, Conflict Resolution Network.

Peace and Community Groups: Jacque Boulet, Borderlands Community Cooperative.

Trade and Peace: Dee Margetts, Australian Greens; US Free Trade Agreement.

Peace and Bullying: Evelyn Field, Author 'Bully Busting'.

Peace and Catalysts for Change: Danielle Bowler, Pioneers for Change.

Humor and Politics: Overview of humor and comments about Michael Moore.

Community Service and Peace: Judy and Glen Friend, Friends Free Soup Kitchen.

Poverty and Social Justice: Basil Varghese, Brotherhood of St Laurence.

Inner Peace: Anthony Finna, Spiritual CWG group.

Peace Poets and Peace: Michael and Gaye Reynolds, Peace poets.

Peace Pilgrimage: Marcus Atkinson walking to Japan to raise awareness about nuclear issues.

Democracy and Peace: Mike Salvaris, public opinion, direct democracy, academic.

Peace and the Middle East: Maher Mughrabi (Palestinian) and Jason Lasky (Jewish).

Spiritual Peace Activism: Jane Chesneau, former expert on children's violence, clairvoyant.

Children, T.V. Violence and Peace: Dr. Suzie Burke, Conflict Resolution Centre, University of Melbourne.

Nuclear Issues and Peace: Gigi Guya, Medical Association for Prevention of War.

Nonviolent Training and Peace. Discussion on Pt' Chang's nonviolent activism.

Nonviolence and Peace: Dr. Tom Weber, Peace Studies Lecturer, Latrobe University.

Love and Healing: Sheynah Pritchard. Healing practitioner.

Love and Peace: Richard Fletcher – World Peace 2000.

Peace Centre and CERES: Launch of the CERES Peace Centre.

Refugees and Peace: Gabrielle Fakhri, Thornbury Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

Environment and Peace: Andrew Hamilton from CERES Environmental Park.

Education and Peace: Ursula Wilks, Principal, Olympic Village Primary School.

Women and Peace: Reta Kaur from Women for Peace. Nonviolent action.

Nuclear Free Future and Peace: Marcus Atkinson from a nonprofit organization called International Peace Pilgrimage.

UNESCO and Peace: Richard Fletcher – Chairman, World Peace 2000 Messenger UNESCO Manifesto.

Religion and Peace: Sister Patty Fawkner, The Director of Uniya, The Jesuit Social Justice Centre.

Peace & Reconciliation: University of Melbourne Conference entitled 'International Perspectives on Peace and Reconciliation', interviews with selected speakers.

Peacemakers: Jackie Bornstein, Melbourne University discussing her PHD paper on Nobel Peace Prize Winners.

Depleted Uranium: Former US Army Major, Douglas Rokke, Director of the Depleted Uranium Project in the Pentagon and expert on depleted uranium (with presenter Marie Ryan).

Peace and Nonviolence: Introductory program discussing what is peace and nonviolence?

I have provided some examples of memorable moments and interviews I conducted over the years. The experience exposed me to a range of voices whom I would never have met under normal circumstances. I met some very high profile, interesting and passionate people. It is amazing how doors open when you indicate you are in the media. It is an interesting dance.

Interview with Bob Brown: Australian Greens Senator

Bob Brown would be one of the most memorable interviewees I had. The interview discusses his book *Memo for a Saner World*. When you are in the role of journalist you have the opportunity to really look into a person's eyes. I found him to be an honest and informed interviewee. There was a moment after the interview whereby someone gave me his book and it was signed. I was chuffed by that and made some noise of happiness. He was leaving and he looked back at me. All I can say to you is that I saw an 'angelic' being, that was the impression he left me with. I felt he was a man who was here on earth for a great purpose. I really saw something great in him.

Interview with Bob Brown Launching his book 'Memo for a Saner World'

SC: I am here talking with Bob Brown from the Australian Greens and we will be discussing a little bit about his book that he is launching tonight at The Friends of the Earth here in Melbourne called Memo for a Saner World. Can you tell us about the book? Firstly, what prompted you to write it?

BB: I was silly enough to tell Penguin that I would write an environmental textbook and that was a couple of years ago, the due date was March 2002. I soon found I couldn't. I found two things, firstly there were piles of good information in the environment in libraries, in cyber space, anywhere you look. The book evolved into a series of stories, various issues I've been involved in - the battle for the Franklin to the current and ongoing fight for the forests in Tasmania, to George Bush's visit to Canberra last year. It is also a good opportunity to talk about a few issues like Global Warming or the future of Antarctica, those two are very much linked together. Few people realise that when the Antarctic ice cap melts then where we are sitting at the moment we will be lucky to be out of the water, and we are upstairs in Smith Street. There is a little bit about Green philosophies woven through it, it is not a Green textbook and it is not a manifesto. It is a collection of ideas and stories.

SC: How did you feel when you were reflecting on these stories as you were going through producing the book? Did it bring up any new thoughts for you?

BB: Yes it does, as you get older and a few neurons fall out you get a bit wiser, there is not so many things competing in your brain. At least I hope you get a bit wiser. So I was able to, have been able to distil out just a few things. At the back of the book, put in a list of 10 things we Greens would like to see… And right at the back of the book is the Greens Global Charter, which was put together at a fantastic global meeting of 8000 Greens in Canberra in 2001; that really lays out the whole broad spectrum of how the Greens think about the world. It is a very honest and diligent pursuit of real democracy for everyone. One vote one value for each person, social justice, peace and of course the environment. All those things meld in together. That is why we have across the board policies now as an evolving Greens party, the first of which was in Tasmania following the flooding of Lake Pedder. There are Greens parties all around the world. Recently the first Green prime minister appointed in Latvia; 500 Green MPs around the world; growing rapidly in Australia on issues, not just the environment but the public good. I will be one of those, in this coming budget period, who says we should be putting much more money into health and education rather than just tax cuts. Society is about everybody having a good opportunity at all times in their life, to good health, to fulfillment, and to being able to take part in society in a meaningful way.

SC: What would you like people to remember about the book you have written in terms of the key points, that you think are really important that people understand about Green issues?

BB: Two things, first of all, in the book I call the Greens the political anti-depressant, we are optimistic about the future. We don't think that the current economic rationalists or market fundamentalist policies that the big parties have, not just in this country but in America and Europe and Japan, have got a future. Because they are degrading the world too fast and they are dividing us between rich and poor too greatly. That is a recipe for social chaos. The second thing is, the evolution I've had as a pretty shy bloke, didn't know where I was going and a bit depressed about the world some decades ago. I fell in with that early Greens party in Tasmania. It is such a delight now to find so many young people falling in with the expanding Greens party; they are getting on at the start of the footway, where as some of us are looking at stepping off at the other end. It is a fast growing; much needed global political alternative to the big politics of capitalism, and hard hearted and cold hearted capitalism which has the world by the throat at the moment. I am very excited about the future.

SC: Would you say that optimism came from a sense of empowerment because you decided to do something? There would be a lot of people out there who think that there is nothing they can do? What would you say to that?

BB: Well for example on the great forest issues of the day, be it in Victoria or Tasmania, you vote for the chainsaws if you vote for Labor you vote for the chain saws if you vote for Liberal, you vote for the forests if you vote for Greens. You can't get away from it. People are empowered and there is a lot they can do about it. We are all the same on that score. If you feel disempowered you feel depressed, if you get going, even if it is just supporting 'a get up and go political group like the Greens' then you start to feel optimistic. We are about giving security to the future of the planet again. We have the first generation of people right around the world who have been robbed of hope and the future, and we have a policy program which is globally connected, to turn that around, by simply being, using common sense fairness, sense of justice and empowering the next generations to come. The Green's mantra is let's ask ourselves in everything we do will people 100 years from now thank us for doing this? If you can't say yes to that you shouldn't be doing it. Very different to the old parties who say, what is going to help us win the next election?

SC: Well I'd like to say personally thank you for everything you have done, you've done an extraordinary amount of work in your life and inspired many people. I just want to repeat the name of the book Memo for a Saner World by Bob Brown. It has been just released today has it?

BB: I am book signing here, it was launched in Hobart a little while ago. I hope people get something from it. I've certainly enjoyed putting it together and it is a great privilege to be a Greens' Senator at this stage in history, and being able to share these ideas with other people.

SC: That's fantastic and I wish you all the best of luck with the book.

BB: Thank you.

Interview with Phillip Adams: ABC Radio National Broadcaster

Phillip Adams is acknowledged as one of the most experienced broadcasters in Australia, if not the world. Phillip agreed to come on my show. Here is a short overview about him:

> Phillip Adams is a prolific and sometimes controversial broadcaster, writer and film-maker. As presenter of Late Night Live, he has interviewed thousands of the world's most influential politicians,

historians, archaeologists, novelists, theologians, economists, philosophers and sundry conversationalists. 'It's a privilege to present Late Night Live,' he says. 'No radio program, anywhere on earth, casts a wider net.' Phillip's laid-back approach has become a trade-mark for Late Night Live, as has his humor, curiosity, his ability to flesh out rare insights from his guests, and his amazing store of anecdotal knowledge.

Largely self-educated (he left school in his mid-teens) he's the author of over 20 books, including The Unspeakable Adams, Adams Versus God, Talkback, Retreat From Tolerance and A Billion Voices. His writing has appeared in many of Australia's most influential publications and he has been a contributor to The Times and The Financial Times in London, and to the New York Times.[27]

I love the fact he is self-educated, that proves that anyone can reach for success and make it. You do not have to have a degree to be smart, I should repeat that, you do not need a degree to be smart. I found him an intelligent interviewee and had a style that is in-depth, informed, humorous and insightful. So asking him for an interview was really a big step, a big brave step, as he would know if I was any good or not. Thankfully I have innocence and didn't really think about it; actually I just jumped before I thought. That is a good strategy, if you give it any thought you chicken out. He and I spoke for 15 minutes and he shared with me his views on peace.

Interview with Phillip Adams, Radio National, ABC Radio

This was more of a conversation and word play than an interview, and that is the greatness in Phillip's style on radio.

SC: I would like to warmly welcome Phillip Adams to this program Bridges to Peace.

PA: I'm fine thank you.

SC: I could spend a good deal of time outlining your career which is over 40 years.

PA: Spare everyone.

SC: So I am not going to do it. I want to briefly say what I enjoyed about reading your background is the great diversity of interests that you have. People may best know you from your radio program Late Night Live on Radio National, or perhaps they have read your columns in the Age or the Australian, or perhaps they are sceptics, art critics, film buffs or jokers like myself appreciating humor. You can safely say you've made it when the International Astronomical Union named a minor planet orbiting the sun between the orbits of mars and Jupiter.

PA: Not a minor planet more like an asteroid or a haemorrhoid I think.

SC: More like a haemorrhoid ha ha. How did you feel when they approached you with the naming of this planet?

PA: Makes a change from the hate mail.

SC: It does doesn't it? It is somewhat significant.

PA: I'd like to think that it is heading towards earth but it's only going to hit the Liberal party.

27 http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/phillip-adams/2913410

SC: Yes the way conservatism is spreading it may find it may actually find it quite easy to find its mark.

PA: We'd need an awful lot of haemorrhoid would we I think.

SC: I think we may be getting a lot of haemorrhoids ha ha

PA: You and I are peaceful people aren't we?

SC: We are and that is why we have programs like Bridges to Peace to try and encourage people to be more peaceful.

Firstly, how does it feel to live such an interesting life, you've had a broad array of experiences?

PA: It's been fun so far. I once calculated that there are 620,000 hours in the elliptical allotment of 3 score years plus 10. You spent 200,000 of them asleep, you are too young to know what is going so for first 20,000, with onset of Alzheimer's you don't know much about the last 20,000, so not many left. So what you got to do is pack it in, have as much fun as you can, as an atheist I think this is your lot so I've always been intent on maximising activity and interest, and everything is interesting.

SC: At the end of the day that is living your life to the fullest isn't it?

PA: That's right

SC: That's great, and certainly many people are not living their life to the fullest, and perhaps feeling that they have to accept their lot of life.

PA: Or they putty up the cracks or fill the silences with endless vistas of boring repetitive things like footy, which I think is a lamentable waste of time.

SC: I think it would be much more interesting to play the game rather than watch it, myself!

PA: I was no good at playing it I think that is also my attitude to watching it. Bridge building that is fun that is a way to get rid of the surplus energy.

SC: I wanted to make a point, when I first heard you speak recently in Melbourne what impressed me about you was the warmth in which you speak. I felt people would feel quite drawn to you and feel a comfort by your approach which seemed like being a friend. Is that the sort of attitude that you have when speaking over radio where you feel a 'personalness' between yourself and the audience?

PA: When I started working at Radio National, had worked in commercial radio before, but when I went to Radio National I thought I'd call the listener Gladys. The ABC were furious they didn't get it, they thought it was an odd thing to call the listener Gladys, often Gladys is a great big truck driver or dare I suggest a football player. Radio is one to one and I've also vastly preferred it to television, which is not so much a medium but a serious mistake, so when you are on radio you are having a conversation. I've preferred conversation to declamations. Also whether I am broadcasting or writing I try to amuse as well as inform. There is a groping for formula there in all the things I do as a communicator.

SC: That is wonderful. I wonder if your approach would have been more effective had you called

her Aunty Gladys for the ABC?

PA: I think great big blokes built like brick dunnies or football players would find it uneasy. Almost every day I'll be wondering around somewhere and some great big bloke would come up and say 'gidday I am Gladys'. I once took the program on the road during a great attack on the ABC some years ago. I was at the Perth Town Hall packed to the rafters with people worried about the ABC. Every single person had a badge saying I am Gladys. Thought that was lovely.

SC: I'm Gladys and so is my mother. Ha ha

PA: The ABC stopped complaining and now they actually encourage the idea.

SC: I think it is lovely, it is a sense of humor and that seems to be something missing in the media. We don't often hear people making furphies or jokes unless it is a comedy program.

PA: Yeah I think the essential difference between what I do and say, what I used to do or what my colleagues in 2UE Alan Jones and John Laws used to do, you have a respect and affection for the listener rather than a withering contempt. If people who listen to the commercial radio stations knew the derision and hostility in which they are held by their favorite broadcasters they would be appalled. They are seen as idiots basically. They are fed a swill. Whereas I must say in Radio National at least there is a respect for the intelligence and the worth of the listener as individuals.

SC: I wonder if that attitude in commercial stations, even in community radio, is a reflection of how people think of themselves?

PA: I happen to know that some of Australia's most famous broadcasters are consumed with self-hatred. They are wise to hate themselves they are thoroughly detestable people …

SC: … They are perceptive?

PA: If you start off with that attitude to yourself, if you realise what you are doing is meritorious then it has to flow on to your attitudes to your audience.

SC: Ultimately at the end of the day you lose the richness of the interaction of yourself and listeners.

PA: People in any sort of media role, if you are a media gatekeeper it is a privilege. It has got to be cherished and treated as such. Most people live lives of quiet desperation and rage because they are so upset and unhappy about what is going on in the world. Some of us are lucky enough and it is only luck to have a microphone newspaper column, or in my case both where you can say what you want to say and you can express the ideas, and try and have some sort of tiny influence; but at least it is good personal therapy.

SC: Without doubt and it is also expansive of our own learning when we are talking to people we learn so much.

PA: I learn stuff from Gladys every day.

SC: Good ol Gladys. You've interviewed numerous people from all around the world.

PA: About 15,000-20,000 I think I am, I'd be in the Guinness Book of Records if there is one. I think without question I would have interviewed more important people in any realm of human activity than anyone else in the business anywhere.

SC: That is a lot of Gladys's isn't it?

PA: I interview the Henry Kissingers, Madeleine Albrights, obscure philosophers, theologians, scientists of all sorts, poets; it is a marvellous opportunity there is no-one that I want to talk to, barring language barriers, that we can't get. So four nights a week, endlessly repeated, I can talk to anyone anywhere on anything, and what an opportunity that is.

SC: Of course there is a rich universe of ideas within every person, I tend to see people as portraits they are all colors, no-one is better than anyone else but we each have a different story, each of us.

PA: I've just written a column based on a sentence I'd heard one night driving back to the city from my farm. An old gentleman, an Australian composer, whose name I didn't recognise said simply 'Everyone can do something better than I can'. The truth of that overwhelmed me when I thought of all the people I interact with on our farm; people who work there and do specific jobs, a lot of these people are totally and absolutely uneducated, all have a gift for something whether it is building a fence up a cliff, whether it is mustering cattle. It amazes me the breadth and variety of skills that humans have.

SC: But If they are unable to see their own greatness because they have believed what they have heard from other people then they never get to fulfil their potential.

PA: We have to celebrate our fellow humans. Not all of them some of them should be energetically denigrated.

SC: Well I think to express yourself and express truth is important, if we all spoke openly we'd all learn a great deal from each other. If you look around the world today, there are so many issues talked to people about - Iraq, environmental degradation, life is getting faster, we are getting less money and there is an air of uncertainty in respect of the future. You have frequently traveled around the country talking to many audiences. What do you find people are concerned about?

PA: They are concerned about family matters, concerned about cosmology, concerned about what happens after they die, they are concerned about everything. The overload at the moment is so enormous that people are tending to switch off. In political terms what Hugh Mackay describes as disengagement is happening, which helps John Howard get re-elected. People have a plethora, a huge agenda of concerns, interests and anxieties, there is no simple answer to that. Anyone, if you sit down with them has a long list of concerns, everything from environmental, global warming, racism, Iraq, North Korea, you name it they are concerned about it.

SC: Do you think the overload comes from so much negative attitudes out in the press and the media where people gain a lot of their information from?

PA: Well certainly media is adversarial and dramatic, there is not, peace is not as interesting as war not as photogenic, agreement isn't as intriguing as argument, so yes the world does get distorted by the prism of the media inevitably.

SC: Why can't peace or positive experiences or stories be exciting for the public?

PA: I don't think it has ever been sufficiently exciting even in the arts. Think about songs love songs, a promising area, most love songs are about the failed lost love, the pains of love, there are very few songs about I am having a great day today, I have to pick the kids up after school that will be fun. Even songs are about pressures, fracture lines, miseries, failures. Human beings tend to base their

art and politics on tension rather than on celebration.

SC: Certainly that is a form of therapy by releasing through poetry or music.

PA: But at least poetry and music turns pain into art that is why people write songs I guess or sing them.

SC: Absolutely it would be nice to see a little more inspiration, sure there are plenty of stories where people are inspired in different ways.

PA: That is what I've been trying to tell what is left of the Labor party, the real problem in the country is we lack, if you like lack, a politics of meaning. People want bad news, they want to be inspired, want to lift their game, their eyes to the horizon. Very little opportunity in politics presents themselves to do it. People are looking not simply for bigger tax breaks in last minute election policies they are looking for some sort of national vision. I think that is one of the things I think any thinking person is trying to contribute towards.

SC: That's right I think that type of environment is created by that adversarial mentality in a sense rather than really looking at solving problems, creating a win/lose situation, it would be nice to see a win/win mentality.

PA: Having said that I also believe that people shouldn't run away from conflict, you only get to change, only get social progress evolution of any sort, through the tensions between, within and through argument that you get any sort of resolution. One of the other things that are happening by the moment, some people are so overwhelmed by conflict that they try to remove themselves utterly and totally from it, and devote their lives to well, shopping or sitcoms on television, I think that is a fate worse than death. The trick is of course to make sure that the conflict stays on the sane side, or it tips into violence, war, bigotries of one sort or another.

SC: I think that people turn that conflict into denial. As you say it is like putting your head in the sand?

PA: Whenever I get someone on the program who is a bridge builder. I had a Muslim scholar the other night who has been denied entrance into George Bush's America. Although his whole role in Europe is to try and conciliate between the Christian world and the Muslim world. Whenever I get anyone who is in the business of bridge building the reaction is always quite extraordinary and grateful. People want to hear that there are possible resolutions. When I talk about conflict resolution or get someone on the program who has been involved in that in some theatre of war or tension, people love to hear it, they find great hope in the idea of reconciliation in its broader sense.

SC: Absolutely all of us are not educated in the skills of mediation where we learn how to listen to each other, to communicate in ways that is not harmful.

PA: There is a tendency to blow the stack, road rage, the world is full of people who have very little capacity to control anger, they are straight onto the hot button of aggression. We are not taught to handle tensions, not taught to calibrate our responses. I was taught many many years ago, on the first days of Australia Council to say 'with great respect' before you criticise someone, it is an old legal trick, with the greatest respect. There is a truth in it if you do in fact say something quiet and gentle to an antagonist and then make your point you will do a lot better than yelling at them.

SC: Absolutely and certainly Gandhi had that attitude of loving the opponent…

PA: I find loving them a bit difficult.

SC: Maybe liking them?

PA: I've tried to love John (Howard), I tried to love Phil Ruddock, I've tried to love George Bush but I must say I failed utterly.

SC: Yes it is understandable if people are projecting…

PA: I am fond of you already but we haven't even met.

SC: We have met once very briefly.

PA: Oh yeah. Apart from that.

SC: Thank you that is very kind of you. When I introduce my program I introduce it from a quote from Gandhi which is to be the change you wish to see in the world. I can see very clearly in your life that you have walked the talk and talked the walk. What would you say to people to inspire them to be active in creating peace and nonviolence?

PA I've got an aphorism that I frequently use at the end of a speech, or a letter, it is something Pablo Casals said in his 80 something birthday when the ancient cellist was being interviewed by the media in Madrid, he was reviewing the world around him, Spain and the wider world, it was a pretty gloomy picture, and he stopped and thought two sentences which don't seem to fit together but they do in my view perfectly. He said: 'The situation is hopeless we must take the next step'. That is my formulation in almost any area, of any activity that humans are involved in, things are crook they really are but that mustn't stop you from taking the next step from having a go from trying to make it better. It is not an event it is a process, it goes on and on and on beyond one's personal life span ad infinitum, there will always be problems that seem and are insurmountable that is not excuse for not having a crack at them. Could be an asteroid or hemaroid from outer space.

SC: Could be Phillip Adams. Duck. That is lovely advice. When you look over your life what gave you confidence to pursue your dreams?

PA: I was escaping a from a hellish home life I had a psychopathic step father who made my life a constant misery. I was an abused child, not sexually but psychological abused, so I had to work out a way of dealing with that. The central fact of my life was when I was five I discovered that I couldn't believe, wouldn't believe, in God so I had to formulate a philosophy, a belief system to accommodate living in a meaningless universe so I had the cosmological thing to deal with plus an intimate conflict to deal with. I found that writing was the way, if was my, if you like, my therapy putting words and thoughts together and that got me going in all sorts of strange ways.

SC: So you found meaning in your writing. Is that where the meaning was?

PA: You look for it, you grope for it. Meaning is like rainbows, a bit out of reach. The pursuit of it is fascinating, I still live in a universe which doesn't have an author, or a purpose or a destiny and it seems to me that any meaning you have in your life has to be subjective, you have to create one that fits your own circumstances and beliefs. Ultimately the whole kit and caboodle comes to nothing, the second law of thermodynamics applies and at some point down the track every last atom in universe will be still dead and silent, so it is not personal death it is cosmic death, the destiny if you like of the whole system. Within that we have to find meanings and purposes and everything from

the love of a child to even, dare I suggest, the love of a country.

SC: So I guess that is very much connected with that emotional feeling like feeling something for something gives meaning would you say?

PA: Absolutely yeah. We are wired for meaning, in any case it is part of our evolutionary heritage it is the way humans function.

SC: Of course that is what applies our sense of worth. If we say something is meaningless, like for instance the war in Iraq no one cares about people being cared there, we accord no meaning no value for that. For those people who really resonate or empathy some pain for these people they are projecting a sense of meaning or value on those people.

PA: Well said.

SC: So everybody can find meaning, it is a question of observing…

PA: ...they can try and find it, that is for sure, or their lives dare I say it will be meaningless.

SC: Some people think that peace is anti-war, some people also think it is social harmony, some think it lies within each of us. What do you think creates peace?

PA: I've never known peace, I've never lived in a truly peaceful society I've never had the inner peace that allegedly you achieve with meditation or chanting OM, I am not interested in stillness, I am not interested in inertia, I am not interested in endless tranquillity but I'd like to live in a world where there is always volatility, excitement, enthusiasm, ideas, argument but this is conducted, as I said earlier, without resort to violence. There are times when I must say I would be willing to pick up a gun, god forbid that would arise, I am not a pacifist you know but if I am in Poland and Hitler is marching in, I will fight him. But I certainly think that war, which is deemed to be the opposite of peace, is not only the last resort but often it is the first refuge of the scoundrel. These days of course technologically wars are unthinkable. Of course you don't need technologies even for genocide, a million people died in Rwanda being hit on the head with axes.

SC: Yes so certainly in those places there is no love, there is no sense of peace, people in violent conflict with each other seemingly trying to have power over another in order to achieve what they think is their goal and ultimately never finding the peace that all of us are seeking. It is interesting. Would you say that peace could possibly be balance or happiness along those lines?

PA: You could say that. I think it is the notion of not being at war, and that certainly is a totally inadequate definition. Peace should be creative as well as passive, it should be a time of optimism and creativity.

SC: Absolutely where that lovely creative tension in the sense of conflict as well. Thank you for your time this morning.

PA: Peace be with you.

Interview with Hon. Mark Latham: Opposition Labor Leader

Another interesting media experience occurred after the lecture given by Mark Latham at La Trobe University. I found myself joining the mainstream media scrum engaged in what is termed in the media, as a doorstop interview, with Mark Latham. He was the then Opposition Leader of the Australian Labor Party.

This was a quote I really liked from his lecture *'democratic reform as a mainstream political issue. That is why I have placed it at the forefront of my Labor Party leadership. Many great things need to be done… but their potential will not be realized if the Parliament is weak and our democracy is shallow.'*

It was interesting, as a member of the public, to be in a media scrum. I smile recalling how as a group we all put our microphones in and competed for a question. In my sense of humor I imagined if I had a nice fluffy mike and was wearing a clown suit, how they would all react. We take this life so seriously don't you think? We feel ourselves so important and use the power of the media to convey the public's right to know, but in reality it is our right to know given our agenda. The truth is the media are interested in ratings. Drama sells it seems. What I tried to do with my program was ask questions that were not about ratings but about our possible future. I asked Mark Latham if he had heard about a Department of Peace as advanced by the US Democrat Dennis Kucinich? He said, 'No'. I reflected on the other Australian media outlets, would they have asked that question? I don't think so. It is easy to understand how questioning is affected by commercial, political, educational and organisational agendas and interests. Peace is not a media topic, yet I was advancing peace in the media because I was from the public.

Interview with John Dean: former Whitehouse Counsel for Nixon

I interviewed John Dean, the former White House Counsel to former United States President Richard Nixon, at La Trobe University. I was interviewing him about his book Worse than *Watergate: The Se***cret** *Presidency of George W. Bush.* **I aired the broadcast on the 6th of April 2006.**

Below is my radio introduction prior to the John Dean interview, providing information on the contents of the book *Worse than Watergate: The Secret Presidency of George W. Bush.* After the introduction is the actual interview, as follows:

Radio Introduction:

> *…I will read some key issues raised in John Dean's book covering the issues of secrecy in government, where is the line between privacy and the right to know everything? As we saw with the Monica Lewinsky Affair with President Clinton, the inner world of his personal life came under scrutiny. Others state that any aspirant to the Whitehouse must be prepared to lose their private life.*
>
> *John Dean discusses the current Whitehouse in respect to the secrecy of personal lives and uses the examples of George W. Bush's character and points out that the earlier years of Bush formed his character and values. In the book he describes George W. Bush as refusing to answer questions about his background and character. Bush was forced to admit his long concealed drink driving arrest and further questions about his military service and whether Bush went AWOL. He goes on to explore Bush's business dealings and the suggestion that he has traded on the family name and influence, being the recipient of the kindness of rich men. He discusses Bush owning the Texas Rangers and his first business at Arbusto, later renamed to Bush Exploration an oil company. The company was merged into Spectrum 7 with Bush as chairman and CEO. This company*

failed. Another oil exploration company was Harken Oil, which wanted the Bush name. George Soros, a part owner, admitted that, 'We were buying political influence.'

John Dean indicates that Bush was a failed businessman and quotes David Rubenstein, a co-founder and Managing Director of the Carlyle Group, a group of top level former Washington officials who, until recently, touted Bush's father. Other reports revealed former Prime Minister John Major, James Baker (former Chief of Staff) and it was found out that Osama bin Laden's brother was involved. Rubenstein described Bush as coming to all the meetings, told lots of jokes: 'not that many clean ones, and after a while I kind of said to him, after about three years, ..I'm not sure this is really for you... I don't think you're adding much value to the Board… you don't know that much about the company'. Business people such as Rubenstein know talent when they see it, and Bush didn't have it. Bush after that became President.

John Dean discusses Bush purchasing the Texas Rangers, a baseball team. They wanted to buy a new stadium whereby the Rangers put up part of the money to construct the stadium and the citizens of Arlington put in the rest using half cent of the sales tax allocated for economic development. According to the American Spectator, Bush and his partners were to receive $135 million from the city of Arlington of an estimated $189 million. The Rangers would not produce the money up front, rather over time in the form of a $1 a ticket surcharge, and the Rangers would pay $5 million a year in rent for 12 years (60 million) then purchase the stadium at the end of their lease for nothing. So for every dollar Bush and partners put into the stadium they got to take more than $2 back from every Arlington taxpayer. At the end of the day the fans and the city would not have a single asset to call their own.

According to John Dean in his book, whilst this deal was going on Bush was still on the Board of Directors of Harken as well as being on the Board's Audit Committee. In June 1990 he sold 212,140 Harken shares at $4 each in a private transaction for $848,560. Eight days after the sale, Harken reported a $23.2 million loss and the share price fell to $2.37. Bush used his proceeds to pay off his half million dollar loan and pocketed nearly $350,000. The question was did Bush take advantage of his insider information when selling his Harken stock? John Dean says, 'Of course he did.' The Securities and Exchange Commission looked into this and no enforcement action was called for, nor did any U.S. Attorney convene a grand jury. Dean says of course all those people worked for his father. Many of the facts of this sale remain buried and Bush stonewalled any efforts to find out more. He goes onto to say that these conflicts-of-interest troubled no-one. Bush's stonewalling has kept the truth hidden.

These deals reveal issues surrounding the character of George Bush, and John Dean indicates that Bush would not qualify to sit in any President's cabinet and it is doubtful he could withstand an FBI background check, which you need to work for a President, but not to be the President. Few potential Presidents could carry the bag Bush does, filled with dirty laundry right into the Oval Office with no-one stopping to check it. Now with the powers of the Presidency he is even better able to keep his past hidden with Dick Cheney a man more secretive than Bush, his mentor, and the one that knows the workings of government secrecy and stonewalling.

John Dean places Cheney under the spotlight discussing the concealment of Cheney's health. He states that Cheney is doing what he did best, operating out of sight but running the Whitehouse. He says Bush is the nation's Chairman of the Board and Cheney America's Chief Executive. Cheney according to USA Today 'you name it Cheney runs it' from everything from appointments, to budgets to congressional relations, resolving disputes between cabinet officers, he is dominant on the National Security Council. Cheney headed key policy task forces from terrorism to energy.

He is The Whitehouse's key lobbyist on Capitol Hill with offices in both the Senate and the house Representatives where legislators and party heads prefer to meet him than the President. Cheney is considered a shrewd political operator who told Bush he has no interest in being President, understood his power would be greater if he acted as if he had none at all. Dean indicates that he can operate as the most powerful Vice President in American history referring to him as a co-President.

Military

He mentions that he has proceeded from poster boy of the Military Industrial Complex to the godfather of almost every industry providing services to the American military. Dean discusses Cheney's former company Halliburton, which has been reported as profiting from the war in Iraq.

Some may recall that the American nonviolence activist Scott Parkin was removed from Australia as a threat to national security. When I interviewed him on this program he mentioned his protest activities in Sydney against Halliburton. He was deported from Australia under the ASIO Act.

So who is Haliburton? Dick Cheney was the CEO and later as Chairman of the Board of Halliburton from 1995 to August 2000. This company is an energy industry giant. Cheney was hired by Halliburton not for his business skills but for his Rolodex given his extensive contacts, particularly in Arab oil nations from his tenure as Secretary of Defence. Cheney's contacts gave Halliburton a level of access that no-one else in the oil sector can duplicate. In 1998 after three years in the oil business Cheney shared with a group of oil industry executives the essence of his business philosophy… it all boiled down to business: 'You've got to go where the oil is.' That meant trading with the enemy and regimes ruled by leaders who employed unspeakable horrors against their people, proved to be good places to do business. Under Cheney, Halliburton did business with Iraq, Iran, Libya, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Azerbaijan to name a few of the countries that use its oil to exploit its people, countries notorious for violating human rights. Several enemies of the US.

Media

Bush like Nixon, until he was weakened by Watergate, uses sheer intimidation when dealing with the press. If a reporter does a story the Whitehouse doesn't like his or her telephone calls are not returned. If the President doesn't like a question, he'll openly take a shot at the reporter. Matha Brant, Newsweek's Whitehouse correspondent has said we're more dependent than ever on Bush's top aides because everything is so closely held. Hopefully you're not just the tool of the administration.

It was an interesting irony, when at John Dean's lecture at La Trobe University, I asked him if I could record the talk for community radio. He said, 'No.' I have to smile today. I approached him later and asked for an interview. He was very tired and agreed making the comment: *'I really wish I had let you tape inside the lecture…'* Given the subject matter of his talk on secrecy; and the fact I was representing community radio (public interest), it was ironic that he had originally said no.

Interview with John Dean former Whitehouse Counsel to US President Richard Nixon, discussing the secrecy and \abuse of power in the US Government

SC: I am here with John Dean who was a former Counsel to Richard Nixon and he has been talking

about his book Worse than Watergate and the subtitle the Secret Presidency of George W. Bush. Nice to see you John and thanks so much for your time.

JD: It's a pleasure to come out here to this community particularly to visit a university, I've had a nice day here.

SC: We are privileged to have you. Can you tell us a little bit about your book, some of the key points you would really like people to understand given your experience being so close to Richard Nixon and the Watergate affair.

JD: I really wish I had let you tape inside the lecture I could have given you about 45 minutes of material that I just gave the students. But in a nutshell I've written a book that deals with the fact that Watergate, whilst as bad as it was, nobody died during Watergate. We have a situation now because of the secrecy and the consequences of that secrecy that are resulting in the deaths of both Americans and people all over the world, that is a very a dire situation, and as I lay out in the book it could get worse before than get better, because I am not just dealing with more than just Iraq I am dealing with issues that relate to the environment and other secret policies that just become the way and means of this administration.

SC: You mentioned in your lecture about in a sense the media, and how the media hasn't really been asking questions, you made a few points about what you thought might be the reasons. Could you repeat those?

JD: I don't know the precise reasons, I do know the American media, the mainstream media has largely ignored the issues of secrecy in this Presidency and only recently with the 9/11 investigation are they starting to press to get some answers. Now with the release of pictures showing the abuses in the Iraqi prisons, again they are saying what is going on here? They have just started this they have really given this administration a pass. I don't know if it is generational? I don't know if it is because of the consolidation of corporate media? I don't know if it is because of an overreaction to what they did with Clinton, how they stayed on his case for sensationalism that pushed it way beyond the limits of what was necessary to cover a story. Maybe all of those things, maybe none of those? I can't get the people in the press core to explain it to me, they don't really know it themselves. Other than they recognise it is a problem. Some have said thank you for raising it in a book.

SC: You indicated in your lecture, under Nixon everything was recorded, it was probably the most recorded Presidency in the United States whereas contrasted by the Bush Administration would you consider this to be the most tightly secret Administration that you have encountered.

JD: As I explained in the book I've never seen an administration or presidency in a Whitehouse as secret as this one. The Nixon taping system obviously revealed all the secrets. No President is ever going to do that again, that proved to be a disaster, Nixon never planned for those tapes to come out. In a sense they are unfair because he probably wouldn't have said many of the things he said had he known the machine was running, even though it was running and he was aware generally of it, it was voice activated system so he lost the active thought of doing it. Unlike some Presidents, who have recorded, have hit a switch or had a secretary do so. Nixon system was voice activated, so in times he clearly remembers he is recording himself in other times he has clearly forgotten that he is doing so, as I said that will never happen again. Hopefully I won't have to write a volume 2 of this book I've done.

SC: Thank you so much of your time and have a great tour whilst you are here.

Interview with Scott Ritter Lecture on Illegal US Wars

I had the opportunity to record a lecture by Scott Ritter the former US weapons inspector in Iraq. He spoke at the University of Melbourne. Later I was invited to meet with him personally and had an informal discussion about Peace Education.

It is essential to a real world at peace that the truth emerges and the public is empowered and informed about decisions that have been made in their name. The Australian Government at the time was a strong and uncritical supporter of United States policy during the Iraq disarmament crisis and one of only four nations to commit combat forces to the 2003 invasion of Iraq in any substantial numbers, under the operational codename Operation Falconer.

Scott Ritter had an extensive and distinguished career in government service. He is a ballistic missile technology expert who worked in military intelligence during a 12-year career in the U.S. armed forces including assignments in the former Soviet Union and the Middle East. A former major in the U.S. Marines, Ritter spent several months of the Gulf War serving under General Norman Schwarzkopf with Marine Central Command headquarters in Saudi Arabia. In 1991, Ritter joined the United Nations weapons inspections team otherwise known as UNSCOM. He has taken part in more than 30 inspection missions, 14 of them as Chief.

Scott Ritter stated at the end of this speech: '…if debate, discussion and dialogue, freedom of speech is sedition, so be it, let it begin here.'

Below is are excerpts from the transcript I produced of Scott Ritter's lecture at the University of Melbourne.

Scott Ritter interview: Former Senior Weapons Inspector in Iraq

…What did the United Nations do, remember that thing called the rule of law. If you are going to pass a law you got to enforce it if it is going to have any value. So we passed a law saying Iraq must be disarmed. We caught the Iraqis red-handed lying about their weapons of mass destruction, about nuclear weapons. At that point in time you should pull the weapons inspectors out, bring the military back in and solve this problem once and for all. Get rid of the man responsible for telling the lies, Saddam Hussein. You would think if the President of the United States policy was regime change, America would jump at an opportunity to do this. No, we didn't want to go to war against Iraq we just wanted Saddam gone and the CIA said he'll be gone in 6 months. We passed the resolution in April, this confrontation is taking place in June, the President is going to wait we got 4 months to go, let's not confront Iraq on this one, let's back off. We'll pass a new resolution that says shame on you for lying. Now you have to submit an honest declaration, no more lies this time.

Then they did an amazing thing that many people who study disarmament really don't pick up on, they transferred the burden of responsibility for disarmament away from the Iraqis and onto the shoulder of the inspectors. You see for inspections to work we got to have access to the information necessary to complete the mission. Think of it as an automobile engine. Inspections are an engine, for that engine to function you need fuel, good information is the fuel that makes the inspection engine work. The Iraqis were responsible for submitting good information, a declaration listing the totality of their weapons, but they lied, the fuel is contaminated the inspection engine is not working too well. But what the Security Council said is inspectors you have to go into Iraq and find the hidden weapons. Look at the inherent contradiction, on the one hand they say Iraq you must submit a declaration listing the totality of your weapons, on the other hand, they say inspectors you have to go into Iraq and look for hidden weapons, what does this mean? That nothing the Iraqis ever sub-

mit will be acceptable. The inspectors will always be looking for the negative, seeking to prove the negative and that is a proposition that will never succeed, it will never function. But the inspectors tried to do this anyways.

To do this we need that good fuel, the Iraqis aren't giving us good fuel, where do you get it? The Iraqis are denying you information, you have to gain access to the information the Iraqis are denying you, you need intelligence capability. You need people who can practice the art of espionage to gain access to denied information in denied areas. If you want to do conventional weapons inspections you need experts. If you want to go after chemical weapons, get a chemist. Look at my resume I am not a chemist. If you want to go after biological weapons, get a biologist, I am not one of those either. If you are after nuclear weapons get a nuclear physicist. Right again, not me, and I'm darn sure not a rocket scientist so I am not good on that ballistic missile thing either. I am a spy. I am an intelligence officer. I do it better than just about anybody. You want to go after denied information in denied areas, you bring in the spies. They brought in me to do that job, my job was to create an intelligence capacity to gain access to the information the inspectors needed to complete their mission, as difficult a mission as it was…

And use Australia, you wanna be concerned about this, what did your SAS regiment do during the Gulf War? They subjected your boys, put them in harm's way, to go into Western Iraq to do what? Intercept scud missiles that could be fired from Western Iraq into Israel. What scud missiles? According to the estimate provided by Richard Armitage to your wonderful John Howard, 12-20 scud missiles. Where did they get that number? I just told you, they made it up. Your boys were put in harm's way on the basis of a lie. If that doesn't shock and disturb you and make you angry, I don't know what will. It is not just ballistic missiles ladies and gentlemen, I can make the same case, the same sad tale for chemical weapons, biological weapons and nuclear weapons. The bottom line is by 1995 the CIA knew for absolute certainty that Iraq had been fundamentally disarmed. It wasn't about disarmament, the CIA wasn't there to disarm Iraq.

Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. I question the true intent of my Government when it comes to dealing with Saddam Hussein in the Middle East. And once we invaded Iraq and it turned out there were no weapons, I pointed out the lies of my government and I labelled the war that we were waging in Iraq as illegitimate war of aggression. According to your laws I could have been prosecuted for sedition. And the amazing thing is every word I said before the war turned out to be true. So the sedition laws far from protecting the security of democracies can actually be used to stifle truth, that is the biggest sedition of all. If you live in a representative democracy…

Informal discussion with Scott Ritter about Peace Education

After Scott Ritter's speech at the University of Melbourne I was invited with a few other peace activists to have dinner with him. It is a funny story so I will tell it here.

My colleague Bill, who is a unionist and the co-organiser of Scott Ritter's speaking tour in Australia, informed me about Scott Ritter speaking at the University of Melbourne. On hearing this I had the strongest feeling I wanted to be alone with Scott but had no idea why or what I would say. Being on community radio I asked Bill if I could interview him.He told me to come to the lecture. After Scott finished speaking I asked Bill again if I could interview him. He said Scott was tired and Bill asked, 'What are you doing tomorrow night?' I said, 'Nothing', he then said: 'Do you want to come out for dinner with Scott Ritter?' I said, 'Yes'. That for me was a great opportunity to get to know this guy. I didn't know much about him, I was just going on a gut feeling.

The next night I turn up at a restaurant in the centre of Melbourne. I remember sitting down first and willing in my mind for Scott to sit next to me. Indeed he did. I listened to the conversation around the table and marvelled at a book that was given to him, something to do with the military, it was given by peace people. I can't recall the name of it right now but I remember thinking 'why don't they get him Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance?' Scott had just published his book Waging Peace: *The Art of War for the Antiwar Movement*. I had not read his book but looking at the title today I would have said we don't need to duplicate military strategies in the peace area. Peace has nothing to do with fear or winning. Perhaps in some activist quarters they saw themselves at war, but the peace I am interested in is beyond the drama of us against them, it is about unity. I had just finished studying Gandhi so fighting was not in my trajectory. I was familiar with some of the war based strategic terminology in business books, as business men fancied themselves at war with other companies. Boys will be boys, I have to add here with a smile.

Anyway, I recall him turning to me and we had a conversation. I can't remember the content today but he said at the end that we were saying the same thing. I know I did mention Gandhi and would have said 'there is no enemy.' I am sure that would have challenged his thinking.

Anyway, I asked him for an interview thinking we would go upstairs in the restaurant. Instead he invited me back to his hotel room. He and I left the restaurant together. We chatted as we walked and in retrospect I recall my own naivety believing he was looking around as a tourist. The world of spooks and intelligence gathering was in movies for me, I had no idea of the reality of who I was walking with, nor his background and the fact that he had been a CIA spy. He was familiar with the FBI, the CIA and the military. He was considered one of their top spies. So I am walking along innocently next to this six foot plus man heading for his hotel room. Now we go up to the 10th floor or so, and I suddenly realise that I have left the mini disk for recording the interview in the restaurant. I asked him if we could ring the restaurant, so he did. No-one answers. Then I thought maybe they are just ignoring the phone. So I suggested we go back to the restaurant and check. You can imagine the surveillance watching us. Good exercise for all. Anyway we head back there and blow me down the lights are all out. Only 10 minutes had passed, they worked fast to get home. I look wistfully at my seat and know my mini disk is there. I smile at myself, this is only the interview of the century with this guy. I leave my mini disk behind. Anyway, I look at Scott and say: 'I left my power chord in your hotel room'. Now today I still smile at this, I am sure at the time he was thinking – this is either one smart spy or one stupid clown. Of course the latter was true. Anyway, he must have liked this silly clown as he bought me a lemonade and we went up to his hotel room. I watched him in the lift as he scanned around. I marvel at my innocence. He would be thinking about surveillance, I see a lift. We go into his room and I am sure he mentioned to me he had checked for bugs. This was not a movie it was the real thing. I do know from his lecture he did

a deal with the CIA so they didn't kill him. Living life dangerously, you would have to be hyper vigilant.

Anyway, I sat on the floor and drank my lemonade. We spoke about peace actually. I didn't really need to know about Iraq, my passion is peace. Well there I was alone with Scott, later my original intention came back to me. I did know what to talk about, I spoke about REAL HOPE my peace, nonviolence and anti-bullying program. I also told him about being a clown. I recall him sitting opposite me on the couch. He was a big man and an excellent listener, which intelligence officer would not be? I am a good talker so if anyone wants to torture me for information, just sit me down and offer me a lemonade and I will talk anyway, I am very visible. I have nothing to hide actually.

I can't recall all we spoke about but I do remember the two of us really looking at each other, as we were so different, from completely different worlds. I asked him what it was like to be a soldier. I put the scenario to him: 'What if someone picks you for a fight in a pub – what do you do?'. He said, 'I pay my tab and leave', I said, 'What if you don't?'. He said: How do I explain the dead body to the policeman?'. I reflected on myself and thought I wouldn't even step on a bug, yet this guy could snap your neck and kill you in a second. He is highly trained. I am a peace clown. Such a juxtaposition.

Anyway he asks me: 'What is it like to be a clown?' he commented he had never met one. This is often put to me. I told him we love everyone, we have no enemies. This is true. My goal in life is to simply love people. I told him about my trip to Russia with Dr. Patch Adams and the people I had met, my time in hospitals as a clown and the great love I experience from people. I look into so many eyes and I only see beauty in the world. It must have been so strange for him to meet me. He offered for me to sit on a chair as I just sat happily on the floor. We talked more about what peace really means. I recall at the end he said, 'I will have to rewrite my book'. Perhaps I had given him a perspective on the real meaning of peace, that it really comes from within us. We can't wage peace or force it, we can only be it and then our world changes. As a clown it is great training as I practice unconditional love of all people. I sit with drunks on the street, I talk to people from different cultures, all ages and shapes and sizes. I learn to be universal in my approach, I start to realise the world is my family. I see beauty and I feel gentleness as my only intent is to give love. Of course the military is the opposite as they are prepared to fight, they are armed and they are watching for an enemy, you can imagine our two mindsets coming together like different planets. Yet he had stepped across those lines of control and was thinking about peace. He had stepped out of conformity and challenged the most powerful government on earth. He was a whistle blower and I saw his raw courage at the lecture. I found myself admiring such a man yet I knew I had no idea what it is like to kill someone. He did say in his lecture that war is disgusting, it is horrible but in his view it is necessary. Today I would say to him all war must go on paper, it is absolutely not necessary. We have to deal with our negativity within, we have to look at group thinking and the perceptions of the other. We have to learn how to communicate for truth rather than for being right, that is a form of righteousness which is what prevents us from seeing both sides. Conflict resolution is about learning to hear the other; it is not about directing false intelligence to confuse the other, or seeking to find ways to demonise the other or putting resources into beating the other. The new world paradigm will be truly about loving the other as yourself. The last two words are the key here, we have to learn to love ourselves. As clowns we are like mirrors to people, we help them to see their beauty. We see only beauty because within ourselves we feel love and we have turned it inward, this creates an empty space whereby we can give to others. After I clown with people I feel totally fulfilled and complete as a person. I realise that love is not only the answer, it is who I am when I live my truth. The military concept is an illusion as we learn to hate the other, as we hate ourselves. The people lining up for military service are often young and have no idea of what they are lining up for. Many think they get discipline from the military, they learn to be men. For me violence is not the nature of man, what I have seen is that gentleness, wisdom and kindness is the nature of men. I realise that facing fear is the nature of humans, including men and women. When you face fear you grow as a person. Facing fear is looking at what

makes us scared, why we feel tense, why we seek to hurt another, who we are, these are important signposts to learning about the true peace of human nature. Some have already typecast peace as weakness, or pacifism or cowardice. It is often associated with the feminine. Yet I have seen incredibly courageous women facing life and raising kids alone, working with difficult bosses, and overcoming prejudice in many different forums. They face fear and do it anyway. Yet when it is nonviolent, that is true courage. It was Scott Ritter at his lecture that brought up nonviolent activists and how they faced what they feared without weapons, he saw this as the greatest courage. I would agree. It was strange for me to be with someone like him, but there was a beautiful innocence in this meeting and I felt in my heart that it was meant to be.

I gave him some of my poetry and indicated he must be tired and had to catch a plane the next day. He kindly walked me downstairs and we had a big hug in the foyer. Then I left inspired and in deep reflection about the experience I just had.

A few days later reality seeped in, you couldn't get a hotter topic than Scott Ritter. I wondered which intelligence agencies would have been spying on us? I thought about ASIO (Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation) and CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). I realised I was metaphorically above the radar and there would be a nice file with my name on it in some office in central intelligence. I just hope they put some balloons in there and a smiley face. I smiled at my own naivety but I felt good that I had met someone and showed him what peace looks and feels like through a peace clown's eyes. It has nothing to do with strategy or winning. In turn he taught me what peace is not and gave me an insight into the mindsets of war. It was a very proactive exchange between two people whom, under normal circumstances, would never have met.

Interview with Major Douglas Rokke: Depleted Uranium Project, Pentagon

Another related interview about Iraq concerned the use of depleted uranium. I met Major Douglas Rokke at his lecture in Melbourne and invited him for an interview. Here are excerpts from his interview with Marie Ryan and myself. The issues are still relevant today.

Interview with Major Douglas Rokke - No Duty of Care for US Service Personnel or Civilians Exposed to Depleted Uranium

Q: Can you tell us briefly about your background?

DR:…little bit of background, during Gulf War 1 I was a US Army Health Physicist and I was specifically assigned to clean up the Uranium munitions mass contamination friendly fire contamination from Gulf War 1, that dealt with the United States Military personnel that were wounded or injured during friendly fire using uranium munitions. In 1994-95 I was the Director of the United States Army in the US Department of Defence Depleted Uranium Project. My specific task as Director was to develop the education and training necessary to ensure safe operations of everything around uranium munitions when used, before they're used or after they're used, and also specifically tasked how to clean up uranium munitions contamination. What I have learned from first-hand experience, both from cleaning and doing the research and putting the program together and my own adverse health effects from uranium exposure, is uranium munitions are a catastrophe they leave a trail of health and environmental effects that very simply rule out their use forever.

Q: What is the state of play at the moment?

DR: The United States has deliberately used uranium munitions during Gulf War 1 through Iraq, Saudi

Arabia and Kuwait. That was in 1990-91. The first use of uranium munitions was by Israel against the Egyptians in the Sinai desert during the 1973 war. Again the medical evidence, the photographic evidence, absolutely confirms that, and then what happened is that in 1993 the United States was going to use them in Somalia on the horn of Africa. We got it stopped, issued specific medical directives requiring full radio bio analysis for anyone exposed to uranium contamination. That is within a building, structure, vehicle, anything that is struck, work in contaminated areas or being downwind where the contamination arises from. Issued in October 1993. Then in 1994, 1995 we used uranium munitions in the Balkans for the first time in Serbia, 1995-96 they shot Iraq, Okinawa. Then in 1999 despite all of our best efforts, up in the white house in Washington DC trying to stop it, they used uranium munitions again in the Balkans and then we turn around and then in this last year we deliberately used uranium munitions, in Vieques, Puerto Rico and then we deliberately used them in Afghanistan, and now we have littered Baghdad and most of Iraq in the cities with uranium munitions again now in Gulf war II…

Q: Isn't using depleted uranium, isn't that against all the rules of the United Nations?

DR: Absolutely the United Nations ruled in 1996 that the use of uranium munitions is illegal. But it is common sense, what right does any nation have to take even 1 kg of solid uranium and throw it in anyone's backyard, the school yard, their neighbourhood, much less the hundreds of tonnes that they have thrown and they have walked away. Even though the United States own medical treatment requirements, require medical care within 24 hours for depleted uranium exposures. That medical care has been denied for the majority of US casualties in Gulf War 1. And it is absolutely not provided for any of the non-combatants in any place in the world where uranium munitions have been used.

Q: What impact will it have on their health?

DR: They're sick and dying just like all my staff and my friends are. You can't get heavy metal or uranium into your body and not get sick. Think about this, we know from Vietnam that Agent Orange had a devastating consequence. The US and other nations deliberately used Agent Orange. We know today that asbestos has a terrible consequence. And everybody and their brother knows that you can't eat lead paint. In uranium munitions it is far worse than any of these, far worse than lead paint even. It is not only a heavy metal like lead, it is radioactive heavy metal. Nobody would advocate that you would get a few micrograms of lead paint or a few grams of lead paint in there but we are going to spread the world with depleted uranium, hundreds and hundreds of tonnes, refuse to clean it up. Refuse to provide medical care and then claim that we don't have to. That is a crime against God, that is a crime against humanity.

Q: If the US Government was going to clean it up how would they do it?

DR: I was the individual responsible in the US Department of Defence in the army that developed the procedures to clean it up. Physically what you have to do, this is what I tested and verified and did in Gulf War 1, you have to physically pick up the destroyed building, bunker, tanker package for disposal. The only way you can do that is to dig a massive big hole and put it in that big hole. Then you have to collect all of the spent uranium penetrators. In Gulf War 1 there was well over 1 million of them spread all over. I don't how many in Gulf War II but I can guarantee just from the video and photographic evidence and first hand discussions, Baghdad is littered with them. I mean video footage that I have seen shows just a half of a block, hundreds of them, laying there. Yet to physically pick up every spent penetrator then you have to take a bulldozer and remove all of the dirt to about 100 metres to at least 12 cm and put that into a big hole. Once you put this in the big hole, how do you mark this big hole for eternity? Because in the future maybe someone is going to build a school or a hospital or a church on that big hole with that radioactive waste is buried, they will unearth it and then everybody will get sick again. You have to understand uranium munitions are solid uranium 238 contaminated with plutonium, neptunium, americium

and they still have a remaining visible uranium 234 and 235. It is not in a small concentration. It is 100% uranium and god knows probably close to 1,000 tonnes in Iraq alone now. You can't clean it up. That was the reason why after I had the responsibility to do this I made this strong recommendation to the United States Department of Defence in the world, do not use uranium munitions ever again.

Q: That was ignored?

DR: Deliberately and wilfully but more importantly the individuals that are responsible for this in the United States point blank refuse, your press release on your ABC news network said the other day 'none of us' repeat 'none of us that were involved in friendly fire and depleted uranium were .. or did the clean up, were sick.' It was an absolute lie. Deliberate and wilful lie in order to comply with the Los Almos memorandum. To sustain the use of uranium munitions even though there are known adverse health and environmental effects.

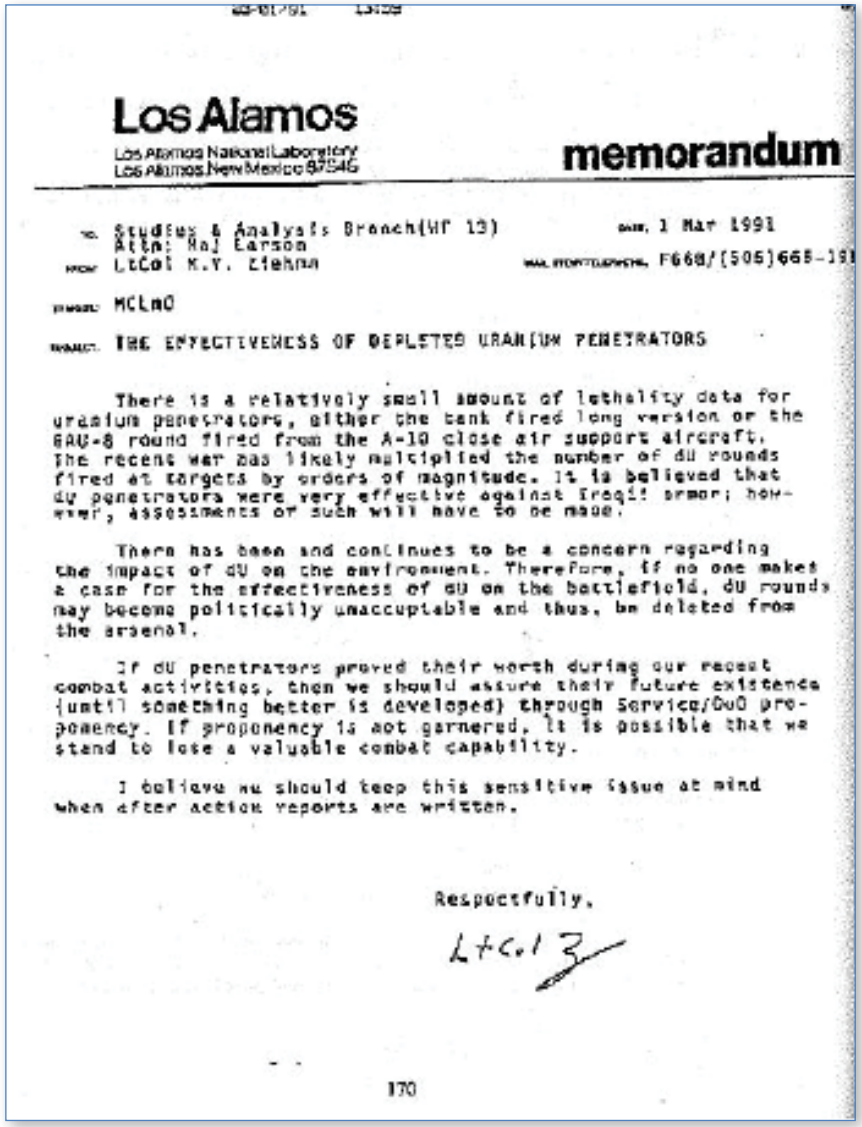
Q: What is the Los Alamos Memorandum?

DR: The Los Alamos Memorandum, was written by Ziehmn, was sent to me in March 1991. And it very specifically said that when we prepare our reports on what we found on the use of uranium munitions that we lie so that we make sure we can always use them. Ignore the health and environmental effects. But more importantly, and yet another thing, in 1992 the Assistant Secretary of the Army Walker, by directive of the United States Senate in DC sent a memorandum to the United States Army Environmental Policy Institute directed a study on the environmental effects. In one of the very specific directives was to figure out ways to reduce the toxicity of the munitions. One of the conclusions of our study was that you cannot reduce the toxicity of uranium munitions. That is common sense. Who wants even 1kg of solid uranium waste put in your backyard? I don't. What right does any nation have to take their radioactive waste that they can't dispose of in their nation and throw it in someone else's backyard?

Q: Are you saying that because they have nowhere to keep it in America they have too much radioactive waste from the nuclear power plants etc. that this is one way of using it?

DR: Absolutely. This is deliberate, you can go and read the Environmental Impact Statement from the United States of Energy for Uranium Hexofloride which is the actual chemical name for Depleted

Below is a scanned copy of The Los Alamos memorandum[1]



Los Alamos
Los Alamos National Laboratory
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87545

memorandum

TO: Studies & Analysis Branch(HF 13) DATE: 1 Mar 1991
Attn: Hal Larson
FROM: LtCol M.Y. Ziehm MAIL STOP/TELEPHONE: F668/[505]665-191
SYMBOL: MCLMO
SUBJECT: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEPLETED URANIUM PENETRATORS

There is a relatively small amount of lethality data for uranium penetrators, either the tank fired long version or the GAU-8 round fired from the A-10 close air support aircraft. The recent war has likely multiplied the number of dU rounds fired at targets by orders of magnitude. It is believed that dU penetrators were very effective against Iraqi armor; however, assessments of such will have to be made.

There has been and continues to be a concern regarding the impact of dU on the environment. Therefore, if no one makes a case for the effectiveness of dU on the battlefield, dU rounds may become politically unacceptable and thus, be deleted from the arsenal.

If dU penetrators proved their worth during our recent combat activities, then we should assure their future existence (until something better is developed) through Service/DoD proponency. If proponency is not garnered, it is possible that we stand to lose a valuable combat capability.

I believe we should keep this sensitive issue at mind when after action reports are written.

Respectfully,

LtCol

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1 http://www.grassrootspeace.org/twomemos.html

Uranium. Yeah it says point blank take radioactive waste from the United States and throw it in someone else's backyard. We don't have it anymore and we don't care what happens to them.

Q: But there are American troops there at the moment who are walking around all that. Even if you forget about the Iraqi people you have thousands of troops there.

DR: Absolutely and the actual country, America's finest sons and daughters from Gulf War 1 as recorded by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in a report released in September 2002, that right now over 221,000 of America's finest sons and daughters are permanently disabled as a result of duty from Gulf War 1 in the first Gulf region from August of 1990 through

May of 2002. Over 221,000 are permanently disabled and over 10,000 have died. That proportion is the same all over the world. If you look at the adverse health effects from Iraq and all of these exposures not just uranium but all the environmental contaminants of war and you look at those reports or look at the photographic and medical records called the Children of the Gulf War it's all there.

Q: So you are saying that most of the problems for the Iraqi children are a result of this depleted uranium?

DR: Combination of depleted uranium deliberate destruction of Iraq's chemical and biological warfare materials beginning in December of 1990 until the present that the United States gave to them and they also manufactured in all of the hazardous materials that were totally released when that nations infrastructure was destroyed. You got to remember that we used chemicals, biological and radiological materials … industry, education, manufacturing and medicine, correct. When you destroy all of these companies and … when you destroy the infrastructure, then all that material is released. War is a toxic wasteland. Because we can no longer deal with the adverse effects of war and all the releases whether it be from DU munitions or any other munitions and conventional munitions leave toxic waste. In all of the materials released during warfare, war has become obsolete. We are poisoning our planet. We are poisoning the future generations. And it is flat wrong.

Q: I wanted to ask you a question in relation to the mindset of the people who would send troops into an area and fire depleted uranium missiles. What sort of mindset would you describe of the sort of people who would do this type of thing?

DR: It is real simple I have been a combat veteran of multiple wars and I am a warrior and still classify myself as a warrior and a patriot. The reason or purpose of war is to kill period. You kill all living things and you destroy everything that is not living. When you are a warrior that is what you do. You don't think twice about this, you don't even give concerns. You know the term collateral damage that is used… as if it is nothing, collateral damage means destroying everything that is not military. That means killing, killing and wounding the children. It means destroying schools, hospitals and churches. And everything else, that is what collateral damage means. They don't even count the collateral damage in war. They just ignore it and say it is ok. It is justified. There is no justification for killing and harming the children of the world.

Q: So what would you advise people in the community after hearing this type of story, very disturbing for everyone.

DR: What I recommend is that we ensure that all the citizens of the world stand up, ensure, demand that medical care be provided for all of our warriors, sons and daughters, military personnel. We have to give the same medical care to the enemy whoever they are if we classify them as an enemy of war, and we have. We have to give that medical care to all the non-combatants the woman and the children

of the world. Then the next thing we have to do is that we have to clean up the environment of all the contaminants of war. You can't continue to contaminate God's earth and cause harm. And then finally what we have to do, we have to ban, uranium munitions have already been banned, we have to make sure they are permanently banned and if anyone uses them hold them individually responsible for the individual use of uranium munitions. Think about it if somebody comes out and takes 10kg of solid radioactive waste and throws it into your local schoolyard they should go to jail right? Same thing needs to apply every place in the world. It is as simple as that.

Q. But Doug, your Government is just accepting no responsibility for any of this?

DR: How about that. And there is a lot of us who are warriors and patriots who are speaking out because it is flat wrong.

Q: Well it certainly is and you're very courageous to speak out against it. But is there any way of stopping this. You mentioned that in the first Gulf War there are 221,000 sons and daughters who have been affected by this depleted uranium.

DR: And other contaminants of war. I'm just a school teacher aren't I!

Q: I don't think you are just a school teacher you are a fantastic courageous individual.

DR: Somebody said you can think of yourself as just a garbage man. That is probably right I am trying to clean up the garbage of war. I am trying to ensure people are taken care of. What it all comes down to. We have to work together for peace. All nations and all peoples and all governments and all religions and all cultures and all societies. We can no longer deal with the consequences of war. War has become obsolete. And always in my lectures and to me it is very important, we say, let there be peace on earth. Peace has to begin with each one we have to take care of it, and ourselves, make a commitment and take action but what is more important that prophesy of peace that comes about 1,000 years ago. And a child shall lead us to peace, well if we continue to contaminate God's earth the flora the fauna and harm the children I don't know where that child will come from that will be able to lead this world to peace. I don't know but I am sure going to do something about it. One seed at a time…

Interview with Professor Gareth Evans: A Responsibility to Protect

Another notable interviewee was Gareth Evans, a former Foreign Minister of Australia for eight years, and President Emeritus of the International Crisis Group. He is currently Chancellor of the Australian National University and co-chair of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. As Foreign Minister, he was at the forefront of recasting Australia's relationship with China, India, and Indonesia, while deepening its alliance with the US. Gareth helped found the APEC and ASEAN security forums. He also played a leading role in bringing peace to Cambodia and negotiating the International Convention on Chemical Weapons. He is the principal framer of the United Nations' 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine known as R2P.[28]

I had the opportunity to interview Gareth after his speech on the Non Proliferation Treaty in 2006. He asked which radio station I was from and I told him Plenty Valley FM. He decided to agree, which was interesting given I was not from the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). I was from a small station in Melbourne with limited coverage that would give him negligible reach. He was giving a voice to community radio. That said a lot about him. Below is the transcript from the interview.

Interview with Hon. Professor Gareth Evans: The International Responsibility to Protect Civilians and Cooperation

SC: It was a very articulate discussion we had tonight. Also I guess many people reflected a sense of sorrow about you and reform. How are you feeling at this present moment when you are going out and talking to people about what has happened.

GE: I am feeling quite desolate and gloomy I should be saying the glass is half full rather than half empty. There are some things to applaud about what happened at the UN Summit, the creation of this new Peace Building Commission deal with fragile states coming out of conflict is a hugely important innovation. The thing I've personally been most associated with for the last five or six years, the idea for responsibility to protect, to establish this new international norm of commitment to help people inside states where there have been massive human rights violations and where there needs to be external intervention. To get that agreed as a new international principle, the responsibility to protect was really pretty important. If you look beyond that, it really was very very disappointing, didn't do anything at all on arms control or disarmament, didn't do anything significant on terrorism establishing clear norms and guidelines, didn't do anything rules to limit the use of military force to acceptable circumstances, didn't do anything very new at all on the whole range of development issues which is so crucial for all the worlds people, and didn't do much at all on the structural and institutional issues where there is a real need for efficiency gains if this institution which we all love deserves the love we give.

SC: In my background peace, nonviolence and anti-bullying to young children, I teach as a world peace clown. What I teach children when we try and solve problems, we don't hate the person but look at the problem to be solved. Looking at international politics, obviously we are talking about power politics; we are talking vested interests, power over another, US unilateralism and pursuing its own agenda, is there any way that we can move towards collaborative rather, as opposed to, adversarial politics and learning conflict resolution?

GE: Probably not going to get there by preaching at people like the US they are not going to listen. What you've got to do is get them to understand that cooperative collaborative behaviour is really in their own interests. In this world of ours which is ever more interdependent, globalised all the

28 http://www.project-syndicate.org/contributor/gareth-evans

phenomena that we are aware of about the new risks posed by terrorism, health pandemics and by environmental catastrophes and god now what else. Even the big mighty US cannot solve these problems by itself it does need the cooperation of others, it has to be a mindset change. The nicest way I have ever heard this put, was by Bill Clinton a few months ago, I was on a platform with him in California of all places. The critical choice the United States has to make is how to use the great power we have, either we can use it to stay top dog on the global block in perpetuity throwing our weight around unilaterally all the rest, or we can use that power to create a world in which we will be comfortable living when we are no longer top dog on the block. I think that particular mindset is what has to be encouraged, because nobody is ever top dog on the block. China is rising internationally. Does the US really want to establish those global norms, law of the jungle where might is right and you do your own thing and you ignore the collective views about these things? Might get away for the next 30 or 40 years but sure as heck not going to get away with it forever. I think it is terribly important to think a) the need about cooperative approaches that can't be resolved by countries alone and b) the long term and necessity for all of us to develop rules for living together that don't involve unilateral assertion of might.

SC: Have you ever heard about the Global Movement of Children?

GE: No I haven't heard of the global movement of children.

SC: Some of the NGO's involved in this new movement are UNICEF and Oxfam and they have apparently gathered about 97 million signatures saying we will put children first.

GE: Yes I have heard of that.

SC: What do you think about the idea of focusing more on children. For example I am creating a Children's Parliament which is collaborative which is lateral thinking, values based etc. If we focus more resources there perhaps?

GE: I think more resources on education, education systems in particular are very important priorities. It is then of course what do you do with that education system and whether you just concentrate on the formal disciplines or some of the sort of values you are talking about, this is critical. What is most alarming since whole generations are slipping away from you, they are not being exposed to decent values or decent learning experiences and in our experience with part of the terrorist phenomenon is linked to the role that education is playing in countries like Pakistan where people can't afford to send their kids to the State system, which is pretty moribund, therefore they go off to religious schools which are welcoming, parents can't afford to pay for anything else.

Interview with Dr. Kunwar Singh: Gandhian Politics

I remember at Gareth's lecture hearing a man making all sorts of noises in the toilet. I have to say, smiling here and out of curiosity, I wanted to check him out. Turns out he was an Indian man. I went down stairs and set up my radio equipment. He and I spoke and I mentioned I loved Gandhi. To my astonishment he told me he knew Gandhi. Now I said immediately, How old are you?'. He said,'Seventy-seven'. He told me when he was a young man (teenager) he was called over by Gandhi to sit with him. He told me how he felt. He was crying as he relayed to me the feeling of being with Gandhi. This person I had just met was Dr Kunwar Singh who had worked for the United Nations and was an expert on international relations and diplomacy. I remember smiling and nodding my head, wondering how likely would it be to meet a person who knew Gandhi.

Interview with Dr. Kunwar Singh: The Gandhian Politics of serving a cause versus the politics of serving a career

KS: …So the tradition in my life was the politics of Gandhi and Nehru who went to jail, who were totally nonviolent and taught me to stand for a cause and work for a cause. One of the phrases that Nehru used in his book … was that: 'We are little men working for the great cause, if the cause is great something of greatness falls upon us too'. We are not great, we are nobody actually, it is the cause that makes us big or a small or great. So if you simply say I am here for myself for a job, like one person I will not name here, he lost the election twice. Here I am asking for a job from you. This totally completely different from what I was trained to hear from leaders of a nation. Who would never say I want a job from you. They would say, 'What can I do for you? How can I serve your interests. This is the way I think you should go ahead, please guide me and tell me. I offer you, I support you, your suffering is my suffering', that is what Gandhi said. I found it totally missing in Australian political life or in the social life, everybody seems to be for themselves. It is better than America, I've been many times. I have studied American history, culture, constitution, geography, political systems where individualism along with capitalism has taken its very high stride. It is the media that rules the American society in thinking today. Very few people, even intellectuals, are left to think for themselves freely. We are all conditioned in a way in life; we are more conditioned by the media that is bombarding your mind all the time with certain messages which are not necessarily healthy for the whole human society…

SC: Gandhi said his life is his message, now you are one of the few people alive today who have seen him, can you recount the experience when you met Gandhi, can you describe a bit about him and his presence?

KS: 1946 and 1947 I was studying at intermediate just below graduate level. …I had met most of the leaders at the time and was with the Student's Congress and I was a follower of Gandhi. I walked in 1942 movement for the freedom of India as a student leader.

SC: So you were walking with Gandhi?

KS: Not at that time but I walked with him later, he came to my home town in the Mussoorie in the Himalayas and the place was called Silverton it was a valley surrounded by beautiful mountains and trees, he used to hold his prayer meetings there. Gandhi would hold prayer meetings in the evening which were attended by record crowds, he was a great inspiration. I knew most of the leaders I had met them Nehru, …Prashad … Patel all of them. So I went to his meetings. I was young and rather good looking and impressive sort of student leader, everywhere I got a seat. So what happened - I go to the meeting there were thousand and thousand of people there so I walk straight to the rostrum where Gandhi was sitting there were two or four girls that walk with him …. He would walk with both of them on either side … when I went there and he invited me and I sat with him and heard him. His voice (pause) came out of his heart. (I can see you've got tears in your eyes you really felt it). It inspired you. It moved you. It shook you. You felt like opening your heart before him. He was the man, totally guileless who had his intelligence, judgment totally without pollution, a very pure heart in tune with God, completely. He believed in God. I have believed in God as inspiration ... If you believe in God it will make you very strong it will give you inspiration in life. You will never feel ... depression, the illness of western society today. So I spent some moments with Gandhi, walked with him, sat with him and heard his voice.

You ask me what happened. In 1947 when India was free, I was in the place I was born, I was a

follower of Gandhi… I was sleeping in my room, about 4 o'clock I saw a dream that somebody had shot Mahatma Gandhi I woke up and my younger brother was sleeping with me, he was opposed to me in politics he belong to the Hindu RS organisation so I told him, he loved Gandhi also, he said it couldn't happen. I started crying and couldn't stop for the whole day, my mother and father consoled me. (I can see you are still feeling that, was that a year before?) No it was a week before. It was a premonition it was clairvoyance. I am a bit of a clairvoyant I can see things. So after a week I saw he was really shot dead. The news was announced of Gandhi's death. I came out of my house into the street the whole city was empty. Later there was Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, men and women all walking with tears in their eyes.

SC: Must have been an incredible time?

KS: Unforgettable. There are many unforgettable moments in life that I will put in my book now which involve events all over the world ....that was a day of Gandhi and it hurt me tremendously. Since you asked me about Gandhi specifically that is what I can tell you.

Interview with Dr. Linda Hogan: Taking Peace Seriously

I always remember an interview I conducted with Dr. Linda Hogan an expert on Peace and Conflict Issues, from the University of Dublin. Dr. Hogan was a visiting lecturer at the Ecumenical Summer School in Melbourne when I met her.

Interview with Dr. Linda Hogan

LH: I was invited back to the Ecumenical Summer School and I taught for a week in Sydney at their summer school and came to Melbourne to do the same thing again.

SC: Can you tell us about the subject you teach and what issues come up?

LH: What we are interested in, in the school I belong to, is creating context in which peace issues are taken seriously and peace is taken as a viable alternative to violence in this world. We recognise that peace very often involves the defence of the innocent and it involves a fight for justice. What we are interested in pursuing in our school is exploring nonviolent options for pursuing justice in this world.

SC: What do you say to people who think nonviolence is ineffective and that the only way to protect yourself is to take the line of building a bigger military in order to create a sense of fear in the other so they won't attack you and that creates a stable world. what do you think of that?

LH: Our history has shown us this is actually wrong. What our history has shown us, force and violence leads to more violence, that we are now in a cycle where violence is presented to us as the only alternative. And yet all we can see is when revolutions, revolutionary activity through violence, there is a cycle of violence that follows it. I would say at the historical level this argument is incorrect, we are in the situation now where we are highly militarised purely because of the failures of those many centuries where military options were only chosen. So I very strongly believe that there are many examples in our histories in our different nations of nonviolent action that has been successful. Very often it is at a local level, very often it has been hidden, very often it has been preventative. In fact the success of preventative action and preventative diplomacy we are not in a situation where we need to evoke military power. So, I really think we have been fed a lie about the

way in which we need a military, I've been talking about an extraordinary book, the book is called 'The Unconquerable World: Power of Nonviolence and the Will of the People', that is the title, it is by an American writer called Jonathon Shell. What he does in this book is make a very strong argument about the power of nonviolence in history, he says very clearly that force now will only lead to more force that is what history has told us. He also says that if we look carefully we find another tradition in our histories as well, that is the history of empires overcome by people power of people choosing the path of nonviolence of people resolving conflict non-violently and peacefully. And really what we need to do at this juncture in history is reclaim that history to recognise its significance and draw hope from it. We know that nonviolence has been effective in many places, even when it's only barely resourced or under resourced. What would it be like if we were prepared to put in the energy, the huge financial resources, the commitment over a long period of time to nonviolent resolution of our conflicts? The world would definitely be a different place.

SC: So if you were the person deemed with the responsibility of being the change in this way, how would you practically do it?

LH: What we need is people working at a whole host of levels to change the mindsets, our schools, our history books, telling the successful stories of nonviolence, the situations that give us hope, in our art and music we need to be celebrating peace rather than glorifying violence. I think in the movies and the games children play we need to be cultivating respect and mutuality rather than again this glorification of the big bangs, the spectacle of violence. We are enthralled to violence; our culture endlessly presents it to us as valuable, wonderful, extraordinary. We need to recognise that all we see is the big bang, the spectacle the fireworks, what we don't see on our screens, and what we really do need to see is the casualties of that violence. Our culture has completely obliterated the consequences of violence from its screens, comprehension from its imagination. Those things in particular I think are important if we are to shift the mindset.

SC: Going back to the idea of violent games, particularly with children, there will be people out there will say look it doesn't affect my child at all, I can put my child in front of a violent game they are not going to go out and kill someone.

LH: They are probably right, they are probably not going to go out and kill someone. I think that violence goes deeper than the idea of the most extreme version of taking another person's life. Our culture is premised on this idea that if we want to gain something, if we want to be successful, then we have got to be strong, hard, disregarding other people, we've got to go after what we want at all costs. That is a form of violence. What our culture doesn't encourage us to do, and what many of these games completely ignore is the importance of cooperative power. So the person may well be right, a video game about violence does not send someone out to kill. But what does it do to the person's approach to their life, their relationships, their immediate relationships, their family? Does it promote this idea that if you want something you go out and take it, or does it encourage young children to think cooperatively and act cooperatively? That is the question, not will it send someone out to kill.

SC: I will ask you an interesting question I met a famous woman here in Australia and based in the United States who is actively involved in the anti-nuclear area. I went and visited her at her place. She said: 'You know what the problem with the world is?' I said, 'No', she said, 'Men'.

LH: I wouldn't have said that to you, what she is putting her finger on is something about the way in which men and young boys in particular are socialised into a particular mindset that makes them believe that the best way, and the most valuable way to express their masculinity, is through vio-

lence or through some kind of expression of power over. So I think she may have put her finger on something there by drawing attention to the link between the way in which men are socialised in many many cultures to believe that they will only truly be fulfilling their masculine identities if they operate in this way. But I would say that really the hazards exist for all people. We can recognise in ourselves very easily and quickly when we are prone to anger when we are likely to lash out, when we are likely to blame someone for something that is really our own fault, to externalise the things rather than to try and deal with them. So we can recognise in our experience how we can be inclined to violence ourselves. I think that is a hazard for human beings, it is part of the ambiguity of being human. So when our culture promotes that or even condones it, it is very difficult to resist, and it is more difficult to resist when we don't see this is the way in which we are socialised. I would say that violence is a hazard that everybody encounters and everybody is prone to, I would think the task of peacemaking and peace building is the task for all human beings not just for men or for women.

Interview with Wayne Clayton: An Ordinary Bloke Who Stands for Love

I met a very interesting man called Wayne Clayton who I found out had hitched across Australia with a caravan and no car. The point he wanted to draw attention to was for everybody to stand for love. He is the first person to hitch across Australia with a caravan. He indicates that this is not acknowledged in the Guinness Book of Records, but indeed it is a great achievement. What I particularly noted when I met with Wayne was that he was a 'blokey' bloke, very Australian and masculine, yet he wanted to communicate love to the world, not as romantic but as a universal concept. He was indeed a visionary. When I think of my other interviewees he was the one that had the lightest and most illuminating approach, as he didn't take himself too seriously. That to me is a sign that he is about peace.

Interview with Wayne Clayton: Standing Up for Love

SC: You are the CEO of Stand for love. Can you firstly tell us about your incredible journey? You hitch-hiked across Australia with a caravan, right?

WC: Yes I am the first person to hitch hike across Australia with a caravan, to do it, did it, in November/December last year started in Perth on 20th November and finished in Sydney at my home in the Blue Mountains on 18th of December.

SC: I should add you were hitchhiking with a caravan but without a car?

WC: It takes a little bit of getting used to travelling with a caravan with no car. It actually took me four weeks to get used to that idea too, but the time I was used to it I arrived at home.

SC: So You didn't notice that something was missing when you were sitting at the side of the road with your caravan?

WC: I thought I was prepared I had the van, bit of food, some water, ready to cross the country, at the last minute I thought I've forgotten something.

SC: Always something!

WC: Always something (click of fingers). Really better if I had a car, then thought I'll be right.

SC: That is the great Aussie spirit isn't it – she'll be right? Did you paint up the caravan?

WC: Yeah yeah we had of course, it was a joke, the idea was that I would become the first person to hitch hike across the country. I was promoting 'Stand for Love'. Which is an organisation and an idea, and something to do. Was demonstrating as best I could, how loving Australia is. The view that I was putting forward, and still believe, was that mateship was love, it is just that you need six, seven, eight beers before you get there. Not you personally (ha ha) in hotels across the country. I painted up the van so we had our logo 'Stand for Love' on it, and the website and so forth. I had a sign said something like: Got a towbar you are not using? World record great cause free petrol. So if anyone wanted me to pay for petrol, I'd pay for it, and I wound up going all the way from Peth to Sydney, that was 31 lifts to get there, and there were two people who wanted money for petrol, and the rest said, 'No that is fine'.

SC: Isn't that amazing that people will do that, they will stop and help you. What sort of people stopped, anything in common or very different?

WC: Definitely no sort of people, had anything from a pregnant sheep shearer to a banker to a poet, to another shearer, the last guy that gave me a lift had a business shredding documents, he was a mobile document shredder. So in terms of the types of people males and females, mainly males which was not surprising. Certainly the ladies who gave me a lift heard me on the radio, saw me on television, harmless enough well known enough they would be safe. The one thing they did have in common was a sense of fun they wanted to participate in this. As the journey went on they wanted to contribute to it, they were grateful that I was making this point, that it is time for us to stand for love, it can be demonstrated how loving people are with this very silly but fun idea.

SC: So what was there reactions when they first stopped and talked to you, what did they ask you?

WC: There was a wide variety of those, the split I think was something between people who had heard about it beforehand was about 50:50. So 50% of people who picked me up didn't know anything about it. Quite often they would stop, they would say, 'Where are you going? I'd say, 'Kalgoorlie, Adelaide', they would say, 'Jump in'. I'd say, 'I'm with this'. Then they would think about it, and most of the time if they had a tow bar they would say, 'Hook it up', and start driving.

SC: So when you jumped in the car what sort of conversations did you have with them?

WC: It would depend on how long I was with them. There was a couple of lifts that were really long lifts, like all day, one lift all the way from Norseman to Middle Village which is on the border of Western Australia and South Australia that is about 600km I think. Another one that was 700km from Middle Village to Adelaide. Massive lifts. So that was all night I drove that time, we discussed everything, discussed my ideas what 'Stand for Love' is about. We also talked about what these guys have been up to, and I actually learned discussing the different things with different people, that I wasn't the star of the show, I was really impressed with myself. Then gradually it became really clear that it was each one of these people that were the stars of the show. They were amazing. One guy who picked me up took me to Ceduna. He had been involved in a couple of world records himself. He was only giving me a ride because he wanted me to break the record. It is unofficial, the Guinness Book of records won't accept it, but that is another story. It still happened. This guy had been involved in an attempt to break the bouncing basketball record and he did it 250km from somewhere to Broken Hill with a team of people on the back of a ute, they jumped down and bounced it.

SC: Amazing.

WC: He was one of many, so many of them were so extraordinary. Never had I met a pregnant sheep shearer, this lady was 6 months pregnant, she had just finished shearing.

SC: Funny that you say that, when I went to Russia with Patch Adams one of the things that I was impressed with was the clowns that I went with, there were 40 international clowns. It was the clowns I was impressed with. Patch was lovely, you could see the greatness in all the people. It sounds like you perhaps had similar insight into the greatness of other people?

WC: No doubt. I knew it was there I wanted to demonstrate it. I am really proud of the achievement, I am proud of doing this nutty thing and I can't wait to do the next one and just keep publicising something that is really worthy of the publicity. What I loved was that there was no team, I had my own support team for this, I traveled by myself, people helped me out in the preparation for it. We created a team out of 32 people who had never met each other and they all combined to make a point. We wound up, like there must have been more than a million Australians that heard about it at the time. I am proud of my country for producing people that will do that. Will come together for something like that to make that point.

SC: And Australians have a good sense of humor don't they? They are innovative, shows that Australian spirit of helping mateship and what have you.

WC: Yes I think so.

SC: So why did you start Stand for Love, what was the reason?

WC: I started Stand for Love as an idea back in 1990 and began as an organisation in 1995, and it became Stand for Love only a couple of years ago, we went through name changes. It is an organisation that has been designed specifically to reduce suffering and increase love in the world and it has taken a long time in preparing. Now with that caravan project we have announced that we are on our way, we have started to grow. We are growing love. I am certain of it delighted to see it growing now.

SC: What made you decide to pursue this path of growing love? What triggered you to think to do that and why did you think you could do anything?

WC: I was a youth worker for five years and I learned about suffering in our culture; there was a lot of kids that are being hurt and that percentage is not getting any smaller. I really wanted to make a substantial difference, it seemed to me there were cycles of suffering going on. In order to do something about the cycles and working in that department wasn't fast enough for me, I wanted to change the way people think, so I started an organisation that does that.

SC: How did you come up with the idea of a caravan? Where did that come from?

WC: In 1990 I was involved in the End Hunger Movement. I had these ideas of making a big difference. So I was on the lookout for stunts, I was engaged in a trip to the States planning the World candle light vigils for 1991. for the Year of the Child, and we wound up with a million people lighting candles and it could be seen from outer space. It was fabulous. But I was travelling to work one day down the M4 in Sydney I saw a boat broken down at the side of the road. It is not every day that you see a boat on a trailer at the side of the road, usually it is a car. There was someone in the boat, but no car, just a boat on a trailer at the side of the road. I was thinking as I drove past, wouldn't it be hilarious if the person in the boat had their finger out trying to hitch a ride and they are waiting for someone with a tow bar to pick them up, by the time I reached Sydney I actually decided this was

completely possible and it would make more sense to have a van than a boat. I always thought it was a funny idea, that would be hugely fun to do, and thought why not do it right across Australia? I thought, 'can it work?' Could raise publicity and awareness and so on, and waited for the moment and the moment was 20th November 2003, Stand for Love.

SC: The funny thing too about that idea, the boat, I was thinking, you could have on the side of it 'Noahs Arc' couldn't you?

WC: Yeah to be honest my father has a boat on the Central coast, we've got to go and pick it up. I was thinking (ha ha) go up by train and get the sign up and try and get to Sydney with the boat. I am thinking to do it again.

SC: You could think up some interesting things to hitch with?

WC: When I was doing this Australia trip, I was told many times about this guy who hitched around Ireland with a fridge. He did it as a bet. It is an outrageous book apparently, it is hilarious don't know the name of it, have to find it. He has done some funny stuff, it was a pub bet and another guy who has hitchhiked around Britain naked. The poms have got it on us.

SC: You could have a spaceship and call it hitchhikers guide to the galaxy. We are all stars of course. It could go on … lots of exciting ideas.

WC: There's an original idea.

SC: You are going to the United States cause this idea is expanding. You've had lots of media cove age haven't you? What are you going to do in the United States?

WC: It is top secret you are getting a big scoop.

SC: Scoop!

WC: I figure Stand for Love has been growing, I want to plug the website if anyone wants to visit the website www.standforlove.com get on there and check it out. We have been growing ever since which is great, more and more people coming and taking an interest and participating with us. I am very ambitious I want to change the way everyone on Earth thinks. Australia was fun so let's go to the States. I am planning to be the first person to hitch hike across America with a caravan next year.

SC: In the wake of Crocodile Dundee should be exciting, are you going to have a cork hat?

WC: I will work it out, after talking to you I might put a clown suit on, I don't know. I can't wait to do that, I want to get onto Lederman and talk about growing love on earth, hopefully Oprah Winfrey. Being an Australian and doing something silly like that I think the Americans will wear that.

SC: You do workshops?

WC: We teach people how to grow love.

SC: Can you give us a brief idea of what the workshops are like, and that they go to the website if they want to find out more details?

WC: I've spent a lot of time, it is not just talk, I've spent a lot of time trying to work out how to grow love. We've worked out what the 4 steps are. The 4 steps are:

1. *Take a stand for love*
2. *Value feelings*
3. *Choose progress*
4. *Act now*

When you say them quickly it sounds pretty easy, frankly it is, not hard to work out these things, takes practice. We get groups together and practice, we practice taking a stand for love, we talk about that, talk about valuing feelings, practice what to do, what actions to take in our lives, it is very practical, it is coming up with practical solutions to have more love in our family, in our lives and in our workplaces, then go home. We spend about eight hours doing that 8-6pm it is the last Saturday in Melbourne, of each month. They are full of amazing people. Because it really takes something to stand for love. It is not necessarily an easy thing to do, especially in a world that as soon as you say the word love, people think you are about to either sell them a Bible or invite them to some sex orgy, or you are a hippy or you are going to be living up a tree. Love is about feeling safe, well, connected, worthy and free. They are the five feelings. We are promoting that and having people feel more of that. We have come up with a way of having that happen, that is what we do in the workshops.

SC: What is wonderful about what you are saying, these are really universal ideas, every person from every culture around the world can easily identify with.

WC: Absolutely. We have a wide variety of people from different cultures and ages that are associated with Stand for Love. We are in the United States, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, great Britain, Australia, we are keen to get involved with every country on Earth. It is common sense, it is really common sense there are a whole lot of the things going on in the world that don't make sense, just because everyone is doing them it doesn't make them any more sensible. The idea that you can take actions that make you feel better and someone else feel worse, and that somehow things are going to get better when you take those actions, it doesn't make sense. Same as if I take actions that have me feel better and you feel worse, or you feel better and me feel worse, doesn't make sense. Or actions that make me feel worse and you feel worse, everything gets worse this way. The only type of action that makes a real positive difference is when I feel better and you feel better. It is relevant in the traffic, relevant in the boardroom, relevant at home, relevant in the kitchen, take more and more of those actions. If I have to nag everybody for the rest of my life, that is what I am going to do. It is the only thing that makes any sense.

SC: It is really interesting the way you said that. If you want to know if you are creating peace or creating conflict, then imagine if everybody did the thought, word or the action. If everybody did that would it produce peace or conflict? It is common sense. Love is common sense. It is not this wishy washy thing that makes us feel good. Why wouldn't we want to do it?

WC: I think we probably do want to do it, and we don't. One of the reason we don't is we are scared, they are scared of the very thing they want the most not just love of each other, that is an important part of it. Love of your work, love of your home, love of your car, love of your body, love of your bank account, doesn't matter what it is. The more love we can get going the better off everyone is going to be. But we do get scared of it for a variety of deep and meaningful reasons.

SC: It is interesting when I looked over your press release I saw the words Love Revolution and that reminded me of Patch Adams. When I was in Russia with Patch Adams, where (he said) all of us can create a love revolution. We can go into a lift or up an escalator and communicate and connect,

which is one of the terms you used as well, it is heartening to hear those words again, very much connecting with ideas that Patch Adams has too. Congratulations very much for doing what you have been doing, it is a splendid idea hitching across Australia with a caravan and no car, clearly you can do it!

WC: Thanks heaps. Thank you for taking an interest in it and interviewing me and talking to your listeners about it, I am really grateful to you.

SC: My pleasure, anything that creates peace you are on my list.

Thanks very much for your time.

The power of community radio is the freedom of public broadcasters to ask questions that the other privately owned media outlets would not consider. Community radio does not tow the political or corporate line and producers are not dictated to by station managers. As long as they stay within the community radio guidelines they have freedom of speech. So you are able to listen to programs created by the public for the public. In my case, Bridges to Peace was about peace in all its forms. There were no other programs of this genre that looked at the entire spectrum. I approached commercial radio but I didn't get a reply. Yet the issue of peace is central to society and it provides the basis of community harmony. So my experience in talking to hundreds of people was to really gain an insight into the diversity around the issue of peace. In Australia we may lose community radio and it seems the biggest threat to a community voice is technical; the switching from analogue to digital. It appears the Government is not going to financially assist community media to go digital, that means many may go off air. Underlying this is a perceived fear of losing community voices and freedom of speech. Here is a quote from The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia:

> *The future of free-to-air broadcasting is digital - but for community radio stations, that future is now at risk. Unless the Federal Government commits to giving digital community radio a future in the upcoming budget, vital digital community radio stations will be switched off. The Commit to Community Radio campaign aims to turn around the substantial shortfall in funding for the Digital Radio Project following last year's Federal Government budget. The campaign has so far attracted fantastic support and national media attention. This support continues to grow by the minute.*[29]

My feeling is that the internet will fill this void providing governments do not censure or control freedom of speech online. At the moment they do not know how to put the gene of free speech back into the bottle, it is indeed out of the bottle online. So we are experiencing a great deal of freedom which is connecting ordinary people around the world. Community radio stations can adjust and simply create online broadcasting which will have global reach, and may end up surpassing commercial broadcasting.

This is good news for the public.

The Fool's Gold: I found my voice and learned to really hear other voices. Peace is experienced and perceived in a wide variety of ways. Peace is expansive and creative.

29 http://cbaa.org.au/Info_For_Stations/Digital-Radio

CHAPTER 10

Pro-Activism is Positive Peace in Action (1999-2006)

For a long time I never saw myself as an activist, as I perceived the negative connotation of this term given the desire of activists to fight. It has only been recently that I have discovered that I am an activist. However, I would re-define myself more accurately as a pro-activist. Don't you just love labels. Anyway, what pro-activism means to me is being positive and active, it is taking action and acting on what I know and feel. I give more credence to what I feel over what I know. I tend to act intuitively. I never saw my participation in democracy as anti-anything but overtime as embracing of everything. My emotional state of being is predominantly positive and curious. I never felt the inclination to join groups or become involved in actions to address local social or global ills. I experienced myself as somewhat an outsider looking in, working out what peace really means.

Through a simple love of peace I found myself engaging in activities, that I felt inspired furthered democracy and the social good. As a result of this passion for peace I have met many activists from across the spectrum. On a personal level I didn't share the feelings of hate, anger and disempowerment that I noted many of them were experiencing. I could understand the frustration with human rights violations, corruption, globalisation, environmental destruction, exploitation and so on. However, as a clown I see things through a different lens. As a Rotary Peace Scholar I was able to meet directly with perpetrators and those victimised. There was a part of me interested in observing as a third party, trying to understand their motivations and the levels of consciousness driving their behaviour. I come from a background where I have experienced conflict with the people I love, and so most of my life I have sought to understand what drives conflict.

As a result of my own inquiry I have passionately sought to discover what creates the opposite - happiness. Perhaps I have to travel through the metaphorical happy/sad clown face that is depicted in drawings. I am not, for the most part sad although I am exploring why others are so sad that they feel the need to have power and control over others and life. I have witnessed these behaviours on all sides. In truth, I feel empathy for all people, and at my core I feel compassion. So I would not call myself a traditional activist. I see myself as loving peace and wishing to live by example by sharing it with the world, as I know we can have what we ask for. I truly know this, as I have it in my own life.

Gandhi's vision was 'to be the change you wish to see'. Always the feeling of Gandhi is close by. I so see his courage and purity of truth, and it is like an echo that I hear within my heart reminding me to remain in peace and lead by example. His vision re-forms the central platform of my pro-activism and I place it at your feet for consideration.

Letter writing as Pro-activism

I've written so many letters that I have lost count. I have written to politicians, famous people, media, CEOs, academics, NGOs, United Nations, Councils and to a range of different types of organisations. I don't care if these letters are not answered, or are only answered in standard formats. The purpose of my participation is for me to exercise my democratic voice. I see definitely my actions as claiming my voice as more meaningful than a vote.

I wrote to John Howard at the time of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Under the Coalition of the Willing my country was at war with Afghanistan and Iraq. I was aware the ordinary people of Afghanistan and Iraq had done nothing to Australians or Americans. I regarded the people on the ground as just like you and me. Yet they were targeted by the US military coalition and my Government went along with what is now being viewed increasingly as a war crime.

It was surreal living with an Afghan man suffering so deeply, and knowing my Government was involved in co-creating this war. Yet he himself bore no hatred towards my country and neither did I, but I defi-

nitely felt an obligation to express my democratic right to ask questions, none of which were answered adequately by my Government.

A Letter to Rupert Murdoch, News Limited:

For many years I felt inspired to connect with Rupert Murdoch from New Corporation. Interestingly, and unbeknownst to me at the time, I did have a connection to his family, as his sister Helen had funded me to go to Russia with Patch Adams. She was supporting clowns to give love to disadvantaged people. I felt a need to contact Rupert to ask him to consider assisting other people in creating a better world for the children. I am still sending this message from my heart to his.

31 December 2008

Dear Rupert,

I hope you don't mind me sending you some poetry. The New Year is at midnight and my wish for the future is one that survives or indeed more than survives. I feel it is in no-one's interests if the world collapses through a system that maximises profit but not common-unity. We are witnessing the financial crisis and more importantly the ecological crisis that may be past the tipping point. There are many sceptics around the world and I value their opinion as equal to mine. However, I have seen the changes in climate in Australia, the bleaching of coral in the Great Barrier Reef, severe water restrictions, salination of the Murray Darling and expanding desertification. I have had this concern for over 20 years now.

I am sending my poetry from my heart to yours. I simply appeal to you to consider assisting other people in creating a better world for the children. The current world situation is still plagued by war, diplomatic politics and over consumption and indeed unnecessary starvation. The world situation is not equitable nor sustainable in the future. I am sure you would agree and may hold concerns for your extended family as I do mine.

I feel if a future it is to be possible we must turn to values. For me I value integrity, responsibility and empathy for others. I look around and see values diminishing as people value making money over ethical considerations and meaningful occupations. In the schools in Australia values beginning to be taught as parents are not passing values. These days parents are separating at rapid rates, caught up in working long hours and exposed to media images that encourages competition, vanity, consumption, controversy, negative spin as entertainment rather than inspiring people to be greater persons. Some may say this is what the people want, I don't believe this is what the people need, many are becoming despondent about the future and feel a great sense of powerlessness and distrust. As we believe the world is unsafe and negative we create by our projections and actions the very world we fear. It is the negative thinking and lack of critical analysis that creates depression (1:3) and the emptiness of an unfulfilled life that causes despair.

Please consider my thoughts, there is much you can do as a philanthropist. The critically important areas are values, peace education and sustainability. I wish you much happiness for the New Year and a sense of peace in your life and indeed for our world.

As Gandhi said 'be the change you wish to see in the world.

Yours in truth,
A peace fool

I have a vision of a media that is completely transparent, serving the public with the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I wonder when peering through that lens what we would see? Perhaps an empowered populace that receives news as balanced information that empowers change rather than power elites distorting democracy for financial gain.

Here is the poem I wrote about media controlling the news. I sent it to Rupert with love.

Is The News Limited?

Is news limited,
To a certain point of view?
What is the view like from the top of the ivory tower?
It's hard to see the faces,
It's hard to get clear in the clouds,
The tyranny of distance,
Drowns itself with another premium beer.
Are you thinking while you read?
Or reading to stop thinking?
Is it entertainment you want?
Is it drama you seek?
Will the truth ever set us free?

What is the role of social control?
Is your mind in control?
Are they controlling your mind?
Telling you what to think?
Or can you think outside the box?
It's time to lift the lid,
And look again.

I watch the 6 o'clock news,
I flick the stations,
Same sound bytes,
Same stuff,
Life is dangerous,
Can't you see it's rough?
Better not to go outside,
Give the police more powers,
Pictures flashed like cards,
To give you the picture,

But I want to know what clippings
are edited?
Which words?
Did you make truth your selection?
Do you even care?

Where are the questions?
Where is the good news?
Why are the few running the show?
Is the tail wagging the dog?
For politicians are friendly to those with muscle,
It is a boys club.

Did you know this is the hour?
The news hour,
You are the story,
So what will it be?
Good news, a new way?
Bad news, keep it the same?
You are pressing the buttons,
You are choosing to stay quiet,
For it is safe in the lounge room,
But is the world in your television?
Or are you the world?

As a former media person myself, and similar to Phillip Adams, I see this profession as a privilege. I think the temptation to influence through the media is always there, but the real service to the community is providing the facts without personal interference and distortion. I would love to see a new form of media reporting arise as peace journalism. I listened to a very interesting Canadian lecturer in Bangkok on the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program, her name is Professor Reena Kukreja. She discussed peace journalism. The power of this type of journalism is that the presenter gives both sides equal time but the intention is to facilitate peace rather than controversy. Imagine if all journalists chose real balance.

Here is a definition of peace journalism:

> *Peace journalism has been developed from research that indicates that often news about conflict has a value bias toward violence. It also includes practical methods for correcting this bias by producing journalism in both the mainstream and alternative media, and working with journalists, media professionals, audiences, and organizations in conflict. This concept was proposed by Johan Galtung. Other terms for this broad definition of peace journalism include conflict solution journalism, conflict sensitive journalism, constructive conflict coverage, and reporting the world.*[30]

30 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_journalism

The Fool's Gold: Every person can make a difference when they speak up. Choose the world you want but don't impose your views, impress balance.

A letter to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI):

I discovered one day going through the statistics on my website that the FBI Counter-Terrorism branch had visited my website 80 times. I was truly surprised. I am a peace clown firstly, why would they find me a threat? I recalled how I had contacted Helen Caldicott the anti-nuclear activist. I recalled how she travels between the United States and Australia, perhaps that is why I received this cyber visit? I then thought FBI is internal to the United States, why would they be investigating a foreign website that advocates for peace?

At the very least I would expect the CIA to be looking given they are charged to investigate outside of the United States. So for me I was exploring curious questions.

At the time I had just finished studying Peace Studies at La Trobe University and had information about nonviolent activism on my website indicating ways to protest non-violently and the various tactics. I just did that for educational purposes, I wasn't seeking to start a revolution. I also had two transcripts which I am sure were of interest to intelligence agencies as both were US whistle-blowers - Scott Ritter speaking at the University of Melbourne and the other was Douglas Rokke, formerly from the Pentagon. I recorded those speeches for radio and they were condemning of the US Government outlining its illegality and misconduct. Moreover, I mused about Kabir my ex-partner, I had all his paintings on my website. He is from Afghanistan; the US was at war there so perhaps they were seeing me as some form of spy or sympathiser with the Afghans. The fact that most of Kabir's paintings were pro-women's rights and anti-fundamentalist in all its forms, deepened my curiosity. Perhaps that wasn't understood? Perhaps they saw an enemy in what they perceived as non-violent activism? I really don't know. I saw an opportunity. Let's face it I am a Fool, so I jumped without looking…

I decided to write to Willie Hulon the Director of Counter-Terrorism of the FBI based in Washington. I told him about the 80 hits to my website and who I am. I thought rather than some agent trying to work out who I am I'd rather just speak the truth and they can put that on my file. I believe in visibility in contrast to the modus operandi of intelligence agencies. I had to laugh at the time, my business was called Funny business and I could see the humor in that. Perhaps they took it literally but without the fun part. I told Willie Hulon about my work and that my focus was on Funny business (corporate side) more so than the peace education in schools, at the time. I explained to him that I believe in the peace beyond the drama. I tried to be informative about real peace.

Below is a reproduction of the letter:

July 2, 2009

Mr Willie Hulon

Head of Counter Terrorism

FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

J. Edgar Hoover Building

935 Pennsylvania Avenue,

NW Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Mr Hulon,

My name is Susan Carew and I am writing because I have become aware that the FBI anti-terrorism section visited my website (www.worldpeacefull.com) 71 times in the month of June 2009. I was perplexed at first and wondered why the FBI would be visiting my site as my work is the opposite to terrorism and in harmony with safety and security. I can only assume an investigation has occurred because of my recent contact with Helen Caldicott. My reason for contacting her was to discuss the idea of an International Children's Peace Award and I wanted her feedback on it. When I reflected further about my website I realised agents were possibly interested in the Art Gallery and the page on War. As a result of the FBI visit I have reviewed my website earnestly. I haven't actually looked at it for a long time and did forget the war related materials were there. Both sections were expressions from people desiring a peaceful world. I decided to remove the material not to conceal but because it is not in alignment with my positive peace philosophy and may be misunderstood.

I am writing to you because I believe in visibility and rather than an analyst try and work out what I am about and misunderstanding my intentions, it is better for me to explain myself for clarity.

I would classify myself not as an activist but a citizen and educator. My approach to issues is not oppositional or 'anti' I am interested in understanding why our world is not at peace. My focus is on positive peace. In the peace literature Johan Gultung discusses negative and positive peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of violence (something undesirable has stopped), positive peace focuses on restorative relationships and constructive resolution of conflict. My particular focus in on children's issues as I am concerned about the future they will inherit. Children have many challenges to face in respect of financial crisis, ecological collapse and impending resource limits that will contribute to conflicts and instability in the future. Children are living within social contexts that accept violence as normal and this notion is reinforced by violence in the media and growing insecurity through family breakdowns. When I have spoken to children I have found attitudes, particularly from boys, where violence is seen as exciting and peace is boring. Moreover, children are often not receiving the guidance from parents or schools in pro-social skills to effectively solve problems nonviolently and learn to be responsible and positive members of a community. The work I have developed is to redress this with values education, anti-bullying and an understanding of shared concern for others.

My REAL HOPE program is based on universal values and educates children to the importance of virtues such as: responsibility, empathy, awareness, love, honesty, oneness, peace and enjoyment. My rationale of values is that behavior is an outcome of internal values. Our values inform us of whether an action is positive or negative. Values generate a sense of integrity and self-respect rather than following impulses of irrational reactions that are anti-social. For example one of my central values is honesty, which means I cannot be dishonest, I have to face issues and take personal responsibility. That is what prompted me to write to you. Values are important as binding societies together with regard to a sense of shared identity and ethical philosophy. In addition to values, I teach emotional intelligence, non-discrimination, nonviolence, loving kindness, truthfulness, oneness with the planet and each other, peace as balance and a choice and the most important – enjoyment. I explain to children that our purpose in life is to be happy. I teach the children juggling which is a non-competitive activity and they can develop their skills by practice. I also explain what it is like to be a clown and how clowns have fun innocently without hurting others. There is an anti-bullying theme through my work to give children skills on how to deal with bullying, which an increasing problem in schools and workplaces. The program is delivered by myself as a world peace clown and through my example I demonstrate a positive classroom of acceptance, fun, trust and respect. I encourage children to question issues and what values mean and why they are important. My real hope is that children will become happier and responsible members of our community.

I became a World Peace Clown as a result of becoming inspired by a nurse and doctor who ran humor seminars. I have a good sense of humor so I connected to the idea pretty quickly. The presenter explained hospital clowning and I felt a desire to try it so within 24 hours I had a clown suit and friend in tow and off we went. I enjoyed clowning in hospitals as I saw the real joy it brought to people and I felt a shared humanity with them. It was in hospitals that I realised the healing qualities of positivity and humor. I could see that negative thinking can lead people to internalise stress and become depressed and unwell. The positivity and humor boosts positive thinking and creates a healing atmosphere for wellbeing. My connection with Dr. Patch Adams happened by chance as I wondered if there were any other peace clowns and I found him on the internet. I wrote to him expressing it would be great to meet some day and clown together. Shortly after, I was invited on his annual clown tour to Russia. Patch is a humanitarian and he visits vulnerable people around the world to give them joy and a sense of being loved. He believes in giving loving service to humanity. I share that belief and see this as peacemaking. I found him a deeply compassionate person. The happiness I experience as a clown is the source of my hope for humanity I am able to see the beauty of people. My mind set is positive and whilst I am aware of the problems we encounter as a global community, I believe it is possible to transform negative environments through positivity and understanding. Peace building and pro-social skills in communities will give citizens the strength to resist violent calls to action and develop norms of nonviolence. I believe approaches to educate communities in non-discrimination, conflict resolution and democratic/collaborative processes are effective in preventing violence.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in contact with me, I am happy to answer any concerns the FBI has or further clarify my work and intentions. I would appreciate a response from yourself as to why I was investigated and any conclusions the FBI may have reached. I can only conclude by assuring you my work and philosophy is truly peaceful and with the highest integrity…

I sent the poem True Beauty as an example of what I truly see. I am sure my poem did not change the

culture of the FBI as fear breeds suspicion and there are agendas at play. Why not just see there are people in this world who simply want a happy and peaceful world for children. That is my only desire. I've been told by insiders the shenanigans they get up to, which in my view creates more drama, as each seeks to play the secretive and competitive game to win. I don't relate to win/lose, my inner feeling is we all win when we all win. You are indeed me and if I treat you less than great then I see myself that way.

This is the poem (overleaf) that I sent to the Head of Counter-Terrorism to help him stand in my shoes. They are big clown shoes and have plenty of room for everyone.

True Beauty Does Not Know of Itself

What is true beauty?
As my mind travels the world in search of this jewel,
What does it look like?
What does it feel like?
Does it shimmer and catch your eye?
Does it grow as you grow old?
Can you hear it caressing your soul?

Is beauty the wrapper or the sweetness within?
Is it the painting of perfection?
Is it the sketch of truth?
Is it the adoring love of the parent staring into those innocent eyes?
Is it the kindness of an old woman in disguise?

For me it has no form,
It sings to me in the acts of love,
It shines on me in the eyes of my friend,
It comforts me in the warmth of understanding,
True beauty is without end.

True beauty does not know itself,
Do flowers marvel at their brilliant colors?
Do the mountains know their massive power?
Do the rivers feel their peacefulness murmuring?
Does a sunny day smile at its radiant warmth?
The colors do not know the painting,
For that is in the heart of the great artist,
There is only contrasting lights in this spectrum,
No color is better or worse than any other,
Each a defining voice,
In the orchestra of perfection,
And the cast is invited,
By the grace of natural selection.

In truth my friend
…there is only beauty,
Universal beauty you cannot see,

When you close your eyes you can feel it,
It is the love that sets you free.

Did he respond to my letter and poem? What do you think?

I am looking at myself far more than the world out there, as I am the creator of my beliefs and I decide what I believe. The questions for me are framed by Byron Katie's personal inquiry called 'The Work'. She asks - Is it true? Can I be 100% sure that it is true? How do I feel how do I react when I believe the thought? Who would I be without the thought? And then turn it around to the self, other, opposite, to try on the projected belief. Byron Katie turns the focus away from the other and towards the self for truth, she states that all war needs to be on paper. I see that our negative thoughts are projections, the real responsibility is owning our thoughts and questioning them. I say this to all sides involved in conflict. In the case of intelligence agencies – what is the threat? How do you know it is a real threat? How do you feel/react when you believe the threat? Who would you be without the belief of the threat? And then turn the projection around.

We have all been raised in cultures that seek to be right. Most operate out of paradigms of 'right' and 'wrong', so I would consider that there are few people who actually question their thinking or engage in problem solving through investigating assumptions. I spoke to a former naval intelligence guy in Rotary who spoke to me of his experience of utilising the science discipline to test assumptions, as distinct from those who select a belief and run with it. Critical thinking is very important to break out of right and wrong thinking. Conflict resolution is an excellent process for broadening perspectives through listening, reflecting and asking questions to jointly understand the issues, empathy, seek options and solutions. So when we actually listen to the other, almost always our own beliefs are challenged, as always someone sees it differently and yet that doesn't mean you or they are wrong, nor does it mean they are an enemy. Clear and open communication expands human understanding, that is, to seek to know the other. Some consider this a tactic but I see it as building empathy. I do not see an enemy but an opportunity to challenge my thinking. I believe to understand the other you must stand in their shoes and solve the problem together. This for me is the beginning of peace.

The Fool's Gold: I believe in visibility and live it. I see no enemies only friends I haven't met. There is no-one to influence only the decision to choose what is true for you. We cannot change other people, we can only change ourselves. This is where real power lies.

School of Arts Café – 'Sur Real Paintings in Motion' Show (2000)

The School of Arts Cafe was a local institution in Queanbeyan and considered a role model for cabaret venues across Australia. Many famous national and international artists performed at this highly acclaimed showbiz cafe.

> *…Celebrity artists who have appeared there included: June Bronhill, Lorrae Desmond, Geraldine Turner, Jan Adele, Nancy Hayes, Kerrie Biddell, Julian Lee, Jeanne Little, Jennifer Leslie, Jill Perryman, Toni Lamond, Margaret Roadknight, Bernadette Robinson, Judy Glen, Donna Lee, Lana Cantrell, David Campbell, Tim Draxl, Lynn Rogers, Dennis Olsen, John O'May, Derek Metzger, Peter J. Casey, Bruce Barry, Noel Ferrier and many more. The Queanbeyan School of Arts Cafe a unique, energetic and high-profiled café and is the longest established cabaret venue in Australia and since 1986 has been owned and operated by Pat, Bill and Timothy Stephens.*[31]

31 http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LA20001124018

It was Bill Stephens who gave Kabir and me an opportunity to put on the first show of its kind titled 'Sur-real Paintings in Motion' whereby paintings and poetry were showcased together in this high profiled venue.

The event that Kabir and I put on was unusual and different as it combined my poetry written for Kabir's paintings.

The show was divided into 3 sessions:

Session 1: Suppression An Illusion *(history, civil war, war, Islam, girls buried alive, mirror)*
Session 2: Expressions of Love *(surreal nude paintings expressing communication)*
Session 3: Resurrection of Self (*the uncertainty of the future)*

The sessions allowed for the different themes of Kabir's paintings. The format of the program was

1) A poem from Lao Tzu 'The Way and the Life', the famous Chinese Philosopher

2) Kabir would exhibit and explain his painting

Bill Stephens zoomed the spotlight in to show the paintings more clearly as Kabir revealed images within images. As people were shown these paintings they saw the brilliance of Kabir's ability as an artist to convey the story, the pain and the depth of the issue in the painting which therefore was truly paintings of poetry in motion.

3) My poem written for Kabir's painting

This became the format for the night. There was a rhythm to the paintings that connected the viewer to complex stories using art as a metaphor and images evoking emotion. It was true mastery.

Our guests were mostly friends in the audience. They enjoyed the experience of Afghan food and a tablar and sitar player. In the East poetry is often accompanied by music, so it was only natural to expand the ambiance of the evening with an experience of the East. A woman came up to me in the end with tears in her eyes and said: 'You mustn't give up please keep going'. She was inspired by our event.

The following are a sample of the paintings and poetry featured in the show.

A) 'Waiting to Exist'
(later the named changed to Foothold)

This painting and description has changed, as Kabir changed, the painting changed years later as he found himself more suppressed.

The meaning of the painting is described as follows[32]:

[The painting] refers to my sense of alienation from both my culture of origin and my adoptive home in Australia. I fail to find a foothold on the red earth of Australia, finding myself suspended between two worlds. The self-portrait depicts me as constrained by my cultural roots, encased in a shell of personal anguish. The sewn lips reveal that my voice and therefore my means of personal expression, has been silenced. My own ideas exist unexpressed in my head, symbolized by unhatched eggs. Other details in the work – the sky shown as drapery, the landscape reduced to walls, the tenuous tendril springing

32 Note the meaning of the painting is not written in Kabir's words but interpreted by an Art Curator

from the second boot -- are all images of confinement and displacement, and my own need to deal with exile and alienation. My closed eye echoes the shape of the free bird my spirit might wish to be.

Poem 1: Lao Tzu – Tao Te Ching

Man, when entering life,
Is soft and weak,
When he dies,
He is hard and strong,

Plants, when they enter life,
Are soft and tender,
When they die they are dry and stiff.

Therefore: the hard and the strong are companions of death;
The soft and the weak are companions of life.

Therefore: when weapons are strong they are not victorious.
When trees are strong they are cut down.
The strong, the great is below.
The soft, the weak, is above.

Poem 2: The Conception of Life

The conception of life is truly a miracle,
A billion combinations but only one will reach the pinnacle,
the very small contains millions of libraries,
Creation is awe inspiring.
All life is equal of that I have no doubt,
We depend on the system,
It is not the other way about,
The extraordinary diversity,
Evolving traits and complexions,
The world is my university,
The mirror to a myriad of reflections.

From within the cage,
The egos dance across the stage,
We postulate our history,
Pecuniary interests vent their rage,
In a kind of specialisation of misery,
Welcome to the enlightenment in the information age.

Returning to our kind,
Images wildly gusting through our mind,
Whistling down the valleys, dark alleys,
Fingers spreading across and behind,
Transforming shapes and breathing,
Losing track of Self and time,
Cracking, breaking,
The floor becomes the ceiling,
Growing awareness my tingling leaves of feeling.

In respect of this new harmony,
The shell is my protein,
The tenderness is soft,
The complexity unseen,
My sight takes flight,
To visit other gardens,

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

To build another nest,
With the timidity of a visiting guest,
The eggs I lay will grow,
Life will take its course,
Who am I,
No-one will ever know.

B) Immortality of Hope

Kabir's painting shown was called 'Immortality of Hope' (Kabir later called the painting 'Omeed' after his nephew which means hope).

Kabir's mother was the inspiration for his paintings. He felt her suffering intimately and he painted to merge with the mystery and heal the pain he felt. I met Kabir's mother, Bibi Shireen, and she was an inspiration to me. I found her to be without ego and a deeply humble woman. She shared with me her pain and suffering. I could see why he adored her. He painted her portrait which was a metaphor for his mother country. The dove of peace is dying on her shoulder, I felt this painting intimately given my love of peace. She was the reason I chose to work for peace.

The meaning of 'Immortality of Hope' (my words from memory):

You will see the image of Kabir's mother in the shape of Afghanistan in the painting, it is his motherland. Kabir's mother was his protector. Part of her hair is actually wood which depicts the destruction of nature in war time. The right hand side of her hair is a blown out hole. You will notice on the right hand side of her face there is a pregnant woman who is veiled and looking towards the wood (left side). She represents hope as she is pregnant. The dove of peace has a bullet in its wing and is nestled into her breast. His mother and motherland has flames licking her clothes representing the burning pain. Behind his mother the skin is peeling off the wall, as a metaphor for all the divisions and factions. The pockets of blue are glimpses of hope. The clock is the clock tower in Kabul, all time as stopped like the dark ages. There is a flame that is licking at the edges and beyond the frame, this represents the pain of war that cannot be contained by the frame of the picture.

Poem 1: Lao Tzu – Tao Te Ching

The world has a beginning:
That is the Mother of the World.
Whosoever finds the mother
In order to know the sons;
Whosoever knows the sons
And returns to the mother:
He will not be in danger all his life long.

Whosoever closes his mouth
And shuts his gates:
He will not be troubled all his life long.
Whosoever opens his mouth
And wants to set his affairs in order:
He cannot be helped all his life long.
To see the smallest means to be clear.
To guard wisdom means to be strong.
If one uses one's light
In order to return to this clarity
One does not endanger one's person
This is called the hull of eternity.

Poem 2: The Symbol of the Mother is Surrender

The women of his country
Live for the children alone,
Their life is pure dedication
Or they sink like a stone,
Their love is their children,
Sacrifice they condone.

The symbol of the mother,
Is surrender,
Is so tender,
The carer of the old,
The protector of the soul.

Non-violence and submission,
You do not need to gain permission,

You cannot be conquered,
For you are the creative,
The spirit of creation cannot destroy,
There is no favored girl or boy.

Allocated the parents role,
The walls were built to provide sweet comfort,
To shelter from the cold,
You have always done as you were told.

Unaware of political intrigue,
And the atmosphere of distrust,
You have no more tears as your life has turned to dust.

The dove of peace is freedom,
The dove of peace is white light,
The dove of peace comes to those
Who never dare to fight,
The dove of peace returns to mother,
It no longer takes to flight,
And as it gently slides away,
Mother wants to fight.

To change your mind is divine,
To forgive is elixir of the sublime,
To heal the wounds and find a new home,
May save us all in time.

A new pregnancy mother gives birth to new hope,
She shapes life from the rubble,
She yields dissolving trouble,
Her children are scared and shaken,
And she hopes that one day,
Humanity will awaken.

What this show achieved was to evoke through metaphors deeper insights into the reality of Afghans living in Afghanistan during war. Australia was at war with Afghanistan and our country did contribute to the pain of the people rather than seek for solutions. This show connected people to the suffering of other human beings in another part of the world. It touched our humanity as we all have a responsibility for peace. Kabir was a master at conveying his truth and feelings on canvas. As a true artist, he took

the viewer into the deeper world of metaphor showing the many layers of complexities for the men and women of Afghanistan. In my view he showed the depth of their suffering.

Bill Stephens, the owner of the School of Arts Café, allowed us to put on a show for the first time and provided a creative channel to express important truths for expanding peace. To him I feel indebted and grateful for the opportunity.

Austcare Refugee Week, Afghan Bazaar Banquet (2001)

My mother rang me one day in response to the drought in Afghanistan. She had heard on the news that millions of Afghans were starving. My mum rang to tell me to do something. I agreed with her and contacted Austcare, a Non-Government Organisation. I contacted Stephanie, the Manager of Austcare, to work with me in creating an Afghan Bazaar. It would be the theme for Refugee Week, an annual week focusing on refugee issues. At first she didn't commit and as luck would have it, a few events she had planned cancelled before she reconsidered and decided to go ahead with the Afghan Bazaar Banquet. The vision was to hold an Afghan bazaar banquet in the Yarralumla Woolshed to highlight the issues in Afghanistan and help the people. Kabir produced the graphic design for the invitations.

Our preparations went well and were advanced and then a problem occurred, September 11 happened. There was great outrage around the world in reaction to the planes flown into the World Trade Centre towers and the Pentagon. Then there was a counter attack by the United States and British militaries on Afghanistan. It is hard to verify accurately how many civilians were killed in specific airstrikes, as the media has not covered this event. However, Human Rights Watch reported later that 'during the United States' bombing of Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan in 2001, tens of thousands of Afghan civilians also left the country as they had no food or shelter.'[33] Stephanie and I realised this event could be volatile and we were concerned about violence. My attitude was: 'if there is a threat then take it seriously, if not let's go ahead'. We ended up going ahead.

I suggested to Stephanie that we organise a small protest march through the heart of Canberra to highlight the drought situation in Afghanistan and the Refugee Week Afghan Bazaar. I felt it was important to gain media attention and raise funds to help vulnerable people. Stephanie wasn't comfortable about a protest march she had concerns about occupational health and safety issues. I didn't mind the risks and would take responsibility for myself. I felt strongly I had to make this situation visible. People were dying from lack of access to water and food, that was more important than occupational health and safety. I placed my service above self and decided to go ahead.

I organised the protest march with two other women through the centre of Canberra wearing chaldari or what is commonly known as the burqua (full cover). This the long cape women wear to cover their heads and bodies. It was my first experience of what it feels like. It is like walking in a bag and seeing out through bars. Kabir did a painting of a women wearing chaldari and he painted it like bars, he was right, the bars also represented the prison that women found themselves psychologically in. The chaldari I was wearing was Kabir's sister's and had been sent from Afghanistan. This was the first protest I had organised. We were letting people know about the 12 million Afghans facing a humanitarian crisis due to years of drought.

The aims of the event was to facilitate an experience between Australians and Afghans as a community building gesture. It was to be both cultural and educational. The political aspect was secondary to the primary purpose. Essentially it was to connect people in common unity, or comm-unity, and raise funds for the thousands starving in the north.

33 http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/9-Imtiyaz_Gul_Khan.pdf

Stephanie was well connected and organised for selected politicians, experts and some Afghan refugees from the Tampa, to speak at the event. We invited the Ambassador of Afghanistan, senators from the ACT Government and Federal Parliament, who agreed to attend. We borrowed hay bales from Forest Park horse riding school, tables and chairs from the Fyshwick markets, Oriental Bazaar carpets from Sabur, whom I had known since I was a teenager. My Iranian friend Parvin also provided some of her rugs. Stephanie found lights that looked like flames (so we didn't burn the Woolshed down) and put them up around the place. We booked some musicians who were professional Afghan tablar and sitar players. A wonderful slide show was prepared by an academic from the Australian National University showing the mountainous countryside of Afghanistan and its rich culture. I found a Four Corners ABC documentary and edited it down to 15 minutes by a local technical college. The film discussed the political issues in Afghanistan and the war. Kabir and I featured a segment from our show 'Sur Real Paintings in Motion', whereby Kabir explained his paintings and I read out poetry.

An event such as this is not complete without tasting the food of Afghanistan. Food is a great bridge builder. Afghans offered to cook their traditional dishes. Christians allowed us to use the church kitchen so that Muslims could cook and store food in the fridges. It was wonderful to witness Christians helping Afghans building friendship across religion. I then loaded the food in my little Mitsubish Colt and drove it to the Yarralumla Woolshed. The food was kept warm by Bain-Maries. Even my mum was in this little space at the back of the Woolshed with a basin and water and washing hundreds of dishes. She stood there all night and didn't see the event at all. She demonstrated selfless service.

By the time the venue was ready it truly looked like an Afghan Bazaar. We even offered discounts to Afghans who dressed in traditional clothes, we really wanted to make an impact and give a real feeling of being in Afghanistan and connecting all the people. It really was a wonderful event.

Stephanie sold tickets and this became the fundraising that benefited people in need in the drought affected north of Afghanistan. This is what she told me some time later…

> *At the Afghan food thing, $10,000 or thereabouts (was raised), which went to a medical project in the north (of Afghanistan) near Tajikistan. Hundreds came that night, and an article in the Canberra Times about the walk you did from ANU to Civic- (need to) check its circulation. plus TV- commercial... (Stephanie Koorey, AustCare)*

It was a great event and I recall having a special moment alone in the carpark and realising it was sold out and a full house. I thought to myself, 'this is what one thought can achieve'. I was amazed that it all came together effortlessly. I was to learn later that the media circulation communicated the message to around 8,000 people. I have just reflected on the fact that my mother (a Christian) was the one who asked me to do something, so it was really her thought that started the ball rolling; perhaps it was her humanitarian streak, her love of Kabir and belief in me. I just made it happen with Stephanie from Austcare.

I do have to laugh in retrospect, people did get 'Delhi belly' the next day, so it was an authentic experience as food wasn't refrigerated. Apparently the Bain-Marie's had not been hot enough. Oh well, they were sick but happy. It was worth the price of their tummies. Stephanie received much feedback and praise for the event. I didn't care that I was not acknowledged personally, it was between me and my love of a higher power. The love of service and success was enough.

After this event I was told that the Ambassador of Afghanistan had been looking for me, he wanted to give me a certificate for my efforts to help the people. I felt that was very kind, but I was long gone from Canberra by then. I appreciated the thought coming to me, and was glad they felt I had contributed to the greater good of people just like me. One person can do something. We are not powerless.

I moved to Melbourne shortly after this event as Kabir and I had separated. I felt the call for my humanitarian work.

The Fool's Gold: Art and poetry are powerful mediums to reach the deeper aspects of humanity. We can all make a difference to the big picture.

A Department of Peace (2004)

I mention in the Bridges to Peace section, my question to Mark Latham (opposition leader) about a US bill that had been introduced to create a Cabinet Level Department of Peace as an approach to non-violent conflict resolution, at both the domestic and international levels. He indicated he had not heard of this bill and didn't seem interested in creating a Department of Peace. I walked away wondering if it was possible. Around that time I received a call one Sunday morning from Stella Cornelius of the Conflict Resolution Network in Sydney. To my surprise, she told me she had been appointed in 1986 (International Year of Peace) to establish a National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament, which no longer exists today. She sent me a book called *An Australian Campaign for a Ministry for Peace.* **It made the case for a Department of Peace. It makes sense; after all we have a Department of Defence why not focus on a Department of Peace? This would create a balance in decision making and offer more possibilities for resolving problems. It does not compete with Defence, it provides another way of seeing problems and generating nonviolent solutions.**

I thought the government appears open to creating a meaningful democracy and issues of violence are critical. I decided to write a petition and see where it could go. I collected hundreds of signatures. However, I didn't submit these signatures to the Howard Government at the time, as I was noticing restrictions on civil liberties and I decided I didn't want to give a list of names to the Government. However, for me the activism was getting out there and asking people to sign the petition, gaining their reactions and developing a sense of democracy. For me it was about taking small steps in the right direction.

The Fool's Gold: What you focus on expands. A Department of Peace is a step towards a culture of peace.

Environment Day – Canberra (2005)

When I was living in Canberra I was invited to go as a clown to an environmental march. I was not lost that it was held near the peace park and I saw the statue of Gandhi. I remembered when I first came back to Canberra I was driving past this park and suddenly realised it was Gandhi's birthday, it was the 2 October. I had to pinch myself at the time. Then I saw his statue.

Here is a photo of myself with Gandhi, my hero, and yes I believe he was a clown.

I recall in the movie Gandhi where the American journalist Vince Walker came to meet him on the long walk to the sea of Dandi, he laughed and said "Walker, my name is Walker ha ha." It is a part of his life many don't know. He was a clown.

At the protest the organisers spontaneously gave me the megaphone, and to be honest I really didn't know what to say other than: 'What do we want… when do we want it?' I couldn't think of anything funny to say, I was caught on the hop. I have to smile, normally you can't shut me up. I guess I was in clown mode not protest mode!

I suggested I could do some activities as a World Peace Clown, and this was allowed. I taught the children clowning and then I asked them to write a letter to the Prime Minister.

Below is a sample of children's letters to the Prime Minister, without prompting:

Dear Mr Howard 4/11/2000

We are worried about global warming. If we do nothing about global warming many parts of the world will only be found under water. But we can stop this by using public transport, not using coal for energy and joining Kyoto would help us a lot. We only have one earth don't destroy it.

From *Thomas*

Dear Mr Howard,

Every minute of every hour of every day of every week of every month of every year the poles are getting smaller and the wind is getting stronger and the planet is getting, warmer, all because you won't join Kyoto or get solar power.

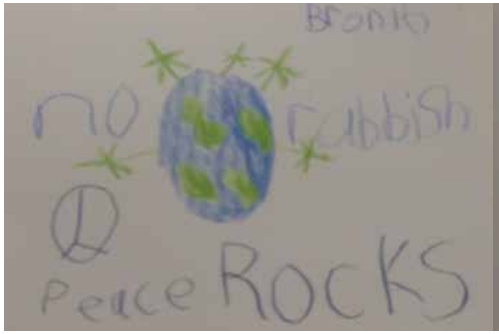
Yours sincerely,
Michael Hoes

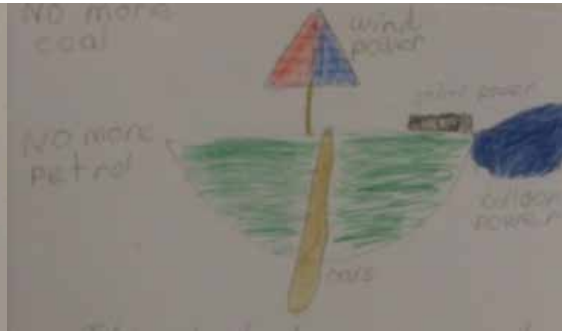
'Dear Australia,

So sorry I turned all of the country into an oil spewing gas belching man-made wasteland. This country is home to over 25 million people and I should never have done any of it. I suggest you all go and vote green. I have been a coward not saying I was wrong earlier.'

Signed,
Johnny Coward 'I resign!
Lewis McDonald, Aged 10

I received so many beautiful, colorful drawings about peace and sustainability. All the parents out there would have at least one picture on their fridge or near where they work. Children's art is so innocent and honest.





I clowned in the crowd, played and met people and had interesting chats. One memorable person was an undercover Federal Police officer. He gave me a card, he was in the Federal Counter-Terrorism Unit. He liked me and we had a good laugh, it was funny actually. I did send him a poem which apparently was passed around his Unit, as they liked it, as follows:

COMM-UNITY POLICING

Community policing,
As the bobby walks the beat,
The many people they meet,
Is the real heart-beat,
That keeps the rhythm of society,
Safe and secure,
For many appreciate the police presence,
And smile at the message,
Of neighbourhood watch.

Budget cuts,
Heavy workloads,

Desk bound,
On patrol,
Lost and found,
Around the town,
For one is seeking trouble,
One must look to see,
Through moments of anxiety,
If the bubble bursts.

A tour of duty,
Job rotation,
Serving civil community or
detecting criminal activity,
For one develops a mind set,
To get the job done,
For you must sift the wheat from the chaff,
The good from the rough,
The weak from the tough,
Knowing right from wrong,
And sometimes the lines may blend,
by association,
Strategic alliances,
For conscience has its own sense
Of social justice.
To be a witness to crime,
To be the first at the scene every time,
Exposes one to stark reality,
Of life and death,
The public is immune and sanitised,
Yet the police must attend and realise,
That they visit the extremes of life,
Where it is hard to see the middle path,
As lies and deception are camouflage,
Obscuring human rights from wrong.

Know that the silent majority,
Applaud your daily courage,
For during conflict many may run away,
Yet you will come and stay,

Determining what went wrong,
For when lines are crossed,
Rules are broken lives shattered,
You are there to pick up the pieces,
And this is the justice of the peace.

Remember Sherlock Homes always asked questions,
Sensed the essence of human nature,
Placed himself in another's shoes,
Expanded the looking glass into the past,
Followed hunches,
To walk their journey retrace their steps,
For investigation is to seek the truth,
Uphold just laws,
Whole-heartedly.
For it takes courage to admit one doesn't know,
And that is okay,
Just stay below until the truth surfaces,
It is the intent behind your actions,
That sets you free,
To be the best detective that's ever been,
And that is the ambition society is seeking,
That is the power that walks the straight and narrow,
For honest police are worth their weight in gold,
And we are depending on them to be bold,
To uphold justice,
And show the young people the value of integrity,
No matter the weather,
And this is how we win together.

The Fool's Gold: When you are open to life, life opens to you like a flower. We have the power to change the world when we see we are the world. What we do to nature, we do to ourselves.

Melbourne Social Forum (2005)

In 2005 offered to conduct some research, free of charge, for the Melbourne Social Forum organising committee. The idea was to evolve this event with public input, thereby creating a truly democratic forum and responding to what the public want.

So what is the Melbourne Social Forum? The Melbourne Social Forum (MSF) is a yearly event. It is modelled on the World Social Forum concept. The concept is to bring people together to facilitate discussions about issues that affect societies and catalyse new ideas for a brighter future. The Melbourne Social Forum press release describes it as:

> *The Melbourne Social Forum is a dynamic open space for finding solutions to the 21st century's most pressing local and global challenges: fair trade, environmental sustainability, global peace and human rights issues. The world's the most dynamic platform for organising and articulating alternatives to neo-liberal globalisation has come to Melbourne. In just 5 years the World Social Forum and a multitude of city-based social forums, from Mali to Florence, Venezuela to Boston and Australia have grown to attract literally hundreds of thousands of people, united under the proclamation that 'Another world is possible!' This movement reflects an understanding that many of the world's problems are inter-connected at a deeper level, and we need to sound out each other's ideas in search of common ground. Ecology and labor, democracy and war, social justice and technology, far from being disparate issues, are intimately connected - so writers, scholars, organizers, grassroots activists, professional campaigners, advocates, media activists / film makers, visual and performing artists have recently come together across many single issues, to find common themes and coordinated actions. The MSF is a space for: Bringing together all types of people and a great diversity of thinking and activity: Holding your own workshops in the unique open space format; Putting forward proposals and alternatives; Discussing issues and collaborating with others in an empowering and healthy way; Resistance to corporate globalisation and the articulation of alternatives; Convergence between many agencies and activists that facilitates dynamic networking; Addressing social issues at a deeper level, by finding the points where problems intersect between issues, movements and systems; This not for profit event is organised by volunteers from their passion and vision for a better world. No one group stands to profit, gain and exploit the space; the space is created by all for the benefit of all.*[34]

I conducted a survey on Melbourne Social Forum (MSF) attendees and CERES visitors on the 19th and 20th of November, 2005. A total of 107 surveys were completed, either partially or in full. The survey was self-completed by respondents. The information was anecdotal not representative of the overall population of MSF visitors over the weekend.

Some interesting responses from the survey:

Main Reasons For Attending MSF: Many respondents indicated their main reason for attending the Melbourne Social Forum concerned: helping at a stall, to hear speakers or participate in workshops, to create change, social justice issues, to learn, share ideas and networking. Other comments included: curiosity, coincidence, general interest and to find out the latest information.

Perception of What the MSF Is About: Respondents indicated a range of perspectives as to the rationale of the MSF which included: raising awareness, sharing ideas with others, networking, being informed and educated. Others thought the MSF was about: creating social change, social movements, new ideas, looking at alternatives, social justice, activism, empowering community, freedom of expression and being with likeminded people.

34 http://www.psychology.org.au/events/EventView.aspx?EventID=1274

Main Message of the MSF: None of the respondents recalled the message 'Your World Your Future: Open Spaces for Open Minds'. Many indicated a range of messages. The most predominant were messages to become active, to do something and inspire others by showcasing those that were active, proving that change can happen. There was a real sense that people must get together, unite, that they are not alone. Others felt the message was creating a better society/community, an alternative or progressive society, to build a social movement and we are interconnected and responsible. Others felt the message was to learn, raise awareness, educate, inform and to be clear about the message given the diversity of groups.

Benefits to the Community: There were a range of benefits. Primarily many expressed the importance of the collective, getting together, networking, discussing and sharing ideas, building community and keeping in touch. Others referred to the benefit of information and education regarding social issues, to be shown the truth, to be inspired and sharing information. In addition, the benefit was to bring hope to people who may be feeling depressed.

Suggestions to Build a Social Movement: There were a range of suggestions which included: focus, teach the unconverted, get the message out more, greater profile - issues 'hot' at the time, focus on issues of resolving conflict, avoid competition between groups or particular groups

dominating, make it a broader social event e.g health centres. The date of the event not to clash or busy, dates considered better April/May or August/September. Other comments: keep imagery upbeat and life affirming, fun fair for children, sign up comedian and utilize mailing lists.

The event was a great success and it enabled people to get to know their community and to have input into subjects that mattered to them. The site of CERES was the perfect location as it was a environmentally sustainable park and gave the feeling of the future. It had solar power, windmills, sustainable gardens, sustainable education and housed a range of groups dedicated to a an alternative future. The rooms and open spaces enabled people to gather and discuss issues and build a social movement.

They invited me back to clown there and I loved interacting with all the people. It is a privilege to meet my community as a clown and special to give and receive hugs. People I find are open and kind. We are facing challenges but how we face them matters, we can choose to become angry at the authorities or we can find ways to build community and create the world we want to live in, it is indeed a world full of possibilities.

The Fool's Gold: Openness, inclusivity and discussions provide forums of contrasting views, new ideas and crystallising visions. Community forums are the beginning of learning democracy. People realise they are responsible for the world and can create what they want to see happen.

Alternatives To Violence Project (2005)

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is run by the Quakers (Religious Society of Friends) originally developed in the United States. I joined AVP IN 2005 and enrolled for training with AVP in Melbourne. I did this as the Quakers were famous for their work in peace and nonviolence and I wanted to learn practical activities to de-escalate violence in our society.

Below is an overview of this community program from the AVP international website.

> *…AVP began in New York in 1975 when a group of prisoners asked Quakers to help them learn alternatives to the violence which was all they knew. It was soon recognised that mainstream society also needed to learn peaceful ways of living, and so community*
>
> *workshops began to run parallel with those in prisons. AVP now works its culture of peace on 6 continents. AVP is active in many different countries of the world including England, Scotland and Ireland, throughout the United States, in Russia, Georgia, Macedonia, Hungary, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, in Columbia, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Brazil, in South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria, and Uganda, in India, Hong Kong and Aotearoa/New Zealand and some Pacific islands. AVP is active in all Australian states and in the ACT. At present AVP is being established in Kenya. AVP has become a resource not only for experiential understanding the nature of violence and its realistic alternatives but also for discovering, or rediscovering, the spirit of hope and community which lies at the heart of a nonviolent way of life. Dealing with violence starts with each of us, in our homes, communities, nation and world.*[35]

I trained in the Basic, Intermediate and then in the Advanced course. I found the program excellent for bringing the community together to learn to speak about violence in ways that were non-confronting yet expanding in skills, insight and empowering. The program ran for the weekend starting on the Friday night until Sunday. The strength of the program is that it is experiential using role plays, drawings, critical thinking, group work, games and activities to create learning opportunities, shared insights and developing other ways of seeing conflict. The process builds the community group.

Here is an example of how the program was structured:

Community Building, Communication, Introduction to Transformative Power

1. *Agenda preview (lists the agenda for the workshop)*
2. *Gathering: My Affirmation Name is…. and a time in my life I have felt part of a community or group is…. (thus each person makes up a name and contributes their experience)*
3. *Violence & Non-Violence trees: Two trees are drawn and people discuss examples of the roots of violence and nonviolence.*
4. *Light and Lively (throwing pattern balls to learn people's name and build the group)*
5. *Introduction to Transformative Power: Transformative power is the power that transforms lives, it works through people. Think of transformative power in your life.*
6. *Sharing a conflict I resolved non-violently (each member shares their wisdom).*
7. *'I' messages (statements from their own perspective). I statements are used in conflict resolution. It is a technique where people speak in the first person stating. For example 'I was upset when you took my newspaper and what I would like is if you would ask me'. Participants learn to own the issue.*
8. *Guided meditation (facilitators conduct a meditation to bring people into a spiritual and peaceful space)*
9. *Closure: The weekend is closed and all attendees thanked.*

35 http://www.oldsite.oases.edu.au/flyers/CommLearning/AVP%20INFORMATION%202005.pdf

The AVP program was excellent and effective, unfortunately the program was not taken up by Council's and Government. I suspect the problem was the low price and the lack of demand from the community. It is still running but mostly through community groups.

Overall, I explored a range of ways to participate in democracy, to claim my own power in democracy and participate in rallies. It was a very interesting and expanding time in my life.

The Fool's Gold: When communities come together to discuss violence and learn non-violence, peace and healing occurs.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

Protests and Rallies (2005 – 2010)

In Melbourne I attended protests and rallies in the capacity of a radio person and also a clown. As a peace clown I wanted to ensure people didn't get violent. Occasionally, I reminded people that this is a democracy to de-escalate tension. To build unity and a sense of community, I would hug the police and protestors. I am very aware that what you resist persists and what you look at disappears. Often with protests we are saying what we don't want rather than what we do want. In my conflict resolution training I learnt to focus on the problem, not hate the person. This is always a challenge for people when they feel passionate about issues that can become divisive. The clown reminds people of the positive side to community.

On one occasion, I do recall being filmed at a protest organised by the Socialist Alliance. The protest was in defence of Muslims who could be incorrectly targeted or persecuted. This is due to the media focus on terrorism and linking this to Muslim people, particularly women with hijab (head cover). I remember David the speaker asking for everyone to put up their hands for a pledge for truth. So I stood there with my hand up, the funny thing was he had more to say and others put their hands down, except the silly clown. I had it up in response to the call for truth. I thought at the time any minute he will start the pledge but he took a while. So I stood out like a sore thumb. It was really interesting, I had said to myself earlier to note the people videoing in the crowd. Blow me down, at 3am I woke up, and saw in my mind's eye the guy filming me and had the realisation that I had been seen as an activist. It was a strange moment as I felt a heaviness and a feeling of being seen, of being 'above the radar' was how I felt it. I remember being really amazed that peace people are treated like they are undertaking an illegal activity. I remember trying to understand what right the authorities had to film people at a protest.

I recall clowning at the David Hicks protest in Canberra. David Hicks was the Australian held at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba for five years. He was identified as a terrorist by the United States and illegally tortured and held in solitary confinement in Guantanamo Bay. The issue at the protest was to do with the human rights violations of holding people without a trial, in a facility offshore from the United States and outside of US law. Hicks' father was a lawyer and kept up the campaign to keep his son's name in the news. I went to the rally testing the jester in the crowd. But I have to say it didn't work as the crowd was so angry. One saw me as being frivolous, as it was no laughing matter. I had a cameraman there from the ABC, unfortunately he didn't see me at my best and it wasn't the best forum for my presence. We were discussing a documentary with clowns and peace and the diffusion of tension. Clearly it didn't work. What did work was that I was able to connect with indigenous Australians who were there. I saw an aboriginal elder and I was able to hug her. In relation to the mood at the rally, I hung back on the sidelines and didn't add to their frustration. I think in bigger protests a clown can work, but for one like this with a tight group of dedicated activists, it didn't work. Also I think clowns could be brought in strategically at certain points to provide distraction but it would have to be worked out more, as we are not here to escalate tension.

There were many protests in Melbourne against the War in Iraq. The Victorian Peace Network were very active in keeping the issues in public view. I attended many rallies as a peace clown seeking to ensure people were positive and non-violent. It was a great experience, feeling the sense of community power and unity around a shared idea. You could certainly feel the reality of people power. It was somewhat surreal for me with the police watching 'we the people'. Sometimes you would see people filming protestors, I guessed this was the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), they were pretty overt about it. I do have questions as to the right to record legal protest and to film without permission, as typically all citizens have to ask for permission to film others, it comes under privacy legislation. When it comes to protesting I think it is particularly important as it could stifle their freedom of speech through fear of government reprisals. On the other hand I understand that police need to keep the peace and some protestors might be violent, so they would need to record incidents. As always, there are two sides. That is the beauty of democracy, our challenge is to live the freedoms responsibly and allow others to have different views in a non-violent forum.

The Fool's Gold: Non-violent people power empowers the people to face what they fear and take responsibility for the future. Proactive democracy is expressing what is wanted. The challenge of the future is to stand up for what is wanted not fight against what is not.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

Raising Awareness about Refugees in Detention and the United Nations (2005)

I was talking to an activist friend about a protest for refugees, I said: 'Why don't you do something inspiring rather than be against something?' She asked, 'What would you do?' I said: 'Make two big Christmas cards and get people to sign them for the refugees stuck in the Maribyrnong Detention Centre and one for the United Nations.' Anyway, I did just that. I set up two human sized cards in Bourke street mall outside the Christmas windows (depicting the story of Christmas). I asked people to write messages on little bits of paper to people who had no home at Maribyrnong. I asked people to extend wishes for peace to the United Nations. I ended up filling both cards. Anyway, I was thinking, 'how do I spell Maribyrnong?' (I found out later it is an aboriginal word meaning saltwater river). I spoke to a lady at the Detention Centre and I asked if we could drop the card off on Wednesday. She asked, 'How many are you?' I said, 'Three'. She said: 'We are having our Christmas party on Wednesday why don't you come?' I replied, 'Great, I can bring our Christmas card'. I didn't tell her it was life sized and full of words of support for the refugees. So in we went. It was quite a miracle, you can't get in there unless you know someone. Anyway, we came to the maximum security gates and some Welsh guys bantered with us. I said, 'Don't forget the key' (to let us out). It was interesting going in there. To have essentially civilian people who are fleeing persecution in there is really amazing. Also there were children in detention at the time. We had the Pacific Solution in Australia at the time, under Howard. I won't go into the politics here but let's just say most of them were genuine refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan. Anyway, I said to the guards if they wanted to search me: 'I can declare I have weapons of mass distraction.' They laughed and I orgasmatroned (head massaged) each one. I don't like to miss anyone out. For me all humans are in my catchment and I feel I need to include every person. I have no negative thoughts at all. We came to the gate which lead us to a grassy area out the back for the Christmas party. My two clown friends pushed me in front, that would be right send out the woman first. Chickens! Anyway, I went in full of confidence and I said to the people: 'We love you and we have a Christmas card from the people of Melbourne, they love you!' The card was leaned against the wall. I then started juggling and blowing bubbles and bantering with those speaking English. I massaged them, as they were probably tense and stressed. They told me stories about their journeys. The guards were big burly guys and I massaged them as well. It was good for the refugees and guards to see each other's humanity, to re-humanise the people. I really liked that. In the end as the refugees were going back in, I got the Red Cross, volunteers and guards in a circle and we did a group hug. We left the facility feeling great with a sense of unity emerging from these crazy divisions we all create through roles and by how we label people. In truth we are all human and we can always be kind and loving no matter what the circumstances. Try to see the real person, is my only advice.

Then we went off to Carlton to deliver the United Nations Peace card to the United Nations office. They were chuffed, we had some photos taken and off we went to the streets. We ended up on a street corner and our clown buddy Uncle Rad asked this lady to walk with a book on her head. Then he had her sing on the corner. Then Rod Quantock (an Australian comedian) came out and we dusted him down with a feather duster and joked with him. I actually met him some years later and interviewed him for radio. He asked me for a lift to his hotel and so I took him to his hotel in my smoky old car. We had an nice chat about peace. His humor was political and he did have a sarcastic quality but he was really tapping into frustrations many Australians felt about our politicians and overseas events. The clowns, jesters, comedians are all very important for allowing people to express frustration positively, they actually allow sensitive topics to be talked about through humor and without violence.

The Fool's Gold: Creativity opens pathways of positivity, support, fun and hope. In small ways we change the world to show we care. Be the change you wish to see is wisdom.

MC at the Alternative G8 Public Event at RMIT University, Melbourne (2006)

I had another interesting experience with a few friends of mine who were organisers of the alternative G8. The alternative G8 is offering an alternative to mobilise citizens power by discussing globalisation and providing a voice to civili society, those excluded and marginalised.

The formal G8 is known as The Group of Eight (G8) which is the name of a forum for the governments of a group of eight leading industrialised countries representing 50.1% of global nominal GDP (2012). There are often criticism and protests given the assertion that members of G8 do not do enough to help global problems such as Third World Debt, global warming and the AIDS epidemic—due to strict medicine patent policy and other issues related to globalization. In Unravelling Global Apartheid, the political analyst Titus Alexander described the G7, as it then was, as the 'cabinet' of global minority rule, with a coordinating role in world affairs.[36]

The alternative G8 was to be held at RMIT University in the centre of Melbourne. I was asked to be an MC at this event as I am a good public speaker. I hadn't been involved in any of the groups, but I was aware that they were trying to create an open democratic space for groups to discuss global issues. Without doubt they had concerns about a global elite engaged in globalisation and corruption, which they saw as destroying not only the environment but local communities. Through the World Bank and IMF these could create more indebted nations and thereby have the power to have debt paid back through austerity measures and so force capitalist structures of a market economy on their societies. Indeed their concerns were markets being forced open in the increasing drive for resources and profit. Other deep concerns were about the global environment, freedom of speech, the war on terror (at the time) and corporate and political fascism under the guise of democracy. They felt community empowerment was essential and that there should be social forums to ensure the public have a voice. I knew some of these activists personally and found them to be intellectuals with a social conscience. They were also brave and did know their rights. I came along for the ride and gained insights into this world. It was very interesting. I see myself as a clown so for me peace is love and joy. My style of peace didn't really fit into this, but I had an interesting experience and learned from those who felt action had to be taken.

So I turned up on the day of protests as a clown. I went and saw my friends who were negotiating with police to take a military truck into the centre of Melbourne. It was a very cute truck with a big pink love heart on its nose. Apparently when I came down as a clown (quite innocently I love everyone) I was told later it diffused the tension. Eventually my friends were given permission to take the truck down the road. I juggled next to the truck, taking in the crowds on the street and marvelling at the police allowing this. I saw the police as tolerant. I then just followed my friends and they parked the truck and set up a sound system. I was asked to juggle on the truck. It was pretty high up but I didn't drop a ball! So I wasn't saying anything just juggling. I looked down and my only audience was a huge police cordon in a circle around us. My friend dressed up as a dominatrix (fish net stockings and leotard) and another guy had a large head of George Bush on. She handcuffed him (pink fluffy handcuffs) and read out his war crimes. What was surreal was to see the police as the audience. She then paraded him past them like an inspection line up. It was interesting to watch. I saw one activist taunt the police which I didn't resonate with. I just smiled at her, my interest was to diffuse tension and lighten people up.

I found out later that day that there had been some activists who had been violent with throwing rubbish bins I believe. I wondered if those responsible could have been agent provocateurs. These are people paid to create a disturbance. They could have been violent activists. I don't really know the truth

36 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G8

of that. There were questions and the other activists didn't know them. However, the media picked up on the violence and didn't cover the G8 issues or the fact that the majority of people were protesting peacefully and for reasons. The media can be seduced by the drama rather than the real news that gives the reason for the groups clashing or coming together.

I found myself dancing in the audience with other musicians pounding on drums, and as a clown I can just go crazy, we all love the celebration. I can play with people as I walk past and they just give a big smile. I can walk with them and wave and generally keep spirits up. I can hug trees, jump on seats, zig zag through crowds, wave from the crowd or throw soft balls for others to catch and send back. It is a great feeling of solidarity being in a crowd of people who are protesting and celebrating as well. You really feel a sense of freedom and people power. You are meeting your neighbours.

A day or so later we held the alternative G8 at RMIT University, I was told to introduce speakers. The attendees at this event could check out the schedule for the day. They had choices to either listen to speakers on the main stage or go to break out rooms to debate and network with other activist. I found out later that two people had been taken by undercover police. I was disturbed by this. I was told to announce a mobile phone number for people to ring if they were taken. Also they could have people leave with them. I found out later the persons kidnapped were taken by police who didn't identify themselves and were in unmarked vehicles. This came back through those who were taken. I recall that the persons were taken to the police station and interrogated and then put back on the street, and I was told with their pants down. I had no idea of the point of this. One of them was from Lentils As Anything (food place) to our surprise. They are definitely into peace. I understood from others that it was a case of mistaken identity. However, for myself I really wondered about why the police would do this and if is this about democracy or protecting the powerful? I felt this to be a central question.

Anyway as a result of this violence at the protest and the kidnapping of two persons, it raised questions for me. I have a friend who is a former British policeman and is a consultant to police. I contacted him. I tried to think of an approach that was proactive and of service to both sides in understanding the conflict better. I asked him how would the police feel about focus groups being undertaken with police and protestors? The idea here was to help both groups get to know each other, to understand social justice issues better, to gain a deeper awareness of democracy and what that means, and how both can work together so as to ensure that democratic rights are not undermined and that the police are cooperated with to ensure no violence. My friend was well connected to the top of the police force and my email was sent to top people.

There was no interest in developing a deeper understanding or forging a democratic approach. I found this incredible. It was a real opportunity for the police. I was not an activist, yet I knew activists, I was a researcher and could conduct the research in a way that opened clear communication channels and served both. Yet nothing happened. I found that interesting.

The Fool's Gold: Re-claim the democratic space. Participation in democracy rather than spectating is where real change emerges. Tension is part of a creative process of change it inspires the desire to choose a new preference or create something new. Diversity and tension births expansion. Choose to solve problems, expand ideas but not to hate people. We have the power to change the world when we choose what we want and consistently focus on this new way. The law of attraction is a universal law, it is a real phenomenon that does not require others to change. Only you can change the world when you choose what feels good and action it.

Poetry Reading at the Final Dinner for the Australian Democrats (2008)

Over the years my path had crossed with Senator Lyn Allison. I had interviewed her on my radio program 'Bridges to Peace' and had asked her if I could role-play as her at the Our World In Crisis course organised by a professor from La Trobe University. I invited Senator Allison to attend a forum I organised on the concept of a Children's Parliament. I used to send many poems out to a range of people, and Senator Allison was on my list.

The Australian Democrats will always be remembered by Don Dunstan's famous statement 'keep the bastards honest'. Every Parliament needs honest brokers to ensure the others do not just slide into nepotism and corruption. The Democrats were perceived as a centralist people's party based on the principles of honesty, tolerance, compassion and direct democracy. Their policies were determined by a participatory method which promoted environmental awareness and sustainability, opposition to the primacy of economic rationalism (Australian neo-liberalism), preventative approaches to aid human health and welfare, animal rights, rejection of nuclear technology and weapons. The Australian Democrats were the first representatives of green politics at the federal level in Australia. They played a key role in the cause célèbre of the Franklin River Dam.'[37]

It was the Leader of the Australian Democrats Senator Allison's press secretary who contacted me and asked me to read a poem at their farewell. I chose to write a poem specifically for this momentous event, whereby the Democrats lost the election and the party disbanded. I am an optimist, I don't believe in defeat I believe in the future and always I have real hope that life happens as it should. Always in the embers there is opportunity for revival and growth.

37 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Democrats

This is the poem I read out to a few hundred people at the Melbourne Rowers Boat Club in 2008.

REAL HOPE for the Future

I am standing on top of a hill,
For Capital Hill
Rises above Lake Burley Griffin,
And the city of Canberra is Aboriginal for a meeting place,
A sacred site,
And from this perspective I can see Old Parliament House,
Where there was much talk in the hallways,
Many crossing the floor for a laugh and a chat,
For this was the people's house,
It was a common room,
It felt much like a home,
For here the dawning of democracy
Was born,
And only this would Advance Australia Fair.

The Senators of ancient Greece were democrats of a ruling elite,
Peopled by men debating about subjects within the Agora,
For the aura of democracy could be seen in contrasting views,
Which amuse, entertain and enliven passionate voices,
As Socratic dialogue raised more questions than answers,
Perspectives heightened as possibilities expanded over the horizon,
And this is the message of the true democrat,
It is to challenge,
And debate,
And to inquire,
It is the art which inspires,
Truth.

The Australian Democrats created democracy in Australia,
And this is not an ending but a new beginning,
For this democracy amuses, entertains and enlivens passionate voices,
And the umpire,
Keeping the bastards honest,
Ensuring fair play sustains a level playing field,
Is what wields great power for legitimacy,
For this moment the Greens keepers are making the pitch,
For the climate has changed,

The deck chairs rearranged,
For a game of chess is not black and white,
It is played with many moves made in advance,
And sometimes it looks like the Queen has been taken,
Yet the pawns can bring her back,
For it is not about power,
It is about small steps and reaching for the highest goal,
For when you reach the end you can bring back the players,
You can change the game,
For one can create new rules,
Which may not rule but be in service,
For true power was never in ruling class.

This tribute turns to the leader,
The quiet achiever,
Resurrecting unity within diversity,
Re-establishing community,
Embracing change even this one,
For change is the only constant,
As the sands rub and sting,
You may feel the chips are down,
That it has been a gamble,
Yet the pearl emerges from the shell,
And this pearl is priceless,
For its value is in honesty,
Its strength is in integrity,
The season is reasoned,
As illumination shines from principle,
For democracy is simple,
When you hold the scales of justice,
And there can be no loss in this position,
Only rebalancing,
For it requires no status or payment,
It is a statement that lives by example,
For it is the truth that sets us free.

So celebrate change and movement,
For peace is possible,
When you are at peace,

For the pieces of the puzzle come together,
When one takes a step back to look in another way,
For this is how you see the bigger picture,
For these are the times of great change,
And great opportunity,
And you are standing on the ledge,
Thinking it is land's end,
Yet it is not the end of the world,
Why not reach for the horizon,
And fly.

So I cannot say goodbye for I feel REAL HOPE is in:

Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Love, Honesty, Oneness, Peace and Enjoyment

Now the new future waits on your welcome,

For this is a home-coming parade,

In which we are all proud,

So let's make it loud!!

I don't believe in defeat, I can only see change. See-change is where all creative change is catalysed, but you have to see it, allow it and get excited for where this takes you. People still believe the political process is where power resides, in truth it is within every human being when they choose. There are no victims only possibilities that we can choose from. Always creative responses are sitting there, in many cases, not noticed. Yet the future of politics will become love based, whereby power over will be seen as a primitive response to power. Consultation, representation, service, values, public good will all be seen as the individual good. There will be no separation. Poiltics in truth has been about influence, democracy is about sharing power where the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. The future will be one of harmony, vision and horizons barely imagined. When we find our greatness our potential is unlimited.

The democrats were sad this night, for myself, I had REAL HOPE, I never fear change but embrace it. There are no losers only the failure to see the opportunity in change.

The Fool's Gold: There is no failure, life is successive. Never underestimate the ripples sent out. Celebrate perceived failures and you will never fail. In the moment of your greatest failure awaits your greatest success.

CHAPTER 11

Rotary Peace & Conflict Studies Scholarship, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand (2008)

Do you believe in destiny? A random email came to me from the International Conflict Resolution Centre at the University of Melbourne advertising a Rotary scholarship. As soon as I saw it I knew I wanted to go on a Rotary scholarship to Thailand. I felt I needed to learn more about this part of the world that is so close to Australia.

I contacted many Rotary clubs, but for one reason or another they were unable to take my application, or felt I was ineligible. This went on for six months. I had moved to the suburb of Blackburn in Melbourne and had just about given up, when my friend Donita and I went for dinner. You will laugh when I tell you this. As we drove to the restaurant I saw a bright light illuminating a sign with the word 'Rotary' on it. I had never seen an illuminated Rotary sign before, I laughed and said to my friend, 'That's a sign'. Then we went to a Chinese restaurant. For some reason the owner said they were over-booked and we had to go. They pointed out a Thai restaurant next door, so we went there. I smiled at the time, as the staff kept giving me brochures on Thailand. This reinforced the feeling, 'I think I am going to Thailand'. I felt it was another sign. Then I met a person who changed my life and became a dear friend to me in the future. She shared my belief in peace.

Then a few days later I went for lunch in Box Hill with a laughter club person. Her name is Bronwen. She was a real live wire (see far left of photo). Bronwen said to me after lunch: 'Oh, I have to put money in the [parking] meter'. I offered to go with her. Whilst at her car she popped the boot and started to show me the kit she'd used in her recent workshop. We started dressing up on the street - colorful wigs, fun clothes and a few juggling sacks. We used the shopfront as a mirror. We had a ball. Unbeknownst to us, there was a whole restaurant full of people who were laughing at our antics. I said impulsively to her, 'Do you want to clown around?' Let's check each other out. A guy from the restaurant came out and invited us in, apparently his group were celebrating the Treasurer's birthday. So we went into the restaurant. We ended up joking with a table full of men, just laughing, joking and finally kissing the birthday boy, each of us kissing his cheeks at the same time. With that we were off around the shops and playing in the fruit and vegetable market at Box Hill. On our return to the car, an elderly man bounced out of the restaurant introducing himself as the President of Rotary. He asked us to come to their annual Christmas in July, to do a laughter workshop. My friend whipped off her wig and putting on her business voice said: 'That will be $200 for the two of us' or something like that, I laughed at her. A few weeks later we arrived at the Rotary Club, I submitted my application. The very next week I was invited to go on radio and they interviewed me on the local Rotary radio show. Then they announced they would support my application to go to Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok to study Peace and Conflict Studies. Is that fate?

So a meeting was set up with those who could decide my fate. This meeting had representatives from the local Rotary Club of Canterbury, Rotary District and the Rotary International Peace Chair. I had to laugh, I had a clown workshop before and after this meeting, so I had no choice but to turn up as a World Peace Clown (my true self). They were warned, and suitably thrown off. I said something like: 'This meeting may not go according to plan'. As I sat down my whoopee cushion went off (I forgot it was in my back pocket) and we were off to a flying start, with plenty of hot air. This perhaps signified a new approach to peace making unbeknownst to all of us. I walked out of there shaking my head with a smile. It was funny to look as a clown and seriously answer questions about being on a peace program, and world peace. The long and the short of it was, the Rotary wheel of luck turned, and I was selected to go to Bangkok in 2008.

Rotary Peace & Conflict Studies Program – Bangkok (2008)

"I hope that through this program, peace is not just a piece of paper ...but a practical tool to end possible conflicts." — **Bhichai Rattakul**

The Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program (RPCSP) is a unique short-term certificate course designed for professionals in mid- to upper-level positions who can arrange to take time off from their employment for just a few months to participate in the program. [38]

The intensive short-term program, offered in English, provided a valuable opportunity for participants to obtain a certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies awarded by Chulalongkorn University, one of Thailand's most respected and prestigious universities.

For up to three months, program participants gain knowledge in both academic studies in the classroom and in practical field training learned through case studies, research and participation. Participants taking the program have the opportunity to network, practice their skills, exchange ideas and develop new personal and professional relationships with diverse industry leaders worldwide.

The program outcomes are as follows:

- Awareness of how to contribute to the shaping of conflict resolution policy at national, regional, and international levels.
- Understanding of skills and methodologies for conflict mapping and analysis, as well as how to apply these analytic methods to fieldwork situations relevant to the participants' areas of concern and responsibility.
- Greater familiarity, acquired through case studies, of process skills (such as mediation, negotiation, problem solving, and dialogue) used in conflict resolution and an understanding of how these may be relevant to one's own fieldwork and locales.
- Ability to rethink and refashion existing models and practices and contribute to the development of innovative ideas and techniques.
- Appreciation of the educational approaches, values, and ideas that underpin the process of peacemaking in order to become agents of change for peace building in appropriate processes of non-violent social and cultural transformation.

To view powerpoint of RCSP: http://www.worldpeacefull.com/rotary-peace-program-thailand/

At Chulalongkorn University I made my way to the Peace and Conflict Studies Centre and found myself in a room of 19 professionals from a range of fields. Sadly, I was the only peace clown.

We were exposed to some high profile professional teachers and even to some peace activists from across the world, as follows:

- Dr Tom Woodhouse, University of Bradford
- Dr Chaiyan Rajchagool, Chaing Mai University
- Dr. Karmarulzaman Askander University of Sains, Malaysia
- Dr. Erik Melander, Uppsala University
- Dr. Puntip Sirivunnabood, Chulalongkorn University

38 http://www.rotarychula.org/

- Dr. Panrapee Suttiwan, Chulalonkorn University
- Col. Songwit Noonpakdi, 11th Infantry Regiment King's guard
- Dr. Mark Tamthai, Payap University
- Mr Vitoon Viriyasakultorn, USAID, Bangkok
- Irene Santiago, Mindanao Commission on Women, Philippines
- Dr Chaiwat Sahta-Anand, Thammasat University, Bangkok
- Ms Reena Kukreja, Queens University, Canada
- Mr Jan Jung Min Sunoo, Vietnam Industrial Relations Project, Hanoi
- Dr Puangthong Pawakapan, Chulalongkorn Univesity
- Dr. Supang Chantavanich, Chualongkorn University
- Dr. Gothom Arya, Mahidol University, Bangkok
- Dr. Sukree Langputeh, Yala Islamic University, Bangkok
- Alfredo Ferraiz Lubang, Nonviolence International
- Abhoud Syed Lingga, Institute of Bangsamoro
- Miki Jacevic, Partnerships and Consultations, Washington
- Geoff Harris, University of KwaZulu-Natal

We had excellent range of lecturers from a plethora of disciplines such as: security, mediation, conflict resolution, communications, peace journalism, peace studies, government, military, non-government and academia. They were from around the world including Asia which provided insights and a diverse ways to see conflict issues.

It was a most stimulating program exploring the foundations of peace as a discipline, the diagnosis and analysis of conflict, conflict resolution and the transformation of conflict. The whole time I was there I kept finding myself re-focusing on expanding peace rather than conflict scenarios.

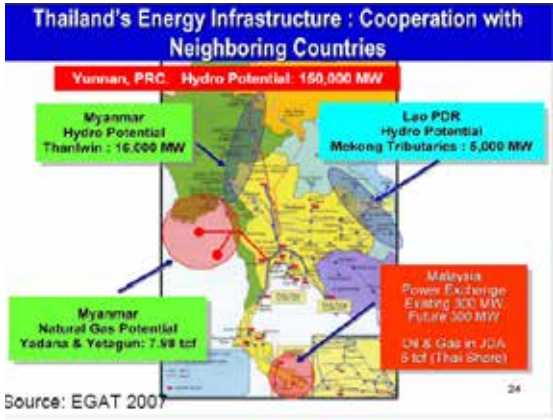
Highlights from the Rotary Peace & Conflict Studies Program

Key highlights from the program are too many to record in this section, so I will focus on aspects that made an impact on myself. I appreciated the lecture from the Norwegian Ambassador, Merete Brattested. I asked to interview her later and spent time exploring her perception of peace. Many have viewpoints of the cessation of violence (stopping the violence), I was interested in transformative peace and positive peace as Johann Galtung espouses. The Norweigans have been instrumental in peace negotiations and seen internationally as peacemakers. My time with Merete was illuminating and helped me to see we have to work on inner peace and find ways to heal those conflicts?

Other notable moments for myself was the lecture and film night by the Jesuit, Ray Helmick whose experience had been in negotiating peace, most notably with the IRA. He showed us a very powerful film about IRA prisoners in jails and the circumstances surrounding and the deep anger they felt toward British occupation and militarisation of Northern Ireland. I have recently been informed by an Irish person that the conflict still is going and bomb blasts are happening from time to time, she was living at a border town. She said in other places protestants and catholics lived happily together. What is interesting in these cases is when the divisions are inflamed, I am interested in the faceless faces behind the division and the real interests. Yet my other interest is to understand why people are so easily manipulated to hate others. The news of skermishes informed me that the disputes hadn't been resolved and elements were still fighting the war, moreover I wondered at the costs of continued security. I wonder if the real security is forgiveness and peacebuilding?

Rotary field trips to the North of Thailand were very interesting. The Rotary peace scholars were taken on a field trip to interview conflict parties to the Salween River dispute. The Salween River is a wild river that flows for 2,800 km's through China, Burma and Thailand. It supports 10 million people in this region. It is one of the longest free flowing rivers in the world. We traveled by long boat up the Salween river and I recall seeing the wild forests of Burma on one side of the river and Thailand on the other.

This is a dispute where the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) was proposing to dam the Salween River for the purpose of generating hydro-electric electricity. They were part of a consortium of other actors such as: Sinohydro, China Electricity Council, GMS power, Norconsult, Ministry of Energy and Asian Development bank to name a few. Of course this was part of a larger energy infrastructure in the region (see picture). The key issues from the energy consortiums perspective was the potential profit of $1 billion and the potential to generate 14,020 megawats from Burma.



On the other side of the dispute were those using the river in respect of land-use and tourism.There were concerns about the river being damaged (see photo). Non-government groups came together to fight the proposed damming of the Salween River, they included: Southeast Asia Rivers Network, Karen Environmental and Social Action Network, Images Asia Environment Desk etc. We spoke to tourist operators about their perspective of how the damming would effect small businesses given the flooding and reduction to tourism. The villagers are very isolated peoples. We were informed that 50,000 Karen had endorsed a petition opposing the project. The concern, particularly of the Karen people were that their villages would be submerged as the dam would flood villages along the river.

It was interesting to learn of the complexities beneath the surface of this dispute. We were looking at the power and wealth of the consortium, the lack of education and simplicity of the villagers who were up against powerful groups with the backing of government and finance. It was interesting to learn of the environmental activists who had waded into the dispute and their intellectual sophistication and the threats they were experiencing. A few activists couldn't give their names or locations as they continually moved. It was interesting to question if democracy was happening or at the very least information provided to those affected. Moreover, inquring into whether the marginal groups had an equal voice with those in power. Are they intimidated, exploited, bribed to ensure one groups wins over the other? or are they considered equal members given seats at the table? Of course these questions were not hard to answer when we realised that the villagers had been given sweetners to addict them to modernity and make it easier to sway agreement. On reviewing the Salween dispute readers can go to International Rivers at www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/salween-dams to review activist issues. There is recent information on KNU protests around the Hat Gyi dam site. To look at the otherside of the story visit Electricity Generation Authority of Thailand at www.egat.co.th. The interesting irony is that power issues were most definitely the focal point in more ways than one.

We visited **Baan Tha Ta Fang** village and we were divided into groups to listen to the villagers to hear there concerns and get a feel for their lifestyle and humanity (see photo). We were to find out that EGAT provided fertiliser for villagers, CD's, motorbikes and fish farms as the people didn't relate to money. They were simple villagers with little education, close families but growing drug problems given capitalism and modernity. They were unable to understand the complex dynamics evolving around them. The world of businessmen, engineering and profits and the world of land-use, culture and traditions were alien planets. The vulnerability of the villagers was apparent. The non-government networks were sophisticated and their agenda was to protect nature. So it was easy to see the dynamics and potential conflict with EGAT and its partners.

Another important aspect of the Rotary program was travelling to Cambodia to visit the **Killing Fields,** this was a powerful experience for me. It catalysed the memories from the movie of the same name. I was struck by the reality of 1.5 million Cambodians killed by communist leader, Pol Pot, between 1975 to 1979. In the 1960's he was persecuted by Norodom Sihanouk, the leader of Cambodia. In the jungle he formed the Khmer Rouge to conduct a guerrilla war against Sihanouk's government. In 1970 Prince Sihanouk ws ousted by a US backed right wing military group. Interestingly, Sihanouk moved closer to the Khmer Rouge and when the US invaded to oust the Vietnamese from the border which drove them deeper into Cambodia where they allied themselves with the Khmer Rouge… From 1969 until 1973 the US bombings in eastern Camodia killed up to 150,000 Cambodians.[39]

Pol Pot studied Marxism in Paris and when in power started an experiment to create an agrarian utopia modelled in part on Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (Great Leap Forward) which he had witnessed during a visit to China. Cambodia's name changed to the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea.[40] Year Zero began and the aim was to purify society of capitalism, western culture, religion, foreign influences in favour of a peasant communism. The Khmer Rouge killed anyone that opposed Pol Pot or threatened the perceived utopian society, they even killed people wearing glasses believing them to be intellectuals. The irony was many deaths occurred during this period were due to starvation on the very agricultural land they worked. Twenty five (25%) of the population died from starvation, overwork and executions. The cities were cleared and quickly by the rumour of a nuclear threat or at gun point. People fled to the countryside, 20,000 died on route. The people became slave labour working from 4am to 10pm, in what became known, as the killing fields.

39 www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/pol-pot.htm
40 www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/pol-pot.htm

We visited the Choeung EK Genocide Memorial and were shown where people were killed violently including babies against trees. We were shown the glass exhibit depicting vertical rows and rows of skulls with remnants.

The stark reality was in front of you as you deeply contemplated, these skulls were ordinary humans.

We were taken to a converted high school re-named Tuol Sleng Genocidal Museum. We were shown the rooms where people were tortured in and the many torture devices. Apparently 20,000 were tortured into false confessions or suspects shot. We walked past silently the endless rows of photos of those who were perceived as Khmer Rouge traitors. They were all killed. I felt the death in this place and found myself deeply contemplating the reality and mind-set of murder. I imagined how negative projection devalues humanity and sees the enemy. I felt the negative energy still in the walls of this place, later I had a shower. I thought how do we educate children to get this? maybe a course 'From Pol Pot to Gandhi'.

We were taken to **Kep Village, Southwest Cambodia to meet with the actual Khmer Rouge.** It was a good test for me to not enter into judgment, dislike or hatred. I wanted the commander to sit next to me. I observed him deeply and saw him march out of the meeting he appeared angry and upset. I contemplated how they processed the past given the present times, whether they had shut away a part of themselves to forget it or if they were in denal or the full weight of guilt affected them. I felt compassion for the commander, as many Khmer Rouge were young people brainwashed (like Hitler youth) by Pol Pot's propaganda and vision of an agrarian simple society using brutal repression. Sitting with former members of the Khmer Rouge, I reflected on how members of the actual Khmer Rouge were not healed from this horrendous era in Cambodian history. Ironically the Khmer Rouge were still in government, Prime Minister Hun Sen is a former member of the Khmer Rouge. I found that fascinating given the United Nations Criminal Court (ECCC) proceedings investigating the key perpetrators of the genocide

of 1975 to 1979 period. This was being discussed in themedia whilst we were there.

We were taken to the **Khmer Rouge Tribunal called the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)** in Phnom Penh to see the judicial chambers and hear of viewpoints as to the healing that may or not happen as a result of the trials.The court had bullet proof glass and one can only imagine the pain that ordinary Cambodians felt. There was deep sorrow in Cambodia over this era and every family was affected, some feared the opening of old wounds, others felt only selected people would go on trial (show trial) and others considered healing as the outcome as people weren't speaking about it. It was a powerful experience, one I will not forget.

We had the privilege to meet **the only survivor from Tuol Sleng, an artist by the name of Wan Nath** (see photo). He had witnessed at Tuol Sleng Prison the murder of thousands of people under the tyranny of the prison commandant nicknamed Duch (Kang Kek Iew or Kaing Kek Iev). The only reason he survived is that Duch liked his artwork. He was the only one.

Here is a profile of **Kaing Guek Eav's (Duch) crimes:**

May 1976 all the prisons in Phnom Penh were consolidated and relocated to Tuol Sleng. Prisons like Tuol Sleng were created to cleanse the ranks of the Khmer Rouge of suspected enemies of the revolution.Duch ordered the execution of prisoners after their interrogation was completed. For example, on a list containing the names of 17 prisoners (eight teenagers and nine children), he wrote the order "Smash them to pieces." On a longer list of detainees, his annotation reads "smash: 115; keep: 44 persons." The text below this annotation reads "Comrade Duch proposed to Angkar; Angkar agreed." On a list of 20 female detainees, Duch wrote annotations for each of them, ordering: "take away for execution," "keep for interrogation" or "medical experiment". At least 100 detainees died after having their blood drawn for transfusions for wounded soldiers. Surgical operations were also performed on detainees in order to train medical staff.[11]

Duch impressed his superiors with his work and was appointed the head of Democratic Kampuchea's dreaded "special branch" – the Santebal.

*... in February 2008, as part of the judicial process, Duch was taken to the scene of his crimes. He reportedly collapsed in tears after stating, "I ask for your forgiveness – I know that you cannot forgive me, but I ask you to leave me the hope that you might." On 16 February 2009, the UN supervised trial of Duch began at a Phnom Penh court. Duch was prosecuted by international co-prosecutors William Smith and Anees Ahmed and was charged with "personally overseeing the systematic torture of more than **15,000 prisoners**."[2] The presiding judge of the case was Nil Nonn. Duch was tried by a panel of five judges — three Cambodian, one French and one New Zealander — according to a 2003 pact between Cambodia and the United Nations establishing the tribunal.[41]*

After an Initial Hearing on 17 and 18 February 2009, the substantive part of the trial commenced

41 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kang_Kek_Iew

on 30 March 2009. Duch's trial concluded 27 November 2009. During the 77 days of trial, 9 expert witnesses, 17 fact witnesses, 7 character witnesses and 22 Civil Parties were heard before the Trial Chamber. More than 31,000 people followed the proceedings at the court building. On 26 July 2010, the Trial Chamber convicted Kaing Guek Eav and sentenced him to 35 years imprisonment. His sentence was reduced by five years as a remedy for his illegal detention by the Cambodian Military Court between 10 May 1999 and 30 July 2007. He also received credit for time already spent in detention under the authority of both the Cambodian Military Court and the ECCC.[42]
Key allegations:

- **Crimes against humanity**
  - persecution on political grounds,
  - extermination (encompassing murder)
  - enslavement,
  - imprisonment,
  - torture and
  - other inhumane acts
- **Grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949**
  - wilful killing,
  - torture and inhumane treatment,
  - wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health,
  - wilfully depriving a prisoner of war or civilian of the rights of fair and regular trial,
  - unlawful confinement of a civilian

Duch was a simple math's teacher who joined the Khmer Rouge, he learned torture techniques and had no compassion for those who he tortured to death. His beliefs enabled him to disconnect. I thought deeply about mind control, government authority, militarism, power, detachment, fear and cruelty. I imagined what if I was lying on those wire beds listening to the screams of those tortured? How would I feel? I awoke in the middle of the night whilst editing this section. I do have an understanding of the feeling of torture, I realised it has been when I've felt powerless and felt another has felt nothing in the face of my suffering. I then turned my attention to my own society where there is: bullying, abuse, domestic violence, stonewalling, lack of consideration for neighbours and so on. I was able to see there is a bit of Hitler and Pol Pot in everyone. So if under certain circumstances that aspect of humans which is selfish, emotionally detached and cruel can arise, then can we create circumstances, enviornments where the opposite can flourish? I wonder who this maths teacher would have been in his life had Pol Pot never existed, probably a person enjoying teaching his students. Such is the power of mind control and beliefs detached from inner virtues where we know our inner navigation. How important is emotional intelligence?

Another important source for readers here is the Miligram experiment by psychologist Stanley Milgram which is a well know story about obedience to authority even when another is visibly suffering.[43] The experiment was not actual electric shocks but the participant being asked to administer the electric shock, believing it to be real. They faced in reality an actor pretending to suffer. What was interesting was when the actor got an answer wrong and the participant was asked to give a shock, this was

42 http://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/indicted-person/kaing-guek-eav
43 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment

increased overtime. It was fascinating to discover that some people would obey authority over their own conscience.

So the key question is:

How do we create a future where men and women feel empathy for others?

Perhaps you have that answer now.

Academic and Field Work Activities

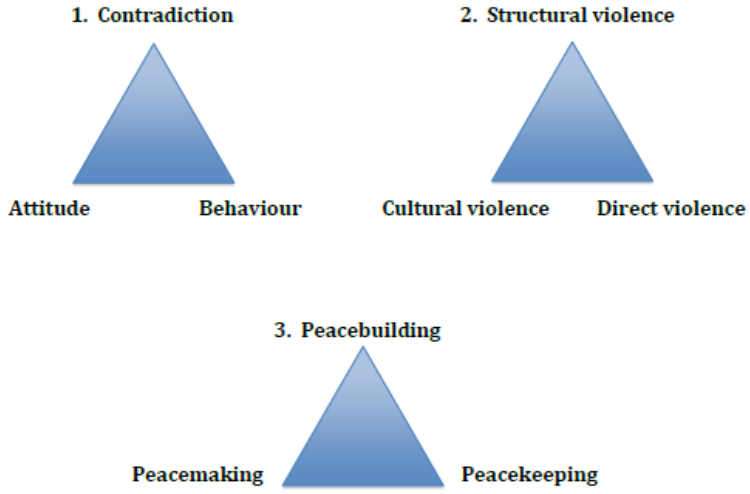
Individual Assignment:

The focus of the individual assignment was on the conflict between the white anglo-Europeans and Aboriginal Australians. I enjoyed this exercise as I wanted to research into my own country. The exercise was formulated in presentations during the first weeks of the course. I could clearly see that the Indigenous people had experienced the psychological projections and behaviours of white Europeans and it was reflected by the type of laws legislated. The insight that was evident was that the attempt to change the Aboriginal people was a denial of their right to exist as a people. It revealed more about the European Australians' intolerance to difference and their primitive perceptions of Indigenous people as savages that required taming and controlling. It was evident that no matter how much governments and interest groups attempted to gain control, they could never succeed in removing cultural identity when a people do not choose to give it away.

Coincidentally at the end of the assignment the Australian Federal Government apologised to the Aboriginal people. Yet healing requires more than saying the word 'sorry', the next step is addressing the past and resolving underlying conflicts that are still hidden. I sense as indigenous people become increasingly empowered we will move away from the secrecy of the abuses of the past and begin to embrace our humanity as One Country. I see that idea expanding to One World as well. We are indeed all brothers and sisters, as they say.

Conflict Mapping

Conflict mapping was a difficult exercise as details were provided by Erik Melander (University of Uppsala) on a number of approaches. The conflict triangle was the model of choice, as it was simple. Conflict mapping, I interpreted as designing a way out of conflict. We looked at Johan Galtung, known throughout the world as the father of peace research and current Director of Transcend. We used his simplified conflict triangle to analyse conflicts. An example of a expanded conflict map is highlighted below:



A summary from Galtung is as follows:

> *The visible effects of direct violence are known: the killed, the wounded, the displaced, the material damage, all increasingly hitting the civilians. But the invisible effects may be even more vicious: direct violence reinforces structural and cultural violence.[2] Galtung claims that although the cultural and structural aspects of the conflict are invisible, they in fact play the most important role during the prevention and rehabilitation stages of a conflict. He states that it is "cultural and structural violence [that] cause direct violence, using violent actors who revolt against the structures and using the culture to legitimize their use of violence as instruments…The direct violence may be the lesser evil, at least in the longer term, than the structural and cultural damage wrought.* [44]

I was constantly reflecting on how the focus in conflict mapping is on the conflict. This of course is logical when that is where one is focused. However, I kept feeling that there must be a focus on peace mapping. This idea didn't leave me for the whole course and I developed my own peace map. Whilst I accept the need to understand the roots of conflict and that a map is a simplified tool to enable clarity to come from complexity. I always felt that the creative aspect of bringing together peace actors, influential people ie. opinion leaders, was not focused on. Had there been a focus on expanding real peace a range of diverse options may have emerged.

Whilst the conflict information and analysis was available in hindsight, key questions for me were where to now? How can conflict be transformed into peaceful behaviour and sustainable over the longer term? These were my most pressing questions. The Cambodians were still facing difficult challenges post the Khmer Rouge. The Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) were faced with a group of experts across a range of fields, yet their expertise was not made use of in looking at sharing techniques, possible solutions and other ways of seeing. It tended to focus on reflecting back to NGOs what they already knew rather than allowing for fresh insights and information exchange. The NGOs could present a conflict map and then create space for different experiences so as to evaluate the picture for new ideas. I feel that would be more fruitful then reinventing the 'same wheel', in a sense.

There was many discussions, lectures and activities around conflict mapping. I see the usefulness of conflict mapping, but I had this strong feeling that it should be a small part of an overall strategy of what I conceptualised as peace mapping. I believe the focus must shift from what is wrong (negative peace), to focusing on an inner and outer environment which expands peace and provides the space to resolve underlying issues and envisage what is wanted. Thus, cultivating a vision of transformative peace as a real Culture of Peace.

I was to find out that in the conflict resolution area there are divisions along the lines of conflict resolution and conflict transformation. My interest is in transformation, as this will provide a permanent shift in relationships and ways of seeing the situation. As I analysed the possible community approaches to peace mapping it was clear that it is about designing a way forward. I could envisage Edward de Bono's lateral thinking techniques being useful in helping people to learn to see differently. Models can be restrictive as situations are dynamic. To resolve problems, one needs to be able to be flexible and aware of changes to spot opportunities. When we get fixed on certain ideas we can become blind to other possibilities. There is an array of potentialities to situations, if we lock ourselves in to just looking at what has failed with the intent of only stopping it, then it never resolves and the lessons that are inherent in the experience are not learned. Thus opportunities are forgone.

I had a few nights working late contemplating the transformative power inherent in all human beings. Life is a journey of discovery, even in war situations, we are learning constantly.

44 http://www.cria-online.org/1_3.html

The questions were:

- What are we repeating?
- What are we learning?
- Can we grow in our perceptions of what is possible?
- What are the catalysts that create climates conducive to reconciliation?
- Who are the peace connectors?

I believe we can transform conflicts utilising creative approaches that focus on positive intent and the truth.

In the middle of the night in Bangkok I suddenly felt to Google transformative peace and found a woman by the name of Byron Katie. Her website is called www.thework.com. I discovered she had been depressed for 10 years and had suddenly awoken. Years later I was to hear of a similar story with Eckhart Tolle, both had similar experiences of feeling illuminated and fearless. When I saw the website I knew this was the transformative peace I was looking for. I absolutely knew it. It was essentially about questioning all negative thoughts and turning them around. The idea is to judge a person on the Judge-Your-Neighbour-Worksheet (see under resources on website) and vent all that you think someone should do and be and what would make you happy. You move systematically through each judgment and then question it: 1) is it true 2) can you be absolutely sure it is true 3) how do you feel or react when you believe the thought 4) Who would you be without the thought (never told to drop the thought) and then you look at the judgment and turn it around. So if I thought '(name) was selfish', I would turn it around to (name) is not selfish, I am selfish and then find reasons to see how this can be true. The challenge with The Work is that you have to try on your own judgements (no-one likes that) it is much easier to blame and make wrong. The challenge is to be open to truth without forcing it, the inner self reveals the truth when you are open to it. So it won't always work if people are seeking an agenda. Yet the principles beneath it is to question yourself, this becomes the first place to start the peace process. Moreover, reality is now. Eckhart Tolle would advocate stillness, living in the now. Many hold grievances from a past that no longer exists or fears about a future that hasn't arrived. Byron Katie is the same, she would work with where you are now, and in this moment there is not a problem. When love is present we start to realise that life is unfolding, we are not in control, but we can investigate our own thinking and arrive at truth. What I found with The Work is that for me, it always lead to truth. I never saw an enemy outside of me but a negative feeling leading me away from truth. In the years that have followed I have realised that negativity is untruth and love is truth. Gandhi worked on this realisation as well. I am starting to really know this.

Transformative Peace

My own inquiry lead me to explore the notion of transformative peace utilising what I was learning. The traditional form of conflict mapping approaches attempt to map highly complexities conflicts in order to develop clear assessments of the factors involved, circumvent escalation of conflicts, predict future behaviors and provide pathways to effective negotiated settlements to secure peace between conflicting parties.

Brief examples of mapping criteria are as follows:

- Actors (parties) and attitudes;

- Behaviours and dynamics;
- Contradictions/incompatibilities, compatibilities;
- Conflict context;
- Causes and Consequences;
- Contrasting beliefs and values;
- Positions, interests and goals;
- Functions;
- Regulation Potential.

The underlying nature of conflict is both unconscious and conscious and if the causes or roots of conflict are not addressed, then it may arise in other manifestations. Therefore, creating an atmosphere or culture of peace is important to enable a focus unlocking conflict and creating a vision for peace. In a range of conflicts, the concept of peace is not known, therefore the experience of peace must be facilitated.

Transformative Peace Mapping utilizes conflict mapping as a first step and applies a focus that seeks to make visible the peace that already exists in the background of the conflict. It acknowledges that the focus on conflict can create blindspots in identifying the creative drivers of peace that have not been considered in conflict mapping. This form of mapping focuses on transformative power that unifies the illusionary positions of adversarial mind sets that set scenarios of win/lose. The transformative power of peace mapping utilizes techniques, innovative thinking and processes to catalyse shifts in awareness to envisage win/win outcomes. These approaches do not seek outside pressures or forces to bear down on a particular desired behaviour mirroring force, but allow the parties to position themselves and maneuver for advantage without reaction. It works on the philosophical statement 'what you resist persists, what you look at disappears'. The transformative process seeks to enliven (inspire and reframe) underlying interests in stable peace and stimulate new visions for peace, illuminating the desire and empowerment of peace making that expands the pie.

Typically negotiations and mediations have focused on Track 2 diplomacy as a means of utilising influencers or opinion leaders to influence Track 1 leaders or decision makers. Track 3 diplomacy or grassroots population are typically the last priority.

The Transformative Peace model reverses the order, as follows;

1st priority: Track 3 – the grassroots;

2nd priority: Track 2 – the influencers/opinion leaders;

3rd priority: Track 1 – the decision makers.

Peace Mapping focuses on the following:

- Creating a climate conducive for willingness to resolve conflict;
- Mapping common ground between conflict parties and the community;
- Clear articulation of fears, blockages and tensions between parties and the community;
- Questioning the fears (use inquiry);

- Clear articulation of positive factors that: rehumanise, release tensions and inspire visions of hope and possibility in the future;
- Clear articulation of peace connectors and similarities in all parties (focus on peace);
- Assessment of readiness to resolve and key influencers (right timing);
- Catalyzing a culture of peace framework (structure and flow).

The objective of Peace Mapping is to make peace visible. As discussed it works on the theory that peace is already in existence, but not visible given where parties are choosing to focus. What we focus on expands, therefore, if we are looking for conflict, enemies or ways to undermine others, then ideas will be formulated along and around this focus. Alternatively, if the focus is making peace visible, then ideas will develop along and around this focus of where is peace: within the parties, communities, history, philosophy and religion etc. It will investigate past, present and design future peace behaviours. As this focus expands other areas of peace become visible in: communications, peace dramas, stories, what works, traditional approaches, cultural harmony, peace in the language and so on.

A Peace Mapping strategy will focus on the community who are not engaged in violence but have an influence on the actors, as follows:

- Community peace making strategies;
- Identify common ground, standing in each other's shoes;
- Histories of Peace – re-membering we are peace;
- Peace in Religion or spirituality – the real power behind belief;
- Where people are similar – focusing on the oneness, what really unifies;
- Peace connectors: organizations, opinion leaders, inspiring people;
- The utilizing of arts to inspire and envisage peace: music, poetry, art, crafts etc.;
- Participatory forums: building cooperation and shared understanding;
- Empowerment workshops to teach conflict resolution, positive peace and local nonviolent advocates;
- Peace through children's voices and through their creativity (emphasizing the future);
- Youth parliaments with a focus on collaboration, problem solving and dialogue;
- VALS – Values and lifestyles modeling;
- Peace and information technology;
- Nonviolent peace games;
- Positive media;
- Capacity building – changing the way you see (de Bono techniques), building interest, building hope
- Problem identification, possibilities and sustainable solutions.

World Peace Youth Day Project – American School of Bangkok

Students were asked to undertake a practical group project. I formed a group wth Ellis, Valdir and Fernando. The group project was clear for me from the start. I wanted to create a children's World Peace Youth Day and a Peace Award to inspire children to be actively engaged in peace. I had a desire to encourage schools in Thailand, together with Rotary, to back children's peace education. I explained to the group I had run a World Peace Day before and had materials for activities. The group had combined experiences in peace education and working in teams, so it was a productive collaboration. In my career I have mostly worked alone as I have many ideas that are still developing. I am used to picking up ideas and running with them to make them happen. So in the initial part of the project I took the lead and it was practical for me to negotiate with outside parties to ensure no confusion or duplication occurred. I communicated continually with the group and was open to changes of direction or alternatives. The members of group were positive in allowing me to coordinate. Once the Peace Education Youth Day was accepted by the American School of Bangkok, the group was then able to collaborate more on how the day would be structured, including the timings and props that were required.

We were given a grant of 30,000 baht by Rotarian Martin Brands and supported and encouraged by Rotarian, Saowalak Rattanavich. Saowalak was invaluable. The Rotary Peace and Conflict Center were excellent in their follow up and checking that all was proceeding to plan. Tucker, the coordinator of the program, gently reminded me at times and organized group meetings. That was effective. Dr Amara (Director of the RCSP) secured the local school through her contact with the Director of the school. Thus, the Rotary Peace and Conflict Center supported the initiative.

The Peace Education Youth Day was held with children 12 to 17 years old at the American School of Bangkok. The day was very successful and the young people were engaged the entire day. We had a clowning session at the end to build team work and to end on a high note. We presented certificates in the presence of Rotarians Saowalak Rattanavich and Martin Brands.

On the presentation night we showed a PowerPoint highlighting some of the feedback we received from students. We accompanied this presentation with a short documentary film, that had been professionally produced to provide highlights of the day.

After our work in the American School of Bangkok, Rotarian Martin Brands sent an email to me:

> *Thank you (Susan), Ellis, Valdir and Fernando and the 27 kids for a most enjoyable day. Very Well Done!... Thank you very much for an inspirational day!... this 'Youth Peace Awareness Day' should really be continued*
>
> *... It needs some hand-out material upfront to explain (in highlights) the various elements that are going to be discussed & their relationship plus a feedback mechanism with actual input highlights of that day. Not easy to do but essential for its lasting success, both for this program itself and for the 'future leader' kids. Can your group do something to help with this? It also needs inspirational leadership like you and your colleagues ... and a 'teach-the-teacher' outline.*
>
> *… This 'Youth Peace Awareness Day' could be a standard program (say: every 3 years) for all 11,141 Interact Clubs (256,000 members) & 7,038 Rotaract Clubs (162,000 members). This merits to be discussed with Trustees Chairman Scott.*
> The feedback was very encouraging and it appears that the peace education program could be taught to the Rotaract Youth across the world. This was considered great feedback and a possible start. Rotary could assist in developing materials, refinement of the program and scheduling a permanent peace education program within Rotary itself.

Saowalak Rattanavich had requested teaching materials with the idea of using the Peace Education Youth Day in the curriculum in Thailand. I tried to follow this up when I returned to Australia but due to changing personal and work circumstances I was unable to provide those materials. Peace is not like other subjects, there has to be an internal change in teachers for this subject to be understood and taught properly. It is not a technical subject but rather in the realm of emotional intelligence. In retrospect, I think the most effective way of moving the peace curriculum forward would have been for myself to go to Bangkok on a paid contract to teach the program to educators. For myself earning income is a constant challenge given the perception and status of peace education. As a result my life is constantly uncertain and changing as I have to be resilient and proactive to survive.

I recall watching the film on the presentation night brought tears to my eyes and I felt a sense of achievement and a confirmation that peace is indeed possible. I felt I could go one step further and acknowledge that peace is actually omnipresent, it is just not yet visible collectively. Peace education and a World Peace Award for Children would make it visible, through the eyes and voices of children. I feel this is the most effective pathway to peace.

Learning to Practice Peace

I view peace as an inner challenge. I believe that peace starts within each of us and the challenge is to remain peaceful with oneself even when faced with negative undercurrents from others. There were undercurrents on the course and I was unsure what the source was. I was aware there was gossip happening, but issues were not raised as they should be in a conflict resolution setting. I decided to observe and view the experience as being the microcosm of the macrocosm. The undercurrents were subtle but I believe they were due to misunderstandings and quick judgements. From a conflict resolution perspective it was difficult to resolve subtle conflicts as they emerge from both conscious and unconscious behaviour. A person can speak with you and smile, but then avoid you. An issue did come to my attention which I could directly deal with. I sent an email to one participant in a positive way asking that we address the issue. We then met face to face and resolved the issue amicably, and a friendship of mutual respect emerged. Essentially it was misperception. I would say 100% of conflicts are based on misunderstandings and that therefore 100% is projection. If people didn't misunderstand there wouldn't be a conflict!

My own practice of peace is based on a philosophy that we project our thoughts and emotions onto the world around us. I am learning to be careful not to read into others what is for me actually an internal process. I perceive that when in peace, no negativity can affect you as you have integrated yourself and healed your own issues from the past. The world is full of people who have suffered or are suffering. Some have worked on dealing with their issues and healed themselves, whilst others carry their issues into life and project them onto others. So my focus was to understand what is 'mine' and what is 'theirs' and how can I 'be peace' in a range of situations.

I am interested in covert bullying, so to examine the insecurities and misinterpretations of others is an important focus. It was interesting to observe some members of the group misinterpreting signals and going with the general consensus rather than seeking to solve problems from a neutral perspective. What inhibits our potential is often hidden within the unspoken judgements of others. I am interested in realizing my own potential, I so I have to look at the dynamics that can either free us or inhibit us to be who we really are.

My lesson from the experience with the group is that kindness is a key to making peace and dispelling misperceptions. It is also a doorway to unlocking peace in others and building trust. Within kindness emerges a feeling of empathy for another. If one is seen alone, another can come and convey inclusivity

or belonging. Empathy connects people as distinct from negativity or self-interest, which divides and creates 'the other'. I think kindness is very important. When a person decides to challenge an inner judgment and actually goes to the person and finds out who they are within a spirit of openness, then their own judgment can be transformed or dispelled. I believe in the inherent goodness of all people. It requires some effort to see it sometimes, but it is there. Kindness can be small acts such as smiling at someone or saying hello, checking to see if a person is okay and showing friendliness. There was one member of the group who was particularly skilled at this. I observed her smiling at co-participants, making comments that a person was 'awesome', encouraging the group to celebrate birthdays and organizing presents and a final party. She was educated in arts and education, bringing groups together and she demonstrated this belief in her own behaviour. I observed that this would be an important component of learning and integrating peacemaking at the individual level, then I think peace at the global level would be a natural outcome.

The experience taught me that peacemakers in the future will not only need to be aware of social exclusion and self-knowledge, but will need to integrate the deeper knowledge into their own lives. This is the notion of cultures of peace being put into action. Peace in my view is a critical awareness of the actions of the self. It was very clear to me that one of the key issues with conflict is the isolation of people, or groups, from the larger group (society). To develop sensitivity to exclusion it is very important to ensure that members of the group don't isolate further or break away from the group. The concept of exclusion connects to issues of dispossessed people around the world. The fact that they have been isolated and not cared for, exacerbates conflict. To become aware and sensitive to these behaviours provides the context to transform them and actively create a Culture of Peace. This is of critical importance for World Peace. I am therefore convinced that peace education is central.

Emotional Intelilgence Clowning Workshop - Chulalongkorn Hospital

Through contacts at the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Centre, I wrote to Chulalongkorn Hospital exploring the idea of clowning there. I was aware that they had no experience of clowns. I was given the contacts of Doctor Atapol and his wife Pat. Dr Atapol is the Head of the Psychiatric Unit at the hospital. His wife Pat runs the Art Therapy area in Oncology. She utilises art therapy with cancer patients and in particular, children. She is a doctor.

Pat and I collaborated to run a three hour workshop on humor and healing. Approximately 40 nurses and health practitioners were invited to learn the importance of positivity in the workplace, positivity with patients and using humor to heal. The workshop explored issues of clowning, endorphins (happy hormones), Dr Patch Adams, happiness in our own lives and catalysing happiness in others. The workshop focused on theory and experiential sessions of laughter and clowning techniques. The last session was a practical exercise of taking a team of health professionals, dressed as clowns, through the hospital to waiting rooms and entertaining the patients and relatives. It was very successful. We also ran a second workshop with occupational therapists, nurses, psychiatrists and others in the children's hospital.

The connection with Pat and her assistant Cherry was very positive. I was assured the work of humor and healing will continue after I leave. I felt deeply grateful to have been given the opportunity to bring love, laughter and freedom to the staff at Chulalongkorn Hospital, it was an experience I will never forget. This was the first clowning workshop in Thailand.

Below are Dr. Pat Sughondhabirom comments based on an evaluation and her experience.

The clowning workshop 'HUMOUR & HEALING' 28 March 2008; 9:00 am.- 12:00 pm. at Chulalongkorn Hospital, Thailand by Susan Carew : The World Peace Clown

Supported by Palliative Care Committee of Chulalongkorn hospital, Thailand and HUMAN center : the art center for healing and professional development organized by Patcharin Sughondhabirom, M.D. translated in the workshop by Sangusanee Nawamarat

…I was amazed when I heard about Susan Carew and the world peace clown. Well... she must be a very happy person, and it is wonderful that she is into peace but 'what else I can offer her', I asked myself. The answer came to me easily and spontaneously when we met. During our conversation plus dinner, Susan who owns a smily face shared with me the portfolio of her works. We immediately understood each other how this could benefit the patients in hospital whose routine is painful and sometimes boring.

Full with sense of humor, Susan easily spread her joy to others and turned the dinner table to be one of the most enjoyable place on earth. At some point, she made me believe that I could do it myself. I could really be a clown, can you imagine?. What a wonderful feeling she gave me that day. Her enormous sense of humor also shined on the faces of others who joined our dinner table, and so do her friendliness and her sense of hope we could feel in our heart that whole evening. We exchanged perspectives of ourselves, our environments, how family functions in the society, how people react to the global warming issue, what the future would be like for children , and etc. Suddenly, we felt we shared many things in common. But the world would not be in peace if we only sat and talked. We felt the need to do something together to make every day more enjoyable. That is the beginning of the workshop. Susan and I, we planned to start from something we already have access, that is to introduce humor into hospital. First we would like to focus on medical staffs at Chulalongkorn Memorial hospital where therapeutic art program is already being applied with chronically ill and terminally ill children by our team including fellow artists from the Human

art center, Sangusanee Nawamarat and Pitan Tachaniti.

The first clowning workshop in Thailand by Susan Carew, on 28th of March 2008, took place at Bhumiphol Building18th floor, Chulalongkorn hospital in the middle of Bangkok city. And later we organized another workshop for Susan on 17th of April 2008, for medical staffs in the Children hospital, again in Bangkok.

The clowning workshop 'HUMOUR & HEALING' , 28 March 2008; 9:00 am.- 12:00 pm. at Chulalongkorn Hospital, Thailand by Susan Carew : The World Peace Clown

…In both workshops, most participants are nurse practitioners who care for patients with chronic diseases, from adult and children's wards. The rest are doctors, social workers and psychologists. Susan let the participants learn the theoretical based and scientific based information first. Then everybody got to learn 'fun to do' clowning skills before we got out and clowned at the out-patient departments and the in-patient departments.

'It is a very very good feeling' someone said to me after the workshop and she wished that we could provide more space and able to accommodate some more friends in the workshop next time.

Most participants feel empowered and promised to bring humor into their workplaces. Some of them also changed their attitudes towards work and the feeling of overwhelmed by the loads of work. To me, the more important is that almost all participants felt free when they clowned. It is fascinating for what we call 'freedom' is usually hard to find, but unexpectedly can be found right there behind those clown masks. It is a kind of freedom that frees us from whatever controlling us in real life. And all that happened, we would like to show our gratitude to Susan Carew, the talented world peace clown.

Patcharin Sughondhabirom, M.D.

Director of Human Center: the art center for healing and professional development

Chulalongkorn Hospital, Bangkok, Thailand'

Field Trip: Clowning at Ma-Lae Refugee Camp

Clowning on the field trips was an experience I wanted to explore to observe intercultural reactions to clowning and the possibility of clowns as peacemakers. Myself and another colleague, a Sri Lankan Doctor were given permission to clown at Mae-La refugee camp. The idea was to explore clowning as a means of creating connection with the Karen Burmese (an ethnic group of Burma). There were approximately 50,000 people resident in this refugee camp.

As we went through the camp we were seen as a curiosity but instantly recognized as bringing something to the people. I did some juggling, waving, blowing kisses and generally playing with the children. Myself and another participant had a tribe of children following us, we felt like the pied pipers. Large groups gathered and we put on semi shows to communicate to the people. There were many smiles around and interactions on a different level. I started to juggle in front of a crowd and noticed it swell to around 200. In the process of clowning I decided to teach them how to juggle. I tried to get a boy to come but he became shy. What I often did was followed the children clown style, many laughed. I mimicked people, smiling and using my eyes and waving to gain their attention. I was always seeking eye contact to make peace with them all, to foster a sense of common humanity, equality and inclusivity. The art of clowning enables one to look into the eyes of the other. As a clown when contact is made - love, acceptance and value is conveyed non-verbally.

As we moved through the camp, we ended up at a makeshift school. Myself and an American, with theatre experience, performed theatre skills for 200 children. This brought together children, teachers and members of this displaced refugee community. As it was impromptu there was a lot of surprise and excitement around it. We conducted a laughter workshop, some clowning activities and theatre (mime). In the makeshift school, I jumped from one desk to the other making noise and they were all laughing and their eyes shining. It was a very positive interaction and deeply fulfilling for me.

Camillian Social Centre, HIV Clinic, Rayong, Southern Thailand

As part of the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program we traveled by bus from Bangkok to Rayong, in southern Thailand. We were scheduled to visit the Camillian Social Center45which is a HIV clinic.

> *The Camillian Missionaries came to Thailand to help poor people access medical treatment. An Italian catholic priest, Father Giovani, set up the Camillian Social Center to provide shelter, care for the homeless and rejected HIV/Aids sufferers. The Center gave shelter to the most vulnerable women and children. The Center is involved in palliative care, childcare, prevention education, supporting a network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), supervising a self-sustaining rehabilitation community, providing scholarships for affected orphaned children and a center for HIV positive orphaned teenagers. All the projects comply with the latest HIV/AIDS strategy outlined by the World Health Organization. The projects are part of an integrated approach that links prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and support to people living with HIV/AIDS. The Camillian Social Center has taken in 1,670 people living with HIV/AIDS. Of this number 730 (43%) people have died due to complications related to HIV/AIDS and 940 (56%) have been able to return to the community.* [46]

Father Giovani ran information workshops for the Rotary participants to educate our group about HIV/AIDS in Thailand.

45 http://www.camillian-rayong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=53&lang=en

46 http://www.camillian-rayong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=53&lang=en

'According to The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it is estimated that 500,000 people live with HIV/AIDS in Thailand. It is estimated that rates are rising in young people becoming sexually active earlier. Other people at risk included: drug addicts, sex workers and men having sex with men.'[47]

HIV/AIDS affected people are often shunned, or seen similarly to untouchables in India, and so experience isolation and discrimination. There is considerable work that needs to be done in education and social awareness to promote inclusivity.

As part of our education, we were introduced to a few prostitutes living at the Center who gave us talks about their life experience. Some women were regular prostitutes and one was a high class prostitute. Some women became prostitutes for financial reasons to support their families; others were taken by traffickers as young girls and hooked on drugs never to be seen again by their families. I learned that prostitution originally started because of foreign multinationals. 'Prostitution in Thailand is estimated between 150,000 and 200,000.'[48] It is a huge trade in Asia and deeply concerning. One of the women explained to us her experience of having to see men constantly, one after the other, and that she had an internal condom, but that did not protect her from HIV AIDS. As a woman I just shuddered at the thought of such a loveless life and exploitation, thus being used as a hobby horse. The other former prostitute regarded herself as high class, she felt some pride in the fact that she was expensive and had formed some relationships with the men. She earned a lot more than the regular prostitutes. They spoke of their life. As peace scholars we reflected on the plight of women in this country.

There was one funny moment where Father Giovani, as part of his education program, showed us a curious wooden box with two holes on the top. Apparently you have to put both hands through the holes. Father Giovani chose Anas Khalifa from Nigeria, who is a Sharia Law Judge. He asked him put his hands into two circular holes and to feel inside the box. What was funny was he felt a phallic object and suddenly jumped pulling his hands out fast. Apparently it was a fake penis and the idea was for men to practice putting condoms on in the dark. Anas was embarrassed, but I could see Father Giovani was making a point, apparently condom use was prohibited in Islamic communities, so he started with educating Anas. We all had a good laugh when we saw him jump back in shock. It was a funny moment, but at the same time, it revealed how important it was to protect people from the transmission of HIV AIDS.

I recall hearing that some of the participants on our program feared that they could catch HIV AIDS and wouldn't touch the people at this facility. I decided to clown at the facility to demonstrate that these patients and kids could be touched and hugged. I thought it was important to show them laughing, just like us. I wished to show inclusivity. So myself and Pasky (Paskalin) my clown buddy from Sri Lanka, decided to just clown around. Pasky played the drums and I did the usual jumping around and interacting with the kids. It was so lovely to see their shining faces and to see the Rota

ry participants laughing as well. It brings joy to my heart to feel that energy of laughter

47 http://www.unicef.org/thailand/hiv_aids.html
48 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_in_Thailand

and unity in the one room. I asked Father Giovani if I could run a workshop with the kids, he agreed. Pasky and I went to another room and created a workshop to enable the kids to be clowns. They did funny walks and jumped into the centre being clowns. They were very funny and enthusiastic, we all had a great time.

Laughter is very important for the immune system. It was Father Giovani who confirmed to me that they had had programs of laughter and noticed that the patients went into remission, so there is method in clown madness. Positive emotions and feelings are very important for health and wellbeing. A positive state of mind can make the difference between life and death. The work we are trying to do as clowns is very important.

Pasky and I visited the small 40 bed facility to meet the patients dying from HIV Aids. I had my rainbow twirling ribbon and played tug-o-war with one lady whose arms and legs were like tooth picks. I will never forget the twinkle in her eyes as I tugged on the ribbon. Her spirit was very much alive although her body was exhausted. I juggled and played with my sliding whistle that sends out high tones then low. I had fun with my squeezy eggs and tomatoes that I throw on the floor. They 'splat' broadly and then regroup giving a really nice visual effect.

I then decided to juggle on the landing outside and I noticed people were not responding. I wondered why this was? It turned out they were blind. So I started to make more noise. I recall a significant moment when I saw a small child around five years old lying on the ground between two parents. She was just lying there. They must have felt so sad. I came up and I had my whistle which sounds high then low when you pull a sliding metal rod. You can make interesting noises with it as you pull the metal rod like a trombone. Anyway, I grabbed her little hand and had her hold it at one end. I blew the whistle and with my hand over hers we pulled the metal rod down so she could hear the low sound, and then pulled up so she could hear the high pitch. When I did this she started to clap and I saw she was so excited. I wondered if this was the first time she had heard this type of sound. I imagined in that moment that she could see color through the sound.

I walked away deeply happy, here I was in a place where people are dying and not long for this world. These moments were powerful moments in my life and always remind me that kindness and love are the keys to peace in the world. On leaving the HIV clinic, I could only feel joy and upliftment rather than sorrow. The moments we shared were so lovely and special for me. I loved connecting with these people, creating a moment of aliveness and laughter. Just live in the moment is what I realised, rather than thinking of the future. I felt deeply happy for having been there. As I mentioned before, I was told many go into remission after a program of laughter; it seems the positive intention boosts the immune system. We clowns know this, who said – 'laughter is the best medicine'? Good 'ol Patch Adams. We are still waiting on the medical fraternity to see the merit in having humor and laughter in hospitals as part of healing, and why not splash a bit of color around as well to brighten up the sterility. Can you imagine how quickly they would heal? I am sure Patch Adams would be nodding in agreement.

I wrote this poem inspired by the five year old child with HIV Aids surrounded by her loving parents. This is a tribute to her courage.

My Healing Wish

This is a tribute to your daughter,
For she is a bright light,
And happiness is the medicine,
Sunshine is the panacea,
For much merriment and clowning around
Is the atmosphere of peace,
In being the Fool is the tool,
That brings healing to health.

May your daughter's life be long and healthy,
May you share in your grandchildren,
May your family remain united,
For they are blessed with love,
And there is no greater wealth than this.

And all I can see is sunshine,
Even in sorrow,
For the spirit of God is a powerful force,
And it requires a trust in the process,
A faith that there is meaning,
Yet every life has a message,
Every life is important.

And may we extend the healing wish to all those unwell,
In hospital,
In war zones,
In sorrow.

For we can extend a hand to others in empathy,
For each is family,
In a world divided,
That is not balanced,
So the key is to find the balance,
And make fairness your measure,
Love your cup,
For I am sure it will overflow with goodness,

For there is much you have done for others.

Always remember that the end is not to be feared,
It is a natural process,
For which we all return home,
For our life is a magic moment that must not be taken for granted,
For the wish to be granted,
Was to be here.

So know that love is healing,
And be grateful for every moment,
Whether it be long or short,
For the real death is not living life to the fullest,
It is living in fear and anger,
And you are the most beautiful gift,
That must be shared,
Cared for,
For all to see,
I wish you a healthy life eternally.

Every moment of life is precious, as is every person you meet. That is the lesson taught to me by those sick and dying.
Why not live every moment in gratitude is the attitude of love.

Clowning in Andong Slum – Cambodia

The Rotary team visited a Cambodian slum called Andong Slum, brief overview:

> *Andong slum was established in 2006. The people in the slum were originally living in Phnom Penh in a place called Sambok Chap. The families were paid off (prices determined at a substantially lower property value) and coerced into signing their land away. They were then herded into buses by armed men and riot police and taken to rice paddies at Andong. They were dumped in an empty field 24 kilometers outside of Phnom Penh. There were no houses, no electricity, no sewage facilities, no drainage pipes to prevent flooding in the rainy season, no trash collection, no school and no hospital nearby. They lost their jobs and businesses.*[49]

This is a good example of why we **need to recouple (link) human rights to trade.**

The Rotary participants walked through this slum and saw clearly that the conditions were very poor. The smell turned me off, yet I felt an inner call to go back to the slum as a clown. I was surprised by the power of my own feeling. These poor people had no running water, and it was dirty and disease ridden. I found deeply disturbing the temporary nature of this slum, and the way the people were literally dumped in this area That was the reason I decided to go back. I decided to care. Myself and Pasky, a Sri Lankan Doctor, spoke to Leigh Matthews, an Australian CEO of the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) called Future Cambodia Fund.

The Future Cambodia Fund supply clean water, therapeutic programs, medical and dental help to displaced villagers in Cambodia. According to the website:

> Leigh was a backpacker who started this charity organisation and ended up supporting 8000 Cambodians, a welfare machine with 12 staff, numerous volunteers and an annual budget of $150,000. She was named Victoria's Young Australian of the Year for 2009 in recognition of her efforts… Leigh won a trophy from Junior Chamber International as one of 10 ''outstanding young persons in the world. [50]

She was very impressive and an example of what young people could achieve when they put their mind to a cause.

In response to my request to visit the slum as a clown, Leigh organised a driver to pick us up and take us to the slum. Andong slum was on the way to the airport and we calculated we could clown there first and then meet the other Rotary participants at the airport. We were scheduled to go to Siem Reap in northern Cambodia. That decision had ramifications, as it turned out to be a significant turning point in my understanding of real peace.

Pasky and I were taken to a make-shift school with wooden planks for seats. This school was built by the Future Cambodia Fund. It was newly built and the only school in the slum. Pasky and I bounced into the room. I could see the excited smiles, shining faces and enthusiasm. We ran a clown workshop with the kids. I clowned with them and showed them what clowns have in their bags. We all played and laughed together. Pasky played the drum, which was really effective, he knew a few games we could play together. So we combined our techniques to bring music, humor, dance and fun to the clown workshop and were rewarded with the bright smiles of the delightful Cambodian children.

49 http://www.photosensibility.com/2009/03/03/andong-village-story/
50 http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/bittersweet-experience-for-a-young-woman-who-believes-in-action-20100622-yvui.html?skin=text-only

After the workshop we walked with the children along a dirt path, we were like pied-pipers. The kids hovered around us growing in numbers as we walked through the slum. As a clown I smelt nothing, saw nothing unacceptable as I was in a mindset of unconditional love. We took the children into the heart of the slum and met their beautiful shining parents. The children just followed us, amazed at the colorful spectacle. We threw fluffy balls into the crowd and were greeted with wide smiles; they were amazed that clowns would come to their slum. They conveyed an acceptance of our presence and appeared happy at the interaction. All that interested me was the smiles on the children's and parents' faces. I wanted to value people who had been dumped in this slum without infrastructure. They had been forced to leave the inner city, because it was prime real estate, as greedy developers were after it. We wanted to show them how beautiful they are through our eyes. One child showed me his arm with blood on it and gave me the impression that disease was present. He deliberately encouraged me not to touch him; I was deeply moved by his protection, I felt under the canopy of love.

After an hour we realised it was time to leave, we had to get to the vehicle and go to the airport to fly to the north of Cambodia. We climbed into the vehicle and departed from the slum, de-briefing with our Cambodian guides. My Cambodian translator said: 'It was like a movie, I can't believe it'. The interpreter was stunned at the impact we made and kept saying, 'It was like a movie', he was shaking his head in disbelief at what he witnessed. I was stunned that I made a difference, as I often see myself as average, as a clown. Then I noticed two children were chasing the vehicle. I noticed one dropped off but the other kept running. I intuitively put my hand out the window, this little boy and the clown touched fingers. I realized the child was chasing his dream, I imagined him wanting to keep the dream alive, in a world of black and white and everyday routine. I grabbed for a puppet and reached out the window handing it to the child. The child stopped still, just staring at the puppet. I felt the dream became real for him in that moment. For me the reality of the experience dawned on me. I realised this was not a small thing we had done, as it had really affected the world of the people in the slum. I saw clearly the connection with this child, as the reality of peace. To truly connect with people is not to be just a smiling nodding face, but to really connect

as humans. I felt I had dared to care. Later back in Bangkok, I told this story to senior visiting Rotarians. I cried as I conveyed the experience, I saw it was not about sympathy, it was about heart connection. That is what the little boy taught me in a Cambodian slum. He was indeed my teacher.

I interviewed the head of a NGO dealing with human rights, he asserted it was common for foreign embassies in Cambodia to turn a blind eye to corruption. To operate in Cambodia, they had to become cooperative and complicit. In market research, this is referred to as 'group think' or following the crowd. The same mindset happened to the Australian Wheat Board in Iraq. This cliché comes to mind - when in Rome do as the Romans do. We pride ourselves on being democratic, yet those values seem to go out the window, when money is involved.

The situation for the Cambodian people Leigh helped worsened, as there were thousands more innocent people caught up in a system of forcible relocation that mercilessly clears residential areas for future economic development and personal profit maximisation. I later spoke to Leigh in Australia, at the time she was attempting to raise capital to keep helping the people. I was to find out much later in the media, that the Future Cambodia Fund was to close down due to the loss of funding from donors and the Federal Government.

The Fool's Gold: True peace is found in heart connection. What we do to another we do to ourselves. What we fail to do for another, we fail to do for ourselves. Love is the bridge of peace and understanding under all conditions. Transformative peace transforms negative mind sets to positive mind sets. This is the beginning of unconditional love.

CHAPTER 12

SPEAK UP Award - Sustainability Peace & Encouragement Award for Kids to Unite People (2009)

Introduction

This initiative was envisaged to build peace and sustainability by inspiring the youth to become engaged in projects and receive the necessary help to action their ideas. The Implemention of this Award would be one of the ways young people can change the world. It will give them the skills to speak up and stand up for the future they wish to create. In my vision I saw Rotary as key given they are dedicated to peace and have peace as their core mission. However, the concept is open to other innovative international organisations that share the vision for young people.

This is the moment for children to SPEAK UP and co-co-create the world they would like to see.

Here are some quotes that inspire why change is important:

> *No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We need to learn to see the world anew.*
> Albert Einstein

> *Everybody today seems to be in such a terrible rush; anxious for greater developments and greater wishes and so on; so that children have very little time for their parents; parents have very little time for each other; and the home begins the disruption of the peace of the world.*
> Mother Theresa, Albanian Christian Missionary, Winner of Nobel Peace Prize

Project Summary

It is proposed that an International Sustainability & Peace Encouragement Award for Kids to Unite People (International SPEAK UP Award) be established. The International SPEAK UP Award will have as its call to action ‘to be the change you wish to see in the world’ (Gandhi). This is a powerful message that leads by example and encourages ethical conduct and real-world community service. This is an important message for children and world citizens around the world.

The purpose of the International SPEAK UP Award is to empower the next generation to lead the collective visions and actions for peace between people and with natural systems. The Award empowers children by rewarding and acknowledging their ideas, creativity and capabilities in both peace building and ecological sustainability in their local communities.

The International SPEAK UP Award raises awareness of the critical importance of children, as future world stewards, to be actively empowered in peace building and ecological sustainability in alignment with The United Nations - Agenda 21. Agenda 21 of the Rio Declaration advocates for people around the world to ‘think globally and act locally’. Therefore, to unite people in their local community and inspire change in the world.

It is proposed that a reputable international organisation become the lead organisation and sponsor of the International SPEAK UP Award. Significantly, the international organisation chosen would be in concert with a growing worldwide movement, empowering a real future for children inspired by the words ‘to be the change you wish to see in the world” (Mohandas Gandhi). This is an opportunity to inspire world citizens towards self-responsibility and peace as personal change, as well as to action peace and sustainability in their world.

It is proposed that the International SPEAK UP Award be promoted worldwide to schools. Project submissions would be collected at the local level.

Susan Carew, a Rotary Peace Scholar, is envisaged to travel to nominated countries as Peacefull the World Peace Sustainability Clown. As a peace messenger, Peacefull would promote the International SPEAK UP Award to schools, communities and organisations. Peacefull would visit schools and speak to children about peace and sustainability at assemblies, as well as teach classes in peace education, disseminate information packs on peace and sustainability and provide information from the United Nations from bodies such as UNESCO and UNICEF.

Susan Carew is a trained market analyst and would conduct market research with schools entitled Children’s 2020 Visions of the Future. The research would provide an opportunity for children to voice their ideas on what peace and sustainability means to them and the type of world they envisage. Moreover, it would provide important global data of children’s visions for the future.

A documentary film would be produced about the International SPEAK UP Award. The film would trace the journey of the promotion of the Award, highlight the highs and lows of it and the many hands linking together in selfless ways. Interviews would be conducted with principals, teachers, children, parents, communities and interesting individuals met along the way, revealing their impressions and what they think about peace and sustainability. The documentary film would enable the voice of children to be heard, promoting how children envisage peace and sustainability, how children express themselves and how they can make a difference in the world. Through this children would learn that when they change, this then changes their world, both locally and globally.

It is proposed that a Patron be nominated, this person would be an outstanding individual demonstrat-

ing a lifelong commitment to youth, peace and sustainability. This person would inspire others with the vision of empowering young people to become involved in peace building and in sustainability projects across the world.

It is envisaged that the International SPEAK UP Award outcomes be presented to the United Nations. The recipients of the Award would be children and youth of outstanding values and merit, demonstrating a determination to 'be the change they wish to see in the world' in their local communities. Thus thinking globally and acting locally. For more information visit the website and download a brochure.

Refer http://www.worldpeacefull.com/peace-sustainability-award-for-children/
Pdf for color brochure SPEAK UP International Booklet Email Sm

This proposal of an International Sustainability & Encouragement Award for Kids to Unite People (SPEAK UP Award) was circulated for feedback requesting critical appraisal from a range of experts ie. Rotarians, peace and conflict resolutions experts, scientists, ministers, civil libertarians, nuclear activists, community development advocates, educators and think tanks.

The initial responses to this proposal were as follows:

'Dear Susan, dear Antonio – very impressive, totally original, never seen anything like it before. Forward it to Olivier Urbain for Arts and Peace – please — all the best johan in California...'
Professor Johan Galtung

'Dear Susan, thank you for sending me the advance copy of your interesting proposal for a Rotary International Peace Award for the Children of the World – a very commendable concept…'
Dr. Henry Gardiner, Past Governor, RI District 9700 1995-96

'Dear Susan, congratulations for taking on this very ambitious project/journey/quest…'
Owen Secombe, UNESCO APNIEVE, Network for International Education and Values Education

'Dear Susan, I really admire your noble effort to educate and inspire children, particularly to understand peaceful philosophy and also the education that you have given yourself in this area.'
Dr. Helen Caldicott
Author, Public educator about the medical hazards of the nuclear age

'Dear Susan, I have now scanned your admirable proposal. Every joyous wish for its success. Blessings…'
(late) Dr Stella Cornelius (AO), Conflict Resolution Network, Sydney

'Dear Susan, Kris here – I have read you proposal and I think it is admirable and a great initiative…'
Dr. Kris Klugman, Civil Liberties Australia

'Sounds like a good idea Susan go for it! Cheers Kevin...'
Professor Kevin Clements, Director, The National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago, New Zealand

'G'day Susan, A brilliant concept! Congratulations. I think the concept is exciting and that Peacefull is the absolutely perfect person to be the messenger. I greatly admire your commitment to world peace, and support this proposal with my good wishes, joyful thoughts and prayers…'

Dr Nikola Balvin, Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, The University of Queensland (based in Melbourne)

'Dear Susan, the wonderful aspect about you is that you are still pursuing your dreaming and I think that is terrific. I really hope you succeed in this endeavour…'
Basil Varghese, Education Coordinator, Brotherhood of St Laurence

'Overall it seems good. I confess to fluctuating between cynicism (big international organisation, bureaucrat-speak) and enthusiasm (yes, excellent idea, could become an inspiring and empowering process). Going through Rotary I think is much better than the UN, much more likely to actually achieve something. Overall, you won me over…'
Dr Geoff Davies
Author, Scientist, Social commentator'

The Fool's Gold: Empowering children to take responsibility for peace and sustainability changes the world. Children can see truth clearly through innocent and positive eyes. When we all support and action peace for children, the world will definitely change.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

CHAPTER 13

Envisaging a WorldPeacefull Social Business (2009 – 2013)

Evolution of WorldPeacefull

My business or fun-ness has gone through a few incarnations. I started off calling my business 'One World Network' which was an acronym for OWN. That is, to take ownership of our stewardship of the earth. I felt we could link together in a global comm-unity. The reality of this idea is not so simple however, as people in the West tend to operate separately and even networks do not feel real until they become true comm-unity. I remember taking this idea to Russia and showing Patch Adams, he said great fantasy. I was shocked at the time and gulped down a glass of vodka (first time in my life) thinking he thought it was unreal, but later I realised what he was saying was that it was a great idea. Culturally I'd had a misunderstanding.

I then changed the name to 'Funny business OWN Empowerment' to lighten up business and look at harmony and conflict resolution issues in business. I spent a few years developing workshops for business.

The work then transformed into WorldPeacefull as this is my mission. My work is more of a social business rather than a corporate business that is focused on money making. It has been created as my vision of ideas to create real peace. I am simply following my heart. I just follow the thread of 'what next' and I find I am manifesting WorldPeacefull slowly, for it is growing in magical ways. I don't see myself in control or even as a manager; I am more a visionary and philosopher by nature and my activities are to catalyse being peace rather than fighting for it. It is an evolution I am experiencing within myself, as I see myself as the world and hence my world changes. So my activity is an extension of this vision, there is no agenda other than expressing what I love.

I've always had a feeling that my mission is to do with the global picture, which is probably why in my early career I studied economics. This subject gave me a good feel for the current state of play world-wide. I like those words as it is indeed a game. I know somehow I will have a role on the world stage. Perhaps a role play - ha ha! How that plays out we will see. Play is the operative word here as I am not taking myself nor peace seriously, I am instead becoming en-lightened around it, I am lightening up and I am loving the process. I have realised the destination is less important than the journey, that is, what is important is the moment to moment play of life as it turns up. At the core of my vision are children, I have seen myself serving them and learning from them. They are the reason I continue and I have complete confidence in their ability to turn this earth ship around. Children are often seen and not heard, more now-a-days as they plug into technology. Some parents may take advantage of that preferring the quiet and not realising it is an escape and they are losing important socialisation skills. Peace is not about keeping them quiet, it is about engaging them in real conversations and participat-ing in the family unit as equal members. My joy would be to give them a platform to craft a world that is fit for them and fun to live in.

WorldPeacefull can be likened to Joseph's multicolour dream coat that covers all the colors of schools, businesses and the general community in a safety blanket of real security and real wealth. REAL HOPE is the rainbow of colors that promotes what makes us all value-able.

The Principle, me, is a Peace Fool a Fool-for-it or Peacefull who is full-of-it. So at the heart of World Peace is the Fool (Worldpeacefull) and I am full of meaning not empty at all, yet I am empty of need which leads to fulfillment, confused? I love paradoxes. The emptiness means I am ready to give of myself without taking. Centrally this work is to teach others through my example, to not be afraid to ap-pear as the fool but to understand that this is the greatest courage and the greatest joy. It is ultimately to learn to be yourself in authenticity.

I have stepped many times into the unknown as I create my path forward. In this creative space I was often in uncertainty just following a thread to the next adventure. My journey through contract work in 400 workplaces gave me insights and resilience with change. I've stepped into the unknown every day, and developed considerable personal experience of what lies behind closed doors and closed minds. What I discovered was that there was unresolved conflict happening in all organisations and that people were highly stressed (fearful). Stress is typically a result of work overload, lack of confidence, low self-esteem, technology issues and conflict. Many do not express this stress outwardly but rather internalise it and feel resentment or disengagement from the business. Then, typically, they can bring it home to family and friends. Many a relationship has gone 'belly up' due to unresolved issues at work. Negativity or unhappiness shows up as undermining colleagues (put downs, sabotage), overt and covert bullying, anxiety, depression, sickness, absenteeism and much more. Some cope with this by taking anti-depressants or become detached from colleagues and just focus on getting the job done with minimum interaction. Others are fed up and leave the job.

The workshops I produced were divided into segments and marketed as:

- Management
  - Executive Coaching (inquiry, emotional intelligence & conflict resolution)
  - Creative Thinking for Innovation (de Bono and other techniques)
  - Values Based Management (learning universal values)
- Wellbeing (emotional intelligence)
  - Clowning Around Workshop (connecting with play and fun)
  - Happiness 4 Life (learning about happiness and clowning around)
  - Humor Positivity and Healing workshop (laughter, clowning in hospitals)
  - Laugh Out Loud (stress relief)
- Conflict Resolution (skills, emotions and critical thinking)
  - Conflict Resolution 4 Wellbeing
  - Laughter, Empathy & Anti-Bullying
  - Stress and Worklife Balance
  - Harmony workshops (problem solving by teams)
- School Programs:
  - Filmed on Russian TV clowning in a hospital
- Other Promotion, Public Speaking and workshops include:
  - Filmed on Russian TV clowning in a hospital

- Interviewed in Arequipa, Peru for local media
- Interviewed by Channel 10 – Clowning at the Austin Hospital
- Interviewed by ABC radio – 774 program
- Banyule Council, Volunteers Lunch – talk on Patch Adams, Russia
- Speaker at Conference on 'Perspectives on International Peace and Reconciliation', University of Melbourne
- Pax Christi – 21st dinner, talk on REAL HOPE and the Middle East
- Victoria University – Inclusive Behaviours workshops and REAL HOPE program
- The Smith Family – Workshop with troubled children
- Melbourne Social Forum, CERES – workshop on REAL HOPE and clowning
- Interviewed by Regional ABC radio – REAL HOPE in Gippsland area
- Interviewed by the Heidelberg Leader – Department of Peace, Peace Education and clowning
- The Community Fun Day – MC and presenter, Lakes Entrance Rotunda, 15th January, 2005
- Beyond Violent Futures: Cultivating peace, University of Melbourne
- Victoria University – Inclusive Behaviours workshops and REAL HOPE program
- La Trobe University, workshop on values based education and clowning for post-graduates
- Quakers Nonviolence Gathering speaking about REAL HOPE
- Oxfam - a talk about values education and clowning in Russia – speaker
- International Volunteers Day, Bethlehem Hospital, Caulfield – speaker
- Clowning workshop for Canteen (kids with cancer)
  - Walk Against Warming – clowning workshops for children. Children writing ideas about the future. Interviewed by ABC Radio 666, Clowning an d the Environment
- UNESCO 'One Bite at the Cherry' 2007 Empowering Social Action For Climate Change, Workshop on Values Education
- Rotary International District 9710 Conference, Sussex Inlet, lunchtime speaker
- University of San Diego post graduates

WorldPeacefull has evolved overtime as I further expanded my vision for a Culture of Peace for community, schools and the business community.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

Workplace Bullying Training Unit

I have created a sub-business entitled the Workplace Bullying Training Unit to tackle power issues and dysfunction in the workplace. Refer to http://biz.worldpeacefull.com**. This work will catalyse transformative peace in the workplace and develop peace education, conflict resolution, creative thinking, values, mentoring, wellbeing and risk assessment into the business community with the aim of saving lives and realising human potential. Not only do peaceful behaviours increase productivity but will expand on the idea that business is evolving into communities working together in harmony for a common vision. Businesses of the future will be leaders in social change, innovation and crafting a new future based on empowerment and mutual advantage.**

Therefore, I continue focusing on ways and means that we can educate and reawaken the population to peaceful behaviours, so we can all live to our greatest potential and thrive.

The Fool's Gold: We can expand peace in every heart through every workplace or space. Conflict resolution is how we begin to share power which unlocks true potential and creativity. Creativity is the key that unlocks innovation, compassion and wellbeing. We can learn peace at work and work at peace.

CHAPTER 14

Travelling the World for Peace (2010)

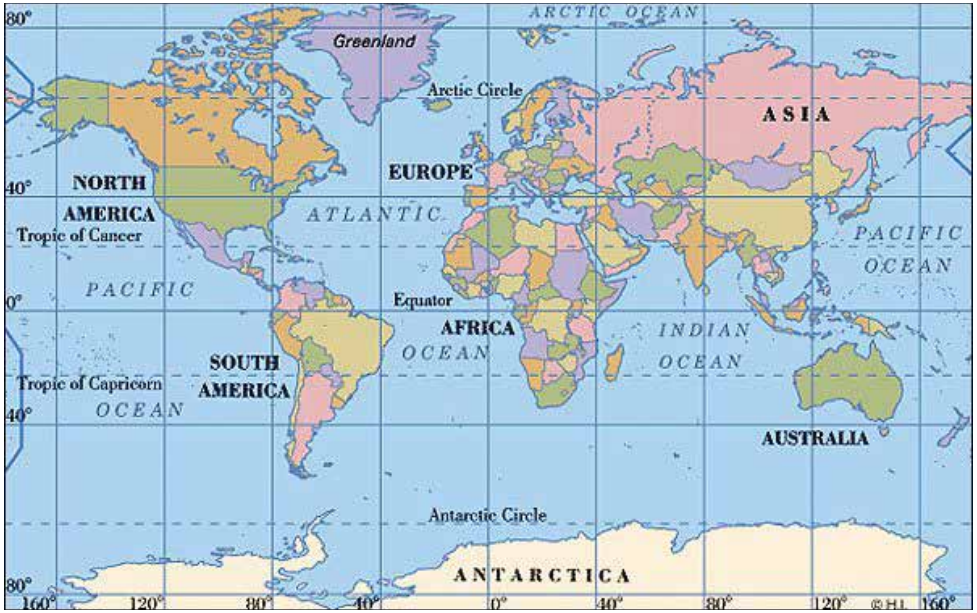
I called myself a World Peace Clown but that somehow didn't ring true until I actually traveled the world. My world trip was inspired, and the feeling I had at the time was that I had to develop inner peace. My underlying feeling was that I could not bring peace to the world until I was at peace in myself. I investigated how much I needed for a world ticket. At the time it cost $6,000. So I visualised I needed $10,000 to go around the world. Life would have to find a way as I did not have any money.

As life would have it, around this time I had been going into a Council in Melbourne as they had offered me a desk to assist me in my unpaid work developing Cultures of Peace. A turn of events meant that I ended up circulating my brochure at the Council about my work. My brochure was received by a woman who was seeking to undertake research into Women in Local Government given this was the Year of Women in Local Government. So they were looking for a female researcher to do the project. I wrote up a detailed proposal and had a meeting. At the meeting the manager asked me to drop the price to $10,000 so they didn't have to put it out to tender. I smiled as she asked, noting that I had asked for $10,000 in my mind. Over the next few months I ended up earning another $4,000 through workshops, and all this was directed to the world trip. In a few months I had the funding and was ready to go.

I worked out a one direction trip around the world and at the last minute decided to join Couch Surfing. My friend had raved about staying with locals. Through Couch Surfing a person can put up a personal profile offering a couch or requesting one, people will give you references. You can give a reference about the person you stay. So everyone knows what other people are like to stay with or as guests. It is free accommodation and the host typically feeds you and helps you to naviagate their city. It is more about inter-cultural understanding and making friends, so in reality it is a peace network. So I joined. I organised to take my clown gear and steri-pen water purifier. Another friend encouraged me to get a Kodak camera which has a USB plug enabling the uploading of photos to Picassa (refer Gmail) and films uploaded to Youtube. It was really handy as I could keep my camera in my pocket. Another friend of the family helped me with all my website and IT needs. He set up my blog so I could record this trip and share it. It turned out to be a great decision.

In my heart I saw the journey was about letting go of control and learning to flow with life. The world ticket covered the places where I felt I needed to go. The idea was to clown when I felt like it, no schedule, just going with the flow. I practiced inner peace the whole journey as my intention was to overcome all fear. Peace for me is love and fearlessness. So I allowed life to show me the way to peace, as life is peace in truth. I saw myself as a world citizen.

Below is the map of the world trip and the places I chose to visit on my trip. The journey covered most of the world except Africa. I visited Thailand, India, Egypt, Greece, UK, Ireland, USA, Central and South America, New Zealand and home (Melbourne, Australia).



Bangkok, Thailand

My first stop was Bangkok, Thailand. I stayed with a friend of mine who was a Rotary Scholar and journalist and was seeking refugee status in Thailand. She is Congolese and a former UN personnel in Kinshasa. She nearly lost her life in Congo. Inspired by the peace course she had attempted to teach young people (opposition militia) peace education and start a dialogue around non-violence. She did this for the future of her own children. She went on television trying to spread the message of peace. She was warned by the authorities to stop. She said she was unable to stop as it was working. She was staying at a friend's place, another journalist. She requested her driver to pick up her children. To her horror she found out her driver had been shot at her house and her mother narrowly escaped with the children. She was picked up by police. She was interrogated by police. As fate would have it, a childhood friend who had been helped by her father as a child, helped her escape, had he not intervened she would have been sent to be tortured and would not have been able to tell the story. I saw her life as gifted. She was acting out of purity, I feel that paved her way.

I was invited to teach peace education to teachers at a Thammasat University, Bangkok, it was a wonderful experience. Interestingly, after my talk about peace at the university the Dean of the school came in and we opened up the possibilities of peace in the curriculum. This was important as my visit occurred around that same time of the social unrest and conflict between the 'red shirts' and 'yellow shirts'. There were riot police on the streets and both sides were waging pitched battles. One of my friends said it happened close to where she was living and she could hear the gun shots and choppers going over head. So this was timely as the public and government were afraid and there were questions

about how to resolve conflict. The 'red shirts' supported the deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and the 'yellow shirts' represented the royal color of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. So this was a power battle going on (note: Thaksin was part of the Carlyle Group mentioned in the chapter on Helen Calidcott). I personally liked the idea of orange shirts (red and yellow blended) as in reality when we see ourselves in the other we can find common ground. In all conflicts one side sees the other as the enemy and in this case they used the color of the shirts to make alliances clear.

To be a mediator is to be a neutral third party and not take sides. A mediator is tasked to help both sides see and hear each other and find commonality and resolve areas of difference. When people divide they demonise the other as somehow 'bad', this is how positional power bases are formed. To maintain the cohesion of a group people have to fundamentally believe that they are right. Any questioning of that is seen as betrayal or weakening the side. Mediation has taught me to solve the problem and not hate the person, and this leads to harmony. The Thais have a saying – 'same same but different'. I really like that. They also have Buddhist statues across Thailand, perhaps they would be wise to look into the message of compassion and harmony, this would change their reality.

After the university I visited the Rotary Peace Centre at Chulalongkorn University where I was trained in 2008. The Deputy Director was an American and we had lunch and discussed peace education and clowning. I met up with the administrative staff but found that one of them in particular was not in harmony with the same aspirations for peace; I felt there was judgment towards me as I had been seen as controversial on the course. In one case I had challenged an intelligence officer. The Thai military had suppressed a Muslim protest and had tied up the wrists of the men protesting and stacked them in a truck one on top of the other. Apparently 70 of them had asphyxiated. This lecturer had been given the task to build bridges with the local Muslims after this horrific event. His job was to win the hearts and minds of the people. I had asked questions in quick succession and in particular I asked, 'Are protestors seen as the enemy?' He probably didn't like the way I asked this and the participants moved uneasily to. If I empathise, what he may have experienced from me may have seemed as an interrogation, yet my feeling was one of innocence. I didn't mean to make it sound like a grilling but I found myself needing to know the answer. Some in the group felt I was being rude, and probably this stuck with some of them. Yet, had we actioned what we were learning and used conflict resolution in the process they would have realised I was just curious and innocent in my intention. I respected him but culturally we are different. I am a woman too, and in Thai culture women are not as assertive as we Westerners are. Later in the second half of his session I suddenly felt inspired to film him talking. I had permission to make a documentary so this was to be just a segment. However, it was a sensitive subject, and again he and the participants were not easy. A note was passed to me to stop, which I did. Interestingly I never used the film. So it seemed that a negative impression or judgment was made and this did affect some of the staff who had listened to others' talking. What was interesting about my impromptu visit was that it was two years later and she still held a grudge. It was not her business, but this situation demonstrated how people divide when they believe what they know is right and the other wrong. I tried to be friendly and sent a poem on peace, but I doubt I was understood.

Anyway, after my meeting with the Director I left by the wrong exit and ended up walking past the Red Cross. I had the feeling I should turn back, and I found out there were orphans there. I asked if I could come back and clown the next day. They agreed. Apparently Australians were adopting these orphans who had been abandoned by their parents. The reasons I was told were social problems of poverty, addictions and mental illness. Very sad I felt. The children were very young from just born to six year olds. I noticed when I came the next day that a Ronald McDonald statue had been placed there and I found that disturbing. I clowned with the orphan children, none of them had seen a real clown but by the end they were all laughing. It was great. A young boy gave me a garnet as respect for my visit, and we bowed (wai) to each other. It was a very special moment for me.

I met with my Thai friend Cherry who I had met in Chulalongkorn hospital in 2008. She works in oncology (cancer unit) and always wanted to be a clown. She was a little different from her compatriots and enjoyed following her own rhythm. She had lived in London as well. We had had an instant connection. I knew she wanted to clown and I couldn't let this opportunity go by. So we organised to go clowning, the giant MBK shopping was not far and it seemed like the right venue given it was air-conditioned.

So Cherry and I were dressed in our clown costumes and we had another Rotary Peace Scholar, Jennifer, come and she filmed us at the MBK shopping complex in Bangkok. This is a shopping centre that has ten levels for car parking and they actually have cars park perpendicular to parked cars to fit more in. So if a person wants to park their car, the car attendants (official people in the car park) roll the cars forward and backward to make room. The car attendants look like police and monitor each level. I was astounded by how many cars there were. Cherry told me many university students park there as they are not allowed to take cars into the university. The shopping centre is filled to the brim with people, we are talking thousands. The demographic strata I observed were mostly people from middle to upper class Thai's and Western tourists. They had security guards screening people to keep out other Thais without money or street vendors. It was sad to see discrimination there when in my own country, you would never see anyone excluded. This reflects a country with high levels of poverty transitioning into a western style democracy and visibly reveals the inequality that is structured into social rules. The 'haves' and 'have nots'. I felt like a rich westerner.

As a clown it was fun to go up to people and play, usually I pretend

to shake hands and then connect. We played soccer with one of my juggle balls on the polished floors between customers. I kept saying, 'World Cup' with a cheeky smile as I know they are into soccer. Then I would follow people and walk the same way, or stand behind them and look over their shoulder with curiosity, or use a puppet to say hello. I juggled with balls and clubs and there was much fascination. Cherry told me people were wondering why we were there. She surmised some thought we were making a film because Jennifer was filming. We blew bubbles and were dragged along by a husband to sing happy birthday to his wife. The man kept saying, 'happy happy' as he walked, looking back expectantly to check we were still following. She thought we were paid for and would have been surprised to find out we were free. Others wanted us to pose for photos. When I passed Moslems I said, 'Shalom', when I passed Indians I said, 'Namaste', and to Thais, 'Sawatika', each gave me a look of recognition as their greeting connected. There was one moment when I ran up and down the escalator to keep pace with the down escalator. I then juggled on the escalator and more than 500 people were watching as I juggled, with many flashes coming from below, it was amazing. These shopping centres are so huge you can have an incredible audience there. Cherry said the shop assistants were very bored, day in day out, and really laughed when they saw us, there was a buzz that went around us. You could see their eyes shining as the experience transformed the neon sterile environment. There were so many smiles and laughs. I saw a couple of nicely dressed men and put my love glasses on them. It turned out according to Cherry that they were the marketing and management people of MBK. Security people were everywhere and we would have been noticed, definitely. They managers came up and asked where we were from, I said: 'Clown town and I have a clown passport', with a grin. Then I did a quick dance, 'strip the willow', with both of them and started to play with everyone. They were very impressed and asked Cherry if I could come every day, but she said I was leaving the next day. So this was something new for them and my hope was they considered entertainers in the future to bring life and love to MBK. We clowned for four hours and it was really remarkable to have this experience. This to me is real connection with people. When I spoke with Jennifer and Cherry later they said everyone was laughing. I thought, 'peacemaking in a shopping centre, why not!' Cherry said she felt so happy and commented she would never forget the experience. She wondered if people would remember. I said, 'They never forget'.

India

I flew to India, my only thought was Gandhi. I knew I had to go there. I arrived in New Delhi and had no-one to meet me at the airport. I got in an old cab all the while hyper vigilant of the great activity surrounding me. I knew how I was seen as a rich westerner and kept my guard. The taxi was old, like a 1920s taxi, and it had no air-conditioning. As we drove through the streets I was confronted by the obvious poverty and dirty streets. I said to myself, 'see this as your home and imagine that you come here all the time.' When I did that I relaxed and let go, I allowed the taxi to drive erratically, honking madly and realized I had no control. This moment revealed a fundamental truth.

The people hosting me in New Delhi I had found on Couch Surfing and would be my first host family. The taxi took me to the front gate and he rang the bell. No-one came for a little while so he rang the number I gave him. Then a young man came out and introduced himself as Navneet. He helped me with my bags and had the big gates opened. I came into the house and met the grandparents; I saw the domestic staff and plush surroundings. I was to stay downstairs and was told there was a British couple staying there as well. It was humid but not boiling. I just soaked in my surroundings. These people were not poor, in fact it turns out they were mostly lawyers but with a special difference. The place was dedicated to universal peace. They had a meditation space with a chart outlining a spiritual hierarchy. Ironically they were situated in a military defence compound in New Delhi. The grandfather, Chandra, and I connected as we were both into peace and he appeared aware of great changes coming to the world. I met Chandra's lovely wife and his son-in-law Navneet and daughter Priya who were a very progressive Indian couple expecting their first child. I encouraged Navneet to clown with me. He bravely agreed.

He took me to the local shopping centre and I gave him some tips on clowning. His family members came as well, to watch. So supportive of each other, I observed. The security personnel were perplexed and tried to get us to leave, but my host family were all lawyers and they explained I was a peace clown. I was not breaking any laws nor asking for money, just spreading peace. A hard notion for people to understand as everyone is seeking money. I was allowed to continue. People were smiling and surprised, wondering why we were there. They were very happy to see us clowning and many interacted with great joy. We met ordinary mums and dads, teenagers, foreigners, children and I even met a magician from Saudi Arabia. He was a very interesting guy.

There was one moment which I will never forget. Navneet blew up a balloon and normally when you let them go they just whiz around in circles as they deflate rapidly. Well in this amazing moment the balloon hovered around his private parts and literally stayed there looking very much like a penis. He and I giggled as children, I laughed so hard I was crying. It was one of those magic moments which I doubt the magician could conjure, only life could deliver that joke. So people watched the two clowns laughing like mad probably thinking we were acting, but we were not. It was a beautiful moment where spontaneity, laughter and freedom were what we were promoting and everyone was caught in the magic of the clowns, a reminder that the best things in life are surely for free.

Kashmir

I flew from New Delhi via Mumbai to Kashmir. The trip to Kashmir was to see a friend of mine who is a human rights activist whom I had met in Bangkok on the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program. She has a phenomenal memory for history and human rights issues. She is a journalist and incredibly courageous.

Here is an overview from my blog of my experience in Kashmir.

> *I landed in Srinagar in Kashmir and was trying to work out how to get to my friend's place. I ended up waiting with a group of people to find out about taxis. In the end I just went outside and discovered there was a little stall where the taxis were allocated. So I got in a four wheel vehicle and started out*

from the airport. I noticed other four wheel drives and then saw the soldiers on the road. I saw razor wire, trucks and armoured vehicles. I found I was uneasy as we passed soldiers on every corner. My driver tooted as we tooted, swerved and weaved our way through narrow streets. I noticed the double story buildings and yet the environment seemed very European. Without the military presence it would have been a beautiful and quaint village. However, I could not ignore this was a militarized zone. I was quite shocked at the amount of armed soldiers. As we came through the centre of Srinagar I noticed a group of women gathered in a protest and shouting. My driver was nervous as he drove me past it. He increased the fee to 700 rupees for the taxi to go around the protest, I was told. Oh well, we went past and I noticed there were people on the streets involving themselves in daily life. I saw the amazing mountains and found myself filled with excitement. This was an incredible place yet there was a sinister cloud over it. We drove along this incred ible lake, I was later to find out it is called Lake Dal. It sits at the base of huge mountains. You can see it is a tourist destination, with nice street lighting and paved streets. I can imagine it being a successful tourist location. It appeared I might have been the only western tourist. People noticed my face and they stared at me, some smiled, including the soldiers, it appeared I was a novelty particularly at this time of tension.

I arrived at her home just in time, with literally ten minutes until curfew. It seems my experience was not to be a tourist but to experience life as a Kashmiri and see what it felt like to be incarcerated in a house. For the first time in my life I found I was under house arrest along with 800,000 others. Ironically the Indian occupation of Kashmir deployed 800,000 Indian troops to maintain Indian control, one soldier for each citizen, an interesting ratio. Kashmir is the disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Both claim Kashmir and there is a complicated history to this. Yet the Kashmiris desire to be a sovereign people not aligned with either side. The South Asian region is considered the number one nuclear flashpoint in the world due to the density of population and tensions. Politically and economically it is a cost that Indians can least afford given high levels of poverty. In reality it is the cost of not making peace. For Kashmiris it is an even higher price because of their loss of freedom and self-determination. Yet Kashmiris are incredibly resilient and they find ways to defy the curfew.

I met my friend's mother, brother and cousin and noticed they were lovely warm people. We sat around talking about our cultures. I explained the independent life of Australian women and the family situations which were far more unstable than for Kashmiri's who were married for life and had extremely strong family bonds. This was a Muslim family but not fundamentalist, the son prayed and he was a lawyer, appearing very open minded. I wonder would I say the same thing about Christians. I notice the bias. The son was particularly interested in cricket, it turned out Australia was playing Pakistan. This was to be the beginning of my hearing about Ricky Ponting who is seen as a super star in this part of the world. I guess I should watch a bit more cricket, hey! Every day and night I heard them chanting and singing in the mosque.

We were close to the university and my friend took me for a walk later the next evening (the curfew was still on) so we went through the university and looked at the magnificent Chinar trees, hundreds of years old. We saw many other brave souls walking and getting their children out of the house. Others were trying to get food. We walked out of the university and I felt myself hesitate as there were a few soldiers. My friend walked confidently past. We walked down to the lake, people looked at me curiously and one woman looked hard at my friend. She said that some might be surprised that I was here during the tensions. We walked further and my friend saw a professor friend. Then we circled back, meanwhile I was taking in the huge mountains, a grandiose presence overseeing this troubled valley.

I spent much time with her family and discovered her mother was one of the first women to work in the bureaucracy, a working woman no less. She told me how the administration moves between Srinagar and Jammu. The time I spent there immersed in their culture was very inspiring, to see such courage on the one hand but at the same time the fatigue from 63 years of occupation. We talked a lot about inner peace and Sufism as emotional and spiritual means to withstand the curfew. Ten days was difficult for me, my friend and her people endured 50 days of curfew on this occasion. Those in the central business district (CBD) of Srinagar had no backyard or means of getting outside as many were in high-rise buildings. So it must have caused anguish, despair and mental illness. Many children had been shot because of stone pelting and this caused much anger in the people. They were then suppressed by curfew, you can imagine the stress of this. In peace studies we call this a pressure cooker as people need to be free to express their emotions and grief. Suppression actually creates violence, if it is not expressed outwardly then it is felt inwardly, often people end up with cancer or health issues, so it is a very unhealthy existence for people. It is a lose/lose situation ultimately.

The excerpt from my blog highlights life under curfew curfew:

> *…It is now Saturday (10th July) and I arrived on Tuesday last week. I had one day out when the curfew was lifted. Today is another day when it has been lifted and I can't wait to get outside. My friend wants to go out at 11am but I am keen to go earlier, however, I just get on the computer and be patient. All is as it is meant to be. At 11:30 we go out and my friend organizes for us to get a lift on a motorbike to the bank. Three of us are on the bike, with no helmets or protective clothing. My*

friend feels embarrassed as she is sitting with legs astride the bike, mostly women on a bike ride side saddle. I used to ride motorbikes so for me it is no problem sitting astride; actually I wouldn't mind having a drive . But they are such mad riders and drivers, people just toot as they come round corners, sometimes driving on the other side of the road, many squeeze past tooting to get you to move over, it is quite amusing to watch. If I wanted to ride in accordance with the rules at 60km they would toot for me to move, I found that a bit stressful but funny as well.

Anyway we walk through the market place and I buy some shoes for 350 rupees. They are good quality. I walk through the market and the people are looking at me, some think my friend is a houseboat person taking advantage of me, they don't realise we are friends as in this part of the world it is very unusual for a local Kashmir woman to be travelling abroad. My friend is a journalist and has attended many international forums. She is very knowledgeable and an extremely honest person. So we walk past little convenience shops, bread shops, meat (butchers) and other local small product shops. There are no clothes shops as you have to buy material and have a tailor make a garment for around 200 rupees, which is very cheap (roughly 30:1 exchange) so $3 for every 100 rupees as I work out. We walk to the bank and I sit down on the curb as my friend queues. A lot of people are getting money out and many have stayed at home I am told. They are too afraid to come out. There have been protests over the week and the situation is tense. I sit there and see the military at the gate of the university. I look at the barbed wire in front of me as a barrier. A man comes up to me and asks me where I am from. I tell him about Australia, it turns out he was in the Government and was responsible for tourism. He told me he met people from all over the world. Two soldiers come and stand next to me. I can see the shotgun next to me. I am looking curiously at them as I am not used to military in civilian areas. I am watching them banging their sticks on their legs. Earlier I saw a crowd running out from the market chased by police, so intimidating the public appears a strategy. To me it is surprising if the objective is to de-escalate violence…

The conflict in Kashmir has a long history. Firstly here is an overview by Wikipedia:

Kashmir has e*xperienced a painful history:*

> *Human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, a disputed territory administered by India, are an ongoing issue. The abuses range from mass killings, forced disappearances, torture, rape and sexual abuse to political repression and suppression of freedom of speech. The Indian army, central reserve police force, border security personnel and various militant groups have been accused and held accountable for committing severe human rights abuses against Kashmiri civilian. A WikiLeaks issue accused India of systemic human rights abuses, it stated that US diplomats possessed evidence of the apparent wide spread use of torture by Indian police and security forces…Human rights watch has also accused the Indian security forces of using children as spy's and messengers, India army have targeted reporters and human rights activists, they have also been accused of committing over 200 rapes in an attempt to intimidate the local population.*

> *The security forces have have carried out extra judicial killings, assaults and other human rights violations.[47] An investigation by the Jammu and Kashmir state human rights commission has found 2730 bodies in unmarked graves at 38 sites in northern Kashmir. At least 574 of these were identified as being local people.*[51]

My friend Assabah informed me of the abuses and she documented many cases, personally interviewing those witnessing, attacked or raped. She has been a brave voice for human rights and I was mindful at anytime she could be killed. Yet there she stood, a slight woman, standing up for truth in the reality of oppression. I saw her similar to Gandhi. I respected her and felt honoured she was my friend. She stood by me when others judged me.

Below is an excerpt from my blog where I was exploring the history:

> *I wish to discuss the 13th July (yesterday) which was the anniversary of an uprising against the Maharaja in 1931. This date is significant as there was an uprising against the Dogra rule (Indian Maharaja) and protests against the prosecution of the architect Abdul Qadeer Khan Ghazi (this is sourced from the Greater Kashmir newspaper). Yesterday was the 80th anniversary of this uprising, where 21 Kashmir were killed by Dogra soldiers. This was the first time there had been an uprising against autocratic rule of the Maharaja (this was a princely state). In addition there had been a strike for 19 days. The uprising was catalysed by Abdul Qadeer Khan who raised his voice against oppression. He gave a speech at a public meeting convened by Youngmen Muslim Association on Jun 21, 1931. This was attended by Muslim leader Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah (later to become Prime Minister, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir). Interestingly just when the meeting was about to end a Pathan stood up and apparently the room was silent. He talked of respect for the Quran and the fact the government did not care for its subjects. He argued for standing up and fighting against autocratic forces. Turned out this man was a disciple of Maulana Jamal-udin Afghani a famous philosopher (poet) of the 20th century. Qadeer was arrested for his speech and this was the first political trial of this nature. Essentially the issues come down to suppression of public dissent, and their leadership roots are from autocratic styles. I have become aware that democracy is not deeply understood and that simply having a voting system is seen as democracy rather than upholding the principle of freedom of speech. The latter is seen as a challenge to power and it appears this is not dealt with in forums or public discussions but through violence. I see the response to 21 deaths of boys, which ironically is the same number as in the 1931 uprising, over a three week period. I see similarities to this date and history seems to continually repeat itself. The lessons have not been learned and the responses are the same. Yet the pathway through this would be for the Indians to examine their methods of crowd control and their political process which I am told are corrupt and seeking influence in Kashmir. Politics around the world is a problem as it is the politics of 'power over' rather than 'power within'. Peace is about power within where you take personal responsibility for your actions.*

If Pakistan and India do not find peace within, through Kashmir, they will co-create a greater threat emerging from unresolved fears within themselves, as follows:

> *With continued fighting in Kashmir, "the risk of another India-Pakistan conventional war seems higher than ever before," says Lavoy. "Even if India and Pakistan do manage to establish nuclear deterrence, the effect will be that every Indian and Pakistani will live under the threat of nuclear annihilation."* Lavoy is Director of Counterproliferation Policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.[52]

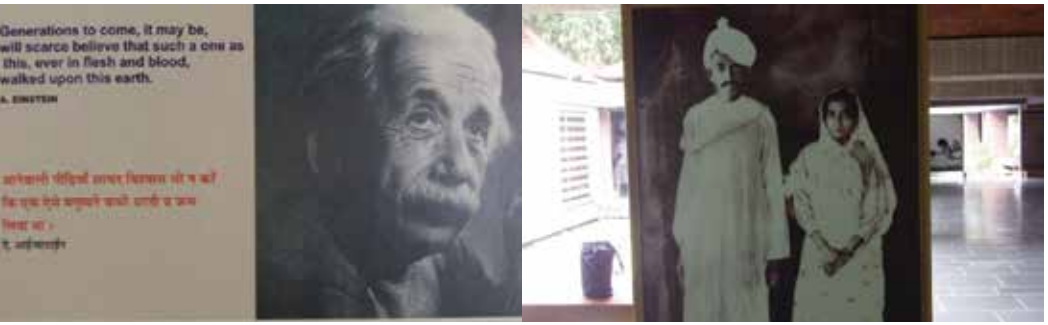
51 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_abuses_in_Kashmir
52 http://www.fas.org/news/india/1999/pj29lavo.htm

I left Srinagar via a Sumo four wheel drive and traveled to Jammu and then by bus to New Delhi. I found a friend on this journey - Barkat. He and I became close and talked on this journey. He made sure I was safe and watched over me. I definitely felt supported and protected. You find angels everywhere. He got me safely to New Delhi.

Gandhi's Ashram in Armedabad, Gujurat, India

From New Delhi I then flew to Mumbai (Bombay) with Gandhi's ashram in mind. I spent a few days in Mumbai and met my Couch Surfing host, Nitin, a wellbeing teacher. He and I shared conversation and food to learn about each other's cultures and lives. I slept on the couch literally this time. On the last day I met with a Rotary Peace Scholar called Kishu, he was a lawyer. He is a very tall man and kindly took me to a few sights. When it was time to leave Kishu and Nitin came to the train station with me. I was grateful to them for their kindness. We stayed in the car for a while as it was pouring buckets of rain. The station and surrounds looked pretty bad and decrepit, I was a bit uneasy. It was surrounded by a slum. But I tried to just be open to the experience. Kishu was warning me not to tell people I am Australian as some uneducated people might refer to the violence against Indians as reported in Australian papers. He also said not to take any food offered. Nitin walked me into the station I gave him a hug and then I had to go to the third platform. I was the only westerner, that is an interesting experience as I am always looked at. No blending in. The overnight train traveled North to Ahmedabad to the State of Gujurat. I spiritually felt strongly pulled to go there.

I arrived in Armedabad in the early hours. I had to wait a while until the Gandhi Museum opened and had a little joy ride with the rickshaw driver seeking to charge more money. I went to the ashram and rested on the cool stone slabs in the outdoor museum. I found myself surrounded by images of Gandhi. I cannot express my joy at coming home. I have spoken truth for so long in my life, many times feeling deeply alone but I was now where I knew I was understood by one, even if he was no longer alive. For me he felt intimately alive. So to be at this ashram was like coming home.



I walked around to absorb the feeling and to walk in his shoes for a moment. I reflected upon how I came to India and how my deeper feeling had been to come here. I had originally planned to go to Porbandar (Gandhi's birth place), but it seems that the ashram was the place. I walked into the library and saw all the books on him. I could feel the tears welling up in inspiration. I felt his presence strongly. I turned my face so no-one could see me cry, they wouldn't have understood. This happens to me a lot, I am used to it. I experience such a depth of feeling. I then sat down and read some of the material. I eventually spoke to staff and told them my story and my love of Gandhi. As I was speaking inspiration came again and I started crying again. This time I couldn't hide it. I told them as I both laughed and cried that I was not sad, I was inspired in feeling Gandhi's presence. One of the women, was a Gandhian as she was wearing white, could see I was genuine. She decided to show me around and

took me to the garden where they pray twice a day and there is the 100 year old tree that was alive when he was. She then showed me his living quarters and there was an elderly gentleman spinning cotton on the landing (see photos). To see the spinning wheel filled me with joy as it was the symbol of independence. They gave me a try at spinning (see photo), it was quite difficult and an art form. Then we walked to Gandhi's private room, she pulled out the keys and let me into his private space which still has his things there (see photo). I felt I was being privileged. We sat on Gandhi's mat and I told her of my REAL HOPE program and how I teach truth. We sat there next to his spinning wheel and then she showed me his staff, I remembered my dream. He came to me briefly and I recall seeing the rims of his glasses, but no eyes. He was walking with the staff and stopped to acknowledge me, I felt lower than my feet in humility. All was dark around us, and then suddenly the dream was over. In the ashram I was filled with a sense of connectedness to him. After I left the room I thought of the prison cells he had been put in, as he lived simply they would have been other places to meditate on God and truth. We moved from there back onto the landing where the other spinning wheel was and children emerged. I took photos of them as I have a particular love of children. I watched the Gandhian teach them of his life and then they sang a prayer together, it was beautiful to watch. I then signed the book writing about truth and love in a poem. I felt at peace being in a likeminded community.

After my tour I was advised to go to the University in Ahmedabad called Gujarat Vidyapith, it was dedicated to Gandhi as he had founded it. I met with the Vice Chancellor sitting on the floor at his desk. Such a different lifestyle, interesting to sit on the floor and chat. We westerners are too stiff to sit cross legged. I tried to encourage the Vice Chancellor to help the Kashmiris practice Satyagraha and ahimsa (truth and love). He invited me to come to prayers. I saw 500 students there and the Vice Chancellor asked me to speak. All the students were spinning wool into cotton from their spinning wheels (see photo). This was the symbol of Gandhi and I was overjoyed to see it still surviving. A man rose to speak to the students, apparently he knew Gandhi. I watched him closely he looked very peaceful. Then it was

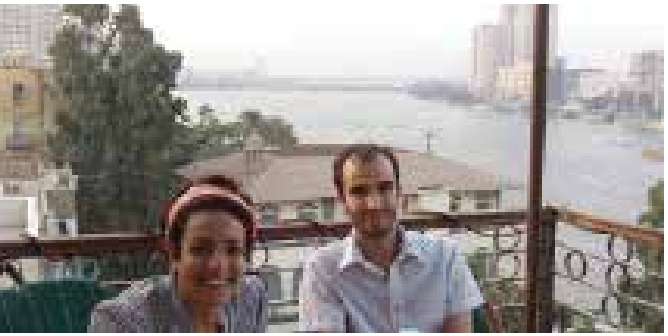
my turn. All the students were focused on spinning and open to my message. I talked to them of being a World Peace Clown and I shared with them about my trip to Kashmir and the human rights violations (see photo). I wondered if the Indians would be able to walk with those suffering oppression in Kashmir. A media student interviewed me about my work.

I then went for some lunch, and groups of people invited me to chat. I met women and men involved in women's health and the challenges of getting information out to remote areas. We had a nice laugh together. I went back to another room to write emails and then returned to the lunch area for a coffee. I was happy to find children there. I pull out my juggling balls, had them gather around, and had a lovely time playing with them.

Later in the day I met a teacher and discussed her work. She then took me to dinner. It was pouring with rain (it was the monsoon season). We couldn't get a rickshaw for me to go to the train station. So she organized a motor bike with a friend and I was whisked through the streets arriving at the train in plenty of time.

I traveled back to Mumbai in second class. I then returned to Nitin's place and spent one more night and tried to organise a 'couch' in New Delhi. I had to organise my trip to New Delhi and then onto Egypt.

Egypt



My travels took me to Egypt. I stayed with an Egyptian woman Manar and her American partner. I caught a taxi to her place. She was very kind and accommodating. They gave me a room and made me dinner. She gave me a rundown on her life and Cairo.

The next day I decided to go to the pyramids. Manar wrote down her address in Arabic to help me navigated my way through Cairo . This I could show to people if I get lost to help me find my way back home.

Manar took me to a local bus headed for the station. From there I caught an underground railway to Giza station and got off. I found myself approached by a Bedouin man who asked me to come for for tea and told me of his life. He then took me to the pyramids where the camel owner tried to negotiate a price. I felt he may be in league with this man, but I wasn't afraid, I was here for the journey and to see what happens.

Below is an excerpt out of my blog about my experience at the Giza pyramids:

…I get to Giza station and as soon as I exit a guy comes up to me. He offers to show me where the bus is. We end up going for a tea, he shows me he is married, a young fellow around 25 and explains he has a seven and a half month old baby. One thing I might add about this guy is that he saw into me. He listened as I was speaking about making others happy by being a clown and he said 'I feel there is a part of you that is not happy.' He said some have a small part or a large part; I felt he alluded to a large part in me. He was right. I felt the tears in my eyes on the bus later. I was perturbed by his insight. The sadness I feel is connected to my family and people disappointing me. I feel quite heartbroken and it is a deep pain I carry. I am trying to reprogram myself away from expectations of people and just see them as playing their part in my life for a higher purpose. My life has been very good as well but I haven't had the security or loyalty most enjoy. I've had to carve this life out alone (the latter part particularly), but I do reflect on this and believe it is my journey. It is not possible to come out unscathed.

Anyway, the guy made an impact there. I felt he was genuine and trusted him as he paid for me to get on the bus and guided me to the pyramids without asking for a tip. Admittedly, he did take me to a friend of his who does camel hire. The camel guy looked like a desert man, quite fascinating looking at them with their long white dresses and head scarfs. I thought 'Omar Shariff country.' Anyway, I felt the same inspiration I felt at the Gandhi ashram, I could feel the sensation rising within me of the importance of being here. I sat with this guy as he tried to sell his ride for 200-400 pounds. I just looked at him and told him I was not a tourist. I told him I wrote a poem and felt inspired to come. I don't know why. I told him the truth and the tears were in my eyes. I said: 'I can just look at the pyramids through the fence, I came for the energy here'. He saw my sincerity and the price dropped to 100 Egyptian pounds. I agreed to this price as the gate entry is 60 pounds, so he is charging me 40 to ride a camel for 1.5 hours. So I am taken to my camel, who the driver calls Michael Jackson (yeah right). It kneels down groaning as they do, they seem to not like being forced (can't blame them). I climb on board. Then as the camel stands up you have to hold on tight as it is a steep movement forward, then up it goes. I am told to keep my back straight and allow my hips to go with the motion of the camel. It is not quite like riding a horse. I am taken into the area where the pyramids are. To my joy it is mostly desert I see and a few camel trains, it is peaceful and the wind caresses my skin, I feel the sensation of the desert. It is quiet and my driver doesn't speak English which in a way I am glad of, as I don't really want the story and chatter. I just want to be with the desert, the camel, and feel the pyramids. I can feel the emotion in me as I try to internally grapple with what the pyramids are. There were a few smaller ones which I didn't know as normally in the pictures you see the three main ones. It is a hot dry climate which is what preserves them, the pollution doesn't help but they were definitely built to last.

Of course the story I am interested in links to one of my poems called 'Encryption of a New Earth'. In the poem I mention the star system of Orion, hence I find myself fascinated by the possible extra-terrestrial connection. The mystery deepens as there is a consensus that humans couldn't build the pyramids today. So it is not unfeasible to assume there was an intervention. I've learned from internet research that the pyramids were built with 25 million blocks, in part made of basalt. Some of the blocks are the size of railway cars weighing approximately 1,000 tons. Of course the mystery is how they stacked these blocks 2560 BC. The key mystery is the technology and the fact they are perfectly stacked, with no mortar and built in the perfect symmetrical shape of equilateral triangles. Some experts say thousands worked pulling ropes two miles long. They say the architecture was precise. Other experts query how these pyramids were built given the time frame of 22 years they would need to cut and transport one stone every nine seconds. The stones were polished granite and marble, clean and perfect. It was questioned how they could do it by hand, given the size, weight and number. Modern engineers couldn't do it. There was also a story about a lost city that is visually a pile of rocks some looking like large H's. The mystery is that they have been carved by machine tools as the lines are perfectly straight and there is no mortar. It appears the city has somehow been moved. Some theories are that extra-terrestrials may have assisted the building of pyramids through levitation technology. Interestingly the Giza pyramid is built exactly at the intersection of the longest latitude and longitude coordinates in the world. Apparently there is high energy in this area. This was confirmed by another Egyptian I met who was into healing and oils, he said this is the highest energy location on the planet. Many come to heal and feel the energy. The pyramids align four points of the compass.

So the theory I am interested in is the intervention of extra-terrestrials. The pyramids were built so they couldn't be destroyed and are still standing 4,000 + years into the future. Ancient texts were reported to have said that the pyramids were built by humans but assistance was given by guardians of the sky with extra-terrestrial technology. This has been given more credence by drawings where there are beings with space helmets and another drawing is interpreted as a being in a ship. Other pictures show large wheels that are glowing and angels coming down. Ancients may have tried to grapple with describing or drawing these encounters. There are similar pyramids in India, Mexico, Teotihuacan, 2000 year old city of the gods', the pyramid is called pyramid of the sun and it is the same perimeter as the Giza pyramid. The Teotihuacan pyramid is said to be the beginning of the four worlds. The purpose of building them was to store the knowledge of 300 books, the knowledge of the universe dictated by the guardians of the sky. The early primitive indigenous people had no writing yet the blocks were perfectly machined. The blocks weighed 800 tonnes and were polished. Only diamond cutters could get through the granite and diorite. Again, the mystery is how do people just one step out of the Stone Age build interlocking blocks?

There was also a story of the first mechanized computer dated 2000 years BC found in 1900 and in Athens museum (have a look if you visit there). Apparently, when x-rayed, the box contained cog wheels interconnected to a 'computer'. A device that measured astronomical data, chart stars (astrology) and 'predicted' the future when a person was born. It is said this computer was more complicated than a Swiss watch. So there is much more to this world Horatio, than we ever thought possible. There is also talk of ancient light globes and what was termed as the Baghdad battery, which was made out of a clay pot, copper lining, stopper around an iron rod and then one just has to add acidic liquid (like orange juice), and walla you have an electrical charge.

After my fascinating visit to the pyramids I had a strong feeling to go to Alexandria to visit the Institute of Peace. I understood it was funded by the University of Peace in Costa Rica. So I went overnight to meet with people. I went there and met with a skeleton staff, as the others had gone to a peace conference in Jordan. However, I was to find out Suzanne Mubarak was the patron. Later I received

an email and was invited to come back on the International Day of Peace to speak about peace as a World Peace Clown.

Below is an excerpt from my blog highlighting the experience in Alexandria:

…I arrive in Alexandria with literally no money. So I remember Manar telling me the library is within walking distance. As I walk I approach a young girl for directions. She offers to walk with me and suggests I'd be better getting a car. I tell her I don't have any money, slightly embarrassed as this is a poor country. She offers to pay for me. I say it is fine and she keeps walking with me. She tells me that she is 21 years old and a student and she wants to travel around the world. She says she loves risk. It is so interesting talking to a girl with a hajab who is spirited. We get on very well and we walk up to the Mediterranean sea. She says we will get a mini bus. They are small buses that ferry people around the city. She pays for my ticket and walks me to the library. She lends me her mobile phone so I can ring the Institute for Peace Studies. She helps me locate the entrance and then we hug and she leaves. The library is a significant location as Alexandria was historically perceived as the centre of learning. Out the front of this very modern library is the statue of a Greek philosopher. The designer was influenced by Greek philosophy. Of course Greece is just across the Mediterranean. Not far geographically.

I go through security and meet the people in the Institute for Peace Studies. It is a skeleton staff as most of the staff have gone to a conference in Jordan. Interestingly enough there was a missile attack from Israel into Lebanon and there is concern about the Middle East. Probably timely for a peace conference. This unit works on conflict resolution and peace education and apparently Suzanne Mubarack is the patron. I've been told that hospitals have been opened and there is no equipment. It was suggested to me that the community works are more for the perception of humanitarianism. However, the peace centre is a functioning centre and it is funded by the University of Peace, Costa Rica. So maybe this is one project that may at some point in the future contribute to a culture of peace. I can only hope.

I speak to the staff about my work and they give me reports on a nuclear free Middle East and terrorism issues. I am then taken on a tour of the library and shown this modern facility which has natural lighting and much art work in hallways around the library. I was also shown an eight panel partial panoramic film on the pyramids and the history of Egypt. I was the only viewer, so I can thank the Institute of Peace for organizing that. Whilst waiting on the railway platform in Alexandria for the train to Cairo. I decided to do an experiment. I pulled out my juggling balls (while dressed normally) and juggled. Imagine a Western blonde woman juggling. It took everyone by surprise. Some boys were very interested and I started to throw the balls to them. Then the men gathered around me in a circle and I pulled out my clubs. They called out, 'Where are you from?' 'Australia' I replied. They said, 'Nice country'. Everyone seemed very happy, the women were very curious to see a western woman making a spectacle of herself. Then to my surprise a policeman turns up and says I must stop. This was my first moment where oppression became visible. Moreover, I reflected on my conversations with a French person (Arabic speaker) who told me of the prison camps and

the oppression of this regime. The corruption had been made clear to me by a man I met randomly in the subway on my way to Cairo University. This was the moment it became real for me. So Egypt had many faces. The one tourists see and the other that most of the people experience…

Back in Chairo, my wonderful host Manar invited me to meet her artistic friends who were having a children's art exhibition, she thought I may like to come as a clown. Her friend joined me and the two of us went along. We met the children, danced, played and had lots of fun. It was very hot and my face make-up was melting. I did some juggling for the children and adults and through some balls into the audience, some of them glowed in the dark, it was really positively received. Their smiles told me everything.

Afterwards I decided to go and get changed and realised I'd ripped my clown suit, as fate would have it, I found a room full of men with sewing machines. I've never seen men sew! I went in there and one guy sewed my suit whilst I kept my pants on (ha). I then did a arm wrestle with one of the guys and juggled for them. They had beautiful smiles and it was a lovely spontaneous moment, I will never forget.

Greece

I flew into Athens, Greece and it looked quite spread out at first, many hills and mountains. The sparkling blue sea contrasts with this widespread city. I found out later it was much larger than I realized, around four million people. My journey to Athens prompted for me the question of democracy. I saw many anarchist symbols and felt the general malaise there, as many had suffered through the financial crisis.

My Couch Surfing host Vanessa decided to take me and other couch surfers on a tour of the riot area where there had been violence. She showed us a picture of a boy who had been killed. There was much graffiti (see photo) reflecting disdain and anger towards the police. I saw some graffiti protesting the death of young children by police. There was some anti-establishment feeling there. She said on the day of the riot she was leaving work and had to find another way home, she said it was scary. We sat in the square where it happened and she informed us the university was nearby and this was a place that was political and students would come. We were also shown the poorer area.

We then walked to see the Athens Library, University and the Parliament. I saw a statue which depicted a philosopher in the pose of 'I think therefore I am'. I contemplated the fact this was the city that birthed what we call democracy. Yet there were anarchy symbols all over the city and I didn't get the feeling that people felt heard.

This is an excerpt from my blog:

…We went across to Parliament to watch the changing of the guard. That was quite impressive with their dresses and large shoes. I stood next to one of the soldiers at the end, as others were getting photos, and I started to juggle for fun. I heard him stomp his foot, clearly he didn't like it. Then a soldier stood in front of me and said, 'Stop!' angrily. I asked, What is the problem?' he said, 'You are showing no respect'. 'Do you know where you are?' he asked me, I said, 'Yes, I am in front of Parliament'. He said, 'This is the memorial for the unknown soldier.' I didn't know that, in truth he had been rude to me, all I was doing was juggling. I marvelled at the contrast between the peace clown and the soldier. One focusing on the moment and the other thinking of the past, seeing the heroism in violence, yet I see the heroism in humor. We are 'same same but different'. Then my new Aussie friend Maddy stood next to the soldier for a picture and just moved her shoulder up and down, he then came up again shouting, 'Get away'. I had to laugh as we walked away, I felt they took themselves way too seriously. In London, Buckingham Palace the guards would never react. There is always the temptation to make them react to test their discipline, but I didn't think I was

rude. Anyway, I thought about democracy some more and wondered about freedom of speech. I certainly got the feeling that people were under surveillance here as there were many police in black uniforms, heavily armed with flack jackets. Population control yet again…

United Kingdom

I traveled on to the United Kingdom and spent some time in London with my friend Jo. I remember being with Jo on my first day out in London. I happened to meet, can you believe, a peace activist on the train. Or rather she heard my voice and came up and asked, 'Are you Susan the peace clown?'. I said, 'Yes', she and I had met in Melbourne quite a few years ago. She was on her way to the Climate Change Camp in Edinburgh. We exchanged numbers really quickly and she got off. I laughed at the timing, what are the chances of getting in a train carriage and actually knowing someone there. I smiled inwardly at life and how fascinating it is. My friend Jo had to go to an interview. However, we arranged to meet after and went to a coffee shop.

Later we met and I started to talk with the café guy. I asked him where he was from but he was reticent to tell me. So I said I don't mind where you are from I am a universal being. To my amazement a woman standing next to me pipes up and says, 'I am a universal being'. I gave her a broad smile and invited her to sit with us. It turned out she always wanted to be a clown. So I invited her to clown on the London Underground the next day and I would do her makeup. She turned up the next day at the appointed time. I did her up and then we went outside to practice. As we walked down the street this guy on a push bike came past and I stuck out my thumb (hitching). He stopped and they spoke in Hindi (both being from Indian backgrounds). It turned out he always wanted to be a clown. So I couldn't say no, I had to take him. So we took him back to the house, made him take a shower (phew) and then the three of us, with my friend Jo, hit the streets. She became my camera person and photo person. So we could record the event.

It was amazing to see the serious faces on the Underground. I zeroed in on a few children and generally juggled and blew bubbles. It was interesting to watch the social boundaries and the inability for people to relax and allow clowns to entertain them. They were afraid we would ask for money, for me my payment is smiles and just bringing the color.

From my blog:

…We clowned with children, hugged people on the platform, bantered, juggled, threw balls around and included others, and when asked if we wanted a donation, I said: 'Give it to someone

that needs it'. Funnily enough the guy said, 'I need it". I laughed. We then went to Covent Garden and clowned around and I got to have a game of table tennis with a kid, I chased him around the table and made out when playing I was a Chinese expert table tennis player, or indeed a Wimbledon tennis expert. I had a lot of fun playing. I also saw a great juggler and gave him a hug, but I noticed he didn't project the love. He was doing it for money. We do it for love and connection, and for free. I don't take money for something I love and I am leading by example. It was a wonderful day and I even met another activist who was Irish. He invited me to meet with him when I go to Dublin. He knew a guy I had interviewed on radio in Australia, Ciaron O'Reilly. Ciaron has an interesting background. Below is an overview of Ciaron's background from Wikipedia:

Ciaron O'Reilly (born 1960) is a long-time Catholic Worker, non-violent resister and Christian anarchist. O'Reilly took part in the 1980s civil rights, social justice and free speech movement in Queensland, Australia, against state Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson. During the 1991 Gulf War, O'Reilly was a member of the 'ANZUS Ploughshares' group which attacked a B-52 Bomber which was on 20-minute scramble alert, at Griffiss AFB near Utica, New York. Their actions put the aircraft out of action for the next two months at the height of the US bombing campaign in Iraq. Together with the other members of the group, he was arrested and sentenced to 13 months in the US penal system.[2] After his return to Australia, O'Reilly took part in the 'Jabiluka Ploughshares' group action which disabled uranium mining equipment in the Northern Territory of Australia in 1998. Together with other members of the Brisbane Catholic Worker, he took an active role in highlighting the involvement and complicity of the Australian government, corporate and military sectors in supporting Indonesia's brutal and illegal 25-year occupation of East Timor. On 5 July 2006 O'Reilly went to trial at Ireland's Four Courts for a third time for disarming a US navy warplane at the civilian Shannon Airport, in the early hours of 3 February 2003.[4] This group action became known as the Pitstop Ploughshares. Two earlier trials in 2005 ended in mistrial. O'Reilly and four others, Deirdre Clancy, Nuin Dunlop, Karen Fallon and Damien Moran were acquitted by an Irish jury on 25 July 2006.[53]

Ciaron sent me a text message a month or so later. I was long gone from Ireland and out of credit and just smiled. I thought 'funny how people connect through these random encounters. Is it chance or meant to be? I know today the answer to that question.

On the following day I just wandered around London and ended up finding people at a peace protest. I had a long discussion with them about positive peace (relationships) and creating unity to inspire peace. I indicated that could bring it into the mainstream rather than it being viewed as negative peace (absence of violence [war]) focus. They took on board my ideas and I made friends with them. One of the guys, Mark, was a poet and he quoted some of his poetry for me, it was incredibly beautiful. He was a beautiful man.

53 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciaron_O%27Reilly

Youtube link: Mark reciting Poetry in London. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nik1vuKRA0g

Then another guy who was Canadian came into our circle. He was a rapper and he did peace type rap songs. So I recorded both of these people who were singing peace in different ways. I marvelled at where my life takes me.

Sacred Sites in Scotland

I then traveled up to Scotland with my friend Jo to visit sacred sites on the Orkney Islands. The Orkneys is the only place in northern Europe you can visit 5,000 year old villages alongside ritual and burial monuments created by their inhabitants. It is part of the World Heritage listed Sites. The Neolithic and early Bronze Age monuments date from 5,100 to 3,500 years. They include Maeshowe chambered tomb and Barnhouse Stone, Stones of Stennes stone circle and henge and Watchstone, the ring of Brodgar stone circle henge and adjacent standing stone and burial mounds and Skara Brae village. The first people arrived there 8,500 years ago, they were hunter-gathers, living off seasonally available plants, hunting and fishing. Farming techniques arrived 5,500 years ago. The landscape is largely treeless and would have been populated by farms and villages interspersed with burial and ceremonial places. The sites are located in low lying land around lochs surrounded by hills. These societies were seen as very sophisticated

I learned of the Ring of Brodgar (see photo), The Stones of Stennes and Maes Howe. I was interested in ancient cultures and how they found peace. I will continue this research as I feel we can learn from the past. Peace is a sacred space and ceremonies were designed to tap into the magic of mystery.

Here is a brief excerpt from Wikipedia overviewing these sacred sites.

The village of Skara Brae, Europe's best-preserved Neolithic settlement, is believed to have been inhabited from around 3100 BC… older than Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids, it has been called the 'Scottish Pompeii' because of its excellent preservation.[54] Other remains from that era include the Standing Stones of Stenness, the Maeshowe passage grave, the Ring of Brodgar and other standing stones. Many of the Neolithic settlements were abandoned around 2500 BC, possibly due to changes in the climate.

From my blog:

…An interesting fact about Maeshowe and other monolithic structures is the midsummer and mid winter solstice. It appears that the sun lights up the chamber on the 21st December. The sun's rays align with the standing stones, the Barnhouse Stone, standing 800m SSW of Maeshowe… There were definitely deep comprehension of the movements of stars, the sun and the moon. As they were agrarian these coordinates features as part of their day to day lives. They were sophisticated builders and had their own system of cosmology and mysticism. When I was on the tour I filmed the tour guide speaking of the history of Maeshowe, she mentioned UFOs. She doubted the validity of the claims but said many people came here with these viewpoints… The name Stennes comes from Old Norse Stein-nes meaning 'stone promontory'. In Neolithic times there would have been more stones then seen today. Groups of standing stones encouraged people to walk in certain directions, between ceremonials sties and settlements. The watchstone is the sole remaining sentinel that stands on the Stenness side… This was the reason I came to the Orkneys. I felt strongly that I should see this site. It is a near perfect circle of 36 out of up to 60 original stones. The Ring of Brodgar is one of the largest of all Neolithic henges measuring 130m in diameter including its ditch and two causeways. The ring of stones itself is 104m in diameter. The best guess about this site is that early Orcadians constructed this henge between 4,500 and 4000 years ago. It is slightly later than the Stone of Stenness, which is the earliest henge in the British Isles. Like Stenness the Ring of Brodgar fulfilled a social and ceremonial function, probably associated with the commemoration of the dead.

54 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skara_Brae

Ireland

My world trip took me to Ireland. Irish eyes were not smiling there as they had been hit by the financial crisis. I flew into Dublin at around 4.30 pm and I had no idea where I was staying. I had a feeling I should find accommodation at Newgrange or a town nearby. I purchased an Irish sim card and was given tourist advice. I was told I could catch a bus to Drogheda for 9 euro, located approximately 60 kilometers north of Dublin. There were B&B's there so I booked one for the night.

I caught a bus to Newgrange and bought a six euro ticket to visit this site. I joined a group and caught a bus to the site. I could see mounds in the distance and, as I got closer, a round structure of white crystal stones and large stones forming the base. There were carvings on the base stones and I remember looking at them and wondering if the symbols had some sort of code on them. The doorway had a large stone out the front with spirals. I am aware that spirals can signify the basic design of the universe, think of spiral universes, swirling patterns that indicate life travelling in a flow and direction that expands. That is how I perceive it. Below is a Youtube link about Newgrange.

Youtube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWC9Az267DE

I clowned with Robert, a Quaker on the streets of Dublin. Below are excerpts from my blog:

I caught the bus and walked to Temple Bar and found the Quaker meeting. It was a Sunday and I dragged my large case and back pack up the stairs. I planned to clown in Dublin, I was unwell but felt it was important. I understood from Siohorn (Irish Quaker) that Robert was the best person to stay with as he had an interest in clowning. He also had worked many years in the Alternative to Violence Project and worked in jails. I came in and as is typically the case with Quaker meetings they sit in silence until they feel the spirit move them to speak. They are Christians, but in the peace area, they are often intellectuals with a keen interest in politics and social justice. So it is always interesting being with them… I went and had a coffee with Robert. I convinced him to clown with me. I was still unwell but pushed forward as I wanted him to have the experience. I have taken a few people onto the streets for the first time, as it is an experience I highly recommend.

I dressed Robert up in my orange clown suit that I bought in India (see photo). I put on make up and tried to find his clown. He said he believes life is about choices, so his clown is about choosing in between this and that, so happy or sad, go this way or that way, that people are ultimately responsible for their choices. I felt much truth in that. He looked great. I finished my make up and the two of us hit the streets. I showed him some techniques and told him what I tell everyone: 'We are not here to entertain, the world entertains us.' There is no pressure to be good at it just send goodwill and find your humor. That is how I clown. It is interesting to see the people around Temple Bar, some are tourists, some are locals. Some walk past and don't interact, this is not so different from Australia as some don't want the attention drawn to themselves. Robert said some may think we want money. Ireland is in recession and people feel insecure and unhappy because of it. There are more people begging, busking and trying to get more money. One person offered me money but I said: 'Give it to someone begging, that would make me happy'. We met lots of children and I did some juggling with the clubs and my new addition, the ring (see photo)s. I danced in front of crowds where fiddlers and guitarists were playing and tried to get them to do 'strip the willow'. So I just go into the crowd and spin around. It makes them laugh and it gives a bit of energy. We went for a coffee break as my throat is sore and really I don't have much energy for it, but I am doing my best. I feel unable to rest as a couple are with us. Yet Robert is a good chatter, so that helps me rest

whilst waiting for my friend Monica to turn up. She watches us clown on the street and takes photos. She told me later it was only through watching me clown that she realized what I do, she said she got it. Robert observed it is hard work as we constantly give attention to people and we are working from the tops of our heads to bring joy and happiness. Continuously responding to the people and playing with children. It is great fun but very tiring.

To conclude my trip I was given free tickets to a show called Celtic Rising which is Irish dancing. Robert, Monica and myself went and celebrated the fun we had together. Monica actually gave me a place to stay when I couldn't find accommodation. So I gave her one of the free tickets to thank her. It was a real treat to experience the Irish culture, we all absolutely loved it. I left Ireland and indeed, my eyes were shining.

United States

I traveled to Chicago and stayed with a couple of 'couch surfers'. My first host was Carly and her husband who had a condominium overlooking the heart of Chicago. I literally slept on the couch as they had a one bedroom place. So very kind of them to accommodate me. Carly was interested in interviewing inspiring women and we connected as she is also an inspiring woman. She and her husband gave me tips on where to go around Chicago.

I then moved to another Couch Surfing place to stay with William a businessman. William picked me up in a Smart car, a tiny two seater with open sun roof, very snazzy I felt. He was able to get my bulky bag to squeeze down to half its size, thankfully the bulk was from toys and clowny stuff. I stayed at his very lovely house in the suburbs of Chicago (eight miles out). It was an American suburb as you would see on television. It was clean and the houses were quite big. He showed me my room in the basement. It was like a little apartment/computer space. He and I had drinks and exchanged thoughts about life and humanitarianism.

From here I decided to go clowning, here is an excerpt from my blog:

> *…The Art Institute of Chicago is private, so it is not open to the public. You cannot even go to the toilet. So as a clown I had privileges, they let me in and I dressed up as a clown. I got Tola dressed up and gave him a few tips. We headed for the Chicago Jazz Festival in the park. We walked past some geese which Tola scared off with my puppet, he squawked at them and I tweaked my nose. I laughed as they made noise and moved away, looks like we didn't have an audience there. Then we saw some soccer people and gate crashed their game. I would run up to a player and rather than kick the ball I hugged him. They didn't know what to do, this was a one off. A couple of times*

I did a good footy kick but mostly stirred them with hugs. Then we waved goodbye and headed to the park. We greeted and chatted to every person as we went along, we even got a smile from of the traffic police.

We walked into a field of thousands of picnics there for the jazz festival. So we chatted, juggled, squeaked, blew bubbles, played pretend cricket and baseball, played with kids and generally had some fun whilst there. It takes time for people to trust you are there for free and enjoy your presence. There is always the undercurrent of 'what do they want from me?' I taught a couple of women to juggle and then met a wonderful juggler who really showed me what to do with those clubs. So I filmed him. I hugged the security personnel. I remember seeing a little girl between two serious parents and her face glowing at seeing the clowns.

Tola and I went for a coffee to debrief. He said clowning was hard work and he wasn't sure sometimes what to do. But he did learn from the experience and met many people. Whilst we were there I met a theatre director who is involved in improvisation, he said he would invite me to one of his events, unfortunately I was leaving. Another guy came in a bit pickled and smiling at us. He was so thrilled we were clowns and said orange was his favorite color. I said it was the clown chakra and laughed. He chatted with us for a while and then left smiling and waving. It was nice to just touch people without doing anything. I feel the presence of the clown is important. You don't have to be the greatest entertainer it is having the courage to engage the public and break down the imaginary barriers we all create.

It was a wonderful experience in the United States and I so love being up front and personal as a clown and Couch Surfing allows me to step into people's homes and observe another aspect of life. I was tired but really happy. Next morning I got up and went to the airport. I had a plane to catch to Cancun, Mexico. This is the Central American part of the journey. A little daunting but exciting as well.

Central America

I was hosted in Cancun, **Mexico** which was the site of the 2010 Environmental Summit. From the sky I could see why, it is all forest as far as the eye can see. I feel an inward joy when I see nature untouched, when I see no people, the pristine nature of mother earth touches my heart in ways that words cannot describe here.

Below is an excerpt from my blog:

I stood at customs in a long queue in Mexico and in my heart asked, why am I here? I then picked

up a brochure to the exact page of Chichen Itza. As soon as I saw the photo of the Mayan pyramid I started to cry. I felt the spiritual feeling and felt enormous joy. My Mexican host Leon (see photo) met me at the bus station and took me to his home. He treated me to some traditional Mexican food. His house was a small square concrete dwelling with two rooms and simple furnishings. I

could see he was not wealthy and I was keen to experience life in all its shapes and sizes. It was so great to be taken places and have him show me where the people go. He advised me to go to Talum and Chichen Itza.

So I caught a bus. It was in Chichen Itza (see photo) that I realized the power of pyramids. I felt the energy as soon as I entered the area. I felt the pyramid before I saw it. Before I knew it, this overwhelming energy was all around me and the tears were there again. I couldn't believe the power of it. I tried to hide my teary eyes from people as they would not have understood the connection I felt. I fell to my knees as if in worship of this grand master silently before me. I stayed kneeling on the ground trying to come to terms with this overwhelming feeling and what it meant. I couldn't make sense of it but I did feel a connection to this site.

Throughout my journey in Central America I visited another pyramid at Tikal in ***Guatemala****. I remember seeing a rainbow forming over the pyramids, it was very inspiring. I managed to see the central pyramid for only a short time but it was enough for me to appreciate the sophistication of the Mayans.*

For the most part I stayed with people in **Belize***, in the forest, and learned of their work in the animal trade and about the changes to the environment. It was the first time I saw fireflies and I was very excited seeing them flashing. I learned of the crime in Belize and the violence that for some was part of daily life.*

I traveled to **El Salvador** *and stayed with a family member of a friend back in Australia. She kindly took me sightseeing around the city. I noticed many armed guards outside of fast food chains and noted how different this was from life in Australia. I felt the residue of the wars in Central America and the sense of insecurity and corruption still hanging like a damp misty cloud over the people's lives. I met some wonderful children in outside the capital of San Salvador and asked them what made them happy. They came from backgrounds of crime and drugs. Their shoes had been donated by a charitable group who brought them together to teach them sport. Youtube link: Children in El Salvador https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jSJaal8xjU*

It was in ***Costa Rica*** *that I learned they had no army and put their funds into social programs and*

forests. They did sell off a lot of the forests but many believed it protected them. I ended up in the mountains in Montevarde, Costa Rica. I found myself visiting a Quaker school in the mountains, I was very much at the mercy of life, I didn't have anywhere to stay and was on a tight budget. I just said to myself, 'if I am meant to stay here someone will invite me'. I ended up chatting to an American woman and she asked me to stay.

I stayed a week and found another school called Creativa, I went and taught the children peace education, on the International Day of Peace. I was astounded to see the flag of the World citizen (see photo). I think this will be the future. The children were experiencing through me that sense of being a world citizen, given my travels. I showed them how to juggle, I interacted with them to generate joy, I explained my life as a peace clown and had loads of fun with children from ages 5 to 18. The school was a progressive Quaker school, high up on top of mountain. It had a higher perspective in many ways. I absolutely loved the day and met some wonderful children full of life and promise (see photo).

Youtube link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIl0No1p-Ec

I went back to San Jose and stayed at a hostel that was dedicated to peace. It had all the famous peace makers Gandhi, Tolstoy, Martin Luther King, Montessori and many others. I felt at home in their company. There was a peace library there. I ended up sitting in on a peace group meeting. They were activists and they allowed me to join them. I told them about positive peace and that for me, there is no enemy. That is not to say there is no greed, there is, or that there is no violence, there certainly is, but I choose to use my energy in a positive peace vibration and I believe it creates the change. I don't hate anyone. I told them of Patch Adams. It turned out he had been there only three weeks before, it would have been great to catch up with him. They asked me to give a talk which I did as a clown. I find I can express peace more accurately as a clown as it reflects it for me, the archetype of peace. For me the clown embodies unconditional love, acceptance, flow and love for all people. I believe in positive transformation whereby we transmute the negative to positive. I will not hate anyone, I am here to solve the problem and to show another way. So, a few of the people were deeply touched and they deeply reconsidered their approach. One was particularly interested in the clown, she was a university lecturer. We kept in touch.

South America

Peru:

I traveled to Lima Peru and on to Arequipa and Cusco. Below is an excerpt from my blog.

…In Arequipa, I stayed at a hostel and met a New Zealand couple who I became friends with. I offered to clown at a school. They agreed and I was given the opportunity to clown and speak to 500 kids. My discussion was on peace, I juggled but also demonstrated resistance and allowance, I explained what we resist persists, what we look at disappears. We look right at it and the power of it disappears. I do not resist, I find myself looking for ways to empower people to see themselves as able to be peacemakers. To empower them to not react violently but to understand that peace is cooperation, dialogue and courage. It was very successful and one little girl followed me around happily. We became friends and I told her she could be anything, she said she would not forget me. I felt the bond. After the school I went on the street and up to the square. I clowned with people in the square and through my painted cheeks (peace, love) I was able to ask people what they thought. I actually interviewed them even though I couldn't understand a word of Spanish. They understood my question and answered. There was such a positive vibe in the square, then the police came and told me I wasn't permitted to clown there, I realised it was another form of oppression, interesting. I find clowning a fascinating way to interact with the crowd or audience, live with no script, yet somehow I am able to see more, and through my presence communicate my message without language. Love is my language and as a clown I am permitted by society to express it without limits.

In Cusco I had the chance to clown with a local travel book store guy. His name is Rolando (see photo), he expressed he wanted to explore happiness, so I told him to come clowning with me. We

organized a gig at a local hospital. We visited people of all ages and spread love and joy. I found the people so generous and loving. After the main hospital, I was to clown alone with children from a special care unit at a hospital down the road. We had a great time going around the wards and spreading love and joy . I then went to see the children with disabilities (see photo). I typically make up my routine as I go. I show the kids all my props and juggle. I work hard at interacting with all children. Even those who appear to not be responding, I spend time giving love to them and assume they can hear and see me. I can pick up the smallest of response, so typically I know when I reach them. I so loved being with these children which I felt were all angels. One of the kids was very animated and she was shouting out very excitedly. She came up and danced with me in the middle of the room and hugged me. She was the one who didn't want me to go. She had the most

spectacular laugh, full and hearty, here was a person not inhibited or indeed limited. The children all got their wheel chairs and surrounded me, they were trying to chase the clown. They were grabbing me and trying to stop me from leaving, they were full of smiles and joy. It was a beautiful experience and one I will never forget. The Director of this unit enquired if I was staying and said she would love me to help promote disability. I told her about it being promoted in Australia as not a disability but people that are just like us.

I went to Machu Picchu the Inca village high in the mountains. This was another sacred site for me and one I'll never forget…

Wikipedia summarises the background on Machu Picchu:

Machu Picchu was built around 1450, at the height of the Inca Empire.[7] The construction of Machu Picchu appears to date from the period of the two great Incas, Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui (1438–71) and Tupac Inca Yupanqui (1472–93).[8] It was abandoned just over 100 years later, in 1572, as a belated result of the Spanish Conquest… Johan Reinhard believes Machu Picchu to be a sacred religious site. This theory stands mainly because of where Machu Picchu is located. Reinhard calls it 'sacred geography' because the site is built on and around mountains that hold high religious importance in the Inca culture and in the previous culture that occupied the land. At the highest point of the mountain in which Machu Picchu was named after, there are 'artificial platforms [and] these had a religious function, as is clear from the Inca ritual offerings found buried under them' (Reinhard 2007). These platforms also are found in other Incan religious sites. The site's other stone structures have finely worked stones with niches and, from what the 'Spaniards wrote about Inca sites, we know that these [types of] building[s] were of ritual significance' (Reinhard 2007). This would be the most convincing evidence that Reinhard points out because this type of stylistic stonework is only found at the religious sites so it would be natural that they would exist at this religious site.[55]

I found out that none of the members of this Inca society would be allowed to be hungry, all were looked after in a spirit of oneness and unity. That interested me. Funnily enough I had been directed to join a tour group, but it turned out I was in the wrong one. One guy pointed out he had paid good money for his tour and he inferred he resented my presence believing I hadn't paid. When in truth I had, but he didn't want to share the space with me. I was not lost on the attitudes of me and mine, rather

55 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu

than we and ours. The Incas would have found the attitude foreign, as did I. When I climbed Huayna Picchu, the mountain behind the Inca village, you could see the village was designed in the form of a condor. The mountains were majestic and for me, a sacred site. I found nature incredibly overpowering and a place of great peace. Sometimes when you come to places like Machu Picchu you wonder why we live the lives we do. Many work hard to survive and are never able to visit places so sacred. We live in an incredible world full of wonders that are astounding.

Bolivia:

Below is an excerpt from my blog.

…I traveled to Bolivia and met with a local Quaker there called Ruben and his girlfriend, Rebecca. He kindly organized for me to travel three hours out of La Paz to a Quaker school in the mountains. I taught the kids some clowning skills whilst talking to them about being a World Peace Clown and the importance of peace in our world.

The next day I went back to La Paz and stayed with Ruben's partner, Rebecca. It was great to stay with a traditional Bolivian family. They worked very hard and the husband had been quite ill. He was very good at building machines with few resources, yet very resourceful. Ruben organized for me to attend a Quaker Gathering and give another talk to youth. I also did a laughter workshop with them, they really loved it and it was a great photo opportunity. Ruben invited me to a traditional Bolivian wedding (see photo). I took my clowning gear with me so I could make the decision when I got there as I had to be sure it was appropriate for me to be a clown at a wedding. I decided to clown at the wedding and the married couple were thrilled. I did a juggling demonstration and showed them my clown props. I also gave a clown blessing by blowing bubbles over the couple. I put my little yellow duck onto a bowler hat, so it could have a ride, ha ha (see photo).

The kids loved the clown and they followed me everywhere. I got dressed back into normal gear and of course everyone knew I was the clown, being a Caucasian gave me away. I had hundreds of friends and felt very welcome. It was a unique experience and treasured as I was part of their wedding which I felt was a great honour. It was great to give love in this way. I felt I connected with the people. The following few days Ruben took me to another school to give a talk on peace. As I was waiting outside to be beckoned in, a little girl around five years old took a shine to me or rather the clown. I made faces and laughed with the kids and they were very excited. I was invited into the room. Then I saw this little five year old braving this huge room with bigger kids from seven to seventeen walking by herself up the side aisle. She came up next to me and held my hand. Then when I placed my gear on the stage, the little girl sat there and played whilst I was in front of the kids. I was introduced by the Principal. I told the kids I was travelling the world as a peace clown and went into the audience, in some instances I sat on knees or lay down across a few students. In other cases I jumped on the wooden seats and literally stepped over kids to get from one row of seats to the next. I juggled my clubs up and down the aisle. I invited children to come up and tell us what they felt peace was and I asked questions about what is happiness. We recorded the responses. I found the kids enthusiastic and positive. I gave lots of hugs

and had photo opportunities and felt the magical connection with others, as I lived the peace I teach.

From Bolivia I then traveled by bus to Argentina.

Argentina:

Below is an excerpt from my blog.

…I was starting to get very tired there and fell ill with a cold. I put out a 'couch request' and was invited by some other couch surfer hosts to stay. It turned out the lady there wanted to be a clown. She met me at the station and took me back to her place and made a lovely pumpkin pie. Her partner Javi turned up, he was training as an economist and we talked about the current economic system of winners and losers. We agreed the capitalist system doesn't look after those who don't get jobs and fit into the system. I have found poverty increasingly difficult to reconcile within myself on this journey. My inner feeling is no person should be treated as beneath equality because they have no money or a mental illness. A civilized society takes care of everyone. Reinforcing the wisdom of the Incas who had designed equality into their society.

I took Paula out clowning. I wasn't that well and felt my energy was low. Nonetheless I still went out for her. I gave her some tips. As soon as we hit the streets she was out there racing up to people, helping carry ther groceries or building material, she was stretching her arms out for hugs, a real natural clown. I didn't think she would be so outgoing. I realized this is for her. I was exhausted so I took a back seat, but she so reminded me of myself when I first started embracing life openly. I do juggle but I realized it can be a bit of a barrier, I do love it though. We clowned all around her area and met older people, mums with kids, men walking past. I chatted with an American man and he admired my earth ball, so I gave it to him for his children. He was touched I didn't ask for money, I wouldn't even think to. It was wonderful and I could see Paula was inspired. We went to her friend's work, her friend is Anita. She was another beautiful person.

We stopped for coffee and Paula kept going, that is what I usually do but I just didn't have the energy. However, it was so nice watching her, blowing bubbles and interacting, chasing people. So funny. It was a real freedom for her. We had coffee and the coffee shop owner gave it to us for free as we brought joy to his customers. See how joy changes people? Then a lady gave us two biscuits each because we made her grandchild smile. I said to Paula see how love works. This is all about love… Paula told me clowning was the second greatest moment in her life. She had always wanted to be a clown.

Paula mentioned she had friends, Maria and Yuan, in Patagonia who would be happy to allow me to couch surf at their place. I traveled to Patagonia in Argentina and spent a week resting in an isolated area, in a sustainable house that was on the edge of a pristine river with the Andes rising behind, the mountains were caked with fresh snow. It was so beautiful and fresh there, I felt I was in heaven and I couldn't believe the good fortune of having found this magical quiet place. I was able to just rest and reflect on my life and the joy of the journey. I stayed with a married couple who were building another house, so mostly during the day I was alone and being sick this was ideal to try and regain my energy. So at night I would make sure they had food on the table in exchange for a bed and a view of the Andes, heaven when you are sick.

So many good people had given me places to stay for free and fed me. I saw the beauty in the world, and people kept reinforcing for me the hope and joy I felt permeating my being. I felt a deep sense of gratitude and the blessing of having taken this trip. The wonder of being a clown and the shared humanity I experienced as I clowned in so many cultures. Yet for me the Thai saying 'same same but different' always came up, as I saw more in common than difference. I saw each as my family and felt humbled by such an amazing journey.

From there I traveled to Chile.

Chile:

My first host Valaria worked at Delta Airlines and she and her friends had a sexy photo shoot. They dressed in very sexy clothing (only the latin Americans can do this well) and I was invited to put on some tight pants. I went with the photo shoot but noticed that I am really a clown, I found myself laughing and not being saucy. They quickly moved me out of the pictures and they strutted their stuff. It was very funny to me. Apparently they circulated the photos on the intranet at work and were cautioned, but I am sure management liked it.

I had the opportunity to witness another clown, a mime artist, he waited behind walls and then came out and created an interesting show.

Whilst in Chile I had to learn more about the Augusto Pinochet and his repressive regime. An overview of Wikipedia provides a brief of the period:

Pinochet assumed power in Chile following a U.S.backed coup d'état on 11 September 1973 that overthrew the elected socialist Unidad Popular government of President Salvador Allende and ended civilian rule. From its beginning, the new military government implemented harsh measures against its perceived opponents.Various reports and investigations claim that between 1,200 and 3,200 people were killed, up to 80,000 people were interned and as many as 30,000 were tortured during the time Pinochet was in government… The Church Report investigating the fallout of the Watergate scandal stated that while the U.S. tacitly supported the Pinochet government after the 1973 coup, there was "no evidence" that the US was directly involved in the coup.This view has been contradicted by several academics, such as Peter Winn, who writes that the role of the CIA was crucial to the consolidation of power after the coup; the CIA helped fabricate a conspiracy against the Allende government, which Pinochet was then portrayed as preventing. He states that

the coup itself was possible only through a three-year covert operation mounted by the United States. He also points out that the US imposed an "invisible blockade" that was designed to disrupt the economy under Allende, and contributed to the destabilization of the regime.Author Peter Kornbluh argues in his book The Pinochet File[24] that the US was extensively involved and actively "fomented"the 1973 coup. Authors Tim Weiner, in his book, Legacy of Ashes,and Christopher Hitchens, in his book, The Trial of Henry Kissinger similarly argue the case that US covert actions actively destabilized Allende's government and set the stage for the 1973 coup.[56]

I visited the city museum and memorials to learn more about the history. I was struck by the faces of the people who had died and the unresolved trauma still lingering (see photo). I recall learning how Pinochet rounded up people into a stadium, they were all murdered.

Below is an excerpt from my blog providing a summary.

…I managed to stay with three 'couch surfers' over a period of four weeks. I was pretty sick by this stage but the joy within was enormous. I didn't care about being sick, I just felt deeply happy. I used the time to write my blog more and start to publish my poetry which felt more and more urgent. To communicate my message of peace was an inner desire to bring this joy into the world. I felt it was time to share what I know. For so many years I have felt inspired to write about love, peace, truth and life. I always knew when I was writing it, that it was for a larger audience. In Chile I wasn't able to clown, although I was offered to go to a hospital, I just couldn't get the energy together. I met some wonderful people and one 'couch surfer' actually gave up his one bedroom flat for me to stay a week. I was pretty sick so it was good to be alone and try and rest. I ended up meeting some Australians standing behind me in a supermarket queue. I heard their accents and started chatting. We ended up going for coffee and I told them I was going to head to Queensland as I was considering going to university to study biology. I was fascinated by the idea of somehow grafting biology and social systems in order to find our true harmony.

New Zealand

The last leg of my world trip was to New Zealand.

Below is an excerpt from my blog.

…It was unmistakable that I was in familiar territory as New Zealanders are very similar to Australians. I felt very happy there as my former husband and I traveled there quite a lot, he was a Kiwi (New Zealander). I did stay with a host this time who was not so helpful and had some negative attitudes, however, I practiced peace. I realized I had to find unconditional love in myself, I had to be able to feel the compassion, I did not know the story of others, so how could I sit in judgment? I could create my own boundaries of what I felt was acceptable in respect of myself, but ultimately people are responsible for their lives. The lady who was with this host was

56 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augusto_Pinochet

the total opposite, incredibly kind and considerate, a very humble person. She had been a nurse and was working in a nursing home helping the elderly. She organized for me to clown there.

I decided to clown at an Environmental Exhibition in the heart of the city. The exhibition connected the environment to peace and I was interested. So I asked the organizers if I could come as a clown. They agreed. As soon as I appeared the kids all came around and wanted photos (see photo). Then I went into the exhibition and asked people about sustainability and created some humor around it. Many people I talked to had no idea what to do about the planet. The photos they were viewing were taken from a hot air balloon by Yann Arthus-Bertrand. He called the exhibition ***'Earth from Above', this was sponsored by UNESCO.*** The people were inspired by the exhibition but either couldn't think of anything, or could not articulate their voices, I was surprised. Even the children were struggling with what to do for the future. I felt this subject must be discussed more and given the apathy and uncertainty I witnessed, to so it could be engaged with in realistic terms, to connected it to in day to day life. Many I feel felt were disconnected from nature and couldn't conceptualise the reality of it and imagine a new world. This is was a central issue.

After that I walked to a giant world map (see photo) on the ground and played around jumping from country to country. I again chatted with the kids and played as a clown with them. I told them that their generation will have to solve these problems, it is a great challenge that we can solve together. I jumped on a skateboard and tic tacked around, the boys were surprised and smiling, it created a bridge to chat to them as one of them. Then I noted the time, I had to leave, the host's partner came and collected me and took me to the nursing home, for my next gig.

At the nursing home I spoke of my world trip and danced with some old folk. (see photo)I also juggled for them and interacted with the staff. I was making it up as usual and tuning into the people. It was interesting to come from a public space to the elderly. Some were non responsive as they were fairly old and with dementia. However, I never mind as it is always an opportunity to give love and spread joy. One fellow put on my love glasses, he did stand out of the crowd. The elderly were wonderful and enjoyed the juggling, jokes and clowning around. Many are clowns themselves.

Returning Home to Australia

Flying back to Australia was such an incredible joy. My blog outlines my joy at returning.

… I boarded the plane. I sat in between two men, and smiled at them. They then plugged themselves in for the whole trip. I was curious to see if they would engage in conversation but they didn't. I looked over my shoulder and everyone was plugged into the on-board entertainment. They offer radio, TV, movies, and so on, so people put on head sets and entertain themselves. It is a four hour flight, but there is no conversation between people. I just marvel at technology. The airline think that they are providing a quality service and all it does is further isolate people. So you can be on a four hour flight and no-one talks to you. Strange I feel. I chose to remain quiet as I like to see if people are able to step out of their fear and engage. Clearly not today.

As we got close to Australia I got excited. I saw us pass over the south eastern tip of Australia and felt a love for my own country. I looked at the other Australians on the plane, I do love my own people to. I was happy to be flying into Melbourne.

We disembarked and I took a few photos as I walked through to customs. I chatted with the customs' guy. He asked me about South America, I said it was good although in Chile I was mostly sick. I said sometimes the bad is good and the good is bad. I am sure he didn't get the comment. I laughed to myself when I said it, but what I meant was that even though I was sick it was good, I really love my life and I don't care if I am unwell, I don't believe I missed out. It was perfect as it was. Nice to come home not coughing.

So I passed through customs and went to get my luggage. I came through the barrier and felt overjoyed. It didn't matter that no-one was there to meet me. I hadn't asked and it wasn't offered. It didn't mean that I am not loved, it meant I was to travel to the city alone which was great. I felt myself as so strong and independent. I did not need people. If they were there great, if not still great, love is unconditional.

So I caught the airport bus and just felt happy. I went to Southern Cross Station and then looked for a suburban train to take me to the loop in Melbourne. This is the city loop, so I thought maybe I would get off at Parliament station and have a coffee there then catch the Epping line and get off near my friend's apartment. She was away this weekend but had left me the keys. So I did just that. I looked up at Parliament - the icon of democracy. I sat at a coffee shop feeling intense joy. The waiters were standing smiling at me. They said you look so colorful and happy. They wondered what was in my suitcase. I said, 'Do you really want to know? I am a clown and my clown gear is there, I've just traveled the world.' They were very happy and intrigued.

I read the Guardian, exploring the Wiki Leaks material, catching up on news as I had a virtual media blackout for six months. I hadn't been following the news on the internet. So I was tapping back in. I wrote a blog on the leaks. I found it very interesting.

I got my bag and headed for the station. Got to my destination and wheeled my bag to my friend's place. I opened the door and I started to smile and I ended up crying, I couldn't stop I was so thrilled. I felt this sense of utter success. I had traveled the world alone, on not much money and I felt so great. With no major problems, just a wonderful learning experience. I had connected with the world as my family.

I rang my mum and she was so happy I was home. She said she had been facing issues in her life. We had a childhood that was full of fighting. I have always wanted peace, I was born to be a peacemaker. My mother acknowledged her own behaviour. I said to her that it was not about right or wrong but about truth. We have to face the truth of ourselves with love and make the changes for a peaceful world. She said she wanted to speak of incidents she and I had and she was looking at resolving them. I felt extremely happy as it is important to heal differences and make peace. I said to her: 'You know I am not into the drama and I am into peace'. She acknowledged that. It was really wonderful to come home, to feel success and to feel my mother was also coming home with me.

What a wonderful way to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. …Now we need to convince governments to walk the talk and not just give lip service to world peace. Perhaps WikiLeaks is the great teacher that has emerged. I am sure it will start something.

Reflection on the World Trip

Below is an excerpt from my blog.

…Every moment on my world trip was filled with the freedom of personal expression which I experienced as peace being lived. Eventually, if many people practice peace in their daily lives the world would indeed shift to a new consciousness or awareness. My feeling is to live this new consciousness of love and truth. You cannot change others, you can only change yourself. If this inspires others to consider a happier life, then that is well and good. My intention is for me to live the life I know is true to me, and the happiness I feel at times is unspeakable.

On my trip I realized I would continue writing my blog, as I felt inspired to keep communicating. I saw the natural world as intimately part of peace and peace as intimately part of the natural world. We cannot create sustainability until we find harmony within and live within the natural order. Hence, the name for my blog 'Peace is Our True Nature' came to life from this desire to connect more deeply with what is the truth of our nature. For me love, happiness, joy and unconditional love are the values that are the foundation to my true nature. When I clown so joyfully I experience a fulfillment I can't describe in words, it can only be felt in the moment. I feel completely happy and I have no thoughts as my heart is open and I am living fully in the moment. I have no fear, I only love to give, I see the blessing of my life and I am deeply grateful. I feel a strong desire to share my life with others, so that they too can feel what I feel. I fall in love with life every day. It is real love I feel and it is total fulfillment. I don't need a lover, a house, a job or the mod cons as I have realized I am the source of love.

That is what clowning around the world taught me, to step out with courage, to expect love from the world, to see the people in the world as my family and simply give without expectation. For me, this is what it means to 'be the change I wish the world to see'. Gandhi was right. When you change; the world changes. World peace is a given. When you give peace you will receive it. I encourage everyone to make a small change that is peaceful at least once a day. Perhaps it is just smiling at someone, or saying, 'How are you?' asking someone about their life or recognizing what they do in a positive way. All these little acts of kindness do create real change, they are not meaningless. They actually change you and that is the wonder of peace, it is a work in progress, but you are the master of peace. When you truly see that, the new world will emerge far beyond what you could ever imagine. We just have to commit to change and be the gift we truly are.

The Fool's Gold: I see the World as myself, all part of the human family. People are more often than not kind. We live in a loving world constantly changing and expanding. Our natural world is dying and economic systems are depleting the earth's regenerative capacity. We are the World.

CHAPTER 15

Travelling Australia for Peace (2011)

One morning, while in the shower, I had the strongest feeling to travel around Australia. I intuitively felt I had four weeks to make a decision and then the 'window of opportunity' would close. This was an intuitive feeling. It was a fork in the road - I either would go to Griffith University and study the environment or I would go around Australia for the experience. As the days went by the feeling got stronger. The manager of the childcare centre gave encouragement by giving me a 'Boating, Camping and Fishing' card to buy camping equipment, and I felt this was a clear sign that I was to go.

My journey around Australia was about testing myself. I felt it was a trip into the unknown yet again. I knew I was to travel alone. I couldn't have fit anyone in my car anyway unless they went up on the roof rack (if I had one). It was chocker block with all my worldly possessions, which I felt was too much stuff. I felt I was going to explore my own response to living out of a tent. I considered the possibility of getting work in schools teaching peace, conflict resolution and sustainability and I knew I would meet exciting and different characters along the way. I could envisage it would be an amazing journey. I sensed the world trip would be complete when I got to Uluru in the centre of Australia. This is a sacred site, and I knew when I returned from the world trip that the end of the trip was there. I would then continue on from there though I was unsure of what I was looking for, 'just enjoy the process' I thought. I developed a rough itinerary of my trip which changed as I changed my mind along the way. I drove a total of 9,981km.

In retrospect I made the right decision as the experiences, the people, the land, the places, and the insights gained were worth more than any environmental degree could offer. I saw the flora and fauna change every five kilometres, and felt a deeper connection with the earth as I drove across it and slept in my tent. I marvelled at my freedom, and my independence. To be the only woman travelling alone in the caravan park filled me with joy and excitement. I didn't feel lonely without a partner, I felt free as there was no emptiness to fill, no-one needed to be there to share this with me, somehow it seemed so right to be alone and really taking in this ancient land. Many times I reflected that had I followed fear, or the worry of being attacked as a lone woman, had I listened to some others then perhaps I wouldn't have gone. However, by this stage of my life I have experience and I had no fear whatsoever. I did not have the funds to have the engine fixed and could not have had it fixed if it had broken down in a remote area. I cast all fears out of my mind and went for the adventure. In this chapter I will share some memorable moments of this journey with you.

Brisbane to Rural Queensland

The car was packed I thought it was a miracle. When I moved into the place I was in it took two car loads, well I had managed to shed a carload and still have space for visibility out the windows. I've had a lot of experience in driving large distances, so I know how important visibility is. I did have some water, but there was no way I could fit 15 litres in the car, so some narrow bottles of 1.5 litres had to do. I had plenty of food and provisions. If the car broke down I was just going to have to face it when it happened.

I headed west out of Brisbane to Toowoomba. It is around 124 kms from Brisbane. My mother called me and I could tell she was slightly trepidatious. I told her I might be in and out of mobile/broadband range. We would just have to see. I could always phone from a phone box or send snail mail. In Toowoomba I reset my speedometer and filled the tank so I could monitor how fuel efficient this car was. Fuel in Brisbane was $1.48 per litre. In Toowoomba I got $1.30 per litre. So depending how long it took me to empty the tank, this would determine how far I chose to travel on limited funds. I noticed a slight sound in the accelerator cable, but the engine was sounding good, so I might wait till I got to Charleville. If I had to have mechanical repairs it might mean I would have to stay put until money came in.

In Toowoomba I stopped at the information centre. I had a nice conversation with the lady there. She also shared my thoughts that the world was changing and she agreed it might collapse. I have found this sentiment in many places. I was working out which way I would go. There was a nice national park to the North West called the Bunya Mountains, however it was 68 kms from Dalby. Dalby is further west of Toowoomba, around another 68 kms. My thought was to head to Dalby then maybe to this national park. I had to think about petrol (120km round trip back to Dalby). I was on a fixed but very low income. So I couldn't indulge on this trip. I also had to think about where I could find free camp grounds. At the information centre I looked through a few brochures and found out about the flying doctor service. I could contact them to see if they wanted a clown. They were operating out of Charleville. There was also a school of the air, I could talk to kids that way. So alternatives were presenting themselves if the schools couldn't connect with the importance of peace education.

I headed for Dalby. On the road I was already sussing out the prices of camp sites, can you believe it was $16 for one person to camp. I thought that was very expensive for a piece of grass. This is was for an unpowered site. In another caravan park they were charging $20. To my amazement the showground in Dalby was $25 per night. I told the lady it was too much and then at the last moment she said to camp at the weir for free. I drove down there but took a wrong turn and ended up down a dirt track. I talked to a couple of moving equipment operators and they told me I was close but this wasn't the weir. I went there and saw a solitary car, but my feeling was 'not tonight, not the first night camping'. It was getting dark, I didn't don't know who the car belonged to and I felt I really need to unload all the camp gear in daylight. So I headed for a caravan park. It was full, I told them I was very tired and asked where I was to go. They weren't too sympathetic. Apparently I didn't shut the door and the lady made a nasty comment. I thought about her insensitivity to me. I had a little cry, it was mostly due to the tiredness I felt. However, I was wondering how I was going to afford this trip, I was seriously thinking, that this may not be a good idea. If the prices were like this all the way I was not going to be able to afford it. Twenty years ago it was different, I had a partner with me and we split everything, this time it was just me and people seemed to charge me the same as for a couple. My feeling though was 'let's just see'. I was told the reason accommodation was scarce was due to the mining industry booking out everything.

I noticed the coal mines and grain silos as I traveled. I also noticed the flat land and it was interesting to see tens of kilometres of acreage that was fallow. It had been ploughed up. I thought about the monocultures as I looked at this through older eyes. I also considered the commodities' industry which is what enables Australia to borrow money to finance the lifestyle we cannot afford. So I was thinking deeply about the coal industry. All the prices of accommodation and food along this few hundred kilometres strip from Toowoomba to Roma was funded for the employees of the coal industry. They accommodated them and it inflated all the prices. The greed was very evident - city prices. I would like

to add in here that I was watching Lateline on the ABC television and they talked about CCS – carbon capture sequestration. Apparently the Federal Government had indicated there would be $1.68 billion for CCS projects and only $172 million had been allocated. I understood that 3,000 CCS projects had to occur by 2020, as there was an expectation of increasing CO2 emissions from India. Apparently not one plant had CCS. The coal industry had promised $1 billion but only millions had been allocated. So I was thinking about climate change. I wondered how 'greenies' would go here in this region given the jobs and security created by coal mining and the reality of global warming, or climate change, as it was now called. This attracted less controversy than 'global warming', and allowed for uncertainty.

The Darling Downs area is renowned as a rich agricultural region growing crops such as cotton, sorghum, wheat, barley, sunflowers, chickpeas, mung beans and corn. The landscape is also well suited to livestock production (sheep, cattle and pigs) with the Downs area renowned as the largest producer of pork and grain fed beef in Australia. The Darling Downs is a farming region on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range in southern Queensland, Australia.

I drove from Dalby to Chinchilla which is 98 kms further on, again hoping to find a place. No luck. I drove further to a little place called Miles. I luckily stopped at a hotel and the manager jumped on the internet and looked into accommodation in Roma. He enjoyed helping people and said he believed if he does good for others when he needs help he will get it. I said: 'Just imagine if everyone thought this way'. I was very appreciative. He said, 'Do you mind driving another 150km?' I said, 'No problem'. He said, 'What about $90 per night?', I said, 'No way'. In my mind I thought $50 and then he said, 'I can get you a room for $49'. I said, 'Done'.

Here is a poem I wrote on the journey: Changing Just In Time: Published Friday, 5th August, 2011

Changing Just in Time

The land is not mine,
Yet it is extracted from,
Ploughed up,
To satisfy the human condition,
For we are conditioned to consume,
More than what we have.

I see the long bitumen roads,
The small towns catering for miners,
For many are seeking a higher wage,
In conditions that are dirty and harsh,
I recall the mining accidents,
Kept out of the media.
To go down a coal mine,
Is to work in the dark,
But I wonder if we will see the light,
In time.
In Chile the 33 coalminers were national heroes,

As they stayed underground for 17 days,
Yet no-one spoke of safety,
No-one spoke of the others who had died,
For it is dangerous work underground,
For any underground movement,
Is an early burial.

We all are living off coal,
I see myself as in demand,
So I cannot sit in judgment,
Yet I must change,
For the world is in crisis,
If I do not decide where I sit,
Then sitting on the fence,
Allows a worse case scenario,
For I must take responsibility,
It is the canary in the coalmine,
This is the warning that the climate has changed,
And what we take for granted,
Is limited in time and space,
For this is a race against time,
And it is time to wake up
To reality.

We must learn the ways of nature,
We must learn how to co-exist,
The Boab tree stores water not coal,
The trees are sequestering carbon
Naturally,
To release it is not to free it,
It is to tip the balance,
For the system self regulates,
Without instruction,
For we are stewards not foreman,
And jobs are not everything,
Yet somehow we must learn to survive with less,
Yet enjoy more leisure time,
Surely we can rearrange the deck chairs,
Reshuffle the pack,

To find the Joker allows us to choose anything,
To start again,
For it is a new game which is coming,
As the climate is the wild card,
That does not negotiate wage contracts,
Or provide employment in the mines,
These are the times truly changing,
For when we are true to nature,
We will change,
Just-in-time.

Mitchell Caravan Park

I stopped in Mitchell and stayed a few nights there. I could feel the romance of camping under the stars and sitting by a hot crackling fire. It turned out to be a very interesting experience, here is an excerpt from my blog:

> *I came up to the town of Mitchell and noticed a sign for a caravan park. I thought I will check out the prices. I get there and the manager says $10 per night for an unpowered camp sight, around $50 for a caravan overnight van. I had a think about it and thought I will.*
>
> *I was given a tour in a golf buggy around this little park. A friendly bloke with his name on his t-shirt drove me around showing me the amenities. He was smiling that I am travelling alone and as a clown. We had a laugh together. I actually met a nice couple with kids in the manager's office. They were talking about the biggest mine in the Southern Hemisphere being built here. He was saying with bitterness that 'no it won't affect the town, there won't be more miners and prices rising'. So I enquired a bit more into that. It was an interesting juxtaposition given the government was introducing the carbon tax to move the economy away from coal and any industry that produces CO2 yet ironically the government is approving a coal mine. The image of the scales with gold bars on one side and the earth on the other came to mind reminding me of Al Gore's film Inconvenient Truth. Looks like the gold bars were chosen.*
>
> *I was told that there is a bush poet at the caravan park. He gives poetry renditions at 4:30 pm. I tell the manager I am a poet. He yells out to the poet that he has a poet in the little golf buggy and I wave. He asks if I am in the Country Poets' Association. I look a bit dumb, I didn't know there was one. I just smiled and said no.*
>
> *So I go and set up my four man tent. It is big. Not quite as straight forward as I thought. It has a mosey (mosquito) netting that you have to put up first with the tent poles. Then you have a fly that goes over the top. It was huge actually. I can fit a table and chair in there, so I have a good little office.*
>
> *Anyway, I went and joined a few people by the fire to hear this bush poet. He was bloody fantastic, I have to say. I recorded him, that will go up on Youtube. He told me he was on Red Faces. This used to be part of a very popular and funny show in Melbourne. One of the segments was Red Faces, Red Symons compared this part and he is known for being the guitarist in Skyhooks, a popular band in the 1970s. He was particularly tough, a bit like the bad guy and really gave the contestants a ribbing (difficult time). They got some really bad acts but they always got good ones as well. They showcased talent. Anyway, this guy had been on the show and he is a brilliant Australian Poet, better than Banjo Patterson (famous Australian bush poet). He spoke off the top of his head and he was brilliant and extremely funny. I recorded him telling me about his life and how he raised his three children by himself. He traveled around and spoke his poetry and had been invited to many places. It was so lovely laughing with older folk around the fire. I really felt a sense of community.*
>
> *Anyway, just cooked my dinner on the BBQ in the great outdoors. Will do some more research on this area so you get a feel for the history. It has been a wonderful stay here. I have met some lovely people: an oncology nurse from Brisbane, a guy and his family from the Gold Coast, a couple travelling around (not sure where from) and a lovely older couple from Dorrigo in New South Wales, they come here every year. They say the price of the caravan park has gone up and they are noticing people (regulars) aren't coming back. It was very sad he felt. He said that he gets into a game with the GPS where you do a treasure hunt. Apparently there were clues close to where he was camped and he walked to the bridge to find the treasure. He said there was a nine foot black snake. He said it was huge. Apparently later that day a snake was seen dead on the road. I felt sorry for the snake and said to him: 'They are such wonderful creatures, amazing how they can slither so quickly. I said We are afraid of them as we are not raised to know their behaviour'. I was thinking of Steve Irwin and his courage with crocs, he had no fear as he knew them. We are very domesticated so we worry we will get bitten. Yes, some snakes here are deadly but my attitude is what can you do. If they get anti venom to you quick enough you are saved, otherwise you get paralysed and pass away. It isn't going to stop me going for walks, but I will be vigilant, I don't really want to be bitten and try the flying doctor as a patient. The old fellow I spoke to also told me he is self-sufficient and has tried to implement everything the government as said about thermal water, coil lights (low energy), and he has two gardens he said for food. I said you may need it in the future. Another guy told me: 'Don't you believe what the papers say, we are in recession. You can tell on the Gold Coast, there is less work'. He said a year ago they couldn't get enough staff. The Gold Coast, for those who don't know, is like the Miami of Queensland. It is all high rises on the beach front. There are water canals and it is a rich person's playground. The buildings are all accommodation and it is expensive. The topic came up because he made a joke about not living on the coast as he may get shot. Apparently there were 50 odd gun crimes in the last six months. I asked him why, he said drugs and unemployment. He is thinking of moving his kids to this area, out in the bush. I said: 'They will have a better life in the country air. The Gold Coast is all hype'. Another lady said to me that the games kids play actually 'hype them up' and it takes ages to calm them down. We sort of toyed with the idea of somehow teaching kids to calm down. This lady was saying that these days they have iPods and gadgets and so much noise. They never have any time to think. What she loves about coming here is she can think. I said reflection is very important, I said most of my time now I am reflecting. I am not working only doing the clowning and peace work. Which is not work for me, it is my calling. I am doing what makes me happy. I want to be part of the solution not the problem.*
>
> *I noticed the water when I was in Roma has a sulphur smell, I think it is bore water (not the yawning type of bore but hard water, we call it bore water). Bore water comes from underground aquifers and it contains mixes of minerals, micro-organisms, chemicals (surface), iron and manganese. I will know for sure if my hair won't lather. I am having a coffee now and can smell it again. No-one is saying not to drink it. Actually thinking about that more deeply they did mention there are natural spas here. That means there is sulphur, so where is it coming from?*

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

I decided to go to the camp fire at the caravan park last night. A few people were still there at 8:30 pm. I sat next to a couple from Norway and Finland (husband and wife). We talked about our lives. They told me they had a friend in Sydney and that is why they came to Australia. They are doing a journey around Queensland with their teenage daughters. We spoke of the state of the world. They also shared concerns about what is happening. Doug mentioned there had been a massacre in Norway where I think around 30 people were shot dead. We talked about violence in society and violent video games. We talked about the media and the focus on violence. I did say to them: 'Don't follow the news, just follow your own life experience. There is violence in the world but there are also kind acts, that tends to not get on the news. I feel you need to just be the change yourself. Try not to judge the world, there are many great people out there'. We spoke of the future, I feel there will be changes in the near future. I was thinking about the Mayans, when Mary mentioned them and 2012. I was surprised at our similar thoughts. I told her I feel there will be change next year but not doomsday, I believe we are going to go through a transition. I said if it looks unstable, just be positive. Try to do your best in life. Don't worry about the future.

Anyway I went back to my tent. I did notice the few people who had been by the fire had trickled away. I remember a point in the conversation where I became aware of others listening to me speak. I did say there was negativity in Australia and as I lay in my tent I hoped I hadn't offended anyone. I remember thinking I just want to bring joy to people in this life. I don't want to create any negativity. I remember the feeling of going home coming to me. This to me is connection to life or God if you like. I don't see God as an entity that looks down on me I experience this intelligence as love. I see it as nothing else. Anyway for a long while I focused on going home. I actually asked please make sure I am on the right track, I don't want to be speaking this truth if it is wrong. I just want to speak from my heart with the intention of doing good. Then I asked this God, source, life, whatever, if I am on the right track send a person to me in the morning and make it clear that it is a sign that I am doing what I am here for. With that I hugged my hot water bottle, feeling a little drunk actually and then fell asleep. My sleep was much warmer with insulation beneath me. Getting better at the camping routine.

The next morning I wake up and it is quiet. The sun starts to beat down on the tent I feel so hot, so I try and cool down. I don't really want to get up but it is becoming like a sauna. So I start to pack up my tent. Big job let me tell you. I packed, stuffed, shoved, ordered, fit all my stuff into my little car. It is no mean task. Full on trying to get it to fit, I can't just shove it in, it has to be organized. I found myself really working on finding places for things and remember where things are, and I am getting exhausted doing it all. I get some cereal and milk and sit in the driver's seat, all the stuff is in the car. I am feeling exhausted and contemplating men. How much I respect and admire what they do, how they take on the physical work. We women can sit back and go, he'll do it. I really saw myself in their shoes and noted how physically exhausting this was. I am not in great shape but I am sure I will get into shape on this trip.

I sat in my car and this woman I'd met the day before came to me. She had two apples in her hand and she popped a $50 note into my bra. She says she wants to encourage me in my work. I was so surprised, she then said of herself 'I have a close connection with God, God speaks to me and I feel to give you this.' I smiled and felt so surprised. She wouldn't let me say no. She said she would like some information on what I was talking about yesterday. I actually shared with her about Byron Katie and her system of self inquiry called the Work, she was interested in learning about how the '5 questions' can help people inquire into negative thoughts. She told me her daughter Jennifer was depressed. I said I'd be happy to give her information. She told me where she would be. She left and I sat quietly in the car reflecting. I actually had tears in my eyes, I did cry. I was touched that this money came. I was wondering how much was in my bank. I was

deeply grateful and wanted to give her something. I had this beautiful candle stick holder in the back of the car. Just that morning I was thinking I wanted to give this to someone. She was the person I felt to give it to.

Clowning in St Mary's Primary School, Charleville

I contacted St Mary's Primary School in Charleville and asked if I could come and teach the kids conflict resolution. I was given permission to visit the school. Here is an excerpt out of my blog:

…the kids started to come in Grade 6 and 7's. I firstly asked the kids what conflict means and what resolution means (see photo). Some saw conflict as fighting, others disagreement. I then asked about resolution and one indicated solving problems. I then took them through the REAL HOPE model. Joking about things as I went. I told them that values are very important as they guide as and make us willing to resolve conflicts. It is what brings us together. Then we did a brainstorming session on what is conflict. I asked people why they get upset with others. They said some were mean, others mean, another said irritating and annoying. I asked what happens when we get angry and upset? They said they may get physical and verbal, another said 'sad', go away and be alone. Then I asked do others make us upset?, many said yes, I said is that true. Can anyone make you upset? I said you can choose your feelings. For example I said you could call me a clown, they said you are one, I said let's say they are being mean, I could get offended, but I choose not to. You can decide if it is true or not. Then I talked to them about projection, like a projector onto a screen. I said to them when someone says you are stupid, the thought is coming from them. So projection is that they think they are stupid and are calling you this. I said to not take it personally but to feel compassion for them. I said we don't need to hate anyone. Then I asked if someone is bullying (see photo) you what can you do. Some said get a teacher, others said go and think about it, another said tell them to stop. I told them we are all community. I said remember empathy (standing in someone's shoes) we feel for others if they are hurt, we make sure we don't hurt anyone and if we want a peaceful community, then we get involved. Everyone can be responsible (ability to respond) and help someone being bullied.

Then I showed the kids an iceberg and showed them that in a conflict situation we only know the tip. The rest, 90% is beneath the surface (see photo). Someone may appear a bully but they may have been bullied at home, maybe their parents are divorcing. What they are doing is taking your power,

they are a powerless person. Some got that. I said the people with power don't bully they don't need to get power. I then showed them the blindspot test, they didn't need the cards. Nearly all the kids when they covered the right eye and looked at the right spot (two spots on a slide), the other disappeared. I explained when we think we are right we can only see one dot, we can't see anything else. Then I took them through a series of slides showing them perception and how the mind plays tricks. I showed them the 3 faces in one picture. That is a good one as kids learn we can see different things in a situation. We are all unique, which is why we see differently.

Then I took them through Dr. Emoto which really looks at how our intent (positive/negative) can affect water. We are 70-90% water. Dr. Emoto had people look at the water in viles with words on it and think positive or negative thoughts. After he froze it he found out that the crystals were either symmetrical (positive thoughts) or erratic (negative thoughts). I explained we can affect someone's health if we are repeatedly negative to them. There are many cases in hospital affected by negativity. It makes people more responsible and monitoring their thoughts. The kids found that interesting. They wanted to know more.

Then we did a game on communication, it is called concentric circles. There is an outside ring and an inside ring, kids sit in front of partners. One will speak on a topic for 2 minutes whilst the other listens, then they stop and the one listening tries to reflect back everything they heard. We did a debrief afterwards, and some said that the other added words, got it wrong, couldn't remember parts. I said it is a bit like Chinese Whispers, that is why we don't listen to gossip, mostly we get it wrong. I had said earlier that the most intelligent thing they can think is 'I could be wrong', this opens to possibilities. So the kids could see that we often don't understand each other so it is important to ask questions.

I then did an activity called the block and flow game. Basically you stand in front of a partner with hands together and the idea is to push against the other, when we think we are right or defensive we push or fight against. Then I showed what it is to go with the flow, gently flowing in harmony back and forth with the other. To learn to ask questions, to try and solve problems, this is all flowing (energy). So I got them to have a go. I said remember when ever you block others you are being defensive or fighting them. We are looking to conflict resolve, therefore we must be willing to flow with others.

After that I did I words, (I statements) and showed them that blaming is pointing the finger (3 are pointing at you), that it is important to say how you feel and what you want. Not to blame them, but to try and solve the problem. That we don't hate people, we solve problems. I gave them examples. Then time was running out (as usual) I quickly took them through problem solving – to look at the problem not person, people see differently (perceptions), I statements 'I think, I feel' etc. to listen to other people's words, feelings and wants, then to look for a solution that both are happy with. I reinforced win/win. That we are not competitive in conflict resolution, we are seeking to resolve issues so both win. The kids really understood that, it was great. I went through a speedy version of role play. The kids were in groups of 5-6 and they picked a mediator, two conflict persons and bystanders. What was interesting the first group of girls talked about being pretty, one said I am pretty, the other said I am prettier, then the 3rd said I am prettier. Then the mediator came in and said you are all pretty and this diffused the competition. Interesting how looks are important for girls. I wonder where they get that idea. Then the boys had a go and there's was a fight about sport. The mediator came into stop them, but was not sure how to do it. I came in and demonstrated listening to both sides and finding out what the problem was, turns out it was a misunderstanding, I then got them to shake hands. It was a quick session but good, as they got an idea that kids can solve problems.

I had teachers give me feedback and one indicated that she had learned it is good for kids to learn to solve their own problems instead of sorting out every time. She also liked the mind opening activities before the role play. She saw the children's education in learning not to blame others but to stop and think about the problem. She said they learned how to help others during conflict. The aspect particularly liked was to do with learning how feelings change water crystals. The kids liked the blind spot activity and perspectives. The acting out of conflict and mediation was enjoyed. Concentric circles was also liked the disliked aspect was running out of time. . She felt what would improve the session was more activities and role play and more time with Peacefull. The last comment was particularly helpful. She said this session made us understand that we need to think about what we say during conflict because sometimes the hurt can all be caused by a simple misunderstanding. Peacefull gave us some good advice for solving conflict and for helping others solve conflict.

I got a nice stamp. It was very gratifying to get this feedback, as I need to see how my work is received and to improve it as I go.

I had a clown session with grades 4-5 (see photo). I had them dress up as clowns. We did a welcome parade, it was interesting to learn that when the kids came through the two columns (as super heroes), that some kids felt a bit embarrassed in front of others, others felt sad as they were not cheered. It was a large group, so kids can run out of cheers if it goes onto long. As a teacher I have to balance it and I use it as a teaching tool. I told kids that the point of the game is to support and cheer each other on, to be aware of other kids missing out and to feel good about ourselves. I also did a laughter game which they really enjoyed. We discussed feelings afterwards and how important it is to create positive environments. We did some funny faces and I just reinforced the importance of being happy. That as a clown I love everyone, I asked them if they believe this, some said yes others said no. I said it is true, I really do love everyone. I said every person is unique there will never be another you. Don't be afraid to be yourself and face fear. A few of the girls had clown phobias, thankfully the teacher had them near her so I knew who they were. All of them got over it, even the one with the deepest fear. I blew them kisses and I could see them warming. That was very gratifying for me.

I did a full school presentation. As usual I have no idea what I am going to say or do. I ended up talking about Russia and my experiences clowning in hospitals, HIV clinics, slums etc. I told them that we make people happy in hospitals and gave information on endorphins, happy hormones. To my delight some kids wanted to get up on stage and say jokes, I really love that so I have no issue with it, I put my clown hat on them and off they go. Others wanted me to fall on my whoopee cush-

ion, I think that was the most popular, I asked kids to watch out downwind, they laughed. Funnily enough my clown nose after many years squeaking, stopped. I thought that was funny I often say too many key strokes. I told jokes brought out my singing flower, they don't know if water will come out but it starts dancing, I join in.

I had a large earth ball bouncing all over the room. I got some great shots of all the kids holding up the earth. I also was able to interview them about happiness and peace. They seemed to find me the source of that. It is lots of fun. I tried to show them that we are all able to make a difference, to find our happiness and follow our dreams. Two kids came up and thanked me on behalf of the school.

Clowning at an Aboriginal Community East of Tennant Creek

I was emailing schools ahead of my visit and made contact with Leonie who had been contacted by the principals of the schools in the area of Tennant Creek. The schools she was connected with were approximately three hours east of Tennant Creek. She offered to take me to a remote community to go clowning with the kids. This is an excerpt from the blog about it:

…In the morning we got organized and set off. We left at 11:30 am and didn't arrive until 4 pm. It was around a four hour drive but we stopped and looked at the countryside, had lunch and coffee. It was an incredible drive, one I will never forget. Leonie played me the CD of Yothu Yindi's (famous indigenous singer) brother who apparently was blind. The music was so peaceful. He was a guitarist, I really enjoyed listening to it. The countryside was magnificent and I've never seen such beautiful greenery . The road was straight heading towards Alice Springs then we turned off onto Bins Road. I saw on the sign 165km in my mind I went 'wow long way'. The soil was bright red and the landscape a sea of painted red with spinifex, ghost gums and a array of plants. We didn't see any animals but maybe we would on the way back. As we traveled through the countryside you could see the beauty of the red and green painting this landscape and I imagined Aboriginal artists feeling inspired by their country. The rocks were red and rugged, there were rounded mountains, some with flat tops. I think that was to do with erosion and an inland sea in this area. There are indigenous people living in remote areas. The community we are heading for is Canteen Creek and it is a dry community (no alcohol). I am very excited to meet the indigenous kids. They haven't seen a clown. So it should be interesting to experience their reaction. Although I know how fantastic every child is.

As we drove we saw a bush fire in the distance, then we could see the flames in the distance, we couldn't be sure if it would spread fast, come towards us or go out. Then we came up and saw the flames quite close to the road, it was a small fire, so neither of us were alarmed. I was mesmerized by the flames, the incredible colors. Apparently the fires are lit by the local aborigines to take out the low level grasses, it then regenerates regrowth. Leonie pointed out how quickly the regrowth occurs. The land is created in harmony with fire, the gums are full of flammable resins which ignite readily and the seed pods apparently open up with heat and regerminate. So the country is designed for fire, but not those that are deliberately lit uncaringly that destroy 100,000 hectares of forest and grasslands. It is technically the dry season and Leonie pointed out how green it seems and where the rivers would run, we noticed dry creek beds.

We chatted and drove along in this beautiful place and she shared with me her love of her job, which didn't feel like a job to her, and how she loved going to remote communities. She is a special needs expert so she is in an advisory capacity for school principals on problem behaviours and/or disabilities. She has been a teacher since 18 and is now in her 60s, so is very experienced. She is a very open minded person and as she talks she always points out the other viewpoint, she considers other sides and is seeking to be fair. It was very joyful to see such honesty.

We discussed the idea of government funding in growth towns, rather than money going into out stations (indigenous communities). So many Aboriginal people wondered what the point of education is for their kids. Attendance is low at schools and schools work hard to entice them to come. If the family decides to go to Tennant Creek for two months they just go. The kids don't go to school. You can feel it is a different consciousness. I think we underestimate how deeply embedded our own culture is and then even over a period of 200 years, we don't really understand how embedded 50,000 years of ancient culture is. They are not going to become model citizens through money spent on education and housing. They have a deep culture that has been passed on for thousands of generations. The thought patterns of Western/Europeans and Indigenous are different is my feeling. There are different priorities and goals in life. Different ways of viewing the land, one values ownership and productivity (Westerners) and the other sees it as part of themselves and this connection is emotional and linked strongly to identity. This is a major difference as the economic system is built upon property rights. Whilst the Indigenous are viewed as traditional owners, it appears more territorial to me rather than property ownership, such as 'my land'. They speak more in terms of country and specifically to the country they were raised in and the people and skin name they identify with. My friend Leonie said they went for land rights in respect of the white people's law to be able to gain their traditional lands, it was not about ownership for them but I sense more of a going home.

My feeling is that they should return to their own culture as I feel it is a healthier life to live traditionally and fully. It has different values about life rather than valuing getting a job and making money which our European style culture is so fixated on. I don't think it brings them happiness. It certainly hasn't brought us happiness. What seems to give them strength are the strong familial bonds, but at the same time there is inter tribal conflict and violence. So breaking the cycle of violence is very important for them to return to harmony. I sense that the payback system is central and in many cultures across the world this operates from tradition. Although if they do not solve the problem but just hate the person/group then they become locked into conflict that may not end or even end in tragedy. Violence appears to be the way they settle problems and it is based on winning the battle. Alcohol of course inflames this conflict and makes it much more dangerous as people are not in their right mind when drunk. Moreover, they can be vulnerable when drinking.

We had a discussion about democracy and the issue of the right to drink alcohol and domestic violence. I felt the alcohol issue was a health issue and there should be intervention given it was brought to them by white people. I am not comfortable speaking about white and black as I feel it creates such a divide. I do recognize there are differences, but somehow we have to find the common ground and be here for each other. To empower is what interests me, where people solve their own problems, they become confident that they can really tackle the challenges before them. The wisdom is inherent in all, we all have equal wisdom. This I have learned.

Leonie told me about some Aboriginals that were removed to the north of the Northern Territory, they were not allowed to this leave a place, it was similar to a reservation. The government wanted them to stay. Apparently they just did a walk out and walked 1,000 km. Can you imagine walking such long distances and in this place the temperatures rise to over 50 degrees. You cannot imagine that kind of adaptation to the land. We really have no idea just how profound their knowledge is and their feeling for the land. We would be complaining after 5-10km. I feel the central issue there is that we cannot force people to live away from their territory with tribal groups who are not their own. I kept thinking about the inability of white people to adapt to others, we seem to need people to conform to our worldview. This does reveal ignorance. There can be perceptions of superiority through technology, professional language, education, technology, but for myself, I don't see that. I see all people as equal but different and I don't see anyone having the right to force others. That of course goes both ways.

We arrived at Canteen Creek and I loved the sign 'Look for People', so gorgeous. Definitely not white people, yet straight to the point. In this part of the world people are rare. We went straight to the school and I met Dean the Principal. He made sure all was organized as he won't be at the school tomorrow when I teach Conflict Resolution. Leonie will come and take pictures, so it will be very interesting. I am so excited to just be with the kids. It is a very nice school. A few houses around the community and what they call camp dogs running around. Leonie told me the other community she had visited on the way to Alice Springs were far worse with dogs, as they were very hungry. This community was very neat and tidy and the dogs looked very friendly and well fed.

Clowning with Indigenous Children

From my blog:

The indigenous kids came in (see photo) and I showed them a presentation of my world trip. My thought here was to open their minds to the world. These are kids in a remote area and very few have traveled further than Tennant Creek. I wanted to expand their vision and show them that anything is possible. They loved the music.

I then pulled out my juggling clubs, my fire sticks, juggling rings and juggling balls. I have this very funny singing cow, and singing flower and singing lion. The kids loved them. I danced along with the songs. I brought out my giggle stick, it is a head massager and I use it to interact, I also have a vibrating massager and gave them massages. They loved it and laughed at each other. In between I do a moon walk or I dance around. I tweak my nose and squeak my dummy (giant). I then brought out my whistle that goes high/low and pretended to be a bird and flapped my wings around the room.

I then got the kids to dress up in wigs and clothing and did a laughter/clown workshop (see photo). I taught them a bit of mime, funny walks, funny faces and what was really magic was that they were coming out of their shyness. The Indigenous people I would call introverts, I myself am more of an extrovert, although sometimes I am introvert. So I understand they are not used to shining. I had them jump into the middle of a circle and do something crazy. The teachers were excellent and very involved,

they found my brightly coloured ribbon stick and called it a crazy stick. When it was wiggled over the kids heads the teacher said you have been touched by the crazy stick go crazy and they did. I loved to see them emerge and for me that was the highlight of the workshop. The workshop was really great and I was able to really connect with the children. It was a joy. The workshop went for 1.5 hours, which is longer than usual. I found the teachers particularly good and they managed behaviour.

I have to report something very funny. In the first workshop the day before a group of dogs tried to come into the room. There was about six of them patiently waiting, one tried to come in. I loved the fact the dogs wanted to join us.

The second workshop was with teenagers and it went very well for the first part. I taught some conflict resolution (see photo) and presented information about Dr. Emoto and how when our emotions are directed at water and then frozen, they actually affect the water crystals. If people thinking loving thoughts then the crystals are symmetrical, if the thoughts are negative then they become asymmetrical. Our thoughts are powerful.

The kids loved the juggling, interactions and presentation. Leonie was there taking photos. Some of the older boys did want to participate but they had 'credibility' to live up to, so they held back from getting into the dress ups. I can understand those difficult teenage years. However, I just played with them on the sidelines, trying to encourage them but I didn't force them. The workshop went very well and when I found the energy breaking up a bit towards the end I concluded it with a circle. I thanked them for having me at Canteen Creek and that I would not forget them. That they are a beautiful people. I told them that being a clown was the most wonderful experience of my life and that all people are equal. What I see when I clown is that every person is beautiful. When I make others happy I feel so happy. This came from my heart to them.

I left the workshop very tired, as it is hard work. But I was deeply happy and the fact it was given for free is even more enjoyable for me. As it is truly a gift of love. I thought about the chances of ending up in the most remote community 300km south east of Tennant Creek. These children had not seen clowns but they were warm and welcoming to me. I got lots of photos of them and really enjoyed my time there.

The Aboriginal ladies I met the day before said there is something magical about these places that they just draw people and they never leave. I certainly felt a call to be with the Indigenous people and I was not disappointed. I felt I learned more about them and my affection for them deepened. I

waved and smiled at the folks as we drove past in the car. I was deeply happy.

We left the town and saw the wild donkeys on the way out. We drove through the bright red road with the beautiful green backdrop of trees, gums, bushes and grasses. We got to the next station 50km away and realised we forgot the bed spread that I used. We had to drive back (100km) round trip to pick it up. Leonie took it really well and didn't flinch. She was truly an amazing host, not negative or irritable, a real joy to travel with. I so enjoyed our conversations. She even told me on the way to Alice Springs there is a place which is considered the centre for UFOs. Apparently there have been many sightings, so I am definitely going to check that out.

Devils Marbles, Northern Territory

I didn't travel too far from Tennant Creek and decided to visit a place called Devils Marbles. I had no idea what I was in for, the rock formations were absolutely magnificent and there were lots of them in the desert. It was they dropped out of the sky. How they got there? I have no idea.

Here is an excerpt from my blog:

I turned off the Stuart Highway (heading for Alice Springs) and went and had a look at the Devils Marbles (see photo). I have to say I was stunned to see all these granite boulders. I can see why they call them marbles, some are perfectly round. They are balancing on rocks, or haphazard or stacked. It looks like someone just plonked all these massive rocks. They were absolutely amazing. I felt they made Stonehenge look like a pile of stones. More in terms of the magnificence of these monolithic stones. I felt the place was sacred and when I checked out the information, I was interested to learn it was a secret place for the aboriginals. They did secret women's business and men's there. I could understand why. They indicated that in the dreaming 'nice people' come but they may take you away and there had been times where children had disappeared. The nice people were spirit. I remember when I spoke to my indigenous friends back in Canteen Creek, they told me about the spiritual life. One said she went to a place and she could smell an odour, she new they were there. The child with her was very stiff saying she could see them. Their sacred life is very important to them and they are tuned into the ancestors. I decided to camp overnight there. I was at the base of some magnificent boulders. I noticed some smoke from behind. I see continual plumes of smoke as I am traveling. I wonder how natural it is to have so many spot fires. It clears out the grass but I wonder about the animals that die when the fires start. I am getting used to seeing smoke and my usual alarm about fires is somewhat sedate given they are typically grass fires.

Wycliffe Well – UFO Capital of Australia

I had to stop at Wycliffe Well to check out the little green men. No book is complete without a UFO story, so here is mine from my blog:

…I headed down the Stuart Highway to a place called Wycliffe Wells. This place is calling itself the UFO capital of Australia. It is really funny as you approach this roadhouse there are tall green beings, like the little Greys portrayed with the big eyes standing out the front. There is a mural of space ships and a mock one. I will take a few photos.

I went into the café and there are endless photos, reports, and information on sightings. The first clipping from The Centralian Advocate that got my attention was reporting that Pine Gap (a US secret facility) attracts UFOs. Interestingly Pine Gap, the Joint Defence Facility was started in Australia in 1967. This facility is top secret and is designated US territory and has attracted many activists given Australia's strategic position in the Asia Pacific region. Moreover as a listening post other countries' communications can be intercepted and nuclear ships/subs coordinated amongst other activities. Concerns here relate to the fact that Australians do not have control of this facility and that US interests can be advanced from Australian soil. The fact it is secret is concerning as it may affect Australians and Australian security. In the article Joseph Hansell, a metaphysician, was interviewed he indicated that UFOs are often sighted around secret bases. He claimed that Woomera in South Australia and Cape Kennedy in the US were prime places for UFOs. Dr. Hansell indicated that he became interested in UFOs when he saw one 12 years before near his home in a district of New Mexico. He said he had seen two more flying saucers since that experience. He went onto say that they came from another solar system and that they had a form of science unknown to humans. He said that the flying saucers could bring the earth to a lighter dimension in his religious understanding. He said he was sure there will be a breakthrough soon and that intelligent beings in these UFOs will make themselves known to us and that from them we shall gain a much more profound basis for our religions and science. Dr Hansell said his religion was based on the principle that Christ, Buddha, Krishna and other prophets were sent to teach different aspects of the one religion leading directly to the one God. His UFO claims were backed up one year later by Civil Defence rescue instructor John Udall.

Another article by Daniel Bourchier stated that hundreds of people across the Barkly saw flying objects in the night sky. Residents at Ali Curung, Murray Downs and Tennant Creek, as well as tourists and travellers, all witnessed the spectacle on Friday evening. A Greyhound bus was parked on the side to check out the objects. A passenger said that he and two bus drivers were awake when they saw coloured lights hovering in the air. 'It was about 9:30 pm when we saw the lights which were very bright'. It was stated in the article that they looked like they were part of a big structure. Red and blue lights encircling the object and there was a huge oval spotlight shining from underneath. It was a kilometre from them but they stated it looked enormous. Apparently the object was hovering above the tree line and the light was searching through the trees on the western side of the highway. It was a powerful light. The object then moved slowly in an easterly direction. According to the Wycliffe Wells Roadhouse proprietor, Lew Farkas, the unidentified lights have been the talk of the district all week. He said: 'You wouldn't believe how many people have come in and told

me about these lights.' According to the locals a group of lights passed straight over Ali Curung travelling from south to north. They said the lights were white and changed to red almost as if they had put on the brakes.

In Australia we have many folk stories about people travelling across the Nullarbor plain (South Australia) and seeing UFOs and reporting all the electrical equipment going off in the vehicle. There have been a wide range of discussions about alien abductions. I recall years ago reading Whitley Strieber's book called 'Communion' on his abduction by the aliens called 'Greys'. He wrote in great detail about the ship and the experiments done. One part I recall clearly was a vision he was shown of a nuclear blast as a possible future. I've heard this through other sources as well.

When I speak to people about this possibility most people are open to it and it seems incredible to think we are the only beings in the universe. I've met quite a few people who have seen UFOs to my surprise, so I suspect it is not as uncommon as it seems, it may well be that the media is not reporting it much or there is a silence around it for fear of being seen as crazy. Even Carl Sagan, the famous NASA scientist made it clear that to be the only life form was impossible. So these sightings are very interesting and worth investigation. The walls of this restaurant are papered by articles. If you go onto YouTube and have a look at Billy Meirs photographs, he claims he has been in touch with a group called Pleiadians and was given the opportunity to photograph their ships. There are many testimonials on the internet by government, defence departments and lay people about sightings. Even former President Jimmy Carter claims he has seen one. So I guess we wait and see if they disclose their presence. That will change the state of play on the planet. That would be a totally unexpected event coming from 'right field'. Totally unexpected.

The reality we face is that we are not looking after our planet and we have not been able to work collectively for the greater good of humanity and other species that share this planet. We have the nuclear fire power to destroy the planet four times over and we spend much more than 1 million dollars a minute on warfare (fear) rather than spending it on peace (love). We are facing melting ice caps, deforestation, global warming, species extinction, loss of top soil, pollution and the list goes on. The planet does not have the resources to cater for more and more countries living a capitalist style of life. We are well outside our ecological footprint. So other more populous nations aspiring to own the same flat screens, fridges, cars and mod cons means a collapsing environment in my view. Perhaps we need some wiser guidance on what it means to be responsible stewards of a remarkable world. We are not here to make money we are here to find out who we really are and live our purpose as part of a shared reality. Perhaps a visit could be the catalyst for real change. From the people I've spoken to, that would be welcome.

So I left Wycliffe Well casting a watchful eye up to the night sky looking for funny lights or anything hovering. I could see the caption in the newspaper 'Clown beamed up and that is no joke'. I smiled. I like the thought of us not being alone, perhaps they can do better than us, we certainly need the help.

Alice Springs

I drove into Alice Springs and it immediately reminded me of Canberra, just similar in the gum trees and houses. It has a small town feel yet is isolated given it is central Australia and any large city is thousands of kilometres away.

Excerpts from my blog:

…I am currently staying at a place called Campfire in the heart. It is run by a Christian group whose focus is on reconciliation and sharing stories. I am pretty sure a contact in Darwin gave me a contact of a guy here in Alice Springs who is a clown doctor. He connected me with this place and another clown doctor. I am staying in a cabin which is really good as I've been sick with a cold the last few days. There is nothing worse than camping when unwell. You just don't have energy. I've been trying to get rest here. They kindly said to me to pay what I can afford. I am very happy about that as I couldn't afford the full price. However, I feel I am in heaven. You can't imagine how good it feels to have a bed rather than a blow up mattress. I haven't been travelling long, yet it is amazing how mod cons are just luxuries. A shower and toilet in the next room, luxury. A jug (kettle) luxury, a fridge luxury. All the things we take for granted. When you live out of your car, it becomes a blessing and one inspiring real gratitude. I am loving being here.

I got a call from a clown doctor, hey that is what I need - a goofy clown to turn up and entertain me. Hadn't thought of that. Anyway, she is inviting me for two days at her house. So we will have heaps to discuss. I did send an email to Flying Doctors, maybe we can do some clowning at 10,000 feet. That would be fun. Hey parachuting clowns in to areas. Patch Adams suggested that once but he was referring to sending clowns into war zones. Not a bad idea, can you imagine how armies would respond when silly billy clowns turn up with whoopee cushions, squeeky noses, big shoes and breaching the lines of defence to give people a hug. The soldiers would feel so vulnerable, ha-ha! I like that image. Anyway, back to reality. I will stay with her and then see some of Alice Springs. I've been crawling out the last few days. Then I will go west of the city to stay with Keith. The clown doctor knows him and says he and his wife Stella are great people. Apparently where he is based is in really beautiful territory, so I hope I will be feeling better and able to explore.

I am also reflecting on my inner peace work. What I find interesting about the work I am doing is to take full responsibility for my own thoughts and through those of the world I perceive. Of course none of what we perceive is the real world, as we project onto everything. The closest to what is real comes in the form of the feeling of love. So my work is to cultivate love in myself and no matter what the circumstances to practice it. I saw myself slip a few times, but I will keep on it. Peace, or more accurately harmony, is constant vigilance of yourself. So I have plenty of time to observe. I know the real life is the one that is an expression of love. What better way to live.

I want to get more into sacred Indigenous history and get the feeling that the commercialisation of their culture is not the full story. My feeling is they held much back as secret, which is a good thing. When you see all the Aboriginal art hanging in the galleries, with no mention of the story, you can see the ignorance of Indigenous culture in this Anglo/European culture. The Indigenous paintings I saw were all about the Dreaming and stories. They are nothing without that, I didn't know that before. Yet in our culture we look at the aesthetics of paintings and decide what they mean or what they are worth. These paintings were poetry on bark, so deep with rich meanings. I am interested to learn more. Life in truth is art.

I offered to do a workshop for the people who have allowed me to stay at their campground. They have a big campfire and they invite people to come and share stories. For the last four days I've not been well, yesterday I spent the day in bed, too exhausted to get up. That night I knew this guy Chris, a clown doctor, was coming to the campfire. He was the one that connected me with David and Sue. I am eternally grateful to him for doing that as I so needed a place to rest.

We sat around the campfire and David made damper. It was really nice with butter and honey. I sat with Margaret an Indigenous lady who told me she grew up in this country. She had memories of cooking kangaroo on the campfire every night. She came from the traditional culture. She said she

liked kangaroo and witchetty grubs. She was a gently spoken woman but I noticed her to be very aware. According to David she was a teacher and I would assume a Christian, as this is a Christian gathering. It was really nice to be with her and I would have loved to ask her more, but I did find her hard to understand. I enjoyed her presence.

I brought my clown gear and told the folks of my work and my trip. I tried to convey the beauty of clowning and the love that is extended. I particularly like to share how beautiful people are and the importance of play. I am sure Chris was right on it. I showed some of my props.

There was a nice couple there who were singers and everyone joined in a song. I loved the community spirit they demonstrated. Margaret was right at home there and very much accepting of the 'white' ways. David and I had spoken briefly about the government earlier in the day. He made the point of explaining how the Aboriginal people had been treated, certainly I've picked up that they have been moved out of their traditional lands and this causes conflict with other tribal groups. I don't know much of their situation but slowly I am getting an idea of it…

I had an interesting experience whilst we were talking around the fire. I actually saw the face of Jesus in the fire. Now I know that sounds imagined, I am not even a Christian. However, the face was clear to me and in my heart there was no doubt. I saw a man with a hat (not a crown of thorns) and he had long hair, his features were distinct. The others came around me and some could see him. I could see no other images in this fire, just that one man's face. I really felt it as a sign. Later on as the fire changed, the face changed and I saw him smiling and looking in the direction of one of the women. I didn't tell her, I should have as she is a Christian. I wondered if she had been suffering. It was so clear to me. It was the first time I've ever seen Jesus, whom I call Jeshua. Believe it or not! Later on I thought I should have taken a photo. Oh well.

Meeting Chris, a clown doctor and peace clown:

…Later on Chris and I chatted in the kitchen about life and how he was trying to find his way. He had been up and down, perfectly fine for a clown. We can't be up all the time. He spoke of his work and his concerns at the violence. We had a talk about the violence issues here in Alice Springs and connecting possibilities to clowning. I think clowning could be great to build up connection, positivity and service. Later on I thought more and I felt a circus was the way to go. I have a book called 'Circus in a Suitcase'. That night as I was reflecting on Chris's work as a mental health professional and clown, I felt he could do great things creating a circus… We discussed the aspects of clowning and how it can develop that feeling part of the brain. I felt that a circus would be good with Indigenous people as they could develop cooperation skills, balancing, juggling, and theatre. They are naturally great athletes and I am sure would resonate with creative activities. The circus could be made into a conflict resolution circus which is an idea I've had for a while. It turns out that Chris was also a peace clown. He was in the peace movement within the anti-nuclear area, which I was pleased to learn. Like me he was not into the aggression of the peace movement but into raising awareness. He said years ago when he started out (in the 1980s) he was invited to come to a gathering of adults and children. He was given 20 minutes to speak of his work and clown. He decided to put it together as time was short. He told me he got the kids to imagine a nuclear winter. He had them put paper bags on their heads. The adults joined in. He had them imagine what it would be like to have no sun during the day. Then he had them imagine what they could do to prevent nuclear winter from happening. He said he then slipped out and they were left thinking about what they could do. It was very powerful. He was intercepted in the carpark and taken back and he stood quietly unseen in the next room. He said the conversation went on for one hour they were so touched by the activity. It opened a window. In that moment I saw him as a peace clown.

Meeting Nique another clown doctor, here is an excerpt out of my blog:

…I am now at Nique's place, another clown doctor, and it is nice to sit on a couch. Funny the small things that make a difference. She is a gorgeous, peaceful, Buddhist lady and kindly has invited me to stay at her place for a few days. We will talk more about clowning.

She did mention to me when she clowned at the hospital there were many prisoners at the hospital with guards were quite hard to make laugh. I find them the most tempting. I can be naughty, a bit like the Queen's Guards at Buckingham Palace where you want to tickle them or make them smile. She also said that there were many Indigenous women with domestic violence issues. I understand that the men may see women as chattels so there is much learning ahead to properly value women. Moreover, women are also challenged to find a way to empower themselves. I have felt saddened by the violence issues and wondered about the alcohol, the frustrations, inter-personal relations, inter-cultural relations and how to deal with complex emotions and changing traditions. Moreover, my friend mentioned the issue of internalized racism, where the violence is turned towards the people they know rather than towards white people and possibly also due to the social frustrations of adapting to a European style of culture. Typically white people are not harmed, that may be because of the laws, I am not sure, or maybe the numbers. There are many Indigenous people who go to jails as they are embroiled in violence. We had many years ago, here in Australia, The Deaths in Custody Inquiry/Commission because many young Aboriginal men were taking their lives, some felt the police may have done it or driven them to it. I think there are two worlds here. For me I felt a different consciousness and I wondered how they cope with this type of society with houses, cars, jobs and money. Whereas their culture was around a campfire, hunting, traditions, customs, rituals, Dreamings – another universe really. I wonder how they reconcile within themselves these two lives and how they can integrate these lives. Reconciliation really is about Anglo/European people reconciling difference and allowing others to be who they are. Do we really have to integrate them into our world? For the Indigenous perhaps reconciliation is about internal change and identity. Finding peace in a changing world, finding the centre of their own truth. So maybe reconciliation means different things for different people. I think there must be deep confusion and a sense of not knowing where you stand, or the order of life and what is true or meaningful for a happy life. I feel empathy for any person suffering, I see no difference in different colors. I do believe we have to feel moved to assist rather than feel obligation or be driven by some sense of guilt. I do think the people themselves have their own answers, maybe as friends we come along side, or share skills such as clowning to bring happiness. I don't believe people should be like me, it is more about them finding what makes them happy.

Happiness is the universal goal of all of us, yet it only comes when we know ourselves. Sometimes we identify with culture, I am seeing an identification as a universal person who is part of a universal family on the one planet. I see the values of humanity as the real stuff that connects us. When we be and do what we really want, then happiness just bubbles up. That has been my experience.

Uluru the Earth Mother

Uluru means Earth Mother, many people may recognise this ancient rock by its European name, Ayers Rock. Uluru (see photo) is close to the geographical centre of Australia. It is considered a sacred site by Indigenous Australians. Uluru is the world's largest monolith on the surface and is actually connected as an underground mountain range to Kata Tjuta (The Olgas). Uluru is 348 metres high by 1.9 kilometers wide and 9.4km around the base. I recall when I first saw it from a distance it was pink and as I got closer the rock became a darker rusty red. It is truly inspiring as it is this monolith rising out of the desert. You realise this country is truly unique and remarkable. You feel you are in the middle of nowhere yet

now here. You can easily float off and imagine the Indigenous people living in this harsh yet beautiful environment. Here is an excerpt from my blog about my experience of Uluru:

…I went to Uluru today (Ayers Rock) and cried as I felt its sacred heart. I spoke to a man at the camping ground, he was disappointed, he preferred colonial history as he grew up with the swagmen. I smiled at what is sacred to each of us and respected the difference. I felt pulled to this site, and for me it represents the end of my world trip, the last sacred site I am to visit. I feel completion and the sense of going home, whatever that means in truth… …I was walking around Uluru and observing the other people, some climbing, some walking. I asked the ancestral spirits for permission to climb the rock, I wanted to be respectful of their customs as the big sign was saying they don't want people climbing the rock and they had fears of people falling. However, they were allowing it. I just wanted to make sure I was in harmony with this site and asked for a sign.

In the middle of the night I awoke from a dream. In it Indigenous women came to me and they impressed upon me to walk around the base of Uluru. They didn't actually say not to climb the rock but the feeling was to walk around it. I noticed in the dream they were very gentle.

So when I went today my feeling was to just walk and feel the energy of Uluru, to take my time, not talk just be with this site. It is really an incredible monolith, it has so many markings on its sides, like craters, chips and patterns. There are water marks where water has slid down and large round holes which give it a moon crater appearance. I was told today that it is the tip of a massive underground mountain range. It just looks so out of place in a flat terrain with nothing other than the Olga's (Kata Tjuta) and Mt Connor looking remotely related to it. The rest is flat country with mulga bush, gums, flowering plants and grasses.

I walked and sat under trees feeling the wind curl around the rock. I listened to the flies, watched the butterflies defying gravity and looked closely at the plant life. Little purple flowers, yellow flowers, pink puffy flowers and trees with fruits. The grasses had green tinges and the diversity was simply breathtaking. When you take the time to really look and be in nature you see more. I remember thinking I know nothing. We were not taught about what these plants mean. I knew nothing about the natural world. I thought of my education and I thought of Indigenous women and their expert knowledge of what humans could eat and what all the plants and animals were. This is really knowing your world. I can give you a rundown on economics and politics but it is not the real world. Where I was today gave me the feeling of peace, in being still. I sat under the tree with no thoughts and imagined Indigenous people walking for long periods and just sitting with no hurry just sitting and resting. You see them do it naturally all the time. I really felt the peace in the place. I saw little caves, pock holes (maybe birds live there), I saw large boulders just on the ground, huge they were. Perhaps they broke off and rested on the ground. The rocks had many rock pools without water, it made me think of water running over the surface.

I went to a little viewing section where Aboriginal art in ochre and white chalk was on the walls (see photo). Another time, such a different perceptual space. I felt gratitude that I have come now, the weather is perfect, not too hot nor dry. It is just beautiful.

I said g'day to a few people as they strolled past. I felt as if I was walking through a painting. It was so beautiful and peaceful, not millions of tourists, so you could have quiet space. I walked for a couple of hours and then headed to my car. I felt fulfilled that I had honoured the dream and felt the country within my spirit.

Uluru is sacred to the Aṉangu, the Aboriginal people of the area. Here is a brief overview of their beliefs:

> *The Aborigines believe that there it is hollow below ground, and that there is an energy source that they call 'Tjukurpa' the dream time. The term Tjukurpa is also used to refer to the record of all activities of a particular ancestral being from the very beginning of his or her travels to their end. Anangu know that the area around Ayers Rock (Mount Uluru) is inhabited by dozens of ancestral 'beings' whose activities are recorded at many other sites. At each site, the events that took place can be recounted, whether those events were of significance or whether the ancestral being just rested at a certain place before going on. Usually, there is a physical feature of some form at each ancestral site which represents both the activities of the ancestral being at the time of its formation and the living presence of Tjukurpa within that physical feature today. For the Australian Aboriginal people, that physical feature, whatever its form or appearance, animate or inanimate, is the Tjukurpa. It may be a rock, a sand hill, a grove of trees, a cave. For all of these, the creative essence remains forever within the physical form or appearance. Around Mount Uluru there are many examples of ancestral sites. The Anangu explanations of these sites and of the formation of Mount Uluru itself derive from the Tjukurpa. Most of these explanations are in the realm of secret information and are not disclosed to Piranypa, the non-Aborigines.*[57]

Here is a poem I felt inspired to write:

Uluru's Re-creation

Am I dreaming?
Am I awake?
The landscape of my country,
Shimmers and waves in the heat,
For it welcomes me home to my heart,
After a long time.

The pink rock,
An earthen ware,
Sculpted by life's forces,

57 http://www.crystalinks.com/ayersrock.html

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

Myths and legends,
Feather the dream time,
As the ochre of sunspots,
Form the moon scape,
As Uluru has a story,
Calling dreamers to awaken.

A clay comet,
Craters masking space and time,
A portal of ancestors,
Creator gods,
Instructing the people on how to dream,
To awaken,
To the real life,
Beyond time.

The dance is another page in dreamtimes,
The song stick stops,
The page turns,
For history is in her step,
Her story is in his in-step,
For she is stepping short and fast,
He is stomping high and slow,
Fast slow stop is the morse code,
Flowing with nature,
The rhythm of arrhythmia,
Finds the full stop,
As an oral teaching,
Of passing knowledge,
For the tree of knowledge,
Does not know,
It feels dances,
It listens to singing song lines,
But never speaks of what it knows,
For the body has a memory,
That needs no language or authority,
As the dance never changed for 60,000 years,
It is known without thinking,
For the creative carries the water of love,

Gathers the ideas of survival,
Spears the wisdom of experience,
As the corroboree is one voice corroborating,
One heart radiating,
That sings for the creator,
For the relationship is of intimate lovers,
As universal law holds the tribe in harmony,
As ancestors are watching the law,
Guarding the harmony of mind, body and spirit,
That it not a festival,
But a celebration,
As life weaving with life itself,
As a Rainbow serpent.

I feel the rock as alive,
It is calling me home,
I am not alone in my quest,
As I rest with my heart in the mind of my country,
Each step on this journey a personal test,
To re-member life,
The ancient spark,
That lives in human memory,
No matter the color, caste or creed,
The seed was planted in fields of fire,
To germinate at the right time,
And that time is now.

Uluru I bow before you,
For I am honoured to be called,
I feel your heart beat,
For I stand at the centre of the earth,
The red earth a blood of many generations,
A signal,
A sign post,
A beacon,
Connecting the east to the west,
As all sacred sites are inter-connected,
A crystalline grid of ley lines,
Pulsating free energy transmitters,

Awaiting the summer solstice alignments,
Attunements,
Calibrating time,
Harvesting in kind,
For the creator is always kind to creation,
For we re-await,
Re-creation,
In space on time.

Coober Pedy and Underground Dug Outs

This experience was an example of fate and how some people live. The dug outs are buildings built underground. They are more carved then constructed. The heat in this part of Australia is severe, so living under ground is preferable. I had my first experience of staying in an underground dug out. Some may recall it featured in the Mad Max movie that was popular in the 1980s I think. Here is an excerpt from my blog:

> *…I headed off down the road drove for a further few hundred kilometres marvelling at where I was and the vast horizon to horizon distances I am travelling. There are not many vehicles on the road I noted, so I am with myself. I am contemplating peace in myself and peace in the world as I drive listening to Byron Katie, considering the reality that life is what it is and to allow for it. To not make war with life but to find peace in what shows up. That doesn't mean you condone violence or unkindness, you just don't be that violence or unkindness, even when facing it. I am seeing more deeply about my own inner state of being, whether I am at peace or not, tense, negative, judging etc. I am examining my thoughts and seeing where I am attached to things. It is in the non attachment that peace resides as well as non judgment. It is very important to change thinking to allow a space for life to just simply be. Non resistance I believe the pacifists called it. So as I travel through this peaceful landscape I imagine the mind, as vast and limitless and unlimited in its capacity. Nothing is impossible, life is an opportunity. We are not here to change others, only ourselves. That is my work anyway.*

From my blog entry about Coober Pedy in South Australia:

…Anyway I get to Coober Pedy. This is opal mining country. I saw many little mines for around a couple of hundred kilometres so I suspect the land is full of opals. Australia supplies around 97% of the worlds opals. I can't say I liked seeing all the little mounds, not exactly mountains, but I worked on accepting this is an industry and people believe they need to make the money. I drive into the town and made contact with Kat.

She is my contact through the clown doctor in Alice Springs. She says that two of her friends are coming this very day and she is unable to accommodate me as she doesn't know if that is okay with them. She tried to contact them but was unable to. I was surprised by that, but didn't have a judgment. I then went to the Visitors Centre to find a caravan park. Some are underground and there are options to sleep above ground to watch the stars. I was curious. I impulsively decided to ring Kat again and suggest we have a cuppa together. She then tells me she is in Alice Springs. Ah I think, no wonder she was hesitant in my coming. She suggests I go to her place just to look at it. She tells me where the key is (complete stranger nice huh). So my feeling is go there. Even though it is 4:30 pm and getting late, my feeling is to go. So I go there I turn off at Crocodile Harry's sign. Then travel three kilometres on a dirt track. I am told to look for an old blue car and it is the first place. Crocodile Harry's is the next place. So I park in this amazing place. It is a rock home, mostly underground. They call it a dug out. It is a home dug out of rock. The rock even has glittery quartz in it. Looking at the house from the outside I see a sign that says 'Welcome to Nowhere' (see photo). Given my work on now-here, I laugh to myself.

I walk around and see a clay pot oven outside, lots of cactus plants, a little fire place, a courtyard with an exhaust pipe made into a hat stand. The rock work is really nice in the courtyard. The door is interesting with signs on it and bolts across. I find the keys and open up and see a house that is like a cave, with rounded archways, rock floor, shaped and curved with little places for ornaments carved into the wall. There are alcoves for candles and other interesting nick-nacks. It is fascinating and you could feel the cooler temperature straight away, perfect for hot climates. There was a kitchen in there and another little lounge with a barrel table and a few steps up to the bedroom where a bed could be unfurled and slept comfortably on. There were cut bottles as little circles (like led lights), you often see with earth ships and a nice cane curtain that allowed light to filter in from outside. It was really beautiful.

I headed over to Crocodile Harry's place. It turns out it is a museum and he died a few years back. I am met by an 11 year old boy. His name is Sam and he tells me he is sight impaired. However, intellectually he is very smart. I told him so and we struck up a friendship pretty quickly. We talked a bit about life and dreams and to be who you are. He asked me later if I first thought him a girl. I said no, I knew you were a

boy, you just have long hair. I explained when I was around 12 someone said I was a boy. 'So don't worry you are fine', I said. He told me his dream to use all his brain and walk through walls. He was shy to tell me, but I am open minded and I said to him it is a nice dream. Who is to say you can't do it, I've heard of gurus who can. We have vibration and perhaps when you lift yours you can walk through a wall. I said work on your spiritual life and see what happens. I also explained emotional intelligence is very important, follow the heart in life. I see this as intelligence I told him. He let me look around the museum. I could see badges, hats, t-shirts with writing to Harry, bras, nickers, flags, pictures of naked women. Sam tells me he doesn't look at them, I said that is good. Life is not just about naked women. Seems like Crocodile Harry was pretty excited by women. He even showed me a picture of 20 naked women like in a school photo. I just laughed at this guy and his obsession. People had written on the walls, there was a little table and chair with artefacts, animal sculptures, sculls, picture boards, all part of a cave like setting. It was pretty impressive. Sam told me that one of the Mad Max movies was filmed in this place. Mel Gibson played Mad Max in the beginning of his movie career.

I asked Sam if he would like me to teach him juggling. He was hesitant at first and lacked some confidence. However, as I was leaving I asked 'Are you sure?'. He hesitated and said he would like to learn. So he followed me to my car and I dug out the balls. At the same time I noticed a car had pulled in behind mine, turns out the friends of Kat had arrived. I hope they were not worried by the house being open and the keys left at the front door. So I went looking for them. They walked up a pathway, having been to an old mine. I met Flea and his girlfriend Crystabelle. They were both from Melbourne. They were happy for me to stay, in fact they said they were going to swag under the stars and I could have the house.

We all went back to the house. Flea built a nice outside fire. I made dinner inside and showed Sam my presentation of clowning around the world, I wanted to inspire him. He was very chatty and happy.

Turns out Sam's parents had separated some months ago and he was sad when he mentioned it. He said he lived between Murray Bridge and Coober Pedy. He loved Coober Pedy although he said the teachers at the school were strange. He mentioned people could be strange here. Crystabelle said the same thing, perhaps it is because of the mining, who knows. It is a desert place and I guess there is nothing other than mining here.

What I liked about Flea was that he was so respectful to Sam. He spoke to him as an equal. As I talked more with Flea I saw a very wise man in front of me. He told me about men over 40 saying they couldn't change. The concept of finding the feminine is not accepted in mainstream society. He said he saw it as being openness, truthfulness, and sharing. He worked as a labourer on a building site and the men were pretty rough, they don't talk about feelings. He said after 40 they are either on one side of the fence or the other. He was meaning in touch with feminine or blokey blokes. He said women can also create this by wanting a man to be a man and not cry or be too emotional. Although he said some women were progressive. I found his assessment of men very refreshing and told him about Steve Biddulph the Australian psychologist. Flea was a sensitive man, artistic and very articulate. I found him very manly in his courageous conversations, not afraid to say how he felt with a sense of humor I noticed. He told me he had found some land, he said he had felt very moved to find land, he found some in Gippsland, he told me it was a rainforest. He couldn't believe how cheap he got it for and all he wants is to do is live close to nature. He just wants to connect. I mentioned earth changes. He said, 'Oh yeah'. He was very conscious that the world is changing and intends to live in nature. I didn't bother mentioning 2012 as he knew. I have met many who feel moved to find a place to live in the country and become self sufficient. This is not uncommon. His partner was not that aware, but had her own strengths as a teacher. She had decided on impulse to move from Alice Springs to Melbourne

and met Flea there. She loved the Northern Territory and found it hard to leave and was tossing up whether she was going to live in a small rainforest. She told me she was aware of the Earth Sanctuary in Alice Springs. She informed me that people thought they were crackpots there. I thought about the discussions on extraterrestrials I had with these people, I see those who 'poo hoo' it as being 'flat earth' thinkers. Not being disrespectful, but when people bring up issues that are outside the norm, they are labelled and judged. I met these guys at Earth Sanctuary and know they are clear. She hadn't met these guys but had heard the rumours. I just talked to her about the world and possibilities. There is much we do not know. She appeared open and a lovely girl actually. She told us a riddle, she said – a man and his son have an accident, the father dies and the son is rushed to hospital. He is taken into emergency and the surgeon says 'I can't operate on my son'. How is this possible? Well I thought about it confused that the father had died… Sam guessed a few things, we really couldn't get it. Turns out the surgeon is the mother. I laughed we just assume the surgeon is a man. Powerful thinking huh.

Sam told us some jokes as well and we all chatted happily around the fire with a carpet of stars above us. Sam had to leave us around 10 pm, he wanted to keep in touch, I suggested email. So maybe I'll hear from him. I gave him a big hug and Flea shook his hand. He went off. I was glad we connected with this boy, Flea mentioned the importance of listening to him and treating him as an equal.

It turns out Flea and I had a mutual friend in Melbourne. How is that we can meet in the middle of the desert, Coober Pedy, just happen to turn up at the same time, and the name of Mish is mentioned. Although it had nothing to do with my friend, the name mentioned was a coincidence. I said I knew a Mish in Brunswick, Flea then described her. He is a good friend also. We chatted about her brilliance as an artist. She is a philosopher and a jester actually. A very interesting woman. She makes her own art mechanically (installation artist), materially, paintings and poetry. She is a true artist living in a warehouse in Brunswick. So we shared stories. I wrote to her tonight to connect them. There are no coincidences in this life.

Flea and I talked about clowning, he brought up the dark clown. I said I really can't connect to that. Too many movies out there. I said real clowns just extend love. It is not about being scary, it is just about humor, not taking oneself too seriously and loving people. I said that is the essence of the clown. He spoke of the yin/yang, happy/sad clown. He wanted to know what the black dot of darkness in the white part of yin/yang meant. I said 'doubt', I also said it is about duality, love and fear. One moves into the other, we oscillate. I said clowning transcends duality, as you feel love for everyone and everything, time seems to disappear.

I started getting tired and decided to go to bed in the rock house. I said goodnight and went in. Set up my sleeping bag and found myself in pitch black darkness. It was really nice. During the night I got up to go to the outside toilet (a drop pit, a mine shaft probably). I looked up at the stars and they were endless, I've never seen so many stars. I even saw a shooting star. It was so beautiful. I could see why they opted to sleep under the stars. In fact when I woke up later in the morning I had no idea of the time. I saw a little light filtering through and thought it was around 6-7 am. Turned out it was eleven and the sun was high in the sky. The house was completely disorienting given the little light it let in. The guys had left a note and departed earlier. I packed up and hit the road.

Woomera Missile Test Site

On my way to Port Augusta I realised that Woomera was on the way. This is an army town set up for testing of short and long range missiles. I decided to stop and check out the Museum the next day. I found a hotel room that night as it was getting a bit cold for tenting. I decided to go for a walk and look around the place as I had seen some display planes, rockets and other relics from the 1950s on my way in. I was interested to learn of the history.

Below is my blog entry on my experience at Woomera:

…The definition of woomera is a type of notched stick used by native Australians to increase leverage and propulsion in the throwing of a spear. For myself in this title it is the spear of truth I am interested in. My target is real peace, or another way of feeling it would be harmony.

When I traveled to Woomera I realized from the signage that Roxby Downs was close by and so also the Olympic Dam Uranium mine. My understanding is that it is the biggest uranium mine in the world. Moreover, I remembered that the Woomera Detention Centre was also in this area. I saw a car next to mine at the caravan park which had a sign about minerals exploration. That raised my awareness. Again, a connection was what I felt. The Woomera missile range was used for testing both short range and long range missiles. Then it transformed into aerospace with the largest companies in the world having a presence at Woomera. When I went for some hot water at the local café inside the Cultural Museum I noticed the shop assistant wearing a logo of BAE Systems. A quick overview of BAE is as follows:

BAE Systems plc (LSE: BA.) is a British multinational defence, security and aerospace company headquartered in London, United Kingdom, that has global interests, particularly in North America through its subsidiary BAE Systems Inc. BAE is among the world's largest military contractors; in 2009 it was the second-largest based on revenues. It was formed on 30 November 1999 by the £7.7 billion merger of two British companies, Marconi Electronic Systems (MES), the defence electronics and naval shipbuilding subsidiary of the General Electric Company plc (GEC), and aircraft, munitions and naval systems manufacturer British Aerospace (BAe)… BAE Systems is involved in several major defence projects, including the F-35 Lightning II, the Eurofighter Typhoon, the Astute-class submarine and the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers. The company has been the subject of criticism, in terms of general opposition to the arms trade and particularly specific allegations of unethical and corrupt practices, including Saudi Arabian Al Yamamah contracts with BAE and its predecessor. In

2010, BAE Systems agreed to pay £286 million in criminal fines to the Serious Fraud Office and the US Department of Justice…BAE Systems is listed on the London Stock Exchange and is a constituent of the FTSE 100 Index.[58]Given the above, the presence and working relationship of a large foreign manufacturer within an Australian army base, close to a source of uranium one would think would raise questions. I just read now that BAE also supports oil and gas market exploration. The following link explains more of this -http://www.baesystems.com/Businesses/BAESystemsAustralia/index.htm

Interestingly, marketing comes to mind at this point. Usually multinationals buy up the channel of supply to ensure it is secure. For example typically they buy up the raw materials, the manufacturers and retailers to control the marketing channel to keep prices down for product development. I thought about the military needing to secure commodities to ensure energy and inputs to manufacture and the importance of developing strong relationships with governments, who are their primary customers. To have a foreign multinational such as BAE present at an Australian army base would raise for me the question of embedded foreign interests. As a citizen in a democracy, and also as a global citizen, it is appropriate for me to raise questions about Australia's national interest. BAE is not serving Australians they are serving shareholders. Interestingly in the museum I saw displays of missiles and the history of Woomera which according to this perspective arose out of the V2 bombing of London in WWII. A search was conducted for a missile range to test weapons. There was no mention of the nuclear missiles detonated in the 1950s and 1960s and when you came to the exhibit about the future it seemed to focus on supersonic aircraft for civilian passengers with no mention of military applications. Yet looking at the BAE website it appears that aerospace is about military air platforms. I don't see the public service there. It is also a British company which brings Australia back into its former relationship with the British reminiscent of the 1950s. I found that interesting. Moreover, during the intervening period Woomera was utilized as an Australian/US defence facility. Many American military families lived in Woomera; the museum history reported some tensions. The arrangement was to launch satellites and missiles as part of the US security umbrella, which is the way I would perceive this relationship.

Looking at the Olympic Dam Uranium Mine, you realize it is the largest in the world. Here is a brief overview sourced from Wikipedia:

Olympic Dam is a mining centre in South Australia located some 550 km NNW of Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia. It is the site of an extremely large iron oxide copper gold deposit producing copper, uranium, gold and silver. The site hosts an underground mine as well as an integrated metallurgical processing plant. It is the fourth largest copper deposit and the largest known single deposit of uranium in the world, though uranium represents only a minority of the mine's total revenue… The deposit was discovered by Western Mining Corporation in 1975 near Roxby Downs Sheep Station and started production in 1988. It now belongs to BHP Billiton, which acquired WMC Resources in 2005. The mine currently operates by an underground mining method called sublevel open stoping, using modern and highly productive mining equipment. The March 2005 mine production rate is an annualised 9.1 million tonnes making it one of Australia's larger mines. 2005 metal

58 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BAE_Systems

production is thought to be in excess of 220,000 tonnes of copper, 4500 tonnes of uranium oxide, plus gold and silver. The copper and uranium oxide are exported through Port Adelaide. Most of the mine workers live in the nearby towns of Roxby Downs and Andamooka. Regular flights to Olympic Dam Airport serve Olympic Dam. The Olympic Dam mine uses 35 million litres of Great Artesian Basin water each day, making it the largest industrial user of underground water in the southern hemisphere. Because artesian pressure is high in the south of the basin the water flows to the surface via mound springs. Water is pumped along an underground pipeline from two bore fields which are located 110 km and 200 km to the north of the mine. The salty bore water requires desalination before it is used. Contaminated water from mining operations is passed through a series of sealed ponds where it evaporates.[59]

I found it interesting the involvement of BHP Billiton who acquired Western Mining Corporation. Moreover, I felt interest in the pumping of water from the Great Artesian Basin and immediately I question whether the Artesian Basin is a non-renewable source and the issue of water rights. Is it recharging or losing water? Of course I wonder about the effectiveness of evaporating contaminated water and the residual left behind. Is it clean?

The proximity of the world's largest uranium mine to Woomera which has the presence of one of the world's largest military manufacturers and the Australian Military raises for me questions. I recall the war in Iraq and the concerns they had a weapons program and the alleged intention of creating weapons of mass destruction. Scott Ritter, former US Senior Weapons Inspector in Iraq, made it clear it was an illegitimate war of aggression and he stated the CIA did indeed have a policy that there will always be a specified number of weapons of mass destruction (WMD's) whether they are there or not. So we turn to Australia, certainly Woomera has been a working missile range, it has a history of detonating nuclear weapons and has the world's largest defence manufacturer in the business of weapons sales and mining interests. The world's largest uranium mine close by would raise the ire of international concerns, I would have thought more than Iraq. So it begs the question why? What makes Australia different?

My thinking moves to a democratic world where there would be equal power sharing rather than uni-polar, although this position is shifting with the Double A rating of the US and the changing economic power around the world. Whilst democracy may appear to be a word, I do feel it is the best security that can be offered when the majority of the people have a real voice. Not just one that appears to give them a voice, but one where they actually have a say in what is happening, as 90% of casualties of war are civilians. This brings us to the refugee issue which is to my surprise a continuing political debate here in Australia. Of course many refugees are fleeing war, particularly those from Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and other war torn countries. Under the 1951 Refugee Convention, of which Australia is a signatory, countries have obligations to take in or provide refuge for people fleeing persecution. Interestingly the origin of the refugee convention was to protect the fleeing refugees from war, during and after WWII. So that is our link to the philosophy of inquiry around Woomera.

The definition about the 1951 Refugee Convention from Wikipedia.

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is an international convention that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. The convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals. The Convention also provides for some visa-free travel for holders of travel documents issued under the convention… the convention was approved at a special United Nations conference on 28 July 1951. It entered into force on 22 April 1954. It was

59 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympic_Dam,_South_Australia

initially limited to protecting European refugees after World War II but a 1967 Protocol removed the geographical and time limits, expanding the Convention's scope. Because the convention was approved in Geneva, it is often referred to as 'the Geneva Convention,' though it is not one of the Geneva Conventions specifically dealing with allowable behaviour in a time of war…Article 1 of the Convention as amended by the 1967 Protocol provides the definition of a refugee as 'a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it..[60]

I don't wish to go too much into the politics as it is a rhetoric that continues endlessly. I instead wish to shift the mindset to one of a higher consciousness. We are on one planet and at the moment we have set up systems whereby we compete with each other. When I was moving through the Woomera Rocket Museum I just felt glimpses of men competing with each other to have the best rocket systems, who enjoyed building their toys and didn't give much thought to the humanitarian consequences of where those missiles fall (hence the refugee issue). They followed orders, they believed the mission before them and didn't question it. I find myself returning to the same thought which focuses on the repression of men's emotional state of being, which in truth, when opened up leads to their liberation. The fact they are raised to deny their feelings, to not cry, to not be seen as emotional (weak) is a teaching which has led many to deny their feelings and cause deep frustrations without an outlet. I don't see this as a glib statement, I see it as significant in the way men are thinking and feeling these days. I welcome their input on this as well, of course. I do not see this denial as the real masculinity, I see it as a created masculinity based on fear and bravado which, I feel is false. Of course this is not all men, there are a percentage who are very open, in touch with feelings, good communicators and face fear without violence. There are many who are not and are deeply emotionally blocked. This can be seen by signs of depression, suicide or impassivity (coldness). I see this as having serious ramifications for effective decision making, that not only focuses on the objective, but has the ability to look at the social/emotional consequences and hence, the way the world is seen and felt in reality. When I studied International Relations I was taught about the philosophers John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, it became clear that the world is seen in two major ways.

The Lockean perspective is here briefly outlined:

John Locke argued that people have rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property, that have a foundation independent of the laws of any particular society. Locke used the claim that men are naturally free and equal as part of the justification for understanding legitimate political government as the result of a social contract where people in the state of nature conditionally transfer some of their rights to the government in order to better insure the stable, comfortable enjoyment of their lives, liberty, and property. Since governments exist by the consent of the people in order to protect the rights of the people and promote the public good, governments that fail to do so can be resisted and replaced with new governments.[61]

Hence this mode of thinking is about human rights and a democratic governance. The Hobbesian perspective is outlined by Wikipedia.

Thomas Hobbes main concern is the problem of social and political order: how human beings can live together in peace and avoid the danger and fear of civil conflict. He poses stark alternatives:

60 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_relating_to_the_Status_of_Refugees
61 http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/

we should give our obedience to an unaccountable sovereign (a person or group empowered to decide every social and political issue). Otherwise what awaits us is a 'state of nature' that closely resembles civil war – a situation of universal insecurity, where all have reason to fear violent death and where rewarding human cooperation is all but impossible. One controversy has dominated interpretations of Hobbes. Does he see human beings as purely self-interested or egoistic? Several passages support such a reading, leading some to think that his political conclusions can be avoided if we adopt a more realistic picture of human nature.[62]

So the Hobbesian viewpoint offers social control. The egoic mind is one that serves self- interest and regards the world as separate and seeks to further one's own interests without regard for the whole. The virtuous mind is one that goes through the emotional filter to access the humanity within. It is an internal navigation system which is deeply grounded in values. These are universal values rather than those that are culturally defined. As one goes deeper into values, the so called spiritual life emerges as feeling connected to the whole rather than the self. That is my understanding of it.

In many respects the justification for the military resides in the notion that we need protection because we live in a world of tooth and claw, it is dangerous and if we don't arm ourselves we will be destroyed by the next most powerful enemy. The war on terror was an example of creating fear about the 'other'. I personally see it as the emotional detachment of men that creates a world that appears unfeeling to the suffering of others. I note it is not all men and that there are women too in this emotionally detached category. I see it more in the stereotypes that children are taught about being female and male. Moreover, females and the chemicals of oestrogen do create the feminine and the testosterone creates the masculine. However, in my view the beliefs that create stereotypes are learned and these chemical differences can be exaggerated by social conditioning. For example, let me throw in a left-field comment, as a clown, I don't feel of either gender. I feel universal. That is the power of letting go of beliefs and living in a space of unconditional love, all labels of separation disappear for me.

So back to the central issue, I feel that emotional detachment is the key issue. When we are trained to see or look for an enemy, that is what we see. I told Scott Ritter (former Senior Weapons Inspector in Iraq) there is no enemy, I now perceive the so called enemy as unquestioned thinking in my own head when negative. Therefore, I am the source of what I see and feel. When we are trained to problem solve and see the other as an equal or to recognise misunderstandings, we have room to resolve conflict. Moreover, when I look to solve a problem and not hate a person, I am focused on solutions not on perpetuating problems. When we demonise others in warfare/politics calling the other the enemy we are not in problem solving mode, we are creating an opponent in which we feel justified in destroying their image or even them personally.

I see the Lockean (libertarian) viewpoint, in my own philosophy, as the right to be human and that international law, conflict resolution and social forums (known as traditional agoras with modern egalitarian values) would be the wisest forums for dealing with conflicted thoughts (war, fighting). I perceive war as unintelligent as it perpetuates conflict by suppressing opponents and it drains resources that could be better used in training people for problem solving, conflict resolution, peace and harmony. We could redirect funds to sustainability systems that are in harmony with the planet and with the true nature of humans.

I see the military and political adversarial approaches that see an enemy as mirroring the world of tooth and claw of the Hobbesian viewpoint (social control) and this creates more conflict and unhappiness, I feel. It distracts us from the real ecological and economic issues that are happening across the planet right now. Indeed we don't even look into who we are and why were are here on

62 http://www.iep.utm.edu/hobmoral/

this planet in space, and these are the most important questions.

It has been interesting to observe the politicization of refugees without there being any real consideration of the truth of what causes the flow of refugees. Instead in Australia they are typically perceived through the media as being illegal when they come by boat. Little consideration is given to their desperation and life threatening journeys or to the reality they face which motivated them to leave their homes in the first place. Little philosophical discussion explores the military interventions used to exert power and control through violence which causes the refugee flows and to discuss alternative interventions designed to promote communication, problem solving and empowerment of people to live to their highest potential and solve the problems at home. Little thought is also given to the current structure of the world and whether this serves civilisation at the end of the day or takes people down a path of a lose/lose. Many watch television and become influenced by the clever arguments of today designed to make one side wrong and the other right. This then makes specific politicians look like leaders of choice promoted either through fear, misinformation or their perceived strength in standing tough on issues. Thus, in my view, the people seeking refuge are used in political power plays which are reflected by mindsets that accept violence as the state of play and view power as winning.

I do not see any backward glance at the economic systems that reward 'winners'. These winners are not driven by virtues, they are driven by economic profit maximization and are rewarded along those lines. Even the industries they find themselves in are unlikely to be their personal passion, they are merely doing it for the money and that is the so-called success. They are seen as successful and gain access to government as money and influence is the motivation. Countries are run on fear, they must ensure their economic Gross Domestic Product (sum of all goods and services) is rising and employment is growing. Otherwise political opponents will criticize their policies and blame them as poor economic managers. When in truth, the economic systems of the world are configured by influential transnational and multinational companies who are the dominant players in the system and influenced saliently by a wealthy elite controlling in the system. The governments extract taxes and enforce laws but they are dependent on the economic activity and influential corporate interests. Therefore, those in the economic paradigm showing success will be favored in this system, they are the winners. Thus, in my view, the promise of democracy hasn't really been realised yet. The Lockean view of a world driven by tooth and claw still creates a tension between those who demand human rights and international democracy and those who uphold power and control as the main paradigm of social control.

So my trip to Woomera raised many issues for me to reflect on. I do feel that the balance of true power is shifting. I do feel that a change in consciousness is happening and I am witnessing the last days of a power and control system through force. There are natural limits to the planet and that is becoming evident. No company can control nature and this is where the real decisive change will come. You cannot keep extracting resources, despoiling underground water, polluting the natural world without consequences. Nature is non-negotiable. The mistakes of the past will be faced as denial cannot be held down. Men will have to re-explore what it means to be a real man. That is to feel their manhood, and when fully realized, discover it is truly wonderful. The masculine that has denied the feminine of openness, emotions, connectedness and purpose will arise I feel. As men realize they are not fulfilled by living out this stereotype which is not real, they will start to question who they are. I feel the same will be true for women who currently play out more the role of girls rather than women, as they believe they are dependent and feel afraid of the world; to them I would say 'step out of your comfort zone and face what you fear and find the unlimited part of yourself.' Go and empower yourself with something you would like to try, embrace your own voice as it is equal and speak up so we can learn from you (this applies to men as well). Then men and women

will come together as equals yet different and work out the problems that beset the planet right now. We have to work together with respect and equality, that is the way we redesign a future where we are no longer scared of shadows, but one that is problem solving based, where we face what we fear and create a world that is in harmony. This is the goal of humanity and it is where we are going. It is our true nature that is taking us there.

Peace is not an empty concept, it is when we inquire into our negative beliefs and take responsibility for the projections we created and called true. The real truth is that we are peaceful by nature and when we question ourselves the peace is there. There is no other to fight with, it is ourselves that are conflicted and that is where the real work of peace comes in. We cannot create peace by militarisation, we cannot create security by economic forces that take more than we need and we cannot demonstrate humanity by refusing to help people seeking refuge whether they be economic or war refugees. The unity we are seeking is within each of us and when we question for truth, amazing worlds arise. The possibilities of the future are endless when we are open to a peaceful and inspiring future. I certainly am, I hope you will join me in the heart.

Nothing is impossible, we all choose the shape of the world. There are no enemies only potential friends.

Port Augusta - Living with Nuns

I traveled to Port Augusta to meet with my friend Elizabeth who is now a nun. The blog below covers the experience of staying with nuns, travelling to parts of the Murray Darling, the Riverina and to the border of Victoria and South Australia. It is a great overview of the countryside, life and living in a Catholic Order.

My blog entry:

…I have been in Port Augusta for nearly a week. It has been a wonderful week with the Sisters of Mercy. I am staying with a Catholic group of three nuns sharing a house. One of them is my friend (see middle photo) who I met many years ago as she was a circus performer, very good at handstands. Elizabeth has busked to fund raise and when we met she was writing a paper for the National Institute of Circus Arts and interviewed me for her project. She was 18 back then and is now a wiser 26 year old with much experience under her belt. She was spiritual when I met her and has joined the order of the Sisters of Mercy.

We've had some good time together. The weather here was overcast and raining up until a few days ago. I am told that is rare. Port Augusta is at the end of an inlet which is 280 km long. I looked at a map and noted Adelaide is not on the southern coast but is sited at the beginning of this inlet (for want of another word). This 280 km stretch of water has served as a Port and at the end where I am, I can see the coal powered station. The natural environment has mangroves and salt bush. The town of Port Augusta is outlined by two mountain ranges, the Baxter range and the Flinders Ranges. The latter has been very popular in Australian folklore and I have seen many paintings over the years inspired by this range. I will do a couple of blogs on the area.

What I love about the place I've been staying in is that they have solar panels on the roof, they catch grey water and have a water tank. Whenever I see more environmental sensitivity, internally I feel happy. Self-sufficiency is the future.

I have found myself quite tired which is why clowning has taken a back seat. The travelling and moving around in itself is full on, so I am not bothered too much if I don't clown. I can do that when I feel inspired anytime. I trust life to flow as it should and feel no expectation to be anything or anyone. I am just allowing it to show up naturally. This is the work I am doing to unlearn what we are conditioned to do, to be, and to have. I am seeking to be and there are no expectations attached. I see every day as purposeful.

Elizabeth was speaking about a two day trip 388 km away. She doesn't like driving as she gets sleepy. I impulsively offered to drive her over the weekend. She wanted to go to Barmera, this is in the Riverland area in an agricultural area. This country town is south east of Port Augusta, quite close to Adelaide but not too far from the NSW border. I didn't have a great sleep the night before, but I was able to drive. We borrowed the other nun's car which was pretty new and had air-conditioning. As we drove we got to know each other better.

Elizabeth is a country girl and told me she grew up with two wonderful parents. She has a brother and sister. Her parents had children in their 30s and were well traveled and mature for kids. So their childhood was a happy one. They were encouraged and supported in all they did. Apparently her mother is a power house and when she decides to do something she goes and does it. She has traveled the world. She and Elizabeth's father started up a potato farm which apparently was successful. It was broad acre farming. Elizabeth said there were a few organic growers around which her parents befriended, but they were traditional farmers and had a few employees to help with the farm.

The place she grew up in was called Kalangadoo (great name) and she went to school in Penola. The town is not far from Mt Gambia and the famous blue lake. Apparently the famous catholic saint (Saint Mary of the Cross) Mary MacKillop opened her first school in Penola and had an impact on Elizabeth. Apparently Elizabeth's mum converted to Catholicism and Elizabeth did later on. Mary MacKillop joined the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart whereas Elizabeth is with the Sisters of Mercy. So they have dedicated their lives to serving humanity. When you meet Elizabeth you can see such an innocence in her, yet she is becoming worldly. She has traveled to various countries around the world like the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Israel, and Spain. The work they do dove tails with social justice so they become exposed to the issues. I found the churches to be very active in communities.

Elizabeth has been to Baxter detention centre and a local, more humane one here in Port Augusta. She has cooked food with the Afghans and offered support. The other nun here is Vietnamese and her name sounds like Sweeden. She came from great poverty and lived near the Mekong Delta. Her family are in Adelaide. She explained she joined the Sisters to escape poverty. She shared that she had a love of music. The poverty in Vietnam would not enable her to learn music and there were more opportunities in Australia. Most Australians wouldn't understand the real choices people from other countries have to make to have a better life, to fulfil their life potential. I encouraged her to be a musician if she loves that, she said if she would learn she would leave the Order, I said leave then. I believe if people want to do God's work, they must follow their heart, the spiritual speaks through your feelings, it is not a theoretical exercise. You can't try to be good, you just are and if you love something you naturally give. I can't think of a better way for society to operate than on

the basis of doing what you love. We certainly wouldn't have road rage, domestic violence and all the frustrations that we witness today if people were encouraged to live their dreams. It is finding the courage to give it a go.

So Elizabeth and I had a great talk. I was imagining the security of such a life of service yet for myself I'm not drawn to be part of a larger institution. I wish to just give of myself on impulse. I want to be free. The freedom I am experiencing is simply self-determination all the time. I am living like a person with endless resources, yet it is a narrow band on which I live. Fortunately I am not materialistic so there is not much I want. I love the mystery of everyday and I am exploring life with wonder. I am going with the flow as they say. I don't want to feel I have to be something or have to be somewhere, just be where I am and let life come in all its colors. I have my down moments, still struggling with a situation, only one thank goodness. The rest of my life is actually fine and I am really healthy and I would say happy 90% of the time. Not a bad batting average, ha–ha!

Anyway as we traveled inland and through pastoral areas and towns, I just found myself taking in the beautiful environment. Admittedly it is mostly farms but there is nothing like driving through the country and seeing to the horizon. This is the magic of Australia, it is a huge diverse country and you can easily get lost in nature, which is a real blessing. I notice how much the gum trees change and the nature. Some are stringy little trees, others large white ghost gums, some are dying, others thriving. The Murray Darling Basin is a large underground basin which feeds the Murray River that runs from south of Canberra across to Murray Bridge and out to sea. The Darling river runs from northern New South Wales and feeds into the Murray just north west of Mildura. Mildura is known for citrus fruit. So it is an important river system and there has been much concern about the increasing salinity of the Murray Darling due to farming practices. It is a heavily agricultural area.

So as we drove we got to see some of the large lakes and the traditional Australian landscapes of gum trees. It was really interesting. I could see why they called the area Riverland.

The Sturt highway runs through Barmera which is near Lake Bonney. They get into water skiing on this lake. I was told later that the river had dropped in water level over the years given the extensive drought and some tourists fell away but I am told the town is bouncing back now as the water is returning and they have a little beach. More people are getting onto tank water which is a good sign. We need to become (chorus) 'self-sufficient.'

We arrived at Barmera and Elizabeth got in touch with Father Paul. This was going to be interesting to find myself in the hub of a catholic community. I met with parishioners at a house. They were all chilling out on the deck. I told them I was a clown and one of the men felt he could rustle up a clown suit. I told them how Liz and I met. They were very hospitable and friendly. I love country people, you can see a change in attitude immediately. They are very friendly and the children really engage. City families can be so separate, the TV is on or the kids are in their rooms on the computer or off doing their own thing. Here I felt a real sense of community amongst them. Also being part of a religious group they would have strong bonds as they share this love of God. I was tired that day so I went to lie down while my new friends went water skiing. I would have loved to have done it. Although the memory of one time I tried water skiing at a park where they have a square with a rope where it automatically goes round and round. So a false skiing experience. I remember lying in the water holding onto this bar with a rope attached and nearly having my shoulders yanked out of my arm pits. It hurt. So that came back. Also my body is in the shape of a car seat so it is not used to taking the strain of having to be pulled up from the water and keeping the body tense for a jaunt around the lake. The thrill seeker in me would love it, but the body went nuh (no). So I yielded to my tiredness. They all had fun and later on the clown suit was forgotten, I smiled.

We went out to a local sport club for dinner. I had some salad bar with hot vegetables and a nice glass of wine. Elizabeth is a vegan so she went for the salad. Some young guys were in a band and started playing. Nick was the son of one of the parishioners. He was an excellent drummer not unlike Phil Collins. They were a cute bunch of kids with bare feet (only in a country setting) and casual clothes; they were all around 16 years old. They were very good though. So I watched the country folk get up and dance following the three and four year olds pogoing. It was fun to watch human nature pogo. Kids do what is natural and have no shyness. If only adults could be that way. I sat at the table next to Father Paul, decked out in black with a dog collar. He was a nice bloke, I chatted to him about being a world peace clown. Across from him was a 23 year old trainee priest from the Philippines who had only been in Australia a few months. He said to me it was strange here. I could well imagine. The Philippines are very warm and community orientated and very poor. So he would be confronted with wealth, the best of everything but at the same time a loneliness. Elizabeth said they can be left on their own a bit when in training. Australians can be like that, not so group oriented and perhaps not aware of what it is like in a new country. I would have someone around him a lot to make sure he is looked after. He was a sweet guy and he came back in the car with Liz and I the next day. He was pretty open minded and I am sure he will grow here.

The next day they went to mass and I went to the information centre to play on my blog, I was feeling inspired about Einstein and also some universal themes. I laugh at the world I live in, I have the ability to go from the micro to the macro very easily, but mostly it comes through inspired feelings. I just feel like exploring, and I don't even know why. However, I can see the links usually after I write the blog. That is life in the flow. So I had a coffee there and then felt I needed a walk, I find I do ttoo much sitting in cars, travelling and not enough walking. Anyway, by the time I got to the footy club where they were holding a film presentation, it was getting close to lunch time. I decided to go for a quick walk to have a look at Lake Bonney. I watched the people get in their boats and some had surf skis. They had their picnic baskets. I walked on the grass, ouch, a few sharp bits, so put my shoes back on. Then I went down to the water and put my feet in the Murray – aaahhhh. It felt good. I would have loved to go for a swim, another time perhaps.

So I went and joined the congregation to watch their trip to Israel, or the Holy land as they call it. I enjoyed the footage as the guy who did it was very funny and very Australian. He had a good sense of humor and what I particularly liked about his interviewing technique was to ask how people how they 'felt'. They were on a pilgrimage and were experiencing the places in the Bible. Places like the Sea of Galilee, the Wailing Wall, the Dome of the Rock, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Mount of Olives, Jordan river (the place of the baptism of Jesus), the Red Sea. There was footage of them floating in the sea and walking through these places. I thought of the tourist trade for Israel. I wondered at the values of the teachings of 'love they neighbour' and the Palestinians.

They also showed the large gathering of the World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain. They attended this gathering in August. Apparently a million Catholics turned up in Spain given the visit of Pope Benedict XVI's. The group apparently had a 30 second look at him as he went past in the 'Pope-mobile'. Apparently it was extremely hot and they nearly got heat stroke in the crowd. Makes you think of the Muslim gatherings in Mecca and how they manage millions of pilgrims. I found this interesting to look through Christian eyes. Yet when I looked on the internet I discovered there was criticism of the Pope's visit by the 'Los Indignados' (Indignant Ones) protest movement. The issue is as follows:

'The group has protested against the government's spending cuts, economic woes, and 21 percent unemployment. Many people are unhappy with the cost of extra security for the pope's visit. They feel this was unnecessary spending at a time that the country is undergoing a deep economic

crisis.' [63]

They showed footage of the World Youth Day with sounds of rock songs and young people waving their arms and speeches given. There were lines of bishops streaming out of the gathering and I wondered if this was a place where they could encourage more young people into the priesthood. I looked at the young faces and saw the future of the planet. Somehow I wondered, how do you bring all the young people together to look at a new world. I felt some inspiration around that. They have the energy and I am not lost on their brilliance of ideas. They will lead adults, of that I have no doubt.

So at the end of the presentation they asked for questions. I asked each of the pilgrims to say how they had felt Jesus in their lives during that visit. I was interested in actual experiences. They all had a different view of Jesus from their experience and one said she felt concern about the Palestinian tensions. I was pleased to hear this awareness as it is a central challenge to Christian and Jewish faith. Love has always been the key call for religions, walling up Palestine will not solve the Israeli government's issues. They are actually cousins yet viewing each other as 'enemies'. There has been the two state solution that the Palestinians have been seeking to validate through at the United Nations. That is they live side by side as two independent states. When you cast a look back into the history you discover there was a Palestinian Protectorate controlled by the British after the Second World War. The Zionists (religious jewish movement) lobbied British politicians for a Jewish Stat. Apparently the Jews had not lived on the land consecutively for 19 centuries, although it was viewed as the holy land. From a conflict resolution perspective, the key to the conflict in my view lay in the Palestinians not been asked to take in Jewish refugees and share their land. Historically they had lived peacefully side by side. Thus the land was just taken. That is the beginning of a sense of powerlessness which began to play out on both sides. Google maps provides a picture of the land redistribution from visual images, I am not sure of the exact numbers as I couldn't seem to find them. It appears the land was 100% Palestinian in 1946, to under half in 1947 (one year later), to around a quarter in 1949-67 and to one eighth in 2007. Moreover this land loss has come through Israeli resettlements, a common strategy to build up Jewish demographic majorities. However, my understanding is that they won't outnumber the Palestinians through birth rates. Another factor relates to the wall that has been built around Palestinian land. It takes up 15% of the land. I remember seeing a film years ago of these walls and they looked like prisons to me. I recall there being one way in one way out. I was informed there is much intimidation of Palestinians at checkpoints. I've spoken to people who have been there and that is the report that came back. I was informed there were campaigns of harassment and basically treating Palestine as a servant state. I met Israeli's who had Palestinian servants. I asked one friend had he made friends with Palestinians in Israel – he said 'No'. Such was the culture of segregation that arose out of the desert between families. I noted on the other side the suicide bombers that were increasingly coming from the mainstream, a disturbing development. A sign of desperation in a dispute, like a weeping wound, that was escalating rather than finding real solutions. I have come to understand more about The Work of Byron Katie and that all war must be put on paper to question our thinking which is often unquestioned. We see that particularly with religion. My understanding is that the God on both sides is one of love not war. So there is work for them to do to understand what peace really is, for it will never happen until they truly want it. Can they educate their children in conflict resolution (on both sides)? A hint for them is to focus on what they truly want and feel good about a future coming where both sides win. This is the law of attraction. The central issue is not about faith it is about learning to love again. Forgiveness and mercy towards those perceived as the enemy is another key. Love thy neighbour comes into my heart. It is easy to hate others; love is much harder as you have to drop the story of an enemy. Many believe if they drop the story they will become vulnerable, this is untrue, they will become free from negativity. That is what real freedom means. Something to contemplate in our world.

63 http://www.voanews.com/english/news/europe/Pope-Due-To-Arrive-In-Spain-for-World-Youth-Day- 127927833.html

There was a moment where I did ask a sticky question but I felt inspired to ask. For many years I've had a question in relation to the Pope and faith. I wondered if he believes in God why does he need bullet proof glass? So I asked the parish group. They didn't really know how to answer the question; one said he has to have that for security reasons. I felt it would be a powerful sign of faith to allow God to choose. I meant that genuinely not to upset anyone, but they are saying God is the power. So why not trust this power. Is everything happening according to a divine plan or is it under human power? Do we surrender to love or do we act from fear? Would the Pope be shot if he just took down the bullet proof glass believing that there is nothing to fear? According to some of the critiques there was concern about the cost of security in a poor country. What is the cost of fear? That question of course can be extended to the entire security apparatus around the globe inclusive of the Middle East crisis. It is worth reflecting on.

So after this session we headed back to Port Augusta. I had a lovely weekend meeting this community and if their faith has created a deeper sense of community and families are having a family life with others, I see that as a good thing. They didn't try to convert me and respected my presence, and they also allowed that contentious question and that raises my respect of them as it tells me they are not threatened. I like that. I am not threatened by them either, I accept we are all on journeys, I feel we are all going the same way. I don't mind if people are Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Taoist or any other denomination, I am only looking to see if love is in the room, that tells me more than words.

So we came back and I felt I needed a few more days. Liz has kindly allowed me to stay here a little longer. I haven't really done the inner reflection I wanted to do. For such a free life I always seem busy. I have to laugh at that. I had to sort out a phone as I lost the previous one with the same Virgin carrier so that my mother could ring. She and I have long conversations so the phone will ensure they have money, as it allows free calls.

I also went out to the Flinders Ranges through a town called Quorn. Nice town. I headed out 20 km on a dirt track to find Warren Gorge. I ended up overshooting my turn off by 14 km, I had a feeling I had. But I did see some giant gum trees, which I absolutely love. Makes me think of the deforestation that has taken place. We see little trees which would have been big ones years ago.

Anyway, I decided to go for a walk at the gorge. It was 4.8 km and I thought I would walk a little way, it turned out the rocks drove me crazy as there was so much quartz crystal here. I felt it was definitely a sacred site.

Below is information about Warren Gorge.

Warren Conservation Park is characterised by steep country with views over forests, reservoirs, pastures and bushland above the spectacular Warren Gorge. The park is most colorful in spring when wattles, banksias, hakeas, heaths and eucalypts are in flower, but its native fauna and wild forests of stringy barks and long-leafed box are always worth a visit. The park has four challenging walking trails, including a section of the long distance Heysen Trail. The tracks are steep and difficult and should be used by experienced bushwalkers only. The relatively untouched nature is a haven for some of Australia's rarest animals and provides ideal opportunities for naturalists, birdwatchers and photographers'[64]

…I saw the peaks of mountains nearby with this red rock strata which was on right angles. Very spectacular mountains and as you walked along the track there were tiny purple flowers everywhere. I saw a farmer on a motorbike rounding up some sheep, the days of horses are gone. As I

64 http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find_a_Park/Browse_by_region/Adelaide_Hills/Waren_Conservation_Park

walked on I marvelled at all the different rocks on the track. I saw some goats freak out as I came close. I continued up and saw all these huge boulders on the top of this mountain. My camera ran out of energy (darn it) and I thought well I will have to remember. I headed over the mountain and noticed a canister. It was a log asking travellers to put their names, number in party and phone, just in case people got lost. Good idea I thought. I headed down the mountain and was greeted by rolling green hills it was so beautiful with the backdrop of a blue sky. I saw magpies flying around playing tag, and other little minor birds. There were little white butterflies, or moths maybe, flying around. I had a closer look to find little tiny spots on their wings. I saw little beetles shimmering, like lady beetles but with blues and purples on their bodies. Really beautiful. I saw a stumpy lizard with two heads, one is fake the other has an eye so you know it is real. It was very still so I don't know if it was dead or waiting. It seemed alive. I then had my highlight – I saw a rock wallaby, I was told later it was very rare. It had a tail which was long but like a possum's and with some stripes. It looked like a little wallaby but this long tail was so interesting. I then saw some kangaroos hopping off and noted how strong they are and built for movement. They have strong tails which they use to help propel them. So the tails are different would love to know how the tail, or third leg, operates in the wild.

I saw some lovely gum trees but of another variety, the branches had pine needles which sort of looked like broccoli, really different. It must get hot here as they were very 'needlie', it ensures less water loss. It was like walking through a pine forest but they were more spaced and different. They were natives so I was happy.

I noted my own fears come up about being attacked by kangaroos, yes they can attack. I had some snort at me in the Snowy Mountains where people go to the snow and water ski. I think the locals are a bit rough with them. Anyway, I was wanting to swim at the time and there was a group and they were not happy with me being there, it felt territorial. They can jump in the water and hold you down, they've drowned a few dogs. So I do see if they are feeling threatened or used to people. The ones I encountered just hopped away, they were good. The goats also didn't take me on. But I noted how domesticated I am and have no idea of nature in truth. The Indigenous know the land and the animals, I saw how much we had lost through Western life as we have become disconnected from the natural world which is us. I really felt that. I felt good walking through this country and thought of how fit the Aboriginals would have been moving through this country. What a lovely peaceful life. Believe me it would have been much better than the world we create. I really see that. So I reinforced to myself to keep facing my fears, to keep pushing on to explore this life.

I met with some campers from Newcastle who had traveled around the world for two years before marriage and now they take off in retirement for weeks and months at a time, exploring. They have a nice ute with a caravan atop of it. They love travelling. They came through Bourke to get to Port Augusta and will travel back. Their daughter has the travel bug too and has to choose between boyfriends and travelling. A hard choice.

I got back to Port Augusta and made the nuns here a nice Afghani dinner. My speciality, the only dish I cook well. Always happy customers. I cook eggplant with rice and yoghurt but you would have to taste it to enjoy its beautiful flavor. They loved it.

I had a bit of heat stroke so I decided to go to bed and put energy into today. I am planning to leave for Perth tomorrow and it will be a long drive. So today I may spend time on a UNESCO application for some funding. I wouldn't mind having another go at my children's parliament idea. Although part of me is tired of trying, my friends in Adelaide did encourage me to have a go. So I will see if I can fit and tick all the boxes.

I had a friend, who is a clown, ring me when I was camping on the Great Ocean Road, the reception cut out but he was inviting me to Alice Springs to clown with 100 children, can you believe he gave that slot to someone else as he couldn't reach me. I thinking is this destiny or are other greater things waiting for me? We had a good chat the other day and he wants to start humanitarian clowning. I really like it and I like the fact that performance is not a big issue for him. He spent a week with Patch Adams in Costa Rica and he reported to me he is out there. He felt compassion is more important than talent and would like to take novices out with experienced clowns. It sounds funny, but yes there is expertise in this work. I agreed with him, it is the heart that is the most important. He is planning a trip to Haiti and wants me to come. I can't say no, he said he would pay for me if I got involved. So maybe bigger things are waiting. I think the Haitians are still struggling to rebuild their country, the international focus has gone off them. So maybe some clowns can cheer them up. I would love to meet them.

I am mindful of world changes and earth changes but I am not going to stop exploring because of that. I will not let fear dictate, it will be love that guides my choices. That is what I learned.

Adelaide

I arrived in Adelaide not sure where I was going to stay. I remembered I had UNESCO friends living there and also staying with Rotarians was an option. I couldn't afford accommodation so had to find something.

Here is an excerpt from my blog:

I awoke around 10am. I was very tired. I find my body gets very achy from driving. I felt very happy and found myself reflecting on this. I turned my phone on and in that precise moment it rang. It was Owen, he is my friend, formerly with UNESCO (see photo). He is a former Principal and educator. His wife Sue is an academic in the social-emotional intelligence area and researching futures thinking. Both of them are experts in the field of sustainability, values and now Owen is looking at child safety. He is training people in this area, how to notice abuse and report it. Both of them have traveled around schools to educate teachers and others in values and sustainability, a very intersting couple. They should be retired but they are truly interested in the future.

Anyway, we had a brief discussion and agreed I would contact him after the Rotary meeting…

I got dressed went down the road and looked around for a card for David and Diane. They were lovely hosts and kind to bring a stranger into the house.David organised for me to follow him and he would show me the Adelaide cricket ground where the Rotary meeting was held, he found free parking and warmly shook my hand and was off to a reunion. I really liked him as I felt he was a true Rotarian and I could see his natural friendship. I've found some are there for vested interests in business and then there are others who truly wish to serve the community. Paul Harris the founder of Rotary speaks of 'service above self', some understand this and some do not. We are all learn-

ing what service means and it is done joyfully. Paul Harris was a wild card and traveller and made friends around the world. I felt the essence of Rotary was friendship. Through this we can help more people as a world community. They see themselves as linked to serving humanity and world peace. The latter is my reason for my own connection with them.

It was interesting I had a dream the night before of Rotary and David was on the wireless connection, I just saw this image of communicating with the world through the internet and I saw Rotary as creating peace. The dream was enough to make me reconsider working with Rotary again. I had met well intentioned people but I don't think many understand the true meaning of peace, many are men in these clubs, older men 60+ and many have engineering and business backgrounds, so clowning and peace is not something they have ever considered. So I have some communication barriers. However, I see this journey as the peace work so I regard these barriers just as challenges and peace as my full time focus. So I can't really lose.

Anyway, I went along to Rotary. I was told the Rotary Club of Adelaide was the largest in Australia. They have 200 members apparently. I sat with Brian (David's brother-in-law). A lovely guy who told me his wife had died and he had met a childhood sweetheart. He said he had just thought of her and they bumped into each other (I hope I got that right). Anyway the point was they ended up marrying. They had a connection but had not seen each other in 40 years. I love stories like that, true love stories, I see it as meant to be…I sat next to a Rotarian who was all smiles, I enjoyed his positive energy. At the end he left and shook my hand. I also left and wondered what next?

I headed to the city and walked around. I typed my blog and that consumed me for a few hours. I enjoyed looking at Adelaide (see photo), it is a beautiful city and people are friendly here, you can feel the energy. I also am aware that I am attractive and a woman and I tend to be treated more positively, I did think if I was ugly would my experience be the same, even with my floating around. I felt probably different but then again, life is magic, so anything can happen, I guess it depends on what you believe. Every life experience is unique and perfect for each person.

I did speak with a homeless guy today who wanted money at first. We got talking and he said he finds people don't look him in the eyes. I told him to 'be the change', to smile anyway. I told him the story of Jack Nicolson, the US actor, who apparently became sad and the advice was 'fake it until you make it', so he smiled anyway and eventually turned sorrow into joy. This guy liked that. He felt that people saw him as less and thought of him a drug addict. He found people could be rude and I sensed his feeling of rejection. I said that people believe homeless people are losers or lazy, always taking from others, they don't appear to help themselves would be the belief I feel. Interestingly people see homeless people as mostly young guys. I tried to help him see that people believe this innocently, they just believe what they read and watch on television. There may be elements of truth but they don't understand the reality for each person or what happened for them to decide to go onto the street. Do we decide to be compassionate or walk past? We've all done it. People I feel are also afraid of homeless people, they seem dirty, might be dangeous, what if they became them? they would be isolated and rejected? so they try to avoid. People also avoid people with clip boards, so there is a general avoidance of being cornered. I found myself avoid one today and reflected on why, fear of not having enough money to give, the negative feeling of saying no. Then I thought about going and buying a book. So why not just give to the other, they are me. Sometimes I do sometimes I don't. My feeling is to be brave and be honest. I am working on it. I still have work to do on myself. This guy and I really connected, he even didn't want to take the money but I made him take it. He said I am enjoying talking to you. My tram came and I hugged him. I could see he was happy. I said to myself 'give more' silently inside. I meant to make room for people, to not judge, to not fall into those patterns others do. This is the power of group think. I know everyone is great in their own way. Just continue to be open. He inspired me, maybe I could be a bridge between homeless people. I could do this as a clown as people trust me. I could interview people open their world to others. I find I am exploring how to create my life to be more in service of humanity. I am playing with ideas right now. Reinventing myself.

I then went for a coffee. My friends Owen and Sue called and invited me to dinner and to stay over. I caught up with them at their house and we went and had dinner. It was really nice to reunite and talk about peace, values and sustainability. I showed my world trip clowning around and the current trip around Australia. I also showed them an interview I did with a couple in Alice Springs about the aboriginal intervention and abuse issues. I thought Owen would like that. What interested me is that I naturally just showed it when it popped into my mind to do so. No planning, no previous thought I must show it. I am flowing with the moment and it feels that what happens is as it should be. I showed them my clowning in indigenous community and some shots of Uluru and the Olgas (Kata Tjuta). It was great to share. They love caravaning, so hopefully that inspires them to go North. They would love it. I had a really lovely time with them.

I love the fact that I don't know what is going to happen. I love the mystery that I live each day. I am fascinated when wonderful things occur. I find my trust in life just grows. My friends felt I was brave, but I don't see that. I really feel I just trust. I let go of control. I have little money so there is no point worrying about car trouble. Just deal with it when it happens. So I find I have to live in the moment as I can't control or pay for outcomes. I just have to flow with it and find peace in change.

Penong to the Nullarbor Plain, South Australia

There is nothing more satisfying than the feeling of travelling alone and listening to music as you watch the magic of the countryside change, transforming as the kilometres just pass by as you become lost in endless space beyond time.

My blog entry depicts my journey, the people I was meeting and the magic of this part of Australia. The Nullarbor is anything but plain or a bore:

…I drove on and came across Penong a small town, my feeling was to camp there. So I pulled in and met the lady. It was a nice old house and had a good vibe. I spoke to the manager there, she was really lovely. We clicked. She told me it was $18 per night and explained the facilities. I told her about the previous caravan park, she said there were issues with that caravan park. We talked about kindness. I said to her I was thinking about that as I drove away, he wasn't interested nor did he show me any amenities just an attitude of false civility it seemed. I was also mindful of my judgment of him and just sat with that. She told me about a confidence guy who turned up at the caravan park who had said he had walked from some place, she said it didn't exist. He said he was travelling the world, walking and he wanted free accommodation. She checked him out and it turned out he was travelling with a couple of guys in a campervan and they were seeking freebies. She and I talked about values and how important it is to just be kind, even if a little bit. I don't think people realize what difference it makes. But I guess I just acknowledge that people might not be happy and it shows, it is not personal in truth.

Anyway, I set up my tent so a cyclone couldn't lift it. It was still windy but manageable. I realized I had left my hammer and a rolled up foam matt at the last camp ground. I reflected on my emotions there I had become frustrated. I thought about how that had been the reason I had forgotten my stuff. Instead of just being in the moment and gently smiling at the tent coming down twice, and being curious about what next, I found myself grumpy as I had expectations. So I just took that on board. I am working on peace, so have to observe my own strong minded nature. At this new caravan park it was better and I organized my dinner and went to a large shed. There was a gas BBQ. I met two young people who had started cycling from Port Augusta and were heading to Eucla and beyond. They weren't experienced cyclists so I encouraged them to take it easy, not to get an injury. They were from Scotland and England. Really nice young people. We talked about travelling and the freedom of that. Then an older couple I'd seen before came over to cook. They were from Albany and both into environmental issues. They were in their 60s and not quite retired but doing work for free, investigating water quality. They had driven to Brisbane to see their two married daughters. They used the trip as an excuse to check out river systems. I thought of the Murray and the high degrees of salinity and patching management. They spoke of sporadic management but not of an overall approach. They were interested in the environment, the wife Geraldine was a scientist and Steve also had worked in the environmental area. They were doing their own study for free, they said grants were becoming less available, they were just following their passion. Just imagine if everyone did this. So it was great to meet them. I spoke of the integration of peace values in order to evoke environmental awareness. In other words the more peaceful we are inside, the less likely we are to want more things as our joy comes from within. Geraldine spoke of the spiritual life, she mentioned they were Christians. I've met quite a few on this trip. I confirmed the spiritual dimension as I see it as very important for finding the harmony with nature and for me it is reconnecting with the energy of love, love of self and the world. The natural world is a harmonic system that adapts and is extremely sensitive. I've noticed that, particularly in arid parts of Australia. Nature finds its balance always. The challenge in these times is for humans to find balance and that is what peace is. I see the environmental crisis as being about humans finding their true nature, as we must come into harmony with nature, we can't bend it to our wills.

We had a really great chat and I could see Steve was a philosopher. He was a tall well built man in his 60s. They both were very vital and keen to get into life. I see this so many times with people over 60. You could say for some life starts then, when they escape the rat race and get going.

It took me a while to sleep but eventually I did. I had done a lot of driving. I woke up very early around five in the morning and then heard sprinkles of rain. I didn't mind though I'll sleep or get up. I decided to have a little sleep and I awoke around 6:30 am. I lay there for an hour listening to others packing up and then decided to get moving. I packed everything into my car, always a magic trick. Anyway after a little frustration got there and had a coffee.

I took off and around 20 minutes on the Eyre highway I saw the Scottish guy John and his partner. They were having a break. So I pulled over and we had a good 'ol chat. They had sent a dry parcel of food to Eucla as they are on push bikes. It is a good idea but they did it from New Zealand so how long it takes to get there could be a guess. They didn't track it, so can't be sure if it arrives, it probably will. I took a photo of them and then waved goodbye. They have a long ride ahead of them. Thankfully it is not hot today, it is quite cool but they do have strong winds which makes it harder. I was thinking about the importance of food. They will have to sleep in the bush as they will not get to any towns easily out here.

I drove onto the Nullarbor and this for me was the highlight. I am trying to mentally take in the tress, the gums the bushes of which I have no names, no botanical knowledge. I stopped and had a look at really stringy thick bark on the trees and these bushes with rubbery leaves which is good for retaining moisture. There are little bushes everywhere but really nice. Sadly I saw rubbish at the side of the road and reflected at the lack of respect of people. I also noticed the community of Yatala, I believe they are desert people and I think they were moved from the Maralinga nuclear test site. There were stories of some returning to their land, they would have experienced exposure as it was a toxic desert. I was thinking how governments can get away with destroying land and making it radioactive with half lives of millions if not billions of years. How does that serve humanity? Are weapons statements of fear and distrust that destroy humanity? Apparently the British government paid compensation to the Australian Government in the 1980s, but how do you compensate for nature? We see nature as somehow inert, yet it is the very foundation of our life support systems. How is the military a support system? If anything it undermines human security as it creates more insecurity and fear like a spiral. I really don't understand it.

I stopped at a whale watching place overlooking The Great Australian Bight. They charge five dollars to go through the door, I won't be paying for my own country. I am told the whales left four days ago, so it doesn't matter looks I decided to look at the exhibitions. According to the information at this Centre, the Southern Right Whales are found in the southern hemisphere. They were hunted relentlessly in the early 1800s, numbers in Australia plummeted and in a matter of decades the population was reduced to a few hundred individuals or less. Protected internationally since 1935, the species has only recently recovered. They remain an endangered species; however numbers are increasing at 7-8% per year. Australia is home to around 1500 of the 7000 Southern Right Whales remaining worldwide. This is a fraction of the estimated 60,000 to 100,000 that existed prior to whaling. The Head of the Bight is a critical area for the southern right whales as 10% of their global population uses this area. Each year between 25 and 45 calves are born at or near the Head of Bight, making it one of the three largest breeding areas on the Australian coast). I think of the Japanese scientific whaling and also that of the Norwegians, well known around the world for being peacemakers. Yet a corner of that society is still seeking to continue whaling. There doesn't seem to be any awareness of the importance of these creatures and honouring their presence in these whaling circles. They have a sophisticated song and form strong bonds with each other.

I just met a lovely couple travelling Australia, they did 13,000 km with their two dogs. It was quite funny her dog went nuts over the bells on my keys, that is how we met. She said the dog is really intelligent and just has to know what that noise is. Sure enough when I went up to the dog it just about broke its neck to check out the bells, it sounded vicious but was actually curious. How funny is that, it brought the lady and I together to talk about life.

Her husband came on over, they were curious about my car, they liked it. The husband took a redundancy payout and the wife suspended her job. They decided why wait until we are old like

the 'grey brigades', let's live now. They are travelling and looking for a place to live. They are loving the life and realised you don't need much. They realise that materialism is not the way and they are thinking of living in a town and getting a little veggie patch going and having a lovely life.

Madura to Coolgardie (Western Australia)

Driving across Western Australia was fascinating, I met more interesting characters and had a bit of car trouble and money restrictions, but as usual all was good. Here is an excerpt from my blog:

…I drove from Madura to Coolgardie today and clocked it at 694.5km. It was a long drive and I had to stop every two hours to try and revitalise myself. There's not much exercise on these trips, there's much sitting and endurance. I realised today that endurance is not about the physical it is about mental toughness. I am pretty good on that front when I commit my mind to a task.

First thing in the morning I was thinking about my car. There was a strange noise when I moved it. I saw a guy playing with tools and thought I might ask him. I went over and told him I had a problem with my car, being a good bloke he came on over and had a look under the bonnet. He cleverly found a bracket that had come loose, the nut and bolt had worked itself loose and it had touched the fan belt. I was lucky I didn't drive it or I would have had a problem. He found some wire and did a quick job on it and suggested I get a nut and bolt. Which I will do. The car ran like a charm.

I left Madura at 8 am. I went through Cockabiddy (funny name) and then onto Caiguna and then onto the straightest road in Australia (so the sign says) straight for 90 km. What I found interesting is the next town turned out to be roadhouses. So for a long stretch of road I am finding just little posts where petrol is available. I traveled onto Balladonia and then onto Norseman which appeared to be the only town. I got wireless connection there. I kept bumping into some German folks I had met in Madura, so it was nice to see friendly faces. The petrol prices were scary at $1.90 per litre and my funds were getting low. I never can be sure if I have enough, as I am winging this trip. I do have to move fairly quickly as my income is low and I am travelling large distances. I have to live cheaply or for free, otherwise I can't afford to do it. Of course that is part of the fun of testing out life. I don't mind but I do have limits financially, but that just fuels my interest spiritually.

I checked my bank balance at Norseman and credit card. The credit card is not allowing me funds and that became the corner stone for my decision of whether I went via Esperance (coastal route) or Coolgardie (country route). When the card was refused that was my fork in the road. So my thinking was practical, to just go on the fastest route to Perth.

I am working out where to stay for free or cheaply as funds are very low. I have enough to get me to Perth but very little to last a week. I don't panic in these moments, this is when life gets interesting I am fascinated to see what happens. Always something comes, but I have no idea what will happen. The friend I was to stay with just can't put me up, so she is sending me house sitting and caravan park info, which is kind of her. My other friend Bronwen has friends so it will be interesting to see if they agree to have me. I am putting out couch requests. My wireless runs out tomorrow so will have to find a way to get that happening. Wireless I find is important. Anyway, whatever happens I don't mind.

I arrived at the Tourist Park Caravan Park in Coolgardie. Started off in a debate with the caravan owner, a strong minded cynic it seems who had much to say about the global elite. A former navy man himself, he wasn't happy with them. Although he said he envied their life, I was surprised, as I don't. I said, 'Why?', he said he wants to be able to push a button and get what he wants. I was interested

in this as I prefer to do it myself, the last thing I want is servants serving me. Anyway, I explained to him this was the carrot held out by a system which states you have to work hard to get to the top and then you are success. When you get there you have what you want. However, in reality many get there and don't feel complete, or they keep acquiring more but it doesn't fill the gap. I tried to explain to him true happiness is in self-knowledge. He said he was listening although I wasn't sure if he understood. He believed in the security paradigm whereas I was playing with life that appears insecure. I said things come. So I threw in the mystical card as that is what happens for me. I said we can't go on the way we are, I felt happiness should be the goal of life, it certainly is for me and has nothing to do with materialism. Anyway, he wanted to read a book I have on the elite, I was a bit hesitant as he is already cynical, however he wanted to learn. So why not.

He showed me my camp site and I went about setting it up whilst chatting with my mum. She is missing me so wanted to talk. I happily got organised and got my cooking gear together. I met a lovely couple, Paul and Tracey in the kitchen. We had a great discussion about life. Paul is a ranger and Tracey an assistant ranger. They have traveled a lot without resources and had friends puzzled as to why. Paul said he acquired new furniture for the first time in his life, he is around my age in his 40s. I didn't find that surprising as I've never had new furniture, I have chosen experience and creating a home has never been important. I have wanted to explore. It seems they are the same. They are into environmental issues. They live in a town called Hopetown which I believe is near Albany. It is a mining town, with a nickel mine recently reopened. They said the town as grown from 400 to 1,000. We talked about world changes and they seemed switched on. They said they had seen a lot of people opting out of the rat race and starting communities. They felt there were many discussing this and that people are aware of change. I found this on my world trip last year. So we had much in common. They felt people couldn't imagine a financial collapse, food not in the supermarkets, not being able to get what they want. I felt the same, it is outside people's imagination, particularly in developed western countries where we grow up unquestioning of this way of life. Tracey saw the financial market as a false economy. I felt this was a good description as it is based on speculation and not on real things. They mentioned the sub-prime crisis in the US and how money was just lent out willy-nilly. I felt it was greed that undermined the stability of the system. We spoke of people lending to get bigger commissions, or large banks trying to force the International Monetary Fund (IMF) countries to borrow to support the financial institutions. We all agreed there is so much corruption around the world now. Something has to give.

We even got to the subject of near death and Paul said he had an outer body experience where he remembers coming out of his body and looking down. He said it was really joyful and wishes it could happen again. I told him about my former husband telling me that he had seen a giant angel, it had a white beard and kind eyes looking down at him. It went through the ceiling. He was awake and felt he was given a sign. He was in a religious group and grappling with the idea of leaving, after he saw the angel he left.

We all agreed there is more to life than meets the eye and it is important to be open minded. We even talked about quantum theory and possibilities, the idea at this level seems illogical, yet it seems to be a place where intention creates outcomes.

We have built up a world on perceptions and we think this is real. I told them I feel we need to question more, we need to think about what is true for us and who we are. These are important questions these days. What I am observing is a massive denial about the reality we are in and a behaviour of 'business as usual' which makes it all seem normal. I would like to see people preparing for self sufficiency. Overall, I don't think a system collapse or change is a bad thing I think it would be a wakeup call, sometimes people need to have an illusion shattered in order to see that it is not real. I know the

economic system is based on telling people that economic growth provides security. Yet the flaw in the economic model is that resources are not infinite. For example if everyone lives the same lifestyle as people in the United States, we would require 3-4 planets to supply the demand. We don't have additional planets, therefore, the system collapses. The fundamental belief in material security is perceived as the panacea to happiness. Yet happiness is not dependent on materialism, as can be seen by many happy people in third world countries. True happiness in reality is based on values such as love, truth, peace and freedom. It is not based on the material reality we have created. So as the world is based on the belief in greed as survival and protected by self-interest. Inevitably this system cannot continue, it breaks down as it is not grounded in values of unity with the planet. One way of envisaging this Is to think about the way we think. If we become very negative, in my view, the body breaks down and becomes ill. If you live a life of positive intent, eating healthy food, practicing self-love and love for others, then you stay in good health. The clowning that I have done confirms this, I can feel the energy in a room and when it is positive it is palpable, when it is negative, it is also palpable but in the opposite direction, people want to leave. If the feeling is loving, people are attracted, this is the unity playing out that most people don't notice. We are often drawn to those who are like-minded. The dynamics on the planet are positive/negative and I believe any system that promotes the positive is constructive, while any that is based on negativity is destructive. In dysfunctional settings like war zones people kill each other on orders and experience post-traumatic stress. War is an extreme example. In a natural society, negative and positive tensions would exist as all people experience fear and love at both ends of the spectrum. However, in a natural society the situation that is unwanted would create a desire for what is wanted and then focus would go there and create it. In a dysfunctional society, negativity drives hatred and can produce a downward spiral of negativity where people are unable to find the ways out of the negative state of mind. This is where tensions become trapped emotions and our world becomes dark. The challenge is to use those tensions to focus on what we do want and create it. This is the positivity that leads to unity.

Speaking with these people confirmed my own perceptions and I guess I confirmed theirs. I felt the friendship with them. They also confirmed that country people are happier. They live a slower life with less pressure and a sense of real community.

After my conversation I realised I was ready for bed. My backside was sore from driving and sitting. I suddenly recalled that I saw a strange bird yesterday. It looked like a waterbird standing on the road yet it had the feathers of an emu (grey). It was a strange bird, I'd never seen it before. It was slow to take off but eventually took to flight. I watched it fascinated, strange eyes in large sockets and grey feathers and quite large like an eagle. I am still wondering what it is. It made me think of the wild life we have never seen and of the human impact on it. The fact we run them over without a real sense of the sacredness of all life. Not all Indigenous people can be wrong, they all value mother earth, they worship her intimately and they understand how she works. This does tie into the economic discussion which is all about our needs being met. Yet the difference is we are seeking more than we need, we don't feel fulfilled with what we've got, always trying to fill that gap rather than feeling a peacefulness with one's life. Rather than being able to be still in the moment, to be alone, to listen to nature, to see it as part of yourself. We have disconnected and this journey for me is about reconnecting. I found more rocks today, really strange clusters of rocks for hundreds of kilometres, I couldn't understand why geologically. There were white rocks amongst the scrub. I got out of the car and took pictures, marvelling at them. There is something to rocks I don't understand yet, energetically they attract me. It is interesting. I wish to connect and indeed that is happening on this journey.

I will wind up in Perth tomorrow from there I don't know. I may work for a while. I don't feel it is my final destination but I will pause to get a sense of my direction. I am thinking about children and have

written a children's parliament proposal, if I get funding I may go ahead with that. Otherwise I may just see where life takes me. My mother asked me today, 'Will you clown there?' I said: 'Yes, after a rest and I will meet the right people'. I've been invited to Haiti next year for humanitarian clowning. I want to sit with my work and reflect deeply on why I am here. I didn't get much demand in the schools for what I do which indicates to me they don't understand the importance of peace; but to give them some credit, I didn't give them much time to plan me into their schedule. However, my priority was to move and the money limitations didn't allow me to stay too long, so I had to wing this experiment. I am not discouraged as I have been at this a long time and it is a calling, I will know what to do at the right time. I am learning that there are no mistakes in life, indeed there is no failure, just experience asserting itself.

I am at peace with that. I am the change I wish to see, I don't mind how that manifests, for me every day is about peace. Learning to allow life and not force outcomes is one of the keys. No expectations and no disappointments, only horizons to explore. That is what I feel.

Perth

Perth was the last destination of my trip around Australia. It was an absolute joy to drive into Perth, suddenly I found myself in suburbs with ponds and stringy bark gums lining the roadside. I saw the usual mark of what we call civilisation in the shops and food outlets, that so many take for granted. To drive in from the countryside is an interesting experience as I felt myself move from the peaceful world with plenty of time and plenty of space to not much time and not much space. It was an interesting world I drove into and I felt not at all real, yet it is another adventure as I navigate life, work and who knows what next. Here is an excerpt from my blog:

I've been in Perth nearly a week. I have landed on my feet phew. I have a friend who has a tribe of friends here and some have kindly taken me in. I had about $11 in my account, so it was either that or the street. So far the latter hasn't been an option (have tent can camp), although it could be one day. I did explain to the people I am staying with now, my hope would be that if I did go onto the street, that I could do it joyfully and with curiosity. Although I doubt I'd be there long, I am friendly and people are kind I have found in my experience. As a woman you are less of a threat, young men tend to be viewed more suspiciously and seen as drug addicts, violent, dependent or losers (sad to think this way huh). Yet in truth society does judge them without really knowing their situation. I've met some lovely guys on the street and it shows you a little love could go a long way. I never see them as losers, I respect all people, I see them as experiencing living on the street which is a very uncertain life. If they can survive it they will be deeply empathetic of anyone down on their luck. Life is a journey for us all, it could be me. Anyway I digress a little.

My friend Bronwen told me she had put out a Facebook request and her lovely friend Lily responded. It turns out I can stay with her and her husband Peter until early December. I will housesit for them for two weeks. I was offered this before they met me, such is the faith in their friendships. It was actually a lady called Ness who recommended to Lily that she meets me. Ness met me in Melbourne and they are also free-wheeling through life like myself. Her and her husband Edward are Buddhists and they are house-sitting. They are very free and I love that. This is a glimpse into alternative communities who are not buying into mortgages but choosing to float around. When you don't have children this is not hard to do. Anyway, Lily knows Bronwen my friend and Ness and so I have a secure place for a month.

My feeling here is to work a little and fix my air-conditioning unit in my car. Travelling further north is out of the question as the climate is moving into cyclone season up north. My feeling was to stop

in Perth and I felt a blank as to where to go from here. Interestingly one of my friends is a medium (yes psychic) and she said in a reading that is how I would feel, 'not sure where from here'. I saw that as well in Melbourne. I feel I am here for a reason and I have a positive feeling around my stay in Perth. Perth is a thriving city that has been made rich on the back of mining. There is a boom on in commodities around the world and Australia is racking in the extra profits. So Perth has a lot of economic activity and new housing developments as I am told they expect 8,000 new houses in the area I am staying in.

I have been taken in by two university academics. I have to smile they are both scientists and have real interests in ethics and critical inquiry. They are both very intelligent and one is involved in curriculum. The question is how do you move logical linear thinkers into social justice? Many scientists these days are actually employed in the military or work for multinationals. I actually went to one of the universities here, which is a technical/engineering based uni and was reflecting on deeper questions of ethics and implications of inventions and how those technologies affect the environment and social wellbeing. So inquiry into social implications is important. You only have to think of externalities like pollution from cars – carbon-monoxide, the pollution from companies (chemical cocktails) and the various trace gases being released into the air or streams. We have heavily polluted the planet. If we look at information technology – we sit for seven hours typing in front of screens, the eyes after a time require glasses as it is close up work. Moreover, the back gets sore as we are sitting and not exercising. Our working life becomes the social frame in which we live and it has not much room for social interaction. Most of our lives are caught up in work rather than living a deeper existence, as nature intended.

So I am interested. My scientist friends have Buddhist and Yoga backgrounds, so they are very interesting. They are lecturers so have some influence on how they frame the world to students. We have really connected and I am loving being with them. We laugh a lot and I explain my life of uncertainty. That is of interest to them as they are exploring the concepts of uncertainty and certainty in a Newtonian mechanics world. So it is very refreshing for me to meet scientists who do not reject metaphysics and who are open to the passionate side of life as a factor in science. I am fortunate to be here.

I've also met another couple who run an Entertainment Bank, it is about clowning, ballooning, characters in shopping centres. I have been a World Peace Clown and nothing else. Never could see myself as an Easter Bunny etc., however I am willing to open up to all forms of performance as I will seek to develop the clowning. I have some balloons and my friend Bronwen turned up and we did some balloon sculpting (see photo)…

I am working on 'where to from here'? I am feeling about the Children's Circle Parliament – a non

adversarial parliament for children which trains them in critical thinking, conflict resolution, creative thinking for solutions and clowning for fun and creativity. I have put in my application with UNESCO for funding, so if it is meant to be, you never know I could get that started. I am a great believer that all depends on right timing.

I have to share with you a funny insight. I do see the world around me as a metaphor. I see signs in that world, as I have shared in this book, which indicates the way for me to go. I noticed a sign that said 'all things coming together'. Then I sat down for lunch and heard a guy say 'all things are coming together'. I smiled, it is like synchronicity. Carl Jung speaks of this in his psychoanalysis work. In Melbourne the number plates there said 'the place to be'. I felt intuitively that was true. I am wondering if the inspiration I felt is true. Will things come together for me here? I am definitely putting out the thought that the right people will come into my life. I wish to serve humanity, in my way I do that each day as I interact with the world through my blog. I am a clown I am sending love and peace whether I am dressed up or not. It is who I am not what I do. So I am reflecting, sitting with what I have done so far and where to from here. It is a lovely creative space to be.

Christmas is here in a month, so maybe some Christmas clowning. I can go to corporate functions or children's parties . I'd like to do more of the latter and really connect with the children. I'd like to make my shows educational.

I caught up with a friend who I met 25 years ago on a Contiki Bus Tour to the United States. We caught up a few times over the years and we get on really well, like sisters. We had coffee and she told me what is happening with her life and I laughed at my own with her. It was so nice to be with an old friend.

I also caught up with another dear friend of mine who I studied with at La Trobe University, we were studying Peace Studies together. She is an environmentalist who walks the talk. In her house everything was re-usable, she doesn't get plastic bags, she rides her bike and is a very natural person. She is very conscious of her footprint and living a frugal and careful life. She has had some difficulties with her mum dying (her best friend) and coming back to Perth to study. She said the teacher training course she is doing is a nightmare. For her it has been a nightmare trying to live. I laugh at those who cannot understand poverty, you only have to take alternative pathways through life away from the security of money to realise how tight things can get. For me, I don't mind as I live outside my comfort zone and actually feel challenged and energised by not knowing what will happen. I also have a deep sense of security, so I don't worry, I am curious. My poor friend is stressed, her sisters want to sell her mum's house, she has no money to buy it and she is moving around. She is not like me where I like change, she prefers a stable home, like most people. So it is a challenge for her. I feel she is very strong and brave. Much more than she gives herself credit for. It will work out but the reality is none of us are in control and sometimes you just have do your best but at the same time allow life to take its course. See where it takes you. I learned that from a parachute jump – the forces of nature just carry you through life, I felt that intuitively strongly. So for me it is a ride.

So life is good and I feel very inspired, as usual. I feel a really positive energy within myself and am curious where life will take me next, who I will meet and how life shapes me. It is all very interesting.

At the time of writing this blog I am still in Perth. I have chosen to not rent to keep my costs down. As a result I have been homeless for 1.5 years here. It has been an interesting experience as I have lived in approximately 35 places. I have either been house sitting, tenting or staying with friends for a few days at a time. I have a rule of thumb that I don't burden other people and only stay for short periods. I have chosen this experience as I wish to maintain the peace work otherwise I would need

to get paid work to cover those basic expenses which I feel would distract me from what is important to me. What has been truly amazing about this experience is I am never without a roof over my head and something seems to turn up when I need it. Thus I feel validated that life is indeed supporting me. I have challenged sacred cows by being a woman over 40 living without a home, paid job and partner. Yet the outcome is that I am truly happy. When I explored this it is because I am free to pursue what brings me happiness and this is to serve the community.

The Fool's Gold: The rock of my life changes shape by all those I meet. I feel the peace in nature and the intelligence in life that re-forms me. All peace arises from facing fear and greeting life with excitement. Always someone comes to help or share a moment. We are never alone.

CHAPTER 16

Humanitarian Clowns in India (2012)

Preamble to Departure

My friend Tim invited me to join a clowning tour to India. I had undertaken a workshop for the City of Perth and donated the money to Rotary. I had a feeling to contact Tim again and I decided to go to India. I was able to get the money I had donated to Rotary and that became my airfare. I was going to Vellore in Tamil Nadu, Southern India. How exciting.

I thought I'd go to the airport from my friend Kit's place. She organised a health spa pampering for me as she is a masseur and health specialist. It was heaven as I was exhausted and so needed revitalising. I could never have afforded a massage and facial, so she did it for free along with another wonderful woman. How kind this offer was. I then went to her place for dinner and I was to go to the airport from there. I sat happily checking my emails to confirm my flight. Tim had emailed me alarmed as to where I was. Seb's Projects, the non-government organisation (NGO) I was to be clowning for, had sent a driver from Vellore in Tamil Nadu to pick me up but I wasn't there. I suddenly realised I had missed my flight, what!!! I had got the date wrong – yes it was the 29 August today but the flight had left just after midnight, which really meant that the 28th August was when I should've been at the airport so as to leave after midnight. I had a sudden shock of panic run through me. I had to ring my friend in Rotary to quickly organise another ticket but this would have to wait to until the morning. My only focus was that I had to get to India.

So after the panic subsided I just decided to accept fate, and wonder what would happen as a result of me missing the flight. I met some friends of Kit. Her friend had been to India, she gave me some lavender for the mossies (mosquitoes). Kit's housemate is a lovely guy and he joined us with his friend. We talked about seeing life differently. My friend is a wise soul and I notice she sits back and observes more. She is a former yoga teacher who is absolutely passionate about healing and is a genuine person of service. She has given me a free yoga session in the past. I love the fact that she gets what real service to humanity is. I would deem her a light. So we were all chatting and after our stimulating conversation proposed an alternative reality, which interestingly, this flatmate said he knew. We ended up learning how to dance. He swept us girls up and danced with us. I loved it and of course clowned around. I jumped on his feet and felt that was a good way to learn, rather than trip over them. We spoke of romance and relationships and I added that we have to love ourselves first so that the relationship is not needy. I could see he was interested. It was a great night and I ended up going back for the last night of my house sit. I didn't sleep well, too much wine, even a couple of glasses is too much for me these days. So at three in the morning I was still awake. Anyway, there was nothing I could do I just had to go with the flow.

The next day the flight was rebooked and another friend of mine covered the costs which I would reimburse on my return to Australia. I wondered why this had happened (spiritually), I don't believe in coincidences anymore. Well I ended up ringing a new friend whom I had met at a peace gathering. I had left my power chord for my laptop in the hills (25 kms out) and she was closer. I thought maybe I could borrow her computer and just check out my emails. Anyway, we ended up talking about cancelled flights and the fact that there are no coincidences, it all happens for a reason. We spoke of a guy called Nick Vujicic, he is an Australian without arms or legs who is just a dynamo, he is so optimistic. Go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo_24_qTNac for an inspiring video. He goes to many schools to talk about his life and how to become resilient. Now she told me about this guy and said you must Google his film trailer featuring his new book Unstoppable. Now funnily enough I had actually used that word to describe this guy in the course of our communication. The point was to press on and to not allow life to stop you from your own personal mission. I do get this, as I am a peace clown and World Peace is my vision. What's more I do not consider this an ideal, I consider it our birthright to fulfil who we truly are. Anyway, I took on board her comments and unending enthusiasm and excitement about

life and encouraging me to go for it. I hung up from her and headed to the shopping centre nearby to have some lunch. I walked through the shopping centre and I felt a definite inner pull to go into the ABC shop. This has lots of videos and books from the Australian Broadcasting Commission. I scanned the books and blow me down there was Nick's book Unstoppable. The synchronicity of this was not lost on me. I opened the book at the section that just happens to be on bullying. That of course is my area. I teach anti-bullying (when I can get in the schools). Anyway, I read it carefully as he described being bullied and how as a boy without arms and legs he was used to receiving disparaging comments about his physical difference. He went onto to describe one guy who always picked on him every day. He was sick to the stomach and felt anxious and depressed. In the end he rolled his wheelchair up to this guy and asked him why he did this, it turned out that the guy didn't seem to realise what he was doing and he stopped from that point. The issue with bullying is the psychological impact on a person who is feeling verbally or physically attacked, it creates all sorts of deep psychological trauma. I myself have experienced bullying and have had some issues with a person regarding power and stonewalling and I saw what had occurred to me as a form of trauma. At the same time it felt as if I had a purpose in this field. I was reminded as I read Nick's words and he went onto describe the statistics on bullying which are up around 30% of kids, this contrasts with some of the statistics I read 1 in 10 (10%) are bullied, 1 in 20 (5%) are bullying but I sense this is getting higher as cyber bullying becomes an easier way of harassment. (this contradicts the 30%) One cannot look at this and not see society in another way, the bullying at work, in relationships, we see it in Parliament and so on. It is part of the culture and has its roots in asserting power over others and in powerlessness. Many grow up in homes that are not that demonstratively loving or have patterns of behaviour that are termed as being 'dysfunctional'. He reminded me of the importance of my work as a Peace Clown. I wondered if my trip to India is about developing this work. Even as I write this now I can feel tears coming, that is always a sign for me. Nick is also a devout Christian and has his faith firmly in the centre. I am spiritual and I know that one must be in alignment with that higher power, which can be called love or truth, it doesn't matter, when you are in alignment with truth your face shines. Certainly Nick's does and he has no arms or legs, he even got married this year, good on you Nick. So his title for his book Unstoppable is a message to me. I felt it definitely.

This trip I I felt was going to be special. I felt it in my heart. Something would happen on this trip as everything had fallen into place. Moreover, I felt I would be tested.

We clowns were organised to visit orphanages, schools, hospitals, villages, areas where lepers live, and even visit girls who have been trafficked., We had a total of 30 places to see. So I was sure that energetically it would be full on. What I felt when I spoke to my friend and the lady who owned the health spa was that I felt a strong desire as a clown to shine love into the eyes of the children and the people I would see. I felt it strongly to just pass on the love. You cannot imagine the beauty of loving people like this with no agenda, just to share love. Always I feel the privilege as a clown and I know we are equal. So I don't see myself as a westerner going to India to give to the deserving, I see myself as an equal going to share love with other beautiful human beings, I see them as my teachers. I see that there is beauty in deformities, disability, physical difference, sickness and so on. I wish to be a mirror to those who think they are not beautiful, to see a shining clown laughing and smiling with them. For me that is the most beautiful image I can imagine. Beauty for me is in the soul.

Here are some blog entries, from my trip to India, sharing the incredible experience of spreading peace and love in the guise of clowns.

Seb's Projects and India

Our first outing as a group was to go to Seb's Projects and meet the friends of Tim who had organised our trip. We were to be briefed about Seb's Projects, meet each other and learn about India and its customs and issues. Here is the blog entry of that first day:

Today I heard the faint voice 'Lily' and knew it was time to wake up. I decided to change my name to Lily which is the meaning of Susan and in fact means peace. My room mate is called Alex and she is a school teacher from Melbourne. Her clown speciality is puppets and I am looking forward to seeing her work.

The group formed and we walked over to the canteen of a nearby hospital. We walked through a beautiful forested area and I found myself meeting Ovidi who is from Spain. He has a warm wide smile welcoming all who come into his presence. We excitedly saw some monkeys. I watched the mother dragging the baby across the roof. Another few were up in the trees. It's so lovely to see monkeys in the wild in the middle of a city.

We all ordered breakfast – omelettes, mango drinks, vegetable sandwiches to name a few items. I was hungry so it was lovely to have a meal.

The key organiser is an English woman named Geraldine, Gerri for short, from the Seb's Project NGO. She has worked for them for four years and is very experienced. I will speak more about this small but effective NGO as I go through this day.

In the 'tuk tuk' (automated bike with a carriage) Jo and Toot were with me. The driver emerged out into the chaos of Indian traffic and indeed tooting is the prevailing sounds that echo like an orchestra of communication that each driver is alert to, for each toot warns that a vehicle is approaching in a 'mish mash' of merging traffic. The city of Vellore is known for housing the CNC (Christian Medical College) hospital famous for health care throughout India. The women in their colorful saris are seen on the streets or riding side saddle on a motor bike. You see little girls and boys going to school. They are in uniforms and they have white ribbons in their hair. I imagined their pride at going to school and being kids. The families here are central and close. There are strong familial networks.

We arrived at the Seb's Projects in a wealthy part of Vellore. We passed large mansions and stopped outside a very nice white building. As we climbed the stairs we found ourselves in a large room with shining floors and paintings adorning the walls. It was very clean and modern. They had a video presentation set up and we were welcomed with coffee.

Gerri introduced us to Seb's Projects and we all went around the group speaking about our clowning. Some were new to clowning, others worked professionally, some were into puppets, silent clowning, laughter yoga, or just felt inspired to be there. We met our new Indian friends who would be both translators and clowns with us. My friend Tim who organised the project described how as a child he had cancer and recalled going into hospitals. He spoke of being inspired by a magician and he wanted to do it too. He performed for cousins and developed his skills. He said he started going to do children's parties and had some difficulties with people not appreciating his work. He traveled to Africa and found that the wide smiles of children inspired him. The numbers grew as word of the 'magic man' got around. He ended up in front of 200 people and he just loved it. Tim felt the magic of being a magician and making others smile. He also had worked with Seb's Projects here in India some three years ago and he set up an eco trail which has brought in much needed revenue for the villages. It was because of his relationship with Seb's Projects that this clown trip was started. Tim is described by his mother as a hippy, I'd say Patch Adams is as well. I guess what

is similar about hippies is their easy going quality and laid back attitude. Tim is that sort of person, he is very much consensus based and goes with the flow. Gerri is the one that can motivate and get things moving, she is very intelligent and capable. She is a young woman, but I have to say that age means nothing to me as these days you meet so many amazing people of all ages.

There is a multicultural flavor to the group but mostly we are an Australian bunch but a few are from Spain and Sweden. There is one Australian, Amo, who comes from an Aboriginal background so it will be really interesting to learn from her. In India older persons are called uncle or aunty, I heard Amo speaking to Emma (elderly Indian) and telling her she would like to call her Aunty as that was in her tradition. I reflected on the similarities of indigenous people. There are often overlaps.

It is fascinating listening to other people's stories and experiences of life and what led them to decide to be a clown. It is a unique group. Tim believes there are around 10,000 clowns around the world. Certainly clown doctoring has increased particularly with the story of Dr. Patch Adams, the American clown doctor. Tim, myself, his mum Margarite and Lisa have all clowned with Patch Adams. There is another very experienced clown with us, Nigel, who has clowned for a quarter of a century as he puts it. He saw himself as unique and I could see he is. He is very good at balloons, as some of the participants reported from last night whilst I was sleeping. He also has traveled many countries and is an independent soul.

We started getting to know some of the Indian volunteers and they have broad smiles and open hearts. One of them, Santosh, who by fate has come to be with us, is a spiritual truth seeker; he and I connected immediately. I saw the artist in him and knew he has joined for a reason. Here is an interview with Santosh https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNotTxmLxZM

Others also indicated it was fate, and my overall feeling was this is a sacred trip and much joy is going to be generated. All smile easily and there is a warm heartedness that is clearly felt in the group. I know we will all become close as we clown together. Yes it will be exhausting but I know it will be incredible.

We are in Tamil Nadu, so the language here is Tamil and I am told people are very proud of their culture. We were given a briefing of the culture here and it was pointed out for women to be modest. It is considered to be a conservative State. The neighbouring State is Kerala, I was pleased to hear this as I studied this part of India and found Kerala had the highest literacy and equality in India. It is a matrilineal society and women are respected. As a result of this dynamic more girls are educated and the State itself has prospered. It is a prime example of why the whole benefits when all members are treated in equality. What I find is that when virtues lead any society, then the whole society grows and prospers. The language of Kerala is Malayalam. What was made clear to us was that the food and customs change as you move States. India is not one, and I recall in the Gandhi movie it was referred to as many Indias. I also heard that people of different religions do live in harmony here. The prime religions are Hindu (80%), Jainism (0.5%), Sikhism (2%), Buddhism (0.7%). Christianity (2.5%) and Islam (12%) came at the turn of the 19th century. There is respect for differences and people coexist. A comment was made about politicians causing division and I felt there was truth in that. Certainly the British brought a 'divide and conquer' strategy as a means of control, and often politicians appeal to certain groups for votes.

We were informed that Indians have a different notion of space and can come up very close, moreover they can come and stare at you as you are white. I sensed as we traveled around that there are not any western tourists so I figure we will be a novelty by being white and also clowns. I am sure it will create a sensation given how long we are here and there will be incredible ripples that will

be sent out by our presence. Ten clowns provide an enormous energy, and as an arrhythmia to the pattern of life this will definitely cause much commotion; I hope we don't cause accidents as the traffic is chaotic and you can just imagine everyone wanting to get a look.

We were asked questions about what we had noticed, which I noted as being a strategy of empowerment. Information was not just given to us we were asked questions first. The Seb's Projects team are small but I can see they understand empowerment. They don't impose ideas, rather they draw out knowledge, this of course is a powerful way to strengthen people.

We learned how to say hello in Tamil 'Vanacum' and 'Namaste' – the latter means 'the God in me greets the God in you'. We learned 'aka' means older sister, 'ana' is older brother, 'umma' is older lady and 'iyia' is older man (or sir). So it was interesting to see that in this language the way to speak to people was related to family, age and gender. Young people are taught to respect elders and you don't sit above an older person. There are rules and it is normal for a young person to live with family until they get married. There are love marriages here and slowly the caste system is breaking down. Apparently it is still important administratively as they are given certificates to confirm the caste. We were informed of the caste system as forward caste (typically Brahmin, priest class) backward caste – those in shops, most backward caste are typically in agriculture/rural areas, schedule caste and schedule tribe are gypsies and forest dwellers.

Interestingly Anup from Seb's Projects has a father who is Brahmin (high caste) and a mother who is a schedule caste. I asked if that was untouchability (the lowest) he said 'yes'. I recall in the movie on Gandhi and my studies that the untouchables did all the lowest jobs such as cleaning toilets and being cleaners. He said there were welfare benefits in being a schedule caste as you could access education more easily, with a lower entry pass of 45% as distinct from the Brahmin who had to achieve 90%. So there was reverse discrimination to bring other castes up to speed. In this area there are engineering technical colleges. I did see the one that was referred to as being a very impressive building. Education and health is notable in this area and when you learn of the difficulties and exploitations of the very poor the need for education is clear.

The middle class has become bigger and there was supposed to be more of a trickle down of wealth but this has not materialised. Literacy rates across India are still low, with 74% being illiterate. So there is much work to be done in a population of around 1.6 billion. This is the world's largest population and with size comes great responsibility. Anup felt the government did very well at devising projects but was not good at implementing them, this is where NGOs come in and do much grassroots work. There are major challenges in this country but it was very inspiring to hear what a small group was able to achieve.

The number one issue in malnutrition. The rural area have the backward caste and they have barriers with engagement with bureaucracy and gaining certificates to prove their status which gives them entitlement to health and education. Seb's Projects are advocates for the tribal and rural people and will assist with the bureaucratic process which must be adhered to in detail. The government appeared to not issue these certificates and I wondered if it was because they didn't wish to recognise land rights. In Australia land rights is an issue for indigenous Australians who were indeed occupied, or invaded, by Europeans. They are given welfare but there is tension still, as many unresolved issues have not really been addressed. The former PM Kevin Rudd did issue an apology to the people which resulted in much crying and a sense of recognition, but the structures of European society are embedded and attitudes take time to change. The indigenous population in Australia are only 1% so their voice is not powerful. I found when I traveled around and met some of them that they were indeed another country. We do not know them or understand the huge cultural

shock of a technological culture dominating a tribal culture with strong ties and a deep knowledge of country. I felt similarities here.

Seb's Projects is concerned with helping those in need to help and empower themselves through self determination. We were told, as mentioned before, about malnutrition, and the isolation of the poor who do not have access to education or health care. There are development refugees, issues of child trafficking, bonded labour and illiteracy. Seb's Project's through the Humanitarian clowns have built a school and around 50 children go there. It was interesting to learn that bonded labour occurs when children are sold by desperate parents through the belief that their child will earn 200 rupees per day by a certain date only to find that the end date is extended and they never receive the money. The parents are too poor to do anything about it. Those in bonded labour do not have freedom nor choice of work and receive no pay. People are exploited through economic disadvantage and lack of education. Seb's Projects are affiliated with the International Justice Mission. They speak of homelessness, domestic violence, disempowerment, preventable deaths (of those who die by 50) and cultural disappearance through modernity. HIV and TB are also still issues.

Seb's Projects have a DREAM program where they teach through art, dance, drama and sports. The arts help with learning English and building confidence. The performing arts have a significant impact on children. Another program was called Goodbye to Paper and was for women who were poor, some had been forced to go into prostitution, and many had not gone to school when in remote areas school was too far to go to. The women needed to restore their trust. This project assisted them to build their own small business, and helped them with ID documents and micro finance.

Seb's Projects also works with the tribal people in the Jawadhi Hills. Apparently 92% of the people here are innumerate and 98% illiterate compared to 74% for the rest of India. The life expectancy of these people is 45 years. I am 49 as I write this book so many will not reach my age, they will die early because they do not have access to medical facilities and nutrition which would extend their lives. It is strange to imagine our different worlds. I just assume I will live to 80 or 90 years, I cannot imagine old age at 45 years, if we live to 90 it is double their life expectancy. Think of all the experiences they would miss out on. In the forest areas there are 7 people in a family, they have an income of $16 per month. Moreover, infanticide is practiced in India particularly with little girls as the family can't afford a girl. The boys are regarded as economically viable and the girls a cost. I recall my former Afghan partner talking about infanticide in his country. As a female I find it incredible. Being an Australian I can't imagine being worth less and I can only feel fortunate that I have a mindset of equality. Things are changing though, and my inner feeling is that they are changing rapidly. They spoke of the HEAL program which is an acronym for Health Education And Learning. They support villages to access government welfare and further research to improve tribal health care and case work.

It was a fascinating day and reminded me of the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program in Bangkok where as a peace scholar I was exposed to NGOs doing excellent work at the grass roots level. I find that very special people are attracted to serve communities. Geraldine and English woman had been involved with Seb's Projects for 4 years and she had a passion for working with the hills people. She is an angel sent to them no doubt. She is articulate and confident, and it is wonderful to see.

We as a group did some team building through a helium straw and tower games. With the helium straw everyone places two fingers to hold this long straw. There are people on both sides of the straw, and the idea is to bring it to the floor as a team. We found it got higher and higher. The other team did it in five minutes by placing one finger facing the ceiling the other facing the floor, some-

how balancing the straw and enabling group work. The tower game required us to build a tower that was tall and aesthetically pleasing. The collaboration made us look at how we work in teams. I found that I hadn't worked in many teams and I was conscious that I had not been trained as a team player, I saw it as cultural as well. Australians tend to be independent and we all generate ideas but actually sitting down and really working together is not natural to our society. In tribal groups there would be order to their communities and customs. Some tribal groups have lived on the same land for 250 years, so one might imagine they have their way of doing things, their own wise people and lore. I am very interested in clowning in these communities. It will be the first time they have seen clowns.

Our day finished with dinner at the canteen in the hospital grounds and a visit to the shop. What I particularly liked is that they wrapped all products in newspaper. So when I go back to Australia I am no longer going to use plastic bags but paper.

There were so many stories, so many insights and sharing today. I find myself very much at home with fellow clowns and look forward to learning and growing with others. It is a unique space and one that will be enormously illuminating. To be a humanitarian clown is to utilise clowning as a means of social change, to show others their beauty is my vision, moreover I want to transfer love from my eyes to theirs, that is why I am here.

The next day we headed over to Seb's Projects to hear a presentation by Nigel. He showed a film on clowns which was interesting and I found myself inspired by this small community of artists and the magic they perform. He then read some chapters out of his book on clowns and I found it very profound and interesting. The rule of clowning is there are no rules, I liked that one. Clowns give people permission to come out of themselves. They are the ones who make the mistakes and make a joke of it. They are like a mirror to humanity showing them to themselves. They are silly people but in truth they use humor to unite with people as people are afraid of being fools. Yet when you are the fool you find there is no fear. For me clowning is spiritual work and I am definitely tuning into where I am supposed to go, I don't think about it, I just intend that I am sent to the right ones.

Clowning in CMC Hospital, Vellore, Tamil Nadu

An excerpt from the blog of 5th September 2012:

…We woke up at 6.30 am to be ready for 8 am to go to the CMC Hospital. This is one of the finest hospitals in India. There were four auto rickshaws waiting for the clowns. Balloons were tied to the rickshaws and we all looked very colorful. As we traveled through Vellore we all waved out the window. I had a colorful bird which I used to catch attention. I was worried we may cause accidents but Indian drivers do have good concentration as everything is so close so there are probably less accidents as a result. It was thrilling to watch smiles break out across people's faces. We had motorbike riders waving, giving us the thumbs up, women on the side of the road catching buses smiling as they looked at these colorful European looking clowns going past. It is so beautiful to see the humanity e merge on people's faces. My friend Tim was very excited. He organised the trip and had wondered how the day would progress.

After 45 minutes of weaving, tooting and chaos in the traffic we arrived at the CMC hospital. We got out. I used my whistle to mock directing traffic. I used my feather duster to dust people down. I also juggled and made out the rickshaw was going to run me over in a joking way. I waved at people and blew kisses. The others were a sea of color and diversity. It is very exciting to watch a group of clowns move through a group and see the ripples it causes as the people come to look. At the hospital there are many families there, some sleep in the corridors as they have sick family members there. The CMC hospital is the most famous hospital in India, and people travel from across the country to access medical care. The place was crowded, apparently 10,000 people a day come to the hospital, numbers you couldn't imagine.

I had no idea what was going to happen, quite a few of the clowns with us were not experienced. One of the other experienced clowns being allergic to mosquitoes had been unable to come, so I had to lead a second group. I interacted with everyone. I walked up stairs, juggled, played, giggled, and interacted with my eyes, it was about making contact with literally thousands of people in a space. The Indian people are themselves good humoured, so even those who didn't smile I know were just not sure what to do when clowns are around. I expect they may never have seen them. It is a normal reaction in the West too. So I find I flow through the crowd with a big grin no matter what happens. It is a good metaphor for life as we learn to allow life to be what it is without forcing outcomes, but just living in the moment 100%. I do this all the time and I lose track of time, and who I am with as I am completely living in the moment. It is incredible to live this way.

We started in Paediatrics and bounced straight in there, meeting some children in the beds. You have to take it carefully as they can become scared, particularly young children who see a clown for the first time. So I came in juggling and dropped my balls. I get crowd interaction by throwing balls to them. I met some beautiful children. I dragged out my large plastic scissors and comb, and made out I was a hair dresser, doing their hair. That worked very well. One nurse I made out she had nits and picked them out and then ate the nit. They laughed. I played soccer in the hallway with staff. I pulled out my colorful flashing microphone and tried to get them to do a Bollywood dance for me, the nurses were very shy. I hugged some doctors, many males were hugged. I was told culturally you don't hug males, that was why everyone was laughing as I broke the rules. I laughed when I was told and said I am a Westerner and I will hug men. I had just hugged the Indian journalist who was doing a story on us. He knew I had a love of Gandhi, and I introduced him to the idea of Gross National Happiness – a concept started in Bhutan.

I made a child laugh with my expanding ball. The kids really like the way it is small and then I sneeze and it opens bigger. I use it as a way of bringing people together as I get them to throw it around. The staff were very interested in our antics. The clown team have a diversity of talents, some juggling, others do magic, blow up balloons, apply stickers, play music, so as a team it is

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

very entertaining. There was much talk of inspiration at the hospital level to start their own creative interventions, particularly for long term patients in rehabilitation.

I met many boys today and smiled and hugged them. Some were attentive, others were in pain or afraid, so I tried not to upset them. I do cross the line a bit to see if I can engage them but if I feel they are not interested I move on.

I had some wonderful interactions with older people and people in the rehabilitation hospital in the afternoon. Many had spinal injuries, amputations, or were disabled in some way. I was able to juggle and blow bubbles to gain the crowds' interest. I also have a ribbon which I twirl and make out I am catching people. I told one guy in a wheel chair I would catch some nurses for him. I actually rode on the back of this chair which had bicycle pedals for the hands as they can't use their feet. It was a steel structure. I jumped on the back and the guy took me for a spin. I was then invited by the doctors to see a patient who they wanted to watch how I went with. I am sure it was experimental for the doctors and nurses and much discussion will take place. We did have a talk afterwards and I spoke of my emotional intelligence training in Bangkok where I had doctors and nurses dressed up as clowns in outpatients. In the evaluation that followed there were comments about feeling freedom for the first time. When you are a clown you are free to be yourself, you are playing with everyone in the vicinity.

It is hard to describe the whole day as there was so much activity. In my own consciousness I don't always remember as I am so deeply in the moment. I was told I was amazing by other clowns in my group which I truly found surprising as I don't see myself at all. I can only gauge by people's reactions how I am received. I saw many smiles and it brought much joy as I genuinely love all the people I see. I do feel the sense of family with everyone.

There were reports from the other clowns of the magic working, the kids were so excited and one clown said she had a powerful moment with a 17 year old. She held his hand and put stickers on him, some others came around and sang. When she tried to leave he didn't want to let go of her. All the clowns had stories of people they had connected with and we saw some wonderful photos.

It was our first day clowning in India and I would say it was an unmitigated success. We created something new and people were truly inspired, intrigued, puzzled and uplifted by our presence. There is nothing like spending time with a group of clowns. The Indian clowns who accompanied us were also enthusiastic and wonderful human beings. They are so loving and kind and there is so much laughter coming from the group as we all start to bond. I truly loved my day today and felt satisfied that maybe I added to the greater peace picture through loving human beings as myself.

International Justice Mission and Hope House

International Justice Mission, Chengalpet, Chennai

Excerpts from the blog of 6 September 2012

…Today we got up early to go to the International Justice Mission (IJM). We were informed only on the bus that we were doing a show, which didn't leave any preparation time. As a group of clowns we have not put on performances together and we had to 'ad lib' it. We arrived at IJM and I had to go and put on makeup. As I came out the show had started and there was no time to confer on how to do this properly. The staff at IJM wanted us to promote the values of cleanliness, money management, trust and integrity. There was not enough time to really do it justice (so to speak).

I was pulled into a skit with my friend Toot. She has been a performance clown for a number of years and we do get on well and respect each other. The brief idea was for her to be the bad clown and me to be the good peace clown. We were to excitedly meet and then I would show her things from my bag which we would use to entertain the audience. There were around 100 people sitting there of all ages. They had previously been in bonded labour. So Toot (see photo) and I hammed it up and I ventured into the audience, as my name was called. I made one of the audience members me by putting my hat on them. The idea of Toot stealing my stuff and us then talking to the audience on how that could be done better went out the window. We ended up pulling out props and it finished clumsily in my view. Still I was able to form a deep connection with the audience and found myself blowing up balloons and flicking them to people, it is a good way to get the crowed to participate. I had some men come up and do a dance.

I did some juggling and threw the ball into the audience, a woman caught it and threw it back. I had a ribbon which I twirled. My friend Toot brought out a big pole that comes out of a small bag, it looks effective. Apparently the IJM guy then got up and tried to create a lesson out of it. He was speaking Tamil so I had no ideas of what he was saying. I feel we could have been more effective had we spent more time on preparing shows and getting the themes right. The group have a range of skills so they all came out.

We were outside which is a different performance space. We just had to go with the flow. I brought out my squeezy tomato and gestured for people to eat it and then squeezed it into a bubble. My expanding ball seemed to get lots of laughter as I threw it and bounced it off people. I taught one woman to juggle (see photo) and she was very happy. I made friends with a group of women (see photo) and was able to convey ideas to them and indicated they were my friends, I could see they were happy.

Our friend Ovidi is a good entertainer, he brought out the guitar and introduced the clowns as we took a bow. I managed to make a speech through the interpreter. I felt moved to speak. I spoke of Gandhi and of Satyagraha – how truth and love are the main pillars of life. I see Gandhi as a clown as he had a great sense of humor, they seemed to like that, particularly an older guy in the audience, I am sure he remembered Gandhi. My friend Toot took a leadership role and thanked the organisers and Tim. In the end it somehow pulled together.

We all did our bit with the people and they did seem happy. We so loved meeting the people. (see photo). We did make bonds which was the purpose. When you see happy shining faces that is a clue that your presence was well received. The Indian people are a gentle and wonderful audience, they are ready to have a laugh and I really love that about them.

I spoke to a man through our Indian interpreter friend Lennon. The man was sad and we spoke of God as he could relate to that. He said he was a diabetic and his daughter and children lived with him as her husband died. He felt low in energy and was unable to support them by taking a job. I tried to transfer faith in the form of gratitude for breath, for family, for life. I was mindful I am not in his situation but I felt that with positive thoughts he would be more effective than in depression. I gave him my badge and balloons and we had a lovely connection. It turns out he was from the next village and not connected with the IJM, so it was so interesting that he and I connected. But there are no mistakes in this life I feel.

My friend Lennon also showed me plants that close the moment you open them. A bit like a Venus fly trap although they are vegetarian (I am guessing). I was so fascinated.

The show was closed and we waved to a grateful group of lovely people and felt good about our moment with them.

Later we received feedback from staff:

'I traveled all the way from Vellore and after watching this program, I didn't feel tired after a long travel.'

Though nobody comes near us, you people came near us and interacted with us.'

'We enjoyed watching the comedy.'

'Our clients had enjoyed watching the program, the team interacted with the clients very well.

These were the feedback from the clients who attended the later Nagari Monthly Meeting on 10 Sep 2012. Below ae quotes from clients:

'We forgot our difficulties while we saw you.'

'You are skilful in doing this and had put lot of efforts towards this.'

'I don't know who they (referring to the clowns) are…..They had come from far off places. God hath send them to keep u happy. Even after attending the meetings, I had made mistakes. But now I don't want to repeat that. I have a desire in my heart to back to my childhood days. Because, the childhood days are fun. After becoming an adult, I become angry. That's the reason for me to think about my childhood days.'

'Thank you for the balloons.'

'*Though you were ill, you had come all the way to bring joy into our lives'*

'I had never seen in my country like this (with all these costumes). We can't travel abroad. But you had come all the way to this place to bring joy into our lives.'

These were the significant quotes from our clients. Once again, we would like to thank your team for their relentless efforts and made our clients to feel special.

T. Praisey Glory Bai, Aftercare Manager

Hope House (HIV)

An excerpt outlining the experience at Hope House from my blog:

…We drove another hour and came to the HOPE house. This is a place for HIV positive children. We had at the last minute organised a programme there. The clowns made a make shift stage and kids sat down on carpet. My friend Toot is a leader and she got the show started. Tim did some magic. He and I spoke in the break about just spontaneously going in but I didn't know the others' routines and when it was appropriate to go in. It is clear we are amateurs without any real knowledge of true performance. However, Toot and Ovidi (see photo) came to the rescue and then our newly baptised clown Mingle who is a Tamil saved the whole show. He had never clowned but he mimicked the kids and it was a big hit. He also had us singing a Tamil song of wanting the other as our friend which was a lot of fun. We clowns were with the kids and playing with them. He then introduced each clown towards the end and they jumped in and all clapped and cheered. The energy was high and it was really wonderful.

Youtube link: Lennon teaching a song https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNotTxmLxZM

I was listening to some of my teachings later and thinking about accepting the moment. It

is not a question of right or wrong it is a question of being at peace under all circumstances. I do see clearly that we all create our reality. I am learning to just trust life, what it brings, and just go with the moment.

On the bus I introduced one of our other Tamil helpers to some spiritual teachings. He was blown away. We spent the three hour bus trip listening and conferring. He himself is a spiritual seeker and found himself invited at the last minute on this trip as he was around Seb's Projects. He and I immediately connected, something I said triggered him he told me. Listening to the teachings he definitely resonated. It was interesting to find a man with a universal consciousness. He knew about Lao Tzu and already was interested in love and light. So it was great to meet this person. India is the right place for this discussion given the spiritual roots here.

I really love the Indian people and we have met so many, we have hugged them. The HIV kids gave us big wide smiles and warm hugs, even the boys were hugging us. They had no parents, so they were orphans. I spoke to the American convenors of this orphanage and found they themselves were special people. I often find angels doing this work, they sacrifice themselves for others and had they not turned up you wonder what the situation of the children would be. The two I spoke with wanted to make the world a better place by giving. The American woman had come in May and really loved the kids. She told me she had had an auto immune disease and had empathy for the kids. We spoke of the gift of illness not to diminish compassion for a moment but to understand that life is what it is, to help children learn to live with the moment in a positive way was our shared belief. How to see the gifts in cancer, how to see the gifts in amputation, in HIV infection this is the work of accepting life in a positive way. Perhaps in this mindset cures are found and others are inspired by the courage. This volunteer said she has to go back to the States in October and is really feeling sad at leaving the children. She said she had learned a lot by working with them. She informed me that the kids receive out of date medication to control the HIV infection. I asked her why? She said it was because they couldn't afford the $3,000 medicines that were better drugs. They are purchased from the local area. I thought of pharmaceutical companies and generic drugs being made available. I pondered about poverty and the reality that they receive sub-standard medication when it would be illuminating to see all HIV patients receive quality treatment no matter what their socio economic situation. Such is the profit motive.

I then turned to an American guy and asked him about his life in India. His experience had been up and down but he had stayed the path for four years. I felt he must be committed to the kids. Any foreigner working in India does have their challenges as bureaucracy can be slow and there is always politics and social issues to contend with. He said he had witnessed a lot of deaths. I thought of the emotional issues with bonding with these beautiful children, it would be painful to see young lives end. He had married an Indian woman and found his own family back in the States dysfunctional and he himself had somewhat detached from them. He was taking his wife back for the first time. I ventured it would be good for his parents to meet her, he didn't look so positive. He didn't like the lifestyle in the States, we discussed office work and the focus on material wealth. He had chosen to live in another way.

I can honestly say the children were beautiful with shining eyes and they had their best clothes on. I tried to imagine their life without

a family and how they would grow up as part of a large group. We clowns had no issues touching them or being with them at all. They were well behaved and thrilled to get balloons and be entertained with juggling, fun tattoos, stickers, acrobatics, clowning and lots of laughter. We gave as much love as we could.

Social stigma is an issue and the kids get ostracised. Apparently a local high school principal had expelled the HIV kids. They were discriminated against by the local medical centres. They have to travel a few hours to Chennai to gain medical attention. You can imagine how worrying that would be if their condition is serious. So they are battling prejudice, with no family protection and ultimately death if they do not stay in remission.

Laughter is effective in maintaining remission. I learned this in Southern Thailand at a HIV clinic. Laughter and positive feelings can turn dis-ease around, so our visit would be helping in their healing. That is a beautiful thought.

I reflect on how our world would flourish with more compassion and empathy. However, for this moment we gave them happiness, respect and deep love, and that is our job. With that I am deeply happy.

My feet swelled up but I am happy we made a difference. My job is inner peace and balance. So a spiritual practice in just being love. I so love being a clown. I so love people.

Comments from Hope House Staff:

The Children seemed extremely joyful and care free. Many of them were able to let go and just have so much fun. All guards were down. Thank you so much for providing our kids with such an extremely fun and silly evening.

- Sierra Freeman (Hope Foundation Volunteer)

'When the kids first saw you all, I'm sure they had no idea what to expect. They've never seen anything like the crazy costumes and make up, but you won them over with you silliness and you fun. I know they loved every minute of the show and it was defiantly not something they will soon forget. You made them forget all about their disease and sadness and let them be kids for a few hours. Thank you for your love and joy.'

- Brittany Stranfield (Hope Foundation Volunteer)

'Thanks for doing noble service for the Humanity. God will bless you all.'

Panineer Setram (Program Director Hope Foundation)
Chesire Home, Viruthampattu

Ihadagoodsleepinasiwasprettytired.Idecidedtogototheorphanageintheafternoonandmeetthechildren.

An excerpt from my blog, 11 September, 2012:

…In the afternoon at 5:15 pm we headed to the orphanage. Children had HIV and we think some had leprosy as some kids had lost their fingers. We arrived in three auto rickshaws and they excitedly came out to see us, they were from four to fourteen, with most youngsters around eight years old. They were filled with smiles and wonder at the clowns. Our friend Lennon and some of the adults responsible for the children had them sit down as an audience. Lennon our Indian translator and fellow clown, who we now call Mingle, introduced us and I was to come in and perform. I marvelled at how used I was at just jumping up and making it up. I rolled around the kids in the crowd, juggled for them and did haircuts with my giant scissors and comb. I smiled at how popular this is. Then Toot came on and played scary monsters with them, she had them all stand and they ran from her laughing. You can see the thrill in their eyes. We had Alex do some magic. Ami had her twirling stick and said she felt much better today as she could flow through the crowd. We were outside and it got dark. My glowing jester's hat intermittently flickered lights on then off, it worked well in the dark. I also had a microphone that shone. I had some kids sing their songs and they did so very well. I chased a few around, swung them in a circle and we plopped on the ground. They would come up and hold your hands and we skipped. I then made an effort to hug and kiss them as I recognise how starved for affection they are. The boys and girls were open to affection. They were truly beautiful children. I watched them deeply thinking of the fact they have no parents. It is hard to imagine their life and how they see the world. I saw Emma at the back (CEO of Seb's) and noted her dedication. Alex and Puzzle did balloons and Toot joined in as there were 100 kids. The kids wanted balloons and stickers. I did find that full on but I distracted some of them with hugs. They were so innocent in their demands.

We drove away in our autos rickshaws with the kids waving, and feeling a special connection with some of the faces. To be a clown is a privilege and I am so pleased we are doing this work. It does make a difference, it may not change the fact they are in orphanages, hospitals or HIV clinics, but for a moment they can forget their troubles, they can believe in magic, they can be transported to another place, they can feel again and believe that life can send in the clowns.

The other part of our group went to a nursing home. One of the members of the group I spoke to spoke of her horror at the fact they were sleeping on concrete in a nursing home. She had been looking for a place for her mum at home and this brought and the realisation that what we have in Australia is just not comparable. She really wants to buy them beds, she had tears in her eyes as the diamond of her humanity shone through the crystal awareness of others. Our fairy (see photo) also cried at the state of the nursing home as she w orks in one. The love and compassion was overwhelming. They conveyed that people in Australia have no idea of the hardships others go through, so this was a huge emotional learning experience. They spoke of some men not wanting to let them go. They spoke of dancing with the men and women. It sounds like it was an amazing time. So beautiful to share our rainbow light.

My love for this group is growing, their incredible generosity and continuous waves to each other and their endurance, for it is not an easy pace that we are keeping. I often awaken with puffy eyes and come back with swollen ankles. We do a lot of sitting and a few hours of show and then we come back.

The streets are dirty and life is a constant buzz here. You see people sleeping in the streets, peeing in the streets, some walking past, others spitting, it is dusty and dirty, yet I feel no judgment. They marvel at we white folk and in clown costumes the streets break open into smiles as those who see us show their surprise and then joy. It is a sea of humanity and we are very small candles in that sea. In fact at the restaurant we took a picture of an Indian woman who was a light in the darkness. I placed Gandhi's image (on the back of my vest) above it, as he was also. I see love as that light, we are tiny candles as Ovidi said, but we are shining and that is all that matters.

Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity, Vellore

I was very interested in going to Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity. I wanted to see the work she had done and her legacy. She was a true humanitarian and one of my friends had met her many years ago. She said it was a moment she would never forget and had tears in her eyes. Here is an excerpt from my blog, 12 September, 2012:

…We were up and out by 9 am to visit the Sisters of Charity set up by Mother Theresa. Our newest member of our team, Brett, turned up from Australia. I was surprised to see him bright eyed and bushy tailed after his 18 hour flight from Australia. He only had a few hours. He came in the auto rickshaw with me and Ami. He was so funny, first time out of Australia, he yells out, 'Like your bike, nice fire', as we zig zag past. He said, 'Honk if you feel horny', well that did it for Ami and I, we will never see India the same as they honk all the time. I made a comment saying: 'That is why the population is so big, they are always honking - ha ha!'. We had a little joking banter in the car, that is how we clowns get to know each other. We go with humor to connect. I so love that, no small talk like, 'Where are you from? And what do you do?', we just get into comparing balls and jokes.

We traveled on bumpy roads and we were met with the usual surprise and smiles from so many people. We are touching the lives of hundred just from the rickshaw. We saw some kids and they kept waving as they walked to school, looking back, waving, looking back, waving. I had my toucan bird out the window of the rickshaw and it makes a 'haw haw' noise. There are three auto rickshaws and we go in convoy. So usually people see the first couple and then we come along so they are fascinated to see more clowns. I saw a man sleeping on a single bed (see photo) oblivious to what was going on. I saw a lady with cow dung which she was patting into paddies. They use them for fires. We were told today that they have gas coolers for fridges. We saw a whole group of women gathering to get government subsidised fuel. We were told last night that our rickshaw drivers get 400 rupees a day which is not much as it is equivalent to about four

Australian dollars. So many guys go past and have a look at us. One guy I kept looking at as he looked very serious and was level pegging us, he knew I was there and ignored me for as long as he could then he took a look. I love that. We get so many waves and smiles that you lose count. This lady I got a photo of as we passed (see photo). So beautiful!

We turned up at Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity. We saw all these middle age to older women in blue home dresses (see photo). Many had mental retardation, mental health and were the most destitute of people. When we got there we broke out puppets, bubbles, balloons, twirling ribbon, noise makers. I floated balloons and got them playing. We gave them heaps of love and kisses. They responded in return and some of them were very funny. We danced with them, they tweaked my nose, others played with my blowers. A lady and I hooked arms and went and ganged up on people blowing our blowers at them laughing. We even did it to the sisters, they were the authority there, so it was nice for the women to see us play with them. I spoke to one of the sisters who had worked in the United States and Mexico. She looked like a wise woman who had been around. On their ambulance they had 'Peace begins with a smile' (see photo). I told her God told me she should wear a red nose, she laughed. We also ran out the back and played with the staff who do all the physical work for the women. They danced Bollywood style with us. My friend Ami twirled her amazing rainbow dress. Her expertise is in fire twirling. She was having fun I noticed. We also ganged up on her and Alex blowing our blowers at them. Another lady loved my blue balloon and had this huge grin whilst she walked around hugging the balloon, I plied it from her and flicked it to her and she grabbed it. She chased some of the guys it was so funny to see these ladies with rotten teeth, with grins and cheeky playful behaviour. We just adored them. They all felt our love. There was one lady there who kept pointing to her arm as if in trauma, we got her to laugh which was important for breaking the pattern. She leaned her head on me and I sent love from my heart to hers, I held her with both arms and hugged and snuggled. It was so lovely to see these roses emerge from the darkness of their existence. A lovely old lady was speaking poetry to me and smiling and putting her hands in the prayer position. She went down and touched my feet to honour me with the highest honour. I touched her feet. She tried to stop me as she didn't feel worthy but I made her accept the blessing. I was told later she was from an agricultural community and had become destitute. I was told later another lady was found on the street in front of the CMC hospital, Gerri from Seb's Projects tried to get her into the home. She went there once and then went back to the hospital and slept in the same spot in the heat, under the rain waiting for her brothers and sisters to come and get her. Apparently they inherited their mother's house and kicked her out. She went onto the street and went crazy. Gerri said it was so sad that for 40 years she went back to the same place to wait for them but they will never return for her. This group had fallen through the cracks of society and you wondered at their lives. To not be married or mentally okay would be devastating

for these women. Some of them were mentally okay and again, how do they keep it together? The Sisters are doing a wonderful job.

I even got our rickshaw drivers to do some dancing and they were shy but they are getting into the mood with the clowns which is great.

Our new friend Brett, called Jester for his clown name, is a great juggler and he will teach me how to steal the juggling balls from him, he had lots of tricks so am looking forward to playing more with him. He is a lovely guy.

All our team are wonderful, it is a joy to be with them and share this remarkable experience of bringing love and peace to others in a non-threatening peaceful way. We are definitely touching lives and making a difference. Collectively this is world peace and I am in bliss as I told Santosh my yoga friend. I said this is the bliss of giving love to others. He is really warming and happy. I can see the effect we are having on all we meet. As a group we are getting more cohesive. It is a fantastic experience.

Comments by staff:

Dear friends, from the bottom of our hearts, we thank each one of you, you taking the trouble to come over here and making our Children happy, helping them to have more happiness, you made them laugh and smile with your fun and jokes. Love and Thanks. – Sister in Charge

Clowning for Jawadhi Tribes in the Jawadhi Hills

All the clowns were excited to get out of Vellore and experience the countryside of Southern India. In particular, we were looking forward to visit a remote tribe that hadn't seen clowns and lived a simple life. They had much to teach us, and we had our joy to share with them.

Journey to Jawadhi Hills:

An excerpt out of the blog, 18-20 September, 2012:

…We had to get up at 5 am on Tuesday morning to take a bus to Jawadhi Hills. We stopped briefly on the road. Toot and I got out, and what I find so refreshing about her, is that she starts stretching. So I just join in. It's a beautiful morning and we are facing amazing foothills to the mountains. We see the locals coming out of their houses. The bus then continued to the next village where we stopped and had coffee. It was a lovely small village, very neat and tidy. I stopped and chatted to Mike and he was reading the paper. I reflected on the news around the world and how all people believe what they read. I was interested in the issue of monsoons and intuitively felt it was late and I felt concern there within myself. I saw the usual politics and conflicts around the country. India is not one people, it is many countries, languages and cultures under the banner of India. In some places Hindus, Muslims and other tribes live together in harmony, in others there is tension. The challenge is to live in peace. My inner sense is that when people are left to their own devices they do live in peace.

The clowns were rounded up to get back on the bus after a break. We traveled a little way and met with the tractor and trailer. Some could go in the tractor up to the village others opted for the five kilometre walk. It was a nice day, not too hot. We walked along this track noticing a little of the wildlife, the different bird songs, the centipedes, butterflies and eagles overhead. I wondered about snakes and wildlife in this part of the world. Apparently there are leopards but they are hardly seen. I am sure with human habitation wild life retracts into what nature is left. We all had chats on our way

to the village. We noticed a small dam and I was told this was the reason for the water drying up. I wondered about the water supply for tribal people.

I found myself separated from the group (in front and behind) and imagined being in nature alone. I tried to take it all in and feel the peace and energy of this incredible country. The area is mountainous with tree cover and huge rocks everywhere. I noticed crystal in the ground and knew it had high energy. As I walked I saw some thatched houses up ahead in a village, people smiled as we walked through. Our guide Gerri talked to them in Tamil and would be known to the tribal people as she works with them. The villages appear clean to me and their houses are primitive but sustainable and organised. I saw chickens, pigs and goats. The people work hard in the fields all day and at night are freer. We walked on past another few thatched houses, with trees and mountains all around. I just marvel at the huge boulders in the mountains and the energy of this place. I understand the tribal people are disadvantaged and poor but I feel this place as being rich. I really feel for people in cities, they don't have the fresh air and are caught up in the hustle bustle and they focus on money and survival. I see city life as hard. I haven't experienced country life, I am sure it is hard physical work but I wonder if people are happy. I am told the tribal people are kinder and that gives me a clue to their simplicity and happiness.

In this area there are dirt tracks coming in and there has been illegal logging as in other places of India. Such is the economic monetary imperative for income. Nature is under pressure and ignorance will just be the juggernaut for exploitation. There are also issues of bonded labour of tribal children. Again, exploitation grows through the ignorance of local people so it is important that they get an education to empower themselves with decision making and understanding in the dominant society they live within.

We arrive at where we are staying. A square brick building with a tile floor. I am told this is the eco resource centre. There are display trees with information on them inside the building so you can learn about the environment, animals and life. It is a nice building. Next to it up the hill are the toilets which I notice are clean. They are squat toilets. These are hard for an older member of the group who has an arm injury. Western people are not used to the natural squatting position. This is a natural way of going to the toilet as natural forces are not resisted. In western culture our way of sitting is not as in tune with the body. There are buckets to wash ourselves and water is available. I feel the water here would be okay as it is rainwater, however it is wise to be careful when in India.

All the women of the group shared one building and had thin cane mats to sleep on the floor. The men were parallel to the toilets in a small room and also sleeping on the floor. The tribal women were paid to cook food for us. We realised they were up at four in the morning getting wood and cooking. With the fire place they used coals and did not waste wood by keeping the fire burning with flames as we would in the West. They conserved wood.

I noticed some huge trees, one in particular in front of our place. It was a beautiful old tree. There was also a tree house built. We all had a go at climbing up the ladder and sat up there reflecting and chatting. Poor old Tim got bitten by ants when he fell asleep up there. I know that must have hurt as I also stepped on an ant and it sent some poison into my toe. Thankfully the pain was quick to lessen.

In Vellore, Toot had bought some nets for badminton, together with rackets, shuttle cocks and volley balls. She also bought some colouring books. I marvelled at her thoughtfulness. As she commented to me later, it brought out the best in her. I was impressed by her kindness. They did have some nets there but other villages didn't so I am sure the stuff she brought would be put to good use. I brought some skipping ropes and she gave them to villagers.

We all just rested in the afternoon. Myself and Santosh sat listening to some wisdom on my iPod. I enjoyed just leaning up against the tree listening in such a beautiful place. Others went for walks, some juggled, others slept, we all just did our own thing. I love this group very much and there is so much to learn from each person. I love the little interactions we have and how they really get out there clowning. They have more energy than me and I am sure they are all learning a great deal. I enjoy diversity and feel at peace with people. I am usually a bit of a loner but I am finding myself enjoying the company and getting to know people better. There is so much wisdom to be gained when you listen.

The idea for us there was to initially door knock after 5:30 pm as people were in the fields. I wondered at clowns visiting houses and how to clown for them in this way. Apparently it is hard to get them together. My friend Toot was quick to mingle with the locals and she played with the children. They just love her and she has a way with children. She has worked with them for years but just wants to eat them, they are so gorgeous. She decided to do my make-up, it was the first time I had changed my look. The kids were involved and she put on red cheeks for them and little noses with glitter. It was a slow process but I was aware this was part of clowning, so I just observed and enjoyed the sweet faces all around us, so curious and innocent. Toot decided to start going to some of the houses so I just went with it and tagged along behind. Tiredness for me has been a reality on this trip and I do what I can when I have energy and I rest when I don't. I find I can't clown every day, usually half a week is what I can manage and I get a sore throat the minute my immune system drops so I watch it, I don't want to pick up diseases nor do I wish to pass anything to others, so balance has been important. Tim is great he says he doesn't want it to be a trip where people feel forced to clown, he wants people to rest when they need it. So for me that is good. I am keen to clown but only when I can give it my energy. So back to Toot I did go with her clowning, admittedly my energy was low but I did get some kids smiling and played a few fun games. It was getting dark so we went back for dinner.

I noticed the fireflies in the trees, so exciting, you see little flashes of what looks like electricity, the fireflies just flying around flashing. It is always magic to watch. The last time I saw this I was in Belize in Central America when staying in the bush. I jumped up and down they were so exciting.

When we all turned in to sleep, and it took me a while to get to sleep. Sleeping on a hard floor requires some adjustment. I lost my pillow so Toot gave me some of her clothes. I felt quite hot as well. I am taking sleeping tablets on this trip to ensure I sleep as energy is an issue. I didn't sleep much as I am a light sleeper and one of our group coughed a lot. The next day was to be full on, but I didn't worry as I just work with life as it comes.

Jawadhi Hills, Clowning in a Remote Village and Night time Performance

An excerpt from the blog:

…We woke up around 5 am to leave by 6 am. People were pretty tired but hauled themselves up for a bucket wash and breakfast. Some dressed in clown outfit, I thought I would dress up when I got there. I was not sure how I would go energetically so I took my gear and thought I would make the decision when there.

The idea was to go to a school, some of the group would stay at the school and entertain the kids, the other group would trek 10 km (round trip) to a village on a hill in a remote area.

We all packed ourselves into the tray that was attached to the back of the tractor. Off we went on a bumpy and difficult drive. The roads are very degraded and uneven due to erosion and flooding. So it is bumpy and there's lots of crunching of gears by the driver. We were all crushed in yet people kept in good humor and there were random spurts of copious laughter which I enjoyed. I would expect this from a bunch of clowns. Thankfully the weather is not too hot but we do cover our skin as we are likely to get sunburned. We drove up steep hills and watched this mountainous country emerge from all around us. So beautiful to be in the heart of nature. So many butterflies of blues, yellows, whites and bird song is all around. We see the occasional cow on the way. I watch Santosh stand up on this bumpy ride and learn to stay centred in himself. He is a yoga teacher and a spiritual seeker who has practiced mindfulness. Ovidi tried to surf as he put it, and stayed up for a while but declared it was not easy to do it. Then Santosh just stood there doing pranic breathing and awareness. He said awareness enables him to stay still. I could feel his energy as I sat there. I felt it to be intense. The others chatted in good spirits wriggling to get comfortable from time to time. We finally got to our destination, the school. In that moment Toot asked if I was going and I decided to go. I wasn't sure if I had the energy but I thought I would go for it. I reflect now on Amo's wise words of seeing life as a challenge. She has a lot of courage I felt.

So off we walked with Anup as our guide accompanied by Mike, Gerri and Lennon (Tamil friends). There were other Tamil guides who led us through the jungle. I had my red backpack with clown gear inside and strode off. A little way into the walk Amo stepped in a funny way and hurt her knee. She was in a lot of pain and I hoped she had not done any real damage. I found out it was her knee. She is certainly tough and wanted to go on but Tim as leader of the group felt it was his responsibility to take her back. He was right, I doubt she would have made it and could have sustained real damage. So just before they went back Anup encouraged them to have a look at the view. It was breathtaking, a vista across a valley with trees and mountains to the horizon. It was just beautiful. I knew I had made the right decision to come on this walk, even if this view was the highlight.

So we walked in single file, sometimes chatting sometimes quiet. I found myself concentrating on the rocks, so it kept me well and truly in the moment. The path could be rocky or loose and sandy so you had to watch your step. We were surrounded by trees that had some likeness to eucalypts but were clearly not. The planet has similarities in different ecosystems and adaptation can be geographically specific or it can also be common in other countries. I enjoyed it and reminded myself that I was in another ecosystem. I watched the nature and the huge rocks and just marvelled at the fresh air, the endless trees and magnificent rocks everywhere. They seemed to me to be very old indeed. A place like this must change you as it is peaceful, perhaps this is why the people are so kind in these tribal villages, they are influenced by the natural world. It was a tough walk at times but we got to a place where Anup indicated it would be a good place to put on clown gear and make up. I laughed to myself on this trip at the willingness to go to remote places to bring joy and felt the theme of 'clowns without borders'. I also thought of the love Seb's personnel have for these people to have us walk 10km (round trip) to visit them. It is highly likely they have never seen clowns. They did know we were coming and Seb's personnel wondered if we should go house to house or do a show.

When we got there we waved to the people. I felt myself move into 'clown' and when it turns on for me I feel a naturalness in my interactions. I am sure I could connect with anyone when I am a clown. It so is a universal language.

We walked past some villagers as they emerged from houses or were using handmade shovels to collect cow dung. We walked into an open area and headed for a large treed area. I saw donkeys in the paddock that were hobbled. We waved at people and caused some commotion as word got around that we had arrived. We were on top of a mountain and it was truly inspiring.

Under the big trees I juggled for the guys and went to make out I was hugging them, one boy ran away. Others laughed as I played with them. I threw balls, blew bubbles, did some balloons and generally played. The others did their tricks. Both Ovidi and Brett are excellent jugglers so I enjoyed watching them juggle together. Puzzle in his quiet way was wonderful doing his double helix balloon with a love heart. He would then give it to someone in the crowd. Toot played with the crowd and interacted. The energy was high and the audience was engaged the whole time. We did a lot of hugging of women (we were not allowed to hug men), I tend to go to shake their hand but pull my hand away and they get it immediately. We are all so similar, this human family, it just amazes me how we can communicate without language. At the end of the show we sang to them in Tamil, thanks to the memory of Ovidi. It was a song about 'I want to be your friend'. It was a lovely show and we said our goodbyes to these shining people.

Youtube clip of Ovidi clowning https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whnEhv8iTLU

We ended up outside the village under some trees for a rest. Puzzle realised his mobile had gone missing and he tried to find it. Anup went to the village to let them know. So hopefully one way or another he gets it back. Anup was aware of time and got us started back. It was pretty hot in the sun and I did find the return walk very exhausting. I made it thanks to Mike who carried my backpack towards the end and helped me up rocks. I was really tired and sweating. It was full on but absolutely beautiful and such a gift. I find nature very grounding.

When we returned to the school the others had had a lovely time with the kids doing magic and tattoos and balloons. So there were so many happy kids there in their best clothes. The teachers had them playing games and our wonderful Lennon was up there getting them going. They did some animal games. Those of us who had returned from the walk were desperate for water, food and a sleep. So we lay on mats whilst the kids did their thing. I was then asked by Mike to juggle. I complied as I had some energy left. I did some juggling making up what I was going to do next. I put my hat on the principal, I noticed after a while he put it behind his back and gently got it back. I then went and pulled up a female child. I noticed the girls were sitting at the back. I wanted to get them involved, I felt we female clowns could be role models for them. I also went to shake their hands and

one girl thought I was getting her up but I didn't, I just shook her hand. Then I went to the boys as well. They were lovely kids all of them. I did my bit and bowed, then sat down.

After a while the tractor was started up and everyone piled back into the trailer tray. I decided to sit with the tractor driver. It was not easy getting comfortable at the front as I had to wedge one foot behind his bottom and the other below. I was conscious I didn't want to crush my foot. So I was careful. Every now and then I'd move my position. My back got sore from banging against the bar. I watched the terrain in front and again marvelled at how rough it was.

We eventually got back to the first village. We got out and some went to sleep, I went and had a bucket shower as I was so sweaty from the walk and and also had some water. We all had to prepare for another show. It was done very quickly. I didn't find this easy as I was very tired and not trained in performance but I went with it and made suggestions.

Toot did some clowning with the group and then suddenly said for me to go in. I hesitatingly asked, 'Now?'. She said, 'Yes'. I was just conscious of my feather duster and I jumped in and made it up. I asked Toot to get a snake as I felt like snake charming using my whistle that goes up and down (high pitch to low pitch). We then ended up clowning around together. It was so much fun, we ended up rolling in the dirt and the audience laughed. We got feedback from other clowns saying it was funny, so I felt happy. When you adlib and just make up the routine it can have the magic or not. Toot and I seem to be very similar and we do gel as clowns. We were both laughing and I was certainly puffing a lot. The other magic moment was juggling with Anup and Brett. We tried to adopt the education theme for children. Brett was the teacher and Anup was the good clown. Toot and I were the two naughty clowns who were not listening and watching while the one good clown arrived on time and learned to juggle. The point was to go to school and learn and not to muck around and be disrespectful. When you focus you learn and achieve your goals. Then the other clowns came on and did their bit, I loved all the performances and felt it was the best ever. I particularly loved the performance where the little glowing thumbs were pressed on and then thrown between people, it looked so effective at night. Then they all gathered the little red lights together and put them in two poys (a poy is a circus toy consisting of a ball at the end of a long string). Ami then did a show twirling the poys and it looked so spectacular that we just watched with awe. All the lights were out and the twirling poys was like a blur of swirls and patterns, it was really great. Then a really beautiful bit happened when Ami touched Tim's clubs and they magically turned on. The two of them then juggled and twirled, it was very spectacular.

At the end of the show we all sang 'If you are happy and you know it shake your … or wiggle your…' and then we waved goodbye to everyone. There were lots of hugs and then afterwards we went and had dinner together. I just looked deeply into the night sky looking at the stars and thinking of the future. I feel a magic in this life and I do trust it.

For me this was a special day, I was amazed at my own energy to keep going, particularly after a 10km walk. I am not that fit and it was truly a miracle. I went to sleep tired but deeply happy. I found my pillow and drifted off to peaceful sleep.

Reflections on the trip to India

Clowning in India was the greatest trip I've been on and I made some wonderful friendships, which I will never forget. I came away with a deeper sense of having experienced the love frequency and how this is what changes our beautiful world.

To love continuously for one month is an experience that cannot be put into words, but I can assure you it is our true nature. To learn to emotionally connect, or at the very least, gain a sense of community, is invaluable. To love strangers and to be there to serve without it being about you, is central. You do have to feel the joy to give it and see through the hardship and poor conditions people are in. You cannot dwell on the injustice or pain they carry. You can be the sunlight in their darkness, but curse it not as they say. That doesn't mean condoning it, it means holding the frequency of love. Love is what they need not sympathy, I am very clear on that. I feel the connection to people all over the world, and yes I see them as my family. Racism for me is something I do not relate to at all as I cannot see the differences, I only see that we are one. My only joy is to see a smile, even if it is random. One doctor that was met on this trip couldn't understand the point of clowns coming in as the people would return to sadness. This doctor was quite rude to Tim and just couldn't connect. Yet what the doctor didn't understand that even one moment out of the misery is something. It is a memory, it is an experience where strangers have actually cared when some people may feel no-one cares. It is the color in the black and white. I recall clowning in a slum in Cambodia and two boys chasing the car as we left. I was told through a translator it was like a movie, they were blown away. The boys were so moved they chased us. I knew when I reached out the window to touch this boy's hand that he was deeply affected by the moment. We touched and I saw it was all about connection not sympathy. In that moment he changed me and I changed him. So yes, one moment makes a difference, it is never a waste of time. This doctor referred to above was clearly not a happy person and perhaps no-one had cared for her, who knows her story. There will be many who don't feel the love.

I found the clowns on this trip very inspirational. They were mostly women who deeply wanted to give to others. We had the most lovely men join us who were also open to love others. I saw such diverse talents, such energy, so much laughter and fun in each person. I just marvelled at the incredibly diversity of the group and support offered by each person to others. I really gained the sense of family. Clowning brings out the best in us, the focus is simply to love and bring happiness to others. It is not about money or personal gratification. When you come into a space with that intention it changes everything. I've been with peace groups who are not at peace, who still harbour anger about the world. I found clowning to be the best expression of peace given that the highest intentions are lived. You cannot help but be changed by such an experience. It made a profound impact on all of us and we gained something special from this trip. I send love to all the clowns and thank them for their part in such a wonderful trip. I will never forget you and you will be in my heart always.

This trip was peace in action, it was without agenda and it was unifying. I have changed and become even more loving and I come back to my own society and I can see the isolation of our technological world. I can see that people are indoors and not outdoors. In India they are living outside and you can see and feel community humming around you. In the West there is a staleness of routine and living for the weekends. In India there is a wildness there and an aliveness. I really felt it. I love Indian people. I know there is corruption there and there is a breakdown of traditions in favour of the capitalist juggernaut. This is a phenomenon worldwide. There is much upheaval and change. However within all this turmoil you can simply love others, so others can simply live.

We live in a truly beautiful world. Our conflicts are based on misunderstanding and fear. When we learn to love unconditionally and stand in the shoes of others, understanding emerges like a sun illuminating our own darkness. We are here to celebrate life not to judge it or compete with it. We are learning to live in harmony with diversity and to bring something of our own light to others. You do not need to be a great performer or have special talents, people respond to love that is genuine. When you see the humor in another's eyes who has no legs or is perhaps suffering from leprosy or social isolation through HIV, you just smile. You see the human being, you do not see the illness. You find yourself relating on a human level. If I ever find myself in a difficult place I hope someone will come to me and offer love and

acceptance of who I am wherever I am. That is the gift of clowning, we are unconditional and there to bring love and share our humanity. As it often turns out we receive far more than we give, as every human being is exceptional. I see no enemies in this world only opportunities to make new friends. Where people are very different I accept the great diversity of life and consider them my greatest teachers. It is all about how you choose to look at others. To step out of conditioned roles and see the divinity within each shining heart. All divinity is, is the love spark, it is not about religion, it is about our true nature which at its highest expression is breathtaking. Imagine a world where everyone dedicates their lives to living to the highest potential, I can assure you there would be no corruption, poverty or crime. The notion of the mythical Eden or Utopia can be a reality when we choose to be the change we wish to see in the world. Just keep choosing love and the new world emerges.

There is more than hope, we can create a beautiful world but first as Gandhi said ‘be the change you wish to see in the world’. I am doing that and I will never go back to my old life. Love is indeed the answer and it illuminates you to see the world as it truly is - magnificent.

The Fool’s Gold: Show love to those abandoned by society. Be the mirror that reveals their true beauty. When we laugh together we bond as humans and all you can see is beauty.

CHAPTER 17

Travelling to the United States for Peace (2013)

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

I traveled to the United States via Hawaii to attend the Rotary Global Peace Forum. The purpose of the trip was to meet peace educators in San Diego.

Below are highlighted a range of interesting speakers and presentations from this forum introducing different ideas on the promotion of peace.

Hawai'i – Overview of the Rotary Global Peace Forum

The Rotary Global Peace Forum was held in Hawai'i on 25 to 27 January, 2013. The Forum location of Hawai'i is symbolic of peace and compassion. Aloha is a term of greeting, it expresses life and love that is shared and Hawai'ians see all people as connected and coming together as one family. This resonates with the Rotary family and with the importance of sharing the goal of peace and living it.

Hawai'i geographically is the most isolated archipelago in the world and is said to house the most biodiversity on earth. Hawai'i is the site of Pearl Harbour and was the target of Japanese bombing which launched the United States into the Second World War. The USS Missouri docked in Pearl Harbour became the site for ending the war with unconditional surrender and the signing of the peace treaty with the Japanese government in 1945.

The Rotary Global Peace Forum attracted Rotarians from around the world, the numbers were approximately 1,800.

The forum was organised over a three day period and the theme was 'Empowering a New Generation's Vision of Peace'. There were six plenary sessions across the three days and approximately 35 workshops. The workshops were divided into communication, action and collaboration workshops. Some workshops were on at the same time and therefore delegates had to make decisions about which ones to attend.

President Sakuji Tanika presented his speech in English and expressed his inspiration for the theme Peace Through Service and how there are many ways to bring peace at the national state level, in communities and in the home. He spoke of his Japanese heritage and of growing up after the Second World War. Peace through service helps people find peaceful solutions and enables peace to grow. The focus of the forum was on linking peace to the environment and he noted that we don't think of the places we live or work, yet environment is everywhere around us. The environment is our home and community and it is important to be happy in our surroundings. When people feel peace in their homes and communities they can do more. He

rationalised that when basic needs are met and people are not concerned with survival then there is less cause for conflict. You can see his speech at - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKNCkIJMN-0

Some of the workshops focused on youth and their voices and skills to solve problems, others were related to schools and philosophy as a form of peace education, and others still focused on peace education and appreciative inquiry. In some workshops the experience of peace was communicated through music, meditation and yoga.

The highlights of the forum were both the pre-recorded session of Aung San Suu Kyi speaking with children at a local school in Hawai'i and later speaking as the recipient of the Hawai'i Peace Award presented by President Sakuji Tanaka. Her speech made clear the needs of the Burmese people in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, sanitation and a wide range of projects that Rotary could become engaged in.

She indicated that there were no Rotary Clubs in Burma but hoped to see some in the future. She spoke of the importance of honesty and that it requires courage, she saw honesty and peace as being close together. To have peace in yourself you have to be honest in yourself. She explained the importance of learning about each other and having the courage to recognise the truth in others. She also mentioned the importance of good communication. (Refer the video of her speech in the keynote section below for further details).

Other speakers spoke of war and the inhumanity of mankind, and that hatred caused people to fear each other rather than look at what we have in common. The message was to learn to live together in peace. There were others that chose to protectively accompany human rights activists to ensure their safety and spoke of the power of presence and the witness as a method of peace. The Hawai'ians spoke of being a seafaring nation and revealed the courage to explore the oceans and that they were driven by values. Local heroes such as Eddie Aikau, a surfer, was mentioned as a national example. Eddie was identified as exhibiting service above self and admired for his fearlessness in attempting to save others on a boat with huge waves. He chose to paddle off with his board and drowned.

Young people were spoken of as the next generation and the ones that Rotary must inspire and empower to create peace in the world. Some mentioned peace education as an important tool in educating the next generation, and others chose the vehicle of the media to communicate stories for peace scholars to gain experience and insights into conflict. Young people spoke of using their skills and initiatives to reconcile opposing groups in school settings, and others used the creative medium of theatre to convey anti-bullying messages and values.

The forum had a wide range of approaches to peace and left delegates with messages to enable them to deeply contemplate how they would implement Peace Through Service at the local club level.

It was a worthwhile conference, and from a global perspective it added another octave to the global voices for peace offering practical visions and generating commitment to the idea that peace is not only possible, it is a decision.

The Deeper Meaning of Aloha by Curby Rule

For those who follow the path of Huna, or are fortunate enough to live in Hawai'i, it is common for us to use the word Aloha. We use it in greetings and farewells and in expressing love. But the word means even more, it is a way of life. Besides these common meanings, the word Aloha holds within itself all one needs to know to interact rightfully in the natural world. These insights describe an attitude or way of life sometimes called 'The Aloha Spirit' or 'The Way of Aloha'.

The spirit of Aloha was an important lesson taught to the children of the past because it was about the world of which they were a part. One early teaching goes like this:

> *Aloha is being a part of all, and all being a part of me. When there is pain – it is my pain. When there is joy – it is also mine. I respect all that is as part of the Creator and part of me. I will not wilfully harm anyone or anything. When food is needed I will take only my need and explain why it is being taken. The earth, the sky, the sea are mine to care for, to cherish and to protect. This is Hawai'ian – this is Aloha![65]*

Excerpts from workshops at the Rotary Peace Forum:

'Dream It Do It' by Ashoka Youth Venture

This was a workshop for young people and essentially the topic was about landmines. So the kids generated ideas on how to remove landmines. It was interesting to learn that a man came up with an idea for rats to sniff out landmines and was later to discover that rats could also detect tuberculosis. This link highlighted the importance of people following their passion, in this case this man's passion were rats.

It was evident from the passion and enthusiasm of young people that they want to be active change agents. Young people demonstrated inspirational ideas and felt confident they could do great things. I thought about myself as an innovator and marvelled at how hard it has been for me to get my ideas accepted and invested in. I have great ideas and I am just amazed that I haven't been discovered. I smile and just trust all is as it should be. That is how I can hold my candle for years, I just have to be at peace with what is. There is no other choice. You cannot force destiny. I dreamed I was teaching peace and definitely my work has grown even if classroom work hasn't, my own personal development has. So I guess when I am ready the doors will naturally open.

Youtube links: Dream It Do It

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Workshop Dream it do it youth testimonial 1.MOV

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Workshop - Dream it do it youth testimonial 2.MOV

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Workshop - Dream it do it youth testimonial 3.MOV

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Workshop - Dream it do it youth testimonial 4.MOV

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii - Dream it do it youth testimonial 5.MOV

An overview from the website:
http://www.youthventure.org/dream-it-do-it-challenge

65 http://www.huna.org/html/deeper.html

Appreciative Inquiry by Dr Donna Ching

Dr. Donna Ching from the University of Hawaii presented her work on Appreciative Inquiry at the Rotary Peace Forum in Hawai'i. It was very stimulating and generated positive discussions.

Appreciative Inquiry is a form of positive thinking that seeks out associations that resonate. The facilitator talked about the importance of resonance (synergy) and people coming together with similar themes. Participants chose a partner and were asked to talk about an inspirational idea. I spoke about my project of an International SPEAK UP Award and showed her the pictures of myself as a World Peace Clown. My partner indicated she is an educator. We both realized we had resonance and synergies through her work as an educator in Uganda and as a teacher of English. The work she was undertaking was to teach English as a way to bridge the diverse tribes who spoke different languages. English would enable them to communicate together in a common language. The teaching of English was also providing a business language which would have spin offs for trade. So through our exchange we were able to see where we could work together. The idea is to build on the strengths of people and see where they overlap and can produce positive outcomes.

This could be an excellent technique for Rotarians and if actively applied Rotarians and peace scholars could be facilitated to look for synergies where they can work together for the greater good.

Appreciative Inquiry is defined by Wikipedia as follows:

> *Appreciative Inquiry (sometimes shortened to 'AI') is primarily an organizational development method which focuses on increasing what an organization does well rather than on eliminating what it does badly. Through an inquiry which appreciates the positive and engages all levels of an organization (and often its customers and suppliers) it seeks to renew, develop and build on this. Its proponents view it as being applicable to organizations facing rapid change or growth.[1] Stowell and West (1991) have been credited with the development of the 'Appreciative Inquiry Method' (AIM). The Appreciative Inquiry method was proposed in the 1990s and arose out of the lessons learnt from research undertaken into the methods of knowledge elicitation (West,1991). AIM was developed over the years and examples can be seen in Stowell and West (1990) as part of the process of knowledge elicitation and in gathering of expertise in (West, 1992; West and Thomas, 2005; West and Braganca, 2011); as a means of gaining understanding of complex decision making in Smith's (2001) work in mental health; and in understanding management problems Stowell (2001-2009)in a number of systems workshops within the Systems Practice for Managing Complexity network.[66]*

Youtube Links: Appreciative Inquiry

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Speaker on Appreciative Inquiry Part 1

Rotary Global Peace Forum Hawaii Speaker on Appreciative Inquiry Part 2

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Appreciative Inquiry Part 3.MOV

Rotary Global Peace Forum Hawaii Speaker on Appreciative Inquiry Part 4

66 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_inquiry

Practices for Cultivating Peaceful Communication in Schools

Kailula High School teachers attended the Rotary Peace Forum in Hawai'i. The teachers explained their program for promoting peace in the classroom. They spoke of thinking differently and the importance of philosophy. They invited the Dalai Lama to attend the school and hear the children's questions, he was impressed, they said. Their work highlights the importance of philosophy and has proved successful in Hawai'i.

The focus on teaching philosophy spread from one teacher in a school to around 40 teachers desiring to be facilitators. They explained that the Dalai Lama came to their school and the kids asked some profound questions which got him thinking. Kids have fresh outlooks and refreshing ideas.

The group of teachers had a session whereby each person introduced their name and what they liked and if they had any obstacles in peace education. We had a large group and people held a ball of wool and wound it around a cardboard tube. They spoke of their name and revealed more about themselves. It was really lovely. Unfortunately there was not enough time for everyone to speak. The group was really large for this exercise, but it was positive. They had a thumbs up/down to evaluate the session. It was encouraging for me to hear more about peace education.

In my REAL HOPE work, philosophy and critical inquiry is included within a values, peace and anti-bullying framework. I found it interesting to see experiential education emerging in a school curriculum seeking to encourage children with critical inquiry, introspection and discovering real meaning; therefore, validating the wisdom of to know thyself and be true. I found this session validating experiential education and self-inquiry. Moreover, the teachers indicated they have established a Philosopher in Residence program, this is a similar concept to the Australian Artist in Residence Program. In respect of my own work this could mean basing at a school a trusted peace clown with conflict resolution skills. Children could approach this person known to have compassion and be assisted to learn to communicate clearer, problem solve and resolve conflicts at school and home in a way that is playful and positive.

Youtube Links: Cultivating Peaceful Communications

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Workshop - Cultivating Peaceful Communications in Schools Part 1.

Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Workshop - Cultivating Peaceful Communications in Schools Part 2

Further information about promoting peace in the classroom is provided by the link as follows: http://www.civilbeat.com/articles/2012/04/14/15546-philosophy-for-children-promoting-peace-in-the-classroom/

Keynote Speaker Aung San Suu Kyi

A definition about Aung San Suu Kyi from Wikipedia:

> *Aung San Suu Kyi is a Burmese opposition politician and chairperson of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Burma. In the 1990 general election, the NLD won 59% of the national votes and 81% (392 of 485) of the seats in Parliament. She had, however, already been detained under house arrest before the elections. She remained under house arrest in Burma for almost 15 of the 21 years from 20 July 1989 until her most recent release on 13 November 2010,[10] becoming one of the world's most prominent political prisoners.*[67]

Many were excited at the speech of Aung San Suu Kyi. We heard two addresses. One was to young people and the other to the Rotary Global Peace Forum. What I noted with the children's session was that the MC spoke for them. I would have loved to have heard their voices rather than have them stand up in silence. It is so important to hear the voices of children; they have much to teach us. Aung San Suu Kyi said she is more interested in the questions as they tell her more than the answers. Questions also show depth and awareness, the questions of the young people were excellent and penetrating.

When she spoke I felt her to be a humble person and she confessed she prefers to listen than to speak, an unusual quality in a politician. She spoke of her hero being her father. She mentioned that house arrest for her was a time to be alone. Having just come out of a 10 day silent retreat myself I could truly see the merit of that. Most people want company but there is a great wisdom and peace that comes from silence.

She used the time constructively and structured her days during the week to do the work she felt she needed to do, to read books that needed to be read and keep listening to the BBC world service to observe events around the world. I recall one of her house helpers saying she was a quiet woman who kept to herself, so silence was her friend. I am sure the military hoped she would crack or give up, but such is the power of compassion, conviction and inner strength that arises from selflessness. This is a power that the military cannot understand. What I do know is that it gives meaning to the phrase … '…it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' This kingdom is simply the place of virtues where the power of love is the real power. She saw compassion as the real courage.

Aung San Suu Kyi only accepted the invitation to speak at the Rotary Global Peace Forum because of the peace theme, she was interested in peace and prosperity in her country, and recognised that the business people in Rotary and the infrastructural work they do could alleviate the desperate need of her people. She also acknowledged the need for conflict resolution, education, water, free health care and healing for her people. All the years under military occupation have decimated her country, making it one of the poorest in Asia.

She spoke at length about corruption and the lack of ethics. In Asia this is a big issue, I learned this first hand through the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. We met some corrupt officials as part of our study. The kickbacks and the money exchanging hands was evident even in the community to ensure services in hospitals, schools and so on. Everyone wanted money. Even in the case of hospitals the poor people had to supply all the medical equipment, they are the poorest of the poor. Such is the notion of poverty and lack of ethics that is an outcome of desperation. The people suffer enormously. This for me was the theme - the needless suffering of people, the lack of empathy and the genuine desire for real peace. Aung Sun Suu Kyi saw it as compassion and courage. Thus the courage to admit mistakes, the courage to make changes, rather than feeling

67 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aung_San_Suu_Kyi

courage when holding the end of a gun. In truth, violence is the opposite to courage. It takes great courage to face what you fear non-violently.

It took her 20 years to get a dialogue started with the military as she indicated that they saw outcomes in terms of win/lose. She said they thought if they dialogued they would lose all rather than share through negotiated settlements. Such was the mindset of the military- an intractable position unable to move, whereby the Burmese people increasingly suffered ethnic tensions, imprisonment and torture. Moreover, she stated that children suffered malnutrition due to worms. There was a constant sense of insecurity, therefore no safe place to rebuild their country. They experienced distrust ethnically and towards the military that was causing tensions and more conflict. It was clear all disparate groups need to come together now in Burma - the military, civilians, bureaucrats, and ethnic groups

I contemplated the military junta that still holds power in Burma and whether Aung San Suu Kyi is being used as an international speaker to attract funds to Burma and what would be the outcome of that, or if they are slowly embracing a democratic process? Would more funds to Burma strengthen the military junta or would it strengthen the people? Clearly Aung San Suu Kyi is willing to be that spokesperson for the good of her people, and appears to live the honesty and courage she asks of others.

Her speech was inspirational and urgent. Perhaps Rotary will organize a coordinated effort to assist the Burmese people.

I recalled on the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program in Bangkok our tour of Northern Thailand and meeting with Karen Burmese organisations. The ones we met were focused on keeping the Karen culture alive by teaching the culture in the forests. We met the backpacking doctors who aided injured, pregnant and dying people in the forests. They were escorted often by the Karen Liberation Army. They were incredibly brave people. I noted some westeners helping them, I admired the courage I witnessed.

On the Rotary program we were briefed and informed about a range of challenges the Burmese people faced. The war inside Burma was one of the longest civil wars in the world. There were at least 1 million displaced persons in Eastern Burma. Militarisation and mega development projects were problematic in respect of displacing people and human rights violations. HIV Aids was an issue, we learned of one in three sex workers testing positive for HIV in 2005. In the eastern states bordering Thailand, malaria was the leading cause of 42% of deaths. Disease was a major issue in Burma. We visited on the Thai side of the border the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (AAPP). We were shown displays of photos of people who had been taken as political prisoners and the history of oppression in Burma. We were shown pictures of typical torture techniques used at Insein Prison, an ominous name that reflected the reality of torture. There was a list of 1400 political prisoners. This non-government organisation provided assistance for families and networked with international human rights groups.

Hundreds of thousands of Burmese attempted to cross the border into Thailand. We saw people living in make-shift shanty towns, bits of plastic were roof's, they were desperately poor. It felt strange as a westerner looking at them in their reality and coming from my own. Very hard to reconcile internally. The ethnic groups travelling across the border were: Karen, Karenni, Mon and Shan. I have scant knowledge of these groups but understand ethnic tensions were exploited. Thus many of the Burmese people were in refugee camps inside Thailand but as Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention people become non-people. I did meet one woman in Mae Lai who I was told was talking to the UNHCR and was planning to come to Melbourne. I can report I met her in Melbourne, so people do get out, thank goodness. The irony was in the only picture taken of me in the refugee camp, she is the only face in the picture. At the time I didn't know we would meet again.

There is a wonderful quote by Aung Sun Suu Kyi which says:

> *The dream of society ruled by kindness, reason and justice is a dream as old as civilised man. Does it have to be an impossible dream?*

Perhaps dreams come true, that will be up to all of us to support that vision.

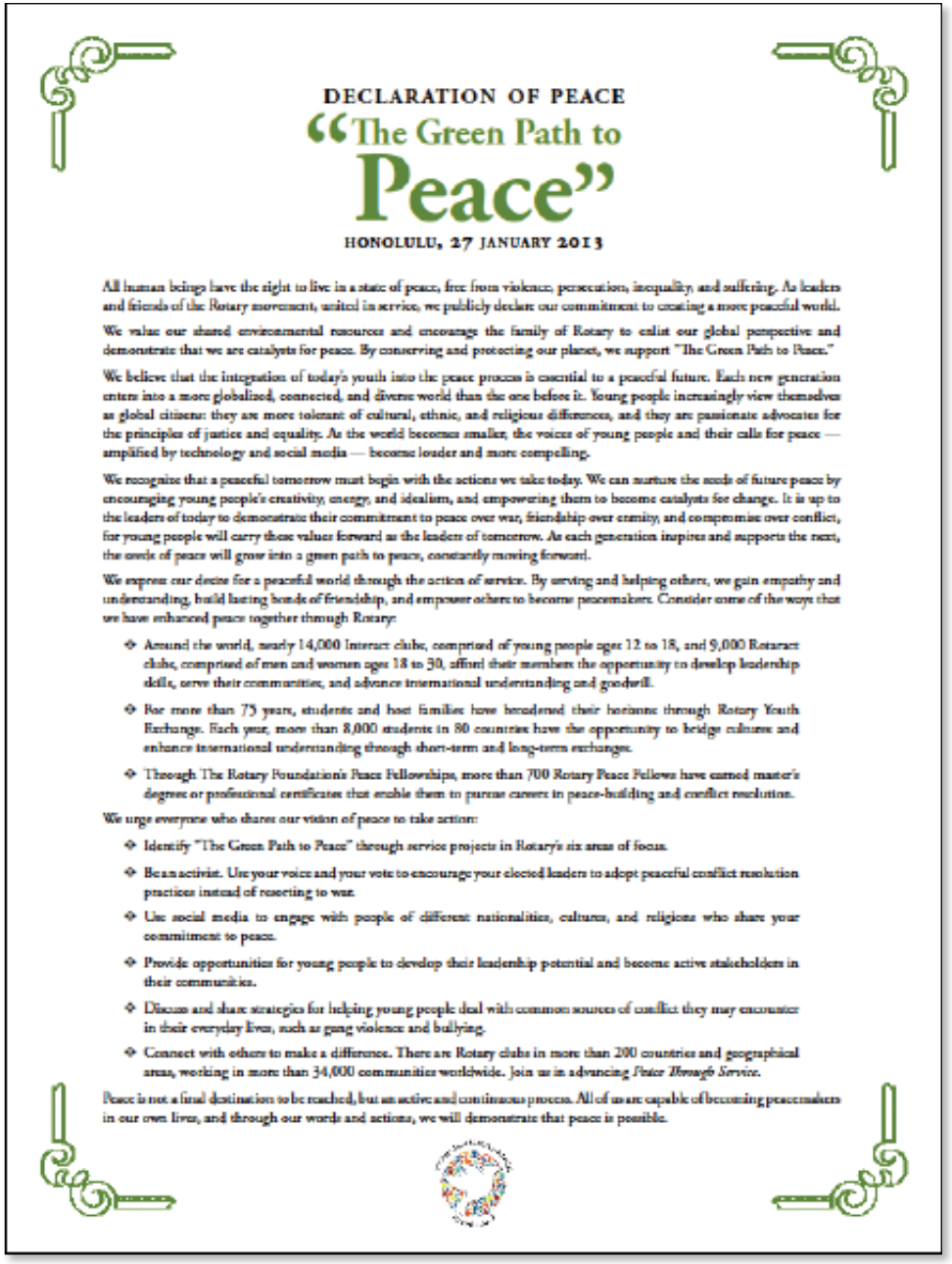
The Rotary Club of Point Loma in San Diego reported on Aung Sun Suu Kyi in their newsletter 'Rotarpoint', highlighted below:

> *Nobel Laureate Receives Award at Rotary Global Peace Forum*
>
> *Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of Mymar's democracy movement and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, delivered the keynote address at the Rotary Global Peace Forum in Honolulu, Hawaii, January 25-27. She was honoured with the Hawaii Peace Award for her longstanding pursuit of democracy through peaceful, nonviolent means.*
>
> *Suu Kyi told Forum attendees that absolute peace is an unattainable goal, but one that we must nevertheless continue to endeavor toward. She said the democratic institutions are necessary to guarantee human rights. 'The kind of peace we want is very simple. We want permanent peace,' said Suu Kyi. She also noted that young people have an important role to play. The Honolulu forum emphasized the importance of getting youth involved in the peace process. 'We must help our young people so that they may be able to take over our task of nation building,' Suu Kyi said. 'We depend on our young people to take us forward.' More than 1,800 Rotarians, Rotary alumni, and supporters of Rotary's peace program took part in this event, the second of three peace forums planned by R.I. President Sakuji Tanaka. The first was held in Berlin in November, and a third is planned for Hiroshima, Japan, May 17-18. 'Rotary builds peace and international understanding through education, humanitarian service, and connecting with youth,' Tanaka said. 'To ensure a lasting legacy in this arena, we must engage young people and the new generations to come in a meaningful way, and empower them to carry Rotary's peace-building efforts into the future.*

Excerpt from the Rotary News, January, 29, 2013 By Arnold Grahl

Youtube links for further information:
Live Link to Aung San Suu Kyi at a School in Hawaii: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wc5K9LK-cu7k
Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Speaker Aung San Suu Kyi Part 1.MOV http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJshQvJd-rY
Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Speaker Aung San Suu Kyi Part 2.MOV http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXwEEQQlik8
Rotary Peace Forum Hawaii Speaker Aung San Suu Kyi Part 3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuYGLlpBkyU

Rotary formulated the following Peace Declaration for the Hawaii conference:



DECLARATION OF PEACE

"The Green Path to Peace"

HONOLULU, 27 JANUARY 2013

All human beings have the right to live in a state of peace, free from violence, persecution, inequality, and suffering. As leaders and friends of the Rotary movement, united in service, we publicly declare our commitment to creating a more peaceful world.

We value our shared environmental resources and encourage the family of Rotary to enlist our global perspective and demonstrate that we are catalysts for peace. By conserving and protecting our planet, we support "The Green Path to Peace."

We believe that the integration of today's youth into the peace process is essential to a peaceful future. Each new generation enters into a more globalized, connected, and diverse world than the one before it. Young people increasingly view themselves as global citizens: they are more tolerant of cultural, ethnic, and religious differences, and they are passionate advocates for the principles of justice and equality. As the world becomes smaller, the voices of young people and their calls for peace — amplified by technology and social media — become louder and more compelling.

We recognize that a peaceful tomorrow must begin with the actions we take today. We can nurture the seeds of future peace by encouraging young people's creativity, energy, and idealism, and empowering them to become catalysts for change. It is up to the leaders of today to demonstrate their commitment to peace over war, friendship over enmity, and compromise over conflict, for young people will carry these values forward as the leaders of tomorrow. As each generation inspires and supports the next, the seeds of peace will grow into a green path to peace, constantly moving forward.

We express our desire for a peaceful world through the action of service. By serving and helping others, we gain empathy and understanding, build lasting bonds of friendship, and empower others to become peacemakers. Consider some of the ways that we have enhanced peace together through Rotary:

- Around the world, nearly 14,000 Interact clubs, comprised of young people ages 12 to 18, and 9,000 Rotaract clubs, comprised of men and women ages 18 to 30, afford their members the opportunity to develop leadership skills, serve their communities, and advance international understanding and goodwill.
- For more than 75 years, students and host families have broadened their horizons through Rotary Youth Exchange. Each year, more than 8,000 students in 80 countries have the opportunity to bridge cultures and enhance international understanding through short-term and long-term exchanges.
- Through The Rotary Foundation's Peace Fellowships, more than 700 Rotary Peace Fellows have earned master's degrees or professional certificates that enable them to pursue careers in peace-building and conflict resolution.

We urge everyone who shares our vision of peace to take action:

- Identify "The Green Path to Peace" through service projects in Rotary's six areas of focus.
- Be an activist. Use your voice and your vote to encourage your elected leaders to adopt peaceful conflict resolution practices instead of resorting to war.
- Use social media to engage with people of different nationalities, cultures, and religions who share your commitment to peace.
- Provide opportunities for young people to develop their leadership potential and become active stakeholders in their communities.
- Discuss and share strategies for helping young people deal with common sources of conflict they may encounter in their everyday lives, such as gang violence and bullying.
- Connect with others to make a difference. There are Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas, working in more than 34,000 communities worldwide. Join us in advancing *Peace Through Service*.

Peace is not a final destination to be reached, but an active and continuous process. All of us are capable of becoming peacemakers in our own lives, and through our words and actions, we will demonstrate that peace is possible.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

A range of messages were shared with delegates in respect to living peace in one's life, in assisting others to resolve conflicts, protective accompaniment, cultural philosophies, virtues and values, expression through the arts, promoting peace through the media, positive inquiry, humanitarian aid, environmental ideas, personal stories, voyager projects, philosophy in schools, student organisations, social businesses and assisting countries with rebuilding Burma.

Overall there was an excellent array of workshops, ideas and approaches to peace which helped to dissolve some of the traditional visions of peace and to discover alternative ways to action peace in communities.

Rotary has the potential to facilitate the joining of hands in peace and friendship to work together in a spirit of truthfulness, fairness, and goodwill to benefit all for a new future.

Gandhi's words are a fitting conclusion … 'to be the change you wish to see in the world'.

The Fool's Gold: Service above Self is working together for the good of humanity.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

Campaign Idea: Smile to Disarm America

I spoke to a range of people to see if I could get this campaign going.

I rang Patch Adams to speak to him about a campaign idea I had that was inspired by the shootings at a school in the United States. Unfortunately I didn't have enough time and support to make this happen. However, Patch was supportive and said I could indicate that he endorsed what I was trying to do. I realised he had other projects that he was committed to. I spoke with Rotarians in Hawaii and on the mainland United States in the Los Angeles and San Diego areas. There was some initial interest but I wasn't able to get the support in time.

I approached Unity Consciousness people to see if they were interested in clowning around, they said they were busy.

I approached Peace Educators in San Diego to also jump on board, but other events were on and situations arose that rendered it not possible.

At the end of the day you can't change the world alone, it is indeed a collaborative effort. Yet I believe in planting seeds and getting ideas out there and not to worry if they haven't germinated, they will one day. So I say to people to get on board with Peace and make it happen, it is not an ideal it is a reality when you choose it. This was the idea I came up with and this is the Press Release is highlighted below.

PRESS RELEASE: Smile to Disarm America

The recent controversy over the gun laws has further divided those who believe in the right to bear arms and those who believe in public safety, particularly for children in schools.

This has served to bring the United States to a crossroad. Many believe that violence is a fact of life, albeit an unfortunate one. However, there ARE non-violent alternatives, and these are advocated by peace educators but seldom understood by the public.

Susan Carew, a Rotary Peace Scholar and World Peace Clown has just arrived from the Hawaii Peace Forum. She is advocating a different form of community peace making. As Peacefull the clown she teaches the REAL HOPE program which focuses on clowning, peace education and happiness.

Happiness connects with the US Constitution - the right to life, liberty and happiness. She is here in the United States to meet with peace educators, visit schools and speak in public forums about peace education and happiness.

Susan aka Peacefull clown traveled to Russia orphanages with Dr. Patch Adams. She asks – 'come out on the streets as peaceful happy clowns and smile at your community. Why not put the unity back in community? Every child loves a clown as they feel happy and safe. Why not be a clown for peace?'

Patch Adams supports the initiative 'Smile to Disarm America'. Peacefull is asking Americans to come out on the street on Valentine's Day February 14 to show your love for children by being a clown or dressing colourfully and smiling at members of your community.

Peacefull the clown will join a group of Rotarians, clowns, peace educators and local school children in San Diego, meeting at (location, time). As peace clowns they will be smiling at people on the street and asking people on the street what they think about real peace and how they would go about creating a positive healthy society that upholds the American values of the 'right to life, liberty and happiness'.

Why not 'be the change you wish to see in the World' as Mahatma Gandhi so wisely envisaged. This is the Statue of Liberty that enlightens the World.

The Fool's Gold: It is the intention that matters not the outcome. One can only throw a stone into the pond of reflection, we see the ripples but have no idea who is affected by an idea, especially when it seems nothing is happening.

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

Los Angeles - Hollywood and Real Characters

I stayed with a friend in Los Angeles on route to San Diego. I decided to go and explore Los Angeles. I was particularly interested in the tinsel town image of Hollywood. I was mindful of the movies that have come out of the United States and how these films have influenced the world. Whilst I have spent many wonderful hours watching Disney movies and other famous films, it was the violent films I contemplated on whilst walking Hollywood Boulevard. I wondered whether the film makers could make the connection to the violence they promote and how that is changing the world. I contemplated the glorification of violence and how it is subtly perceived as 'strong'.

On my list of 'must see' was Hollywood not for the normal reasons of getting a peek at stars, but because I knew that the epicentre of violent films had come from this area. My feeling was to walk around and reflect on this movie industry and how it influences society. It is difficult to say that society always creates the films, I sense that films also create society. So for myself as a peacemaker I had to just go and have a look around and get a feel for the place.

Here is an excerpt from my blog:

> *…I have made my way to Hollywood, got out on the corner of Vine/Hollywood. I am curious. I find myself in a café listening to this guy asking this girl if she wants to be Brittney Spears. This young girl has a guy with a long ponytail and a woman with dark glasses talking to her. I can't hear that well but I hear words like 'tape', 'viral', 'money', 'you want to sell to people', 'experience', 'music video' and I have to smile at this industry.*
>
> *When I was walking down Sunset Boulevard I was thinking about the violence that has come out of this small section of Los Angeles. I see the stars on the pavement like a pathway to stardom. I feel the dreams here, yet does it bring people happiness?*
>
> *I overheard the guy saying:' … If you have a great script, you will get by if you have a great story. In the end they don't care about anything else. If you have the best production values in the world, design, and you have no story… essentially you won't get anywhere'.*
>
> *Yet in my view the greatest stories have not been told. We have made up for lack of talent with special effects and an industry which I imagine would have lots of hoops to jump through. I can see it would be easy to lose yourself in an imagined future and money.*
>
> *I am watching the young girl who is doing a lot of listening, she is wearing a military style top and she looks tired to me. She sits with two movie 'insiders'.*
>
> *The guy is a good talker and hasn't stopped much, it feels like a sale to me. The woman appears to be backing him up so I am not sure what they are seeking to do with this young girl. He said: 'You have to look good, you are attractive.'*
>
> *I find it interesting to be in a place where people are seen to be, and are hopeful to be seen. I see myself sitting here in my red beret and red top and wonder how I appear. Perhaps I am in the industry perhaps I am seen as a hopeful, perhaps I am rich, perhaps not. Although I am sure they know through brand names who is in and who is not. I couldn't be in this type of world, I have to be myself.*
>
> *I am at Starbucks and have just met an afro American who lives here. He said some people are okay some are not. He said he loves the mountains but wouldn't climb them, too high. He had a bit of an unstable look in his face and I sensed he was gay. Yet my inner feeling is of warmth towards him. I showed him the 100 foot wave in the New York Times and he was amazed at the surfer. I said he is either brave or crazy.*
>
> *Another guy walked in, about 60 years old, with his typewriter, I am surprised he has a typewriter. He spotted me as he came in and sat with me. I notice a script on his typewriter. I only think now why he might have done that, perhaps for me, because he bought something. I exchanged a few words with him asking if he was a local. He said yes, I asked what it was like here. He said it was okay. I saw he wasn't that happy in his eyes. He went and came back and I said goodbye, he said he'd be back but didn't come back. So interesting the discourse.*
>
> *I just had a chat with a retired New York policeman. He apparently arrived in New York from New Jersey when he was 15. I met him as an older man say around 65, and in a wheelchair and on dialysis. He has had to come to Starbucks to plug in his battery to power his wheelchair. He went to another place earlier and they wouldn't let him plug in. He showed me the stump on his leg. He has lost his foot through diabetes. He has lost peripheral vision. He had a scar from his belly button to the top of his chest where they opened him up. He said he has to go on dialysis three days a week. That is where they take out his blood, clean it and replace it. He told me he has nine children (five girls four boys) and they don't know he is in a wheelchair. He explained that some were high court judges and lawyers. He doesn't want to worry them about his illness and pull them out of work. I said it is important for them to know. They love their dad, it sounds like he is a kind father. I asked him about policing in New York and he said there was a lot of violence. He said he was good at picking people, he became perceptive. I asked him what he learned, he said to shoot. I asked him what caused the violence, he seemed to think it wouldn't change. I asked about parenting. I told him I teach values and positive behaviour. I questioned role models. He didn't disagree but didn't really add to it, I guess his experience was not so much to solve the social problems but to police them. He had had disappointments in his marriage as well. He told me he threw out his wife when he caught her sleeping with a man. He came home early and nearly shot the guy. He said the guy fled and he threw her out. He said he has been single ever since. I thought, it is a lonely life for some. He is very independent. He is plugging in his electric wheelchair so he can power it to get to the hospital. He will get some McDonald's and then go home to Long Beach. It's not easy travelling around in a wheelchair given his career. I had a debate with the girls here at Starbucks as they wouldn't let him use the toilet, he had to buy something. They wouldn't give the code. So I bought him a donut so he could get the code. What is $2? (I didn't realise at the time that was not a good idea given sugar). The girl tried to explain they get all sorts in here and some spit on her and are disrespectful. They said it is a rule and if they give to one they have to give to others. It made me think about our society and how we treat people, I know love is the answer, and if we were in each other's shoes, what then?. At the end of the day he is a man on dialysis, will harm no-one, he is plugging in his wheel chair so he is mobile and needs to go to the toilet. Let him go is my vote. I asked this man how he goes on, he says he never gives up. He did consider shooting himself but stopped himself. Incredible to think that a man who protected the public, was a strong policeman, and now he is physically declining and still strong. Yet he is vulnerable. He told me he didn't shoot himself as he had something to live for. We talked for a while and showed him my photos of clowning and saw joy in his eyes, so I was happy to share. I said goodbye to Casey.*
>
> *Then a transvestite passed by the window and saw me. S/he came in dressed as a she and asked to sit with me. S/he chose me as there were empty seats but sat with me. S/he had a friend outside. S/he proceeded to tell me s/he likes white guys. We spoke of love and s/he told me the story of her life. She said she was from Mexico (I will use the female pronoun as in truth she was). Yes a transvestite, but really a female in a man's body. She had a beautiful 20s style hat and a pretty face. She*

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

told me she had no friends and what would happen if she died, who would collect the body? She had no friends. Her father lived here and apparently tried to rape her, and she went to a shelter then a mental institution to deal with the trauma of her father. I suggested forgiveness, but realise it is not easy. She was thinking of going back to Mexico to be with her mother. I thought that was a good idea, so important to be with people who love you. She then told me some stories of past lives and how she talked to Einstein and he had a time machine. Yes I know it sounds far out. She told me some far out stories but to me it was not about my judgment it was to be an ear so she felt heard. I listened intently with great warmth and suspended my disbelief. She said she was influenced by Satan, I did believe that as I saw kindness in her. She said she could be unforgiving of people. I said we are all human. She also said she was an angel, and later a fallen one. I saw nothing but a person who was gentle trying to gain a sense of identity. She said she didn't want anyone to see her beauty. Yet I could and I said so. I couldn't go with the negative side of what she was saying. I just saw good. She was grateful and we shook hands. She said, 'We may meet again', I said, 'You never know'. She said I was an angel. I truly love people I don't care what shape or size or color, if I can be a mirror to show them their beauty I will be that for them. I am not here to judge anyone.

Then I walked down to the Metro, it was about 7:30 pm, and caught the train towards Union Station getting off at Pershing Station. I missed my stop and then had to go back one stop. I left the station and was disoriented. I asked a policeman about the buses, he was polite, especially since I was a foreigner, but didn't really know so he suggested I go to the map but I didn't recognise the bus numbers, I knew my bus was 40. I ended up asking a dark guy (funny how I think I need to refer to color, it is irrelevant in truth) and he asked a lady in Spanish and she, through her child (translator), told me to go back up 4th street and then left. I found another person who walked me to the bus stop. I found out on the bus that I had caught the last bus and the 40 didn't go all the way. I had to get off at an intersection and catch the Line 10 going East toward Whitwood Mall, then I had to get off and walk north up Norwalk for 1 mile to Beverley and then left and walk until Carly, where I was staying. On the bus I met a very interesting man around 70 who was an educator in drug and alcohol. He was teaching people maths and literacy to try and help them hold down a job. Many had difficulties. He said only 20% came out of drugs, 80% stayed in it. This was a better recovery rate compared to the 7% national rate. He told me the people into drugs were across society but they typically had suffered a trauma and sought to feel better by taking drugs. Those who did come out made the decision that they had had enough. I told him about clowns and the positivity and how good it would be for kids to experience happiness without drugs and to reach out to community. I told him it was disarming to smile and it could be done very gently and in a fun way. He said he liked what I was saying. He also commented on Australians, he said they have a different way of seeing that he noted when he met them. He said, 'They travel, whereas Americans don't'. That was true, we travel a lot. We tend to not fear the world and go into it to explore it. I find I have no fear, that is why I can be on a bus at 8 pm in Los Angeles and then walk home. He said that in some parts of LA you have to be careful and there would be some who would hurt a clown, but he did acknowledge that would be rare. I sense the truth in that. We had a lovely chat and he was all smiles. He said I was unique or something to that affect. I felt the warmth and we shook hands and parted, leaving deep impressions.

I walked up the road just enjoying the fresh air and hoping I would recognise the intersection, I've only been there once. I found it and thankfully did recognise it. Had I caught the bus this morning out the front I would have been lost but instead I walked to the shops and the intersection of Beverly and Norwalk. So all was good. As I came in Elia was relieved I was okay.

The Fool's Gold: To embrace the unity in diversity. We are all actors on a stage. Beyond the performance we are one.

Michael Beckwith: An Emissary of Peace

My friend Elia asked me to go to her spiritual church. It turned out the teacher was Michael Beckwith. A friend in Australia had raved about him and said he was very switched on. The church is called Agape. This is an excerpt from his website http://agapelive.com/index.php?page=3

The website highlights the purpose of the Agape Church, as follows:

…Dr. Michael Beckwith's life is a living testament to building spiritual community. In the 1970's he began an inward journey into the teachings of East and West, and today teaches universal truth principles found in the New Thought-Ancient Wisdom tradition of spirituality. Gifted with a vision of a trans-denominational spiritual community, in 1986 he founded the Agape International Spiritual Center upon his faith in that original vision.

Dr. Michael Bernard Beckwith in a personal letter to him Coretta Scott King wrote, 'I greatly admire what you are doing to bring about the Beloved Community, which is certainly what my dear husband worked for and ultimately gave his life.'

Recently described in 'What Is Enlightenment?' magazine as a 'non-aligned trans-religious progressive,' Dr. Beckwith shares his powerful conviction of creating the Beloved Community through his participation on international panels with other peacemakers and spiritual leaders including Dr. T. Ariyarante of Sri Lanka, and Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mohandas K. Gandhi. He is co-founder of the Association for Global Thought, an organization dedicated to planetary healing and transformation.

Dr. Beckwith is the originator of the Life Visioning Process, which he teaches throughout the country along with meditation, scientific prayer, and the spiritual benefits of selfless service. He facilitates retreats, workshops and seminars. His books include: 'Inspirations of the Heart', 'Forty Day Mind Fast Soul Feast', and 'A Manifesto of Peace'.

Dr. Beckwith's achievement as a humanitarian and emissary of peace have been widely acclaimed. In 2003, his activities were enumerated when he was written into the Congressional Record of the 107th congress. He is the recipient of numerous humanitarian awards, some of which include: The 2004 Africa Peace Award, Thomas Kilgore Prophetic Witness Award, Howard Thurman Stained Glass Window Award by Morehouse College, a commissioned oil portrait for Morehouse's prestigious Hall of preachers, and the Humanitarian Award of the National Conference for Compassion and Justice.

Thousands gather weekly to receive inspiration from Dr. Beckwith at the Agape International Spiritual Center in Culver City, California. Together, Drs. Michael Beckwith and Rickie Byars Beckwith have written lyrics and music performed by the Agape International Choir in concert venues worldwide. Always in demand, their performances inspire peace and goodwill in the global community. They share their lives with their four adult children and six grandchildren.

Here is an excerpt, from my blog, about meeting him:

…On my last day in Los Angeles Elia and I traveled to see Michael Beckwith. He is an inspirational speaker and founder of Agape Ministries. We got there a little earlier and walked around. There were stalls set up as little tents with people selling their healing arts, clothes and coffee. Elia queued for us to get good seats inside. It was a large conference-like room with the seats all pointing towards the stage. There were pictures of Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Mother Theresa and others at the back. I sat close to the front and asked the organiser if I could film.

They started off with prayer/meditation and an introduction. They have a big screen where they advertise what is going on, I smiled as the announcer sounded like a radio jock. They had a wonderful musician singing about forgiveness. This was not a typical church but one that had its roots in the African American spiritual churches which are full of music and life.

Michael's wife, Ricky, played music and was excellent. She has a beautiful voice, very moving. Eventually Michael Beckwith came on. I had no plans to see this guy but my friend Elia is a regular attendee to these services and took me. My friend Bronwen loves Michael Beckwith, so I knew of him and had a copy of his speech on my iPod.

The guy sitting next to me was a hoot. He was a clown definitely. He said to me, 'We are squashed in like sardines'. I simply said: As long as we don't smell like sardines' and he was off laughing so loud. I loved his openness. His friend said his other friend was receiving the live streaming and could hear him laughing. He laughed a lot. I was a little uncomfortable but reminded myself that all are one and if there is any discomfort in me it is for me to look at that. I actually liked him and enjoyed his spirit. There was one part of the service where they encouraged us to talk to the person next to us and I noticed he found eye contact hard. So I felt he was shy and the laughter somehow masked this insecurity yet enabled him to be heard. He hugged easily and it is all part of the healing process for all. Michael spoke of the new spirit rising and that we are one. Most of what he said I resonated with and I believe that gratitude is the attitude. They contrasted themselves with the church and a judging God preferring a loving God that loves all and is all. I considered him a revolutionary as he did speak against the evils of society. What I particularly loved was a comment that business was to serve peace. Now I had never thought of that before, but indeed it is true. The goods and services are really about serving needs in people, albeit manufactured needs, but it is to serve the community so they feel peace. The economic system is seen as stability as people are relatively satisfied in respect of their needs and wants. It is a false security but nonetheless it is what governments want. I really loved the idea of business serving peace. It ties in with the social business concept where people are raising money for the greater good. I think that is the movement away from self interest and greed where we see ourselves as served as part of a collective and what we do to others we do to ourselves. He spoke very passionately yet I felt he was not happy. He did confess he had felt dark as he had visited a sad place. I can't recall where he went, maybe Haiti, I am guessing. So he is healing as well. They also spoke at length about giving and they have tithing, I am not into that so much as I feel people will give out of love, and that love is God in reality. So I believe in just allowing the church to grow or diminish naturally. People will keep it going if it is in alignment with their truth.

I managed to make my way to see Michael after the service and gave him some brochures. I asked to interview him for Youtube and he agreed. I did try and contact Catherine his assistant but she didn't respond. I notice they have a peace ministry. Unfortunately they didn't call, but as I often think these days, it was not meant to be, if it was they would have. So I just enjoy the experience of love and peace and know it is all exactly as it should be.

The Fool's Gold: All is exactly as it should be. The true ministry of peace is a healing ministry.

Clowning on the Streets of San Diego

In San Diego I met some Clown Conspiracy people and they offered to take me for a drive to Los Angeles to see a 'jugglejam'. The guys I met there I would call masters of the universe, they are excellent jugglers or object manipulators (a new term I learned). They were fantastic to put it mildly.

When I returned to San Diego I did send an email around to clowns in the Clown Conspiracy club to invite them to come and play but there were no takers. So one day I was walking the streets for exercise and this guy happened to smile as he walked past. Half an hour later we saw each other again and this time we spoke to each other. I ended up inviting this young guy for a cuppa at a local café. It turned out he was to become my next clown buddy. He was a Christian and had never clowned before, I told him it was about spreading peace. He related to that and thought he'd give it a go. So I invited him to come onto the streets the next day, as a Mardi Gras was happening, so it was the perfect time. I was tired, but that is not unusual given my life. Here is the blog entry of that experience:

I met my new friend Kyle at the Maritime Museum. We got changed in the toilets (bathroom) of the restaurant next door. I painted his face with blues, reds, whites and yellows. I put a nice colorful wig on him and he borrowed my Indian clown suit. He looked great. I gave him some tips on clowning - that we are not here to make people laugh but to be happy and share it. We are careful not to get people out of their comfort zones and to be in harmony with them. If we use the massager we make sure we have permission etc.

Diane a former clown gave him more tips as she drove to drop us off near the Convention Centre in downtown San Diego.

We waved at some people and said hello. I have to laugh, at the lights this guy was standing with his bull dog and he felt the need to say that my peace symbol was an upside devil symbol and gave it a name, he believed in Jesus Christ. I have no idea where he got that from but all I could say to him is that we were here to spread peace and love I understood it to be a nuclear disarmament symbol. Amazing some of the comments you get. Poor Kyle got to hear this as a first introduction to clowning. He is a Christian, so it seemed funny a Christian saying this. He wasn't that happy.

Anyway we moved on and were allowed into the Mardi gras. We were early but we said hello to the workers setting up. We taught a woman how to juggle. We saw some huge aliens on stilts, some belly dancers, pirates, pharaohs, rockers, dancers and all sorts of other characters. Kyle and I went for a cuppa at the pub. We were met with smiles from others. Often people ask for photos. I pulled out my fool's tarot, basically I like to find out what sort of fool people are. It is really good. This guy pulled a card as a drunken fool and his mother and girlfriend laughed and said it was true. They liked the cards they got and it started some laughing which was nice.

Youtube link of some rappers creating peace and partying - woo hoo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_46VgKVsvPo

My friend Kyle was great, he laughed with people, danced and dropped the doggy pool then got a tissue and picked it up, that brought a laugh. I recall one guy saying that people don't listen and Kyle drifted off. He was actually a very funny clown.

We wound up getting some pizza. I saw a woman putting salt on her pizza and there were police there. I said to the policeman that the woman was assaulting her pizza, ha ha. To another guy I mentioned we had jumpers not sweaters. I should have said they were hard to get on, and we can't keep them down.

I was feeling tired clowning and not my usually bouncy self. I found the crowd was a bit thin. However, it was still fine really, as I love people and I go with the flow.

I saw Kyle with a bunch of drummers and he was banging away at his peace tambourine and it looked great. He had courage and jumped in with people. I really felt him to be a natural.

I then asked if we could go out on the street. I actually felt better breaking out of the enclosure. We met people on the street, a lady trying to sell happy hour. Perhaps it should be every hour of the day. Funny how we equate alcohol with being happy. There were many on the street that were not that happy drinking. That is why they were drinking!

We met a lovely African American guy who had a guitar and played for us. I tried to sing with him and dance. He liked me, me thinks, I gave him a hug and he wanted to get the pacifier out of the way (dummy). He was a nice guy.

We met another guy walking around, seemed like a retired academic. He had long grey hair and was interested in comedy. I thought he'd be good and it was lovely to see him at his age living his dreams. I then saw a lady in a wheel chair and gave her $5. She looked cold and I tried to warm her up.

We also spoke to a lady on the street, the two of us sat down and she spoke of security intelligence agencies, much of which I didn't understand, but that she had been born on a military base secretly. She told us about identity theft of her identity. She even said that Steve Irwin (the famous Australian) had sought a hit on her; I thought she meant amorous but she didn't. I was moving into the realm of mental illness and found myself just listening. It was her truth. She said a lot about the system and who knows which bits are true which are not. It is not my place to judge her, so I just listened to her. I told her to write a book. After we left her we saw she had moved to another spot.

I thought about mental health and the vulnerability of homeless people. I was told by Kyle that there are around 30,000 homeless, apparently they come to San Diego because it is not as cold. You can imagine that on the east coast, where it is snowing, they would freeze to death. I had a debate with another guy earlier in the week, he was a clown but he felt they were using the system. He said some make a lot of money. I've heard this before and maybe it is so, but ultimately money does not solve the problem. It can give an excuse to people to ignore them and do nothing. I recalled when I was in Macchu Picchu in Peru that the Incas had no homeless people. So it can happen in societies when there is a will. I do feel all of us have to look at the problem. When you have people erecting tents on the sidewalk it is a problem. Are they slack or bludgers? Well the protestant work ethic which is drummed into us from childhood would lead you to believe they are losers. In my worldview and having not had a home for two years, it is not easy trying to focus on survival and on finding a place to stay. Socially it can affect your friendships, and family, and if the person has substance abuse, it can cause poor communication, mental health issues, and aggression, and vulnerability. etc. they will be more vulnerable. I met another guy a few days before that and he had black skin but it was peeling off and you could see white skin, he had a skin condition. He was trying to sell paintings to survive. He said his family didn't pay him for work, so how many seek monetary help from family? If we look at ethnic or cultural differences it is clear that there are people in the United States who are seen differently. I saw more Afro Americans riding the buses (as they say). I saw many Mexicans working in servant roles. When I had been in England it was the Mediterranean people that worked driving taxi's, the Pakistanis worked in the newsagents and there was a homeless problem in the London Underground, I understand around a few thousand were homeless and seeking warmth there. In San Diego 30,000 is a big number and I sat today thinking – how do you solve that? I wondered at public investment in public housing. We have that problem in Australia where the government housing stock got sold off so they have a shortage. I thought about people allowing you to stay in their home. Most people won't do that, they would eventually expect you to pay your way, philanthropic

assistance as service for as long as needed would be rare, unless you had a spiritual dimension. We live in a world where there are powerful beliefs around paying your way, users pay, ownership, entitlement without a great deal of understanding of structural violence (racial inequality, gender, age, education) which erodes equality for all. These days people have to get an education, not everyone is scholastic, we have artists and drifters and a range of different types of people that must fit in the box. We live in a world of winners and losers and typically white privilege is an issue. My friend is studying as a counsellor and she was reading a paper on it. I heard it again from a peace studies student. It is essentially about the advantage of being white (or what I term in truth as pink, bit of humor there). Anyway, I can relate to this idea and know that when travelling the world I was given special treatment as a white person from Australia. It was because of the perceived beliefs about white people which largely comes out of the American movie industry. Moreover, as a woman I am also given certain privileges as I am not seen as a threat. If I am attractive then doors open more and if I had money, these would be wide open. So yes, we do discriminate, we do it unconsciously and consciously. I must say, as I sat on the bus looking at an Afro American, looking at her and thinking about her talents and the fact she was riding the bus, I thought that it was my loss if the system didn't see her as an equal. I find it incredible that we look at skin complexion, racial background, handicap and so on and alter our behaviour. Yes I've done it too, but I am conscious now so I look at the conditioning and see it for what it is - untrue.

So going out on the street as a clown gives me the opportunity to tell an Afro American man that he is gorgeous, to encourage him to find what makes him happy, to let his talents shine and heal the past. He nearly cried when I said these words. Kyle said, 'Words are powerful' and he is right. I tried to show this guy that we can create our own pathway out of poverty. I know it is not easy but it is not impossible, as there is a tad of magic to this world as I know. I've been able to survive for two years now without a house or job, yet I work for peace full time. I am following my passion and just going with life as it takes me. I can understand the feeling of uncertainty plaguing your every step, I know what it feels like to feel alone, to have no money, but I also know that the magic that comes when you dare to reach for your truth, and to bring a smile to another, costs nothing. This guy said he was hungry so Kyle agreed to drop me at a shop to get him a burger. We came back and I gave it to him to help him see that life is kind.

Kyle took me home and gave me a video - Women of Faith. He told me earlier he had been part of this group, I joked with him wondering if he wore a dress, but he supported them which I thought was great. Kyle had drug issues in his past which makes him a good person to talk to on the street, he has been there. He prays for people and he said that some like that and some don't want it. He is respectful of both. I guess some just feel that someone cares enough to ask. Kyle is a good person and goes to a local church. He wants to live the message of peace. He took off the clown gear and we hugged and off he went. I was deeply grateful that he had the courage to give it a go and I was glad I got out in the public at least once here. I was tired but it was worth the effort.

Clowning is community building because we love unconditionally. It is not about helping others; it is about meeting others where they are. It is about showing them their greatness, not trying to be great through helping underprivileged. It is about seeing people and giving something for nothing, that inspires trust and peace. These to me are the tools to peace. It has to have no agenda, but be just for the sheer joy of meeting people. People never disappoint me as they are unique and interesting. I am never bored with them and I realise people need to be heard. We are indeed equal whether you are in a business suit or daggy pants on the street. The challenge is for us to look further than the perceived image, which is not who people are. The same applies for the rich guy, there are many beautiful people in disguise just seeking peace like you and I.

The Fool's Gold: The clown mirrors your greatness.

Message from a Holocaust Survivor for Peace

I first heard Frances Gelbart speak at the Point Loma Rotary Club meeting held at the San Diego Yacht Club. I found myself very drawn to her by her words 'love each other'. That was for me the sign to speak to her. So I waited until others stopped talking to her and said hello to her. I told her what I do as a peace clown and found myself standing there with this older woman holding hands. The feeling I had was that she was a fellow peace maker. I really felt strongly that I wanted to interview her.

I rang her a week later and tried to set up a time to go and interview her. I arranged to catch the train to Carlsbad just north of San Diego. She picked me up from the train station and I was taken to her home. We spoke for a while about my work and life and then I asked for the interview. She said no at first, I was surprised and then felt perhaps we could just talk. In the end she agreed to be interviewed. This is the transcript of our interview and below that is some information reproduced by Rotary from a newspaper story written about her by a journalist at the San Diego Yatch Club. Her story is a reminder of why being a Fool for peace is important.

Interview with Frances Gelbart, Holocaust Survivor, 13 February 2013

SC: 'I am with Francesca and I had the pleasure of meeting Francesca at a Rotary meeting giving a talk about being a holocaust survivor. So perhaps Francesca if we could start with you describing a bit about what happened and your background?

FG: It happened in 1939 when the German's invaded Poland. I remember we had to stay in the line for food and especially when they found out I was Jewish, once we get close to the counters they say sorry we don't have any more food. This was repeated day after day after day. I remember when they gather us and we had to go to the ghetto which is a suburb of Krakow by name Podgórze. People in the ghetto used to be assigned to apartments, we had to leave our home and go to those apartments. But the apartments were not just per family they used to put 3-4 or even 5 families in maybe two bedroom apartments. Our privacy was made with sheets between each family. Slowly and systematically they took everything away from us. The young people that could go to work were transferred eventually to concentration camps. In the meantime they used to come into ghettos and gather people into big trucks take them to hard labour some of them we never saw again. Some of them came and the same thing was repeated again and again. From the camp I was in Płaszów which I worked in a paper factory. I remember being hungry and standing on a very, like, high machine and feeding the machine with paper that made lines and you had to be very quick to do that. Sometimes I used to fall asleep because I was on a nightshift. The women and people around me used to say go and lie down we will take over for you. Somehow I always knew I would live. The people used to give me extra rations. I guess I was the youngest amongst the people. From Płaszów I went to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz I received a tattoo on my left arm which I bare the number A26284 I was told that the number was given previously to somebody else. Being in Auschwitz, first going into Auschwitz I have to go back and remember. Going through the segregations I was called by one of their officers and asked what is my name, my name was Immerglück which means in German always lucky. He asked me if I am always lucky and I said in German, 'I hope so.' He sent me to the right which means life and this is I guess is one of the miracles for me to survive. I survived the first segregation and I also received the number, the tattoo I spoke of before. They issued me a striped uniform which consists of jacket and a skirt and a pair of wooden shoes. They held us always in a big area. The panic was constant with the tremendous dogs. If you happened to be out of the line, just a couple of inches out, they would sick the dogs on you or they would whip you. There was a hard labour in Auschwitz as well as in all the camps. In Auschwitz I was assigned to segregate clothes after the people that came from Budapest, from France, Romania and all over Europe. They brought their best clothes, the only thing they could put in a suitcase and carry. I used to segregate this with others and all the goods to my knowledge went to Germany. I went to another camp which I don't recall the name of it. I went to Bergen Belsen where Anne Frank died, I went through segregation again. From Bergen Belsen I went to Mauthausen (Austria) I was liberated by the Americans and I live now in Carlsbad, California.

SC: When you think of German's today, what do you think of Germans?

FG: I have nothing against the German people, it was the SS that were the ones that were so terrible. It is just unfortunate the reputation follows them throughout the World and through all the years. But the new generation of Germans they try to make connections with the Jewish people especially. Some of them, I understand in Germany, convert to Judaism, some become Rabbis, they are very ashamed what their fathers or grandfathers did, or that they followed. Many Germans try to assassinate Hitler. When I think of Germans today, like I said, the young people are not in fault of what happened.

SC: What do you think could prevent any holocaust happening to any ethnic or cultural group, what would be your advice given your experience and wisdom over the years?

FG: I really could not say, if we knew we could prevent it. What happened, it is the $66,000 dollar question. I really don't know. I am not that wise perhaps to foresee. We need unity that is for sure and love among us, equality which perhaps we might achieve in the next generations. More understanding of each other. But then I wonder because even insects fight, is it unusual for people to fight? There are many questions in this world honey.

SC: How do you in your own life overcome any sort of fear of another? How do you see other people from different ethnic groups?

FG: I think as a rule every ethnic group like to be amongst each other, they feel comfortable and no wonder, they want to practice their heritage not that by mingling they couldn't do it. That is why the United States is so great we have so many different ethnic groups. Israel for instance has something like 120 different ethnic groups living among them. They live in harmony. I really don't know what the answer is.

SC: As a last question really directed at young people who see a lot of violence on television these days, they see those that are included and those who are excluded who are the in-group or the out-group. They are experiencing more and more bullying at schools where groups of kids are picking on other kids. Given that you have been in a situation where a group has been picked on by another group. What advice would you give children who are involved in bullying others or being bullied.

FG: Well love is the answer definitely. Love each other. Tolerate each other. Personally I feel a child that bullies he is bullied at home or mistreated. Still in today's world we have to sort of spread our elbows a little bit, but this is not the answer really. The answer is understanding.

SC: I remember at the talk you gave you talked about angels. I just wondered, if you are happy to talk about your belief in angels.

FG: I believe yes, I had an angel all along in the concentration camp, throughout the years I always believe I would live and yes I do believe in angels.

SC: So we are not alone are we?

Be the Change You Wish To See In The World (Gandhi)

FG: Everyone has an angel, everyone.'

You can also see the interview on Youtube by visiting - Holocaust Survivor Message for Young People. MOV http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBaJhKkZZEM

Below is a reproduction from a journalist's article on Frances Gelbart published in the Rotapoint Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Point Loma.[68]

…Frances Gelbart, a resident of Carlsbad, California, spoke to the Point Loma Rotary Club on February 8th. She described her experiences as a 10-year-old child from Krakow, Poland, who survived the brutality of five Nazi concentration camps— including Auschwitz—before her liberation from Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Austria in May 1945, the month World War II ended in Europe. Sixty-eight years after her liberation, she still doesn't like to talk about what happened to her, but added that she feels an obligation to the women in the camps who mothered her, gave her extra bread, helped her in assemblies and marches to remain inconspicuous, and urged her to 'live' and 'to tell the world what happened.'

Born Francheska Immerglück, she said her maiden name was a source of amusement to Nazi guards because translated from the German it means 'always lucky.' During a selection at Auschwitz, she was asked 'is it true you are always lucky?' and she responded 'I hope so.' The Nazi sent her to a work camp and not to the gas chambers, where most children were sent soon after arrival. Mrs. Gelbart recounted the outrages that she saw, heard, and experienced during the Holocaust. She said her job at Auschwitz was to segregate and fold the clothes stripped from Jewish inmates to be sent to Germany. Near her barracks was the facility where she heard screaming and crying—the place where medical experiments were performed on twins. Her clothes worn year round were a striped jacket, striped shirt, and wooden shoes. Like other prisoners at Auschwitz, she had an identification number tattooed on her arm—and today when she mentions this at schools, she hears from students such questions as 'couldn't you have refused?'

From Auschwitz she was moved during winter in an open train car to another camp, stopping for three days at a railroad siding to permit German troop trains to pass through. There was nothing to eat, she was covered in ice and snow, and two of her toes became gangrenous, she related.

Mrs. Gelbart doesn't hold the German people responsible, but rather the SS and the Gestapo. 'Personally,' she said, 'I have nothing against the German people. It's too bad that history is following them.

[Note: For those interested in reading Mr. Harrison's entire column, it may be found online at www.sdjewishworld.com, click on Archives, scroll down to Search Archive, go to Search by Date, and find February 2013.]

The Fool's Gold: From the greatest trial comes the greatest triumph, to realise that love was always the answer.

68 http://www.pointlomarotary.org/pdf/newsletter97.pdf

CONCLUSION

When I cast a loving drift net over my life it settles on the school of thought that simply learns to flow through life as an observer. The hook that was placed before me, in this life, has been to understand and learn about peace. As I examine the currents of my life that have taken me through experiences of travel, work, pro-activism, media, partnership and metaphysical questions, I see clearly the tapestry that life has woven, as a multi-coloured dream coat, resulting in the person I have become today.

The highs and lows of my life have not served to embitter me, but to inspire me to reach higher for my true potential and true self. I have found that the concept of peace is really a living philosophy of learning to live in harmony with what feels true and so reveals me authentically.

The metaphor of the Fool turned out to be the reality, as I stepped out of the structure of society that had formulated my early life, to discover that a living stream of consciousness swept me up in higher thoughts to lead me home to love and truth. I realised the world for me was not black and white but a reflection of my own reality. If I was seeing something I didn't like then I saw myself projected into the world, if I saw the true beauty of life, again that was life in my image. I realised I had the power to choose reality by believing or disbelieving my thoughts. I chose to believe the positive thoughts and disbelieve the negative thoughts, to start up an inquiry so as to dispel my conditioned mindset in order to reform my world.

My travels around the world offered the opportunity to see a great diversity of humanity. The wise words the Thais say is 'same same but different'. I felt at home in all countries and found myself adapting naturally to whatever life rearranged. I didn't expect to find my culture and customs in other countries, but instead I embraced the great cultures of the world finding myself growing in my exploration of discovery; I was seeing my own family in every person's eyes.

My journey through Peace Studies and Chulalongkorn University delving into what is peace and what is conflict, led me to the understanding of conflict transformation to realise peaceful transformation was the real focus. I visited the killing fields in Cambodia and met the Khmer Rouge, and realised that humans had a choice between love and fear, allowance or control, and that we always decide what world we create. I read a range of literature on non-violence and found myself enlightened by Gandhi's example, whom I felt to be an intimate presence in my life.

I experienced the real 'self' beyond the 'ego' by living in the present moment, and I realised that peace is between thoughts. I have come to realise the pointlessness of 'fighting' for truth, 'fighting' for justice, and have found that I have more power in focusing on peace and creative change. The parachute jump taught me that I am not in control, and to go with the flow and observe it unfold. I am here to enjoy the ride.

The greatest love of my life is to be a Fool. I stepped out of society's structures and psychological tourniquets to discover the true freedom of flowing through society as the 'clown'. To see the smile on my face mirrored on the faces of those around me was a mirror ball that kept revolving sending out rainbow light to all and sundry. I discovered I had the power to bring color, happiness and freedom to a moment, that for some might be treasured for their entire lives. Wearing the mask allowed others to remove theirs and let in the sunshine of their beauty to shine on me, to remind me that people are kind. My juggling balls were metaphorical for balance and rhythm which I found to be the peace of a peaceful life that is flexible and active in harmony. I saw clearly the Fool's gold in REAL HOPES as the true values of humanity playing out in our daily lives. The smiling faces of children and their excited questions were the candles that I lit as I traveled through their lives, leaving with them a memory of

what happiness can truly look like and offering them the light of happiness they can hold onto in their darkest moments. I saw their lives as structured and confusing, yet their childlike innocence mirrored the innocence of the clown who came to love them as they are. To move through the world as a clown was the real circus - where I could fly high on the trapeze to catch others as they fall or I could juggle time and places; I could entertain my many audiences with laughter and stories of my road less traveled and yet, somehow, return to the centre. I found myself the ring master who was directing my entire show. My life has been this wonderful mosaic that shifted and changed as I changed, to reveal to me the one song of life itself as returning always to harmony.

Lastly, I see the world as a continuous poem of infinite depth and wonder, transporting me beyond the man-made world to new horizons of infinite possibilities. Poetry is the art of words that curl and spiral metaphors into deeper insights, that only an artist can conjure. Like magic tricks we reveal the koans (Japanese riddles of wisdom) that springboards the clear mind and heart into higher awareness. Poetry has been another great love of my life that has carried me from the depths of great suffering to the heights of enlightenment where I saw the humor in life through the eyes of a Peacefull clown. The happy/sad clown was the parody, yet happiness was the promise that was sustainable when true. So I will finish this wondrous journey with a poem to summarise the truth of a life so far well lived, and open to future possibilities.

I thank you for reading my story; may it cultivate within you a belief that you can do anything. I went from not being able to read a book due to dyslexia, to travelling through life like the pied piper in the guise of a clown skipping along reminding people of peace. To follow your heart is to return to the so called mythical Garden of Eden, it is to find yourself in a place of great beauty that is more real than any belief. In fact it is a world beyond belief. It is the peace beyond the drama that leads you home to yourself. It is what some call ‘heaven on earth’ and you know you are there because you cannot stop smiling. You got the joke!!

I started with a poem and I will finish with a poem which sings far more than I can ever convey in mere words. Allow me to bring my heart in to complete this book as a dedication to your true purpose and happiness. Love is always the peace in your life.

Love the World as Your True Self

Our World feels…

Do you love the World or fear it?
Do you know the World or imagine it?
Do you walk in the World and enjoy it?
Do you envisage a new World and act on it?

Our World is a precious jewel…

It is breathtaking in magnificent diversity,
Go to the oceans, see the whales, the dolphins, the fishes and plankton,
Go to the forests, experience the trees, ferns, birds, worms and butterflies,
Go to the desert and feel the sands and see your footsteps fade,
Feel the winds rush against your face, feel it cascade,
The sun beats down and you can see the heat rolling in waves of mirages,
As the mirage of your life fades with the sun of great clarity,
As pyramids of ancient cities tower over the new.

Our World is larger than life …

It is grander than the highest mountain peak,
It is more colorful than the greatest surrealist painting,
It is living art that evolves and inspires tears,
It is our purpose for living without fears,
It is the reason we are breathing,
It provides a home for us to live in,
It is a Garden of Eden that we never created,
Its magnificence cannot be held in your mind or be owned,
It is blind to prejudice and in harmony
As above so below,
It is interconnected, adaptable and sustainable,
It has an intelligence beyond your wildest dreams,
It travels in spirals and waves of infinite growth,
It feels the vibration of life changing in nanoseconds,
Responding as its body is intimately known,
It is the greatest mother that gives endlessly to life,
It is infinity made manifest,
It is the true love and peace unspoken,

It is you and me in reflection.

Our World is our true nature…

It is the love I feel when I go to nature,
It is an intimate conversation without words,
I stand and look out into the vast ocean as my heart yearns,
I feel the energy of my life and the planet in union,
I feel the sun as my vision so I can truly see communion,
The moon revolves to give me fertility to create humanity,
The earth gives me nourishment to thrive,
The rain quenches my thirst keeping me alive,
The plankton generates oxygen so I can breathe,
All to ensure my survival and balance,
All without anything in return for my happiness,
This is the unconditional love the seers preach about,
It is the natural state of being in harmony,
It is our true nature,
When we be,
True to ourselves.

Our World is in love…

I am sending love to the World as joy,
I am sending love to you as empathy,
I am sending love to myself as healing,
I am sending love through my communications as my truth.

For joy, empathy, healing and truth,
Are the four horseman,
They are the rising phoenix out of oceans of despair,
That will repair the earth and reunite the human family,
To find faith is for those blind to greed,
Who take the side road and the wisest creed,
To keep travelling with eyes fixed on the yellow brick road less traveled,
Keep journeying to recover a renewable worldview,
For the truth is all around you when you see first then look,
To discover your World book has no ending.

Our World breathes peace…

Start with breathing deeply,
As nature will guide you to stillness,
Some call it home,
From stillness peace awaits your welcome,
For all answers lie within your beautiful heart,
But you must learn to be silent,
To stop the noise in the mind,
To be kind to yourself and others,
To question negativity and seek for a newer sunrise,
For you are the creator of your reality,
You are the one who defines your World,
And as you rise up to meet your potential,
Love will meet you at the gate,
For FATE is always on time,
From All Thoughts Everywhere it amasses,
And you are never alone in this plight,
Our World is about to change into a new light,
Enlightenment is a new state of play that saves the day,
For we are playing with states that bring in more love,
That ask more questions but condemn not,
As love is the frequency of great change,
And we are about to change our frequency,
For good,
Believe it or not.

This book is dedicated to all fools who believe they can change the world

‘Dear Peace clown why do wars start, what goes so out of control? Why do people believe what bad things that other people say to them? Why do people care for money so much, after all it’s just a piece of metal!’ From Marina (aged 8)

Susan Carew is a Rotary Peace Scholar and a World Peace Clown. In 1998 she dreamed she was teaching peace. Her vision is to bring REAL HOPES to the World.

This book traces a 16 year journey exploring peace in education, the media, politics, international relations, clowning, research, philosophy and what she calls pro-activism has provided insights into real answers to our personal and global dilemmas.

This book explores the foundations to peace, a different way of seeing peace and invites you to jump off the cliff of uncertainty to understand that peace is always present.

Susan is a trained economist and market analyst and through her extensive experience she has come to the conclusion that we are here to awaken to who we really are. Life does not always turn up the way you want, it is how we turn up when life is happening that makes the real difference. Life is not about restrictive structures and TO DO lists it is about flowing with life, knowing your true essence, not resisting life to discover that you are indeed the creator of your life and that what you choose does change the world.

Susan has shown another way, that was un-fun-ded but fun-filled with opportunity, real hope and the promise that we can inspire the children ‘to be the change they wish to see in the world’ as Mahatma Gandhi so wisely inspired.

So why not be a fool for peace! If not NOW then when, if not YOU then who?

Dear Susan, I really admire your noble effort to educate and inspire children, particularly to understand peaceful philosophy and also the education that you have given yourself in this area.

Dr. Helen Caldicott, Author, Public educator about the medical hazards of the nuclear age

For decades I have bemoaned all over the world that peace and justice are not taught in schools, now I have read over her business plan to implement a program in Australia and I support it whole heartedly. Not only is it a great leap forward for Australia, it also is a pioneer project for the rest of the world to emulate. I feel she has the passion to carry it out.

Dr. Patch Adams, Gesundheit Institute