

PROLOGUE

(a) Several points should be made before proceeding: It has been pointed out to me by a dear friend, and for the benefit of a handful of souls who've read large tracts of this mighty tome and possibly may feel the same way, that often it comes across to the reader, that my friends, colleagues and I were a nasty bunch of ill-tempered bastards who sneered and snarled at each other the entire time, constantly at each other's throats. This was never (and is still not) so. Sharp-witted and extremely acerbic, yes, but bad friends, no. The verbal battles were our version of black humour, the trick was to not to burst into laughter. However, I've no intention of re-writing the book and therefore must leave it to the readers to determine for themselves which was the real animus and which was not.

Point (b) Of course Prologue is being written many years after the book was completed, however;

(c) I wrote the book three times. Apart from the very first galleys (which were written by hand back in the dark-ages, I began writing in earnest in 1994, using a Brother electronic-typewriter, then changed to an 'Amstrad' WP word processor (a gift from my old friend Frank Butler).

I did well and had written about 75% when disaster struck, the 'Amstrad' crashed taking my book along with it. In disarray I was forced to type it all again this time using a Commodore 'AMIGA' 2000' computer (a Christmas 'surprise' gift from my wife). The first version was a crisper, lighter even happier tale, full of amusing though inconsequential anecdotes. I'd saved everything onto floppies of course plus I'd made hard copies on 'real' paper, however on making inquiries, I discovered the Amstrad Floppies were obsolete and the cost of transferring them to IBM beyond my means. So, with a little help from my friends (in Parliament House, Canberra, my old (London) mate, Frank Butler to be precise) presumably with Asio's de-briefing and translating computers at his disposal plus my hard-copy, he was able to transfer it onto IBM floppies. However, the machine he used could not quite decipher my somewhat faint Amstrad print-out, so it made wild guesses, therefore my book was reproduced in gobbledegook. Frank warned me of this and grinning, added "At least it's all there, cock! You'll just have to go through it all again correcting it.

I was eternally grateful to him for making it possible and without choice buckled down to decipher it all, writing it out yet again, but this time to my astonishment the story emerged differently. Oh it was the same tale all right, but written as if an inconsequential outer-layer had been stripped away, revealing something deeper. Unencumbered with trivial anecdotes, while still amusing, a more embittered tale emerged. Ruthless, angry, pedantically truthful, far more revealing and may I add, infinitely more painful to write.

When writing the final version, my psyche and it's memory banks were affected in several different ways and one supposes for different reasons, so it's worth adding some notes before you begin.

For instance: Point (d) the story ended *circa* 1982, with Chapter 39. I was still very angry at the treatment I'd received during my final years with the 'Graeme Bell All Stars' and my surprise dismissal.

I never saw it coming, I'd been with him for six years, so he must have liked my work and was devastated when a letter arrived telling me I'd been replaced. Therefore subsequently I wrote very spitefully about it. Don't misunderstand, I stand by what I wrote at the time, however, time heals old wounds and we're all old mates again now, it was water under the bridge. Plus, twenty-three years later everyone involved made up for earlier transgressions in a truly wonderful way, by agreeing to appear at a glorious Benefit Concert on my behalf, so old scores have been settled.



Thanking musicians and audience for a wonderful tribute; circa October 19th 2005.

At the same time as (and linked to my dismissal) came the story of my marrying and settling into suburban domesticity. Well, that didn't last long! Don't misunderstand me... my marriage has lasted well and is rock solid, even more-so in this fateful almost fatal year of 2005. It was my domesticity that failed, that is to say I was soon up and playing again, disappearing on gigs and even touring overseas with two successful Australian bands, plus many other exciting adventures.

But that was okay, it so happens that my wife also secured a wonderful job that took her to far away places, so we made a deal; "I won't worry about you, so don't you worry about me." Neither of us had a problem with that, both of us needed a lot of our own space and by this time (both long-time divorcees) we knew how to handle it.

Marriage is an adventure in itself, plus there were other extremely interesting things occurring during the following twenty-three years which necessitated a further two chapters being written several years after I'd finished writing the bloody book and which hopefully, my erstwhile publisher Mel Pullen, insists I record. Well... I've half promised I might perhaps add them in 2006 and he knows I'll relent in the end.

Meanwhile, let us return the original 40 chapters:

Point (e) The 1972 story of my trip to Crete while in charge of 'Barry Noon and The Fernze Brass Foundry's floor-show was also inserted after the book was completed, I realized too late that I'd omitted it when engaged in what I'd hoped would be my final précis. Ho-fuckin'-ho! Some hopes of that, at this very moment I think I'm on somewhere about my fifth 'final' edit!

Because of the disturbing events leading up to my trip to Germany, plus the trauma experienced at the Turkish border, it was one of the unhappier, more frightening periods of my adult life and ironically therefore one of the most interesting. And therein lies the "Catch 22" of all great adventure, the more horrific the nightmare, the better the story.

The sequence of events began when Liz Cornish and myself arrived in Germany and I found myself heading off on an unplanned trip to Turkey, leaving her stranded in Wiesbaden, without a word of German at her disposal. The surprise left her shocked and angry but I was angry too, plus I felt guilty, although it had never been my intention to leave her stranded, indeed I had accompanied her to Germany in order to remain by her side. I could not live without her! Needless to say, my unexpected Turkey-trot was hell-on-wheels and I can't explain how relieved I was when it was over. However, that was only the beginning.

Twenty years later, at my home in Sydney, when called upon to regurgitate the horror my psyche proved extremely reluctant, it was difficult to winkle out the worst of my traumas and upon editing that particular chapter two years after I'd written it, I discovered I'd omitted the entire trip to Crete. It was hardly something one would forget considering the circumstances, however my brain refused to recall a single incident, which is an interesting facet in itself.

In order to retrieve it, I resorted to walking along my local beach, watching the waves roll towards me and scuffing my feet in the sand. It was the only way I could encourage my fevered brain to relax and relive the agony.

Contrary to popular psychiatric belief, the human subconscious does not push nightmares away refusing to acknowledge them. In fact it reacts directly in reverse to that theory, refusing to discard them at all. Instead it buries them, stores them forever and they remain there, lightly covered, needling us for the rest of our lives. It is our conscious brain that refuses to relive its trauma, still terrified by the horrific experiences, it pushes them ever deeper beneath the surface and remains reluctant to re-experience the nightmares.

The subconscious has no language. I mean it never speaks, it records only feelings and therefore the conscious mind cannot engage it in a rational conversation. By this I mean the conscious mind cannot openly discuss deep-seated problems with its sub-conscious counterpart, so our feelings, though disturbing, lie buried and difficult to uncover.

Along with other painful memories, apparently my mind preferred the story of Crete and the Fernze Brass Foundry be left undisturbed. But I was not prepared to submit to that and as a result while digging away at it, I noticed that my conscious mind had no trouble releasing the nice bits, indeed it did so joyfully, however, when required to reveal the more painful aspects, painful or embarrassing secrets perhaps, it reacted in several different ways and I shall try to set them down here, starting with an uncomfortable subconscious reaction.

At no time during my life had I ever had difficulty accepting the peculiar circumstances of my birth, firstly because I knew nothing of it, that is to say I was not consciously aware of it. Secondly, when I did learn of it, through the auspices of my first wife's spiteful remarks, I didn't believe a single word she said! And thirdly, finally when I heard it from my mother herself, my feeling was that too much water had passed beneath our mutual bridge and I believed I no longer cared. When Heather spitefully informed me of my bizarre nativity I didn't dwell on it nor did I attempt to rationalize the information, I simply dismissed it as another of her pathological fantasies, a distasteful factor woven into the fabric of our unsuitable union, in other words, I didn't believe her.

Later however, on reflection it all made sense, it explained the enormous trouble my mother went to in order to prevent my discovering the truth, things like not being allowed to play with my cousins and being forbidden to ever visit or talk to my uncles and aunts. But then in 1985, when my mother was eighty-one years of age, Ike, (my second wife) and I paid my parents a visit. While having tea, my mum looked across the table at Ike, laughed bitterly and blurted out the entire sorry tale. For the first time in my life the truth was being revealed in my presence and from the horse's mouth no less! Well, she was not exactly addressing it to me, but seeing as I was sitting in front of her one can only suppose it was meant for my ears too.

It's curious isn't it, although I'd had close encounters with several women throughout my life, including a seven year de-facto relationship, my mother only unburdened herself to my *bona-fide* wives, the two women whom I actually married. Upon reaching the end of her bitter diatribe, I reached across the coffee table and taking her hands in mine assured her that it no longer mattered, indeed, it had never mattered. I was unconcerned. In truth I had no memory of it and therefore she needn't have punished

herself so in the first place! I had no conscious memory of the events and cared even less. "As far as I'm concerned, Mum, it was never a problem and that's the end of the matter!" I concluded.

I hoped I was setting her mind at rest but who knows? Shortly afterwards my wife and I returned to Sydney and I gave the matter no more thought. Three years later my mother died and it became a closed book, or so I thought.

That is until sixty-two years after she'd committed her mortal sin, when I sat at my typewriter and began recording the details. After a few pages I developed all the symptoms of a gastric ulcer and as I delved deeper into the tale so the pain increased, as if a knife was being thrust deep into my solar plexus and was being brutally twisted.

I was aware of the cause, I knew what was happening, but was surprised by the violence of the reaction. However, undaunted I continued working on the text, I understood what was causing the pain and it was a revelation, sixty-two years after the event I became aware that as a newborn child only a few seconds old and incapable of rational thought a part of my brain recorded the danger I was in.

A terrifying experience is a terrifying experience, no matter what age we are and in mammalian terms I had indeed been in the very gravest of danger. With hindsight, that in itself is enlightening, fear is mother nature's alarm system, the most powerful of our warning signals, it tells us that we are in danger. Our primary and most important instinct is self-preservation and therefore nothing is more terrifying to a helpless infant than the fear of being abandoned. No matter what our situation, whether it be in the jungle, a desert or the comfort of a civilized environment, parental abandonment is certain death staring a new-born infant in the face and realization strikes even at the moment it enters the world.

As I sat typing with the pain in my gut increasing, I realised that sixty two years before, when less than a minute old, the moment my mother turned her back on me, in that single terrifying moment, the experience was recorded by my subconscious and stored silently away. Now, sixty-two years after the event when asked to relive the experience it was reacting violently, releasing peptic juices in copious amounts. However, I was determined to write the piece and taking myself off to a chemist's shop I purchased a bottle of Mylanta, a powerful antacid which I drank whenever the pain became unbearable then pressed on with my story.

When it was finished and the pain in my brain dealt with, the pain in my gut disappeared, never to return. Well, that is to say, not until I reached another stressful point in the autobiography, when I had to deal with more psychological disturbances. e.g. the circumstances surrounding my first child, every aspect of my disastrous first marriage and later, when suffering the prolonged stress of an exciting but painful seven year *de-facto* relationship.

Upon reaching a part of the story which dealt with these debilitating milestones, (milestones might be a more apt description) another interesting syndrome appeared, to confuse the issue still further, my brain refused to divulge its secrets. Huge blanks appeared, which I could only fill with enormous effort.

At first I supposed it to be the well known 'Writers Block'. However, finally suspecting it was something similar to my earlier experience of mental reluctance, I again walked along the water's edge at Curl-Curl scuffing my feet in the sand and listening to the waves crashing onto the sand. It had worked before and I thought perhaps given time it might do the same again, and indeed it did, I had discovered a practice which enabled my reluctant mind to relax, pay up and play the game. I sat on those dunes for hours watching the waves roll in while encouraging my mind to relax. Slowly, very slowly, the log-jammed information was released and the gaps were filled.

There was a catch of course, (there always is!) although it released the information, it did so very reluctantly and with the return of acute gastric pain. However, then, as before, once the data had been

typed and therefore dealt with, my brain calmed and the gastric problem abated. That is until I faced the next trauma, that of writing the account of my arrival in Wiesbaden with Liz Cornish and then finding myself on an enforced tour of Turkey without her. Where on top of suffering heartbreak at being parted from her, I was forced to shoulder enormous responsibility and face extreme personal danger.

Sitting at my desk I tried to piece together the experience and again found it impossible without another trip to the beach. And when I did manage to recall them, the memories were not necessarily in the correct order. What should have been a three day task simply typing out my memoirs developed into a week spent dividing my time between sitting on the beach and willing my brain to recall the events, then placing them in the correct order so that I could type the the bloody things.

Months later while editing the passage beginning:

“Staring bleakly out of my hotel window in Diyarbakir”

I realized with a start that I'd left out the entire ferry-trip to Crete! However, before inserting it and rewriting the chapter, I checked the date stamps in my old passports and indeed they bore witness to the correct order of the border crossings involved.

During those tumultuous, unhappy but incredibly exciting years, I over-indulged in everything, my dependence on booze, sex and dope had increased over a lengthy period. They were tough times and I was drowning my sorrows in the time honoured tradition. A young musician's apparent ability to function normally while virtually *non-compos-mentis* on booze and drugs is a phenomenon which also requires further proper medical investigation. I recently became fascinated by the subject, especially since nowadays I'm a non-smoking virtual teetotaler, taking only a prescribed glass of red wine per day for my cholesterol control and an occasional glass of champagne to wet a new grandchild's head. I'm not a killjoy, in my opinion if people want to damage themselves it's their body and their business. If everyone just minded their own business and let others get on with there's, it would make not an atom of difference, the world would still go on turning. I disagree with spending millions of dollars putting policemen's lives at risk saving idiots who want to throw themselves off the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Why interfere? And people who wilfully place themselves in extreme danger and then have millions of dollars spent on rescuing them. Fuck 'em! Who needs 'em?

Nowadays I'll drink a glass of beer or wine to celebrate a birth or a birthday, but for over five years I never touched a single spoonful. This was after a magistrate threatened me with a gaol sentence if I continued with my recalcitrant behaviour, he meant the threat seriously and I took it very seriously! I tried to cut down on my nightly intake when at work but found it impossible. Then one evening I was stopped yet again by the breathalyser police as I drove home only days after having my driving license returned. I was not drunk, but I was over the limit. At the police station, the queue of staggering drunks was so long, and I kept finding myself pushed aside, that by the time I was given the blood test I was below the limit. As I collected my belongings, the duty sergeant eye-balled me and said, “You're a very lucky man, Mister Harrison. If I hadn't kept putting you further back in the queue each time, you would have gone to gaol, sir! You do understand what I am telling you?” I nodded, I understood very well, though why he'd kept me out of trouble I will never know! The experience frightened me though and I redoubled my efforts though it was not easy.

I found the only way was to dry out completely and that was difficult. At first I tried refusing all alcoholic drinks while at work, but again I failed, the pressure was too great. In order to give up drinking altogether, I knew I would have to remove myself from temptation altogether.

I don't need to explain that playing music in pubs, theatres and clubs is the ultimate drinker's temptation, especially as back in those days most of the booze was free to band members. Our wages were ridiculously low and free beer was thrown in to keep us from complaining and with temptation ever present, the solution had to be drastic. At the time I was experiencing acute pain in my joints, I was playing in two sight-reading big-bands and worrying myself sick over my very rusty reading ability, consequentially my stage fright had returned with a vengeance and I needed a drink more than ever. The temptation increased tenfold and I knew I really couldn't continue in this manner. One evening I came home threw my car keys onto the table and informed my wife I had retired.

She pooh-poohed the suggestion, but I meant it. The next morning I telephoned the people who regularly used my services and informed them of my retirement, "My general overall health is failing." I explained, "I'm finding it impossible to continue, so please don't call me, I am no longer available to play." That was the general gist of my message and it was true, I was ill, my health both physical and mental was at a low ebb.

So I stayed home and watched television. Drying out had cost me my career but I was getting old anyway, it really didn't matter all that much. I didn't mind staying at home and surprisingly I didn't miss the music. I was neither desperate to play again nor to drink. I think relief at not having to do either was uppermost at the time. Plus there was an unexpected bonus, without alcohol, my desire for tobacco disappeared.

Eventually I became bored and took a day gig driving a baker's delivery van, or to be pedantic, a Danish Patisserie van. The job entailed a very early start, rising at four a.m. and on the road by six. Strangely I didn't mind, it was rather nice and besides, I was back at home sitting in my garden by ten thirty!

The job suited my temperament admirably, I was driving alone and before the city bustle began and I enjoyed that. Plus the physical exercise gained by lifting heavily laden trays in and out of the van proved a cure for my aches and pains and I stayed in the job for three years.

Three years in the same job was an amazing feat. From the very beginning, with my volatile temper and independent streak it was only a matter of time before the boss and I locked horns. One fateful morning I arrived to find that the ovens had failed during the night and the cakes weren't ready.. I waited patiently, everyone was very edgy and when finally the cakes came out, in the panic the boss told me to get a move on, because according to him I was dragging the chain. Well I was only the bloody van driver for God's sake, what could I have done about it? Failing ovens was not my department. Infuriated at his misplaced outburst I muttered, "Me dragging the chain? You must be fuckin' joking' mate! I've been standing around here since fuckin' four o'clock, ya stupid prick!" and I stalked outside. To my astonishment he followed me and we almost came to blows. That was the end of my day gig, when I arrived home that morning he phoned and fired me for insulting him in front of his staff. I was expecting the call. I was amazed we'd remained compatible for so long, three years in the same day-gig was a record for me.

Recently I began playing again and only occasionally, if ever, do I drink on the job. As I said previously, I've been known to wet a newly arrived grandchild's head, or drink a toast to my wife or a friend, on the occasion of their birthday. At Christmas I'll even raise a glass of wine in the general direction of our Christmas-card donors, but basically, give or take a rare glass of beer, I don't bother with alcohol at all. However, back in 1971 it was an entirely different story, I was nowhere near so temperate.

Mind you, my immediate colleagues and I were by no means the only musicians guilty of over indulgence. In the past I'd played with and paid good money to hear some of the very finest in the world and often found them less than sober. On one memorable occasion, backstage with only two minutes

before curtain-time I found the sad genius I'd forked out a lot of money to hear, lying in a heap on the floor smashed out of his brain. Shipwrecked, bombed, destroyed beyond recovery! I was appalled at the sight and disappointed, I toyed with asking for my money back but the instant the words, "Monsieur's et Mesdames, et main tenant, Bill Evans!" was announced he stood up, walked on stage, put his hands on the keyboard and became breathtakingly eloquent, a veritable Mozart! I dashed out front and took my seat.

"Ah," you're saying, "In that case he wasn't really out of it at all, he was merely pretending." and that's not strictly true either, many times I've been in the dubious position of knowing exactly how much they, and indeed myself, had consumed before the concert and I may add, when it was over they/we often collapsed in a heap. This happens believe me! In some cases the men involved had to be helped to their feet and carried bodily to their hotel. Ben Webster and Stan Getz, to name two of my favourite musicians and whom I know for certain and to my personal knowledge that this happened to (not to mention myself and some of my dearest mates).

Life can only be understood backwards, however, I'm afraid it has to be lived forwards. With hindsight we understand everything, but alas the knowledge comes too late to be of any use. "If I knew then what I know now." is an oft quoted axiom and if such a thing were possible, we would indeed be extremely dangerous when young. For some of us, booze and dope were the only safe path through the horror, it was the only crutch we had to enable us to pick our way through our own personal minefield, a safety net which helped us cope with our stage-fright.

However, that kind of help comes with a Catch 22, a few million brain cells get blown off in the process. Many great artists from my peer group achieved the winning post without crossing the finishing line. It was the cross they had to bear for baring their soul to the audience. Not for a jazz musician the luxury of removing a brush-stroke, or a word they disapprove of. There is no chance for a jazz musician to correct his work before his public hears it (or views the painting as it were). If a gifted improviser doesn't like what he's doing it's too damned late! Painters, potters, poets, authors, indeed creative artists and craftsmen of every kind have a fail-safe to fall back on, they can change a petal, alter a leaf, or an eyebrow, smash a vase, replace a word, a stanza or an entire chapter. However a jazz musician can never indulge in this kind of luxury, every brush-stroke, every word, every note is there for all to hear and for all we know, to be sniggered at. We cannot take back the notes we regret. As you watch us up there on the stage presumably having a wonderful time, you may think we don't care, but without a drug of some kind, we feel like a trapeze artist working without a net - and therein lies the crux of the matter, booze, or whatever other drug we use, becomes the net, with that under us we know we're a genius, what's more, when we are high we don't give a damn! We believe we are great and therefore we are! Well, it may be a great feeling, but in my opinion the price is too high. Still alive and still playing at sixty five years of age, I now understand that it is too late to retrace my steps and do it all again. I know now that I play better without any of the muck. However as a young man, when first I entered the fray I was unaware of this. In too far to turn back, on discovering the horror of reality was too awful to bear, booze alleviated some of my fear. However, it also lowered my performance level. Marijuana did a better job, but it had me wondering whereabouts in the music I was? My playing was okay but my short term memory had flown out of the window and I spent half of the evening worrying in case I was playing the bridge when perhaps I should have been playing the last eight! Nobody else on stage seemed worried, so I supposed I was in the right place, however in spite of my dope inspired euphoria, it was a worry

Heroin was by far the best, one's fear simply disappeared, however, as far as I was concerned it asked too much in return, physical and mental degradation, plus an early death is too great price to pay for

artistic success. Or any kind of success for that matter and fortunately my common-sense, or possibly a fear of the dire consequences, had me recoil from it's use very early in the piece.

Disaster did eventually strike though, while on-stage in the middle of a Graeme Bell 'Country Tour' concert, I was floored by a massive attack of paroxysmal-atrial-tachycardia. Happily the local doctor was in the audience and was called on-stage to tend to the problem. I was helped into the green-room and after a thorough examination he prescribed a then newfangled drug called a beta-blocker. He administered two tablets on the spot and they worked almost instantly, a few minutes later I was able to sit behind the drums and finish the concert.

However, the following morning Graeme insisted I obtain a portable supply of the drug and drove me to the surgery to make sure I did. The GP wrote out a prescription with instructions to take one pill an hour before each performance and indeed they did solve my problem. However, all this information appears in the chapters dealing with my years as a member of Graeme Bell and his All Stars so there is little point in writing about it here. Let's return to the question of talent and it's accompanying problems. Talent - a gift some people are born with, comes with an accompanying sack of rocks, plus a Catch 22, put simply, 'Nothing great is easy!' A gift it may be, but the recipient must work his or her arse off at it. Plus there is an omnipresent fear of failing to reach perfection, a double-edged needle which spurs them on to greatness. Indeed it is this 'spur' which encourages us as youngsters, to stay at home and practice, when others of our age are out on their first dates.

It imposes increasing demands on us to hone our craft, to sharpen our abilities, to strive for absolute perfection. "So, where's the Catch 22?" you ask and the answer is simple, The same adrenalin fuelled fear that drives us to greatness, also shipwrecks us when we walk out to face our audience. We have two options, either we harness it and use it to power the music, or we crack up under it's debilitating effect. The brilliant Sydney pianist, Judy Bailey puts it in a nutshell. Referring to it as, 'the veil' she says, "I place my hands on the keys, the veil descends and the nightmare begins." and I understand exactly what she means. However, what I don't understand is; when 'the veil' descends and we sit on stage not knowing whether we are on our arse or our elbow, how come we still perform perfectly and at an even higher level? Why is it that when not knowing what the hell we're doing, we still play brilliantly? I've even left the stage unable to remember what I did on there! Unable to recall a single note! Panic totally blacked me out. And yet, after the concert my colleagues congratulated me on my performance? That's what mystifies me, if I've gotta feel that bad to play that good, I'd rather not play at all!

Only yesterday at my home, one of my dearest, most beloved colleagues was so out of it at five o'clock in the afternoon, he fell over. Not once but twice! Then he threw up in my bathroom and fell over again. I found him on his hands and knees and had to help him to his feet three times. I tried to talk him out of driving home but he insisted, got in his car and left. When he'd gone I cleaned up the mess and very worried, called his home. His wife informed me he was busy taking an advanced student through a music lesson, perfectly and with no sign of stress at all. This is a true story, I am not making it up, nor am I gilding the lily. Still concerned, the following morning I rang again to inquire how he was and according to his wife, after the lesson he collapsed and spent the rest of the evening unconscious. "Put him on!" I said, I asked him what he thought of his behaviour and he couldn't remember a thing. Nothing! Yet his pupil noticed nothing untoward, as far as he was concerned his master did a perfect job, para diddles and all. That's what intrigues me. How the hell do we do that?

Okay, so the muse totes a sack of rocks, in addition, it has to endure the torment of fearing to reach less than 100%. It's a dangerous trait, but tough shit, if you want to be in it you have to bear the burden. However there is another allied syndrome which you may or may not be aware of. Often the mind and

the body of the person with the gifted gene is forced to share existence with a less than ideal being, sometimes, in addition to artistic cowardice, it might be a moral weakling, a complete arsehole, and this too becomes a component of the sack of rocks. Many of the people I admire and enjoy listening to I wouldn't walk across the street to talk to! Some are violent, some are cheats, some are thieves, some are avaricious schemers, others are simply wicked, cruel, evil bastards, some are potty and others are just plain stupid, but Oh My God, when they place their fingers on the keys and begin to play, the music is so divine that to me they become God!

Let me make something very clear. The poetry, prose, paintings, or music, whichever gene it may be, is already in place at the time of a talented child's birth, it takes education, dedication and fitness to extract it. In other words, the music is already there but the person has to learn how to play an instrument and write down the notes. The beautiful pictures are there and will be magnificent, but he or she will first have to learn how to use a brush and mix the paints. The story is already programmed into the child's mind but in order to extract it the child must learn the alphabet, how to use a pen, how to write and spell and construct a sentence. The software is in place, but if the hardware is not up to the task, as magnificent as the art may be, in human terms the result can be disastrous. Ix Elderberries, Vincent van Gogh, Charlie Parker, Brett Whiteley, Chet Baker and Art Pepper are famous examples who spring to mind. There are others, the list is frightening.

In Sydney, musicians and journalists once shared club premises, that is to say, the Musicians were afforded the privilege of sharing the Journalist's club with its members. As a result I met many journalists who were exactly the same as our lot, some seemed so permanently pissed one wondered how they ever managed to type their newspaper articles? In London they even went so far as to put a play on about just such a man, 'Geoffrey Barnard Is Unwell.' and aptly enough Peter O'Toole was cast in the role of Barnard. Let me quote a case in point, a journalist and close friend of my wife and I, a gentle, kindly man, has been banned for ever, for the rest of his natural life no less, from the aforementioned Sydney Journalist's Club, for being drunk and not only that, they won't tell him what he did! In the light of the above and knowing what journalists the world over are like, I cannot for the life of me, imagine what he could have done to deserve such a sentence and neither can he! To succeed in having yourself banned for life for getting drunk in the Sydney Journalist's Club (a 24-hour drinking club, run by drunks for drunks, I may add) is an improbable, if not totally impossible thing to do! I mean one can only wonder what on earth the man could have done to invoke such a sentence? Did he climb onto the bar and shit in the till? Maybe he shat in someone's dinner? Or perhaps he publicly pissed in the club president's wife's new hat? I've no idea? One can hardly imagine anything less than this being just cause for a lifelong ban! From the Sydney Journalist's club? I mean, the mind boggles! How does a journalist get himself 'banned for life' from The 'Sydney' Journalist's Club for being drunk? It's like being sent home from a nudist-camp for not wearing clothes!

In the heavenly 'points system' for 'Celebrated Piss-Artists' in the great bar-room in the sky, this places my friend equal to and perhaps even a few points ahead of, Roy Melia, a drummer who succeeded in having himself dismissed from the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra for being too drunk! The word 'too' is the one we are concerned with and I should point out that I am not indulging in hyperbole here; during Roy's dismissal, emphasis was placed on the words; "too drunk!" and I think you'll agree, that in itself sets the entire scenario! *Tres formidable*, gentlemen, hats off to you, you guys are in a league of your own!

A while ago I read of a group of medicos in Australia who were mounted a specialist study on Stage-fright, or as *they* call it, Performance Anxiety. So! At last it has been acknowledged as a serious enough problem to mount an investigation. I think that's wonderful news! Mark you, I've not read of any

findings or a course of remedial action, but if any of you chaps are still at it and feel you'd benefit from a talk with me about it, name the day and I'll lay myself on your tender mercies and you can pull my brain apart. On the other hand, you'll gain the same insight by reading the rest of this tale. Whoops! This was supposed to be a short prologue, but as usual I got carried away. However, I'm glad we had this little chat. Enjoy the book.