

Vangelica's Village



SENSUAL, SIMPLE, SUSTENANCE



Simonce
AN ARTIST OF LIFE

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Sensual, Simple, Sustenance

Simonce
An Artist of Life

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- v. Rocket Man – Miss Merriment*
- vi. John Lennon – Citizens of Praha*

*Mother, you tread on
this earth like an angel,
having suffered so
much to give life to a
troubled spirit.*

*May the predictions of
the gipsy woman,
come true in the
twilight and you enjoy
endless happiness and
riches, as this spirit
finds some peace.*

PROEM

In so many ways, upon reflection, all I see is a simple village boy. The same village boy born in the barren, rocky mountains of Macedonia.

The place where home was two rooms of half metre deep stone walls, inlaid with mud and straw mortar, with a dirt floor and below are animal stables. Almost biblical times and a nativity scene at Christmas. Well folks, it was actually 1966, but as remarkable as this may seem it is actually my place of birth, Crnicani.

There was no electricity, no running water, no services, no supplies. Not much of anything except pretty harsh winters and lots of snow.

No education, no economy, no hope, no future, no inspiration. To think that the mystics would tell me that I chose to be born into this life! A life worth writing about???

Absolutely - a story of one family's quantum leap in faith, destiny, evolution and cultural crossroads. From East to West and across the globe in a single generation.

In late 1998, after an amazing period of about three and a half years in New York City, working, living and mainly discovering the meaning of life (either very late or very early depending on one's perspective) and the power of dreaming, I was very unceremoniously preparing to return to a life less ordinary in Melbourne, Australia.

It was during a period of five weeks travelling in Europe trying to delay the inevitable that I decided I had to write - not sure if it was to try and avoid insanity or because of it?

Whilst in NYC - without question the world's most amazing Metropolis - I discovered so many things about myself and life. How this happened I have no idea. For back in 1993 I went to NYC for a week, but the cultural shock drove me to Amish country after only five days and a vow never to return again.

Less than two years later in 1995 I returned to NYC to work for a year which lasted quite a little longer, although it did not seem like it. I got to really enjoy and appreciate life. Reflecting on it, I think despite the lunacy of the place, it is just like the village in Macedonia. A village where you can walk to work and all your friends are very nearby.

One major discovery whilst in NYC was that of synchronicity and the connectedness of events, as are the signs leading up to events, if only one can "see". Sadly, for most of my life, like nearly everyone else I too could not see, until I read "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho. A truly touching fable about a young village boy who dreams of travelling. His father explains that to travel you have to be rich or be a shepherd, and so he becomes a shepherd.

Quite natural that I can connect with such a story. My grandfather was a shepherd and as a young village boy I spent many a day with him tending the small flock, up in the nearby hills of Crnicani. My father also was a shepherd boy in his youth.

Many years earlier when I was a teenager, The Police put out an album titled "Synchronicity", but of course it had no meaning for me at the time for I could not see.

On my travels through Europe I also happened to read another of Paulo Coelho's books. This time "The Pilgrimage" in which he explains that not only does one have to find their sword but once they have found it they have to know what to do with it.

I found my sword, when I went to stay with an old friend of mine in London. I was both blown away and inspired that he had published a book of his adventures trekking through China, Mongolia and Russia on the Trans-Siberian. Not only had he published, but it was in hard cover as well. Check it out. It is by David Kessel, world travel writer and is titled "Into Mongolia".

It is an epic journey, which is well documented but which left me wanting to feel its passion. What was really enlightening was the fact that you did not have to be a writer the calibre of D.H. Lawrence or Mark Twain to indeed write and have a book published.

Up until then, despite the thought of writing a book often crossing my mind, I had never taken it seriously. Many of my friends had expressed amazement at my correspondence skills. Some have even been openly touched by my words.

As has been the case many a time, my cognitive processes have been deficient. Not only did I consider it best to leave writing to the masters, but I also considered there were already millions of publications on all manner of subjects (what could I add to the literary world?), it would not be possible to get a book published, vanity publication was far too egotistical and probably would not make any money after all.

Books find their readers, like lovers find each other. Whether that be a single reader or millions of readers - it simply does not matter.

In late December 1998, I wrote the following short passage in London:

“Life is a Garden”

*Born of a seed
Spreading one’s branches out towards
the sun
Learning and developing with the
experiences of each season*

*But why simply be a tree?
Why not Monet’s garden?
Or even your own personal garden, with
colourful and fragrant flowers, exotic
orchids, green grasses, lush and succulent
leaves*

*Attracting birds, bees and other “spirits”
to our garden of life.*



On January 3, 1999 only a few days later wandering through Camden with my mate, I discovered a most remarkable book by Grian titled “The Gardener”. It is an enlightening little book with all sorts of wisdom on life’s dilemmas.

At this point I am totally convinced that I should write. The only issue is the subject matter. Surely every subject under the sun has been covered? Having arrived at the conclusion that one need not write a best seller, allowed me the freedom to play with matters close to the heart.

As we approach the new Millennium, The Age of Aquarius and my Mother's seventh decade of Spirituality, I decided to focus on a tribute to all three, especially my Mother. I focussed on truly defining characteristics. No easy feat!

Growing up in Australia, I always felt (and still do albeit to a lesser degree) culturally alienated. Simply did not fit in. Going to NYC this all changed, for it is the most cosmopolitan place on planet Earth, where Americans are outnumbered by foreigners. Cultures melt together.

In NYC I was involved with a very special lady from South America (Rio to be more specific). Not sure why, but in her eyes I was not Australian but rather Macedonian. This the case even though I had spent only five of my early years in Macedonia. Perhaps it was those formative years that are critical and defining? Or perhaps it was some other cultural characteristic?

Like a lightning bolt, again in Camden it hit me. Seeing the books "Like Water for Chocolate" by Laura Esquivel and "Aphrodite" by Isabel Allende, a thought crossed my mind "Love is Food, Food is Love" (interestingly enough the latest paperback version of "Aphrodite" has on the cover "The Love of Food, The Food of Love"). I came across a free postcard with this exact sentiment in London - it was from a charity seeking to feed house bound people. The synchronicity and signs were everywhere.

Focussing some more on travels of a few months earlier in Navajo country. I sampled some of their food on the side of a road where they had set up some makeshift eateries. The flavours and simplicity reminded me very much of Macedonian food with fry bread, mutton and grilled peppers. It also seemed the only thing authentic in Navajo country.

Thinking about my family, I realised that no matter what happened, it would be virtually impossible to maintain much in the way of Macedonian culture beyond my lifetime. The only thing capable of surviving is the cuisine, as seemed to be the case with my Navajo kindred spirits.

So I have embarked on preserving some of my family's *Sensual, Simple, Sustenance* for posterity and as a tribute to my Mother (who has fed me this wonderful stuff for so many years and continues to do even though I am a grown man). Laced with some beautiful works of art and with a little help from my wonderful and inspiring friends. *That is how you and I came to be connected!!!*





Tibetan Tassie Tikvarnik

“Fires of Life”

*An Angel has
descended from the Heavens
with the grace of a sacred
Eagle feather falling
to Mother Earth
to tend to some
of my fires
of life*



In truth, even though I have found my sword and believe I know what to do with it, this creative force would not be present without the universe conspiring to bring into my life Tibetan Tassie.

For the better part of the last year or so, Tibetan Tassie has been a constant source of positive feed back, encouragement and seer of attributes not evident to most others. Only in such a comfort zone is it possible to generate the drive and energy required to create.

If ever one needed to question the Bible and the concept of creation, one need only to try and create something unique to realise that anything on a Biblical scale is simply not possible, even if all of nature's forces could be harnessed, which they never will despite man's need and desire. It has taken the almighty Mother Nature billions of years.

Mankind, without question has achieved many remarkable feats and has even dreamed grandiosely (the pyramids of Egypt, man on the moon - Gaudi even dreamed so grandiosely that some seventy-three years after his death, La Familia Sagrada, his life work, is still only half complete and who knows if it will ever be completed), but all of these achievements and creations pale into insignificance with those of the natural world and the endless universe.

No sooner have I begun to write that I start to have self-doubts. Questioning the inspiration and the desire to create. Fortunately for me my friend is not far away to whisper words of encouragement. Full of life and energy she seems capable of channelling that energy my way. I must be eternally grateful that there is a special person to sometimes light my fire and other times just kindle it.

A woman who runs with the wolves and who saw my eyes light up when I read the poems of Walter Rinder and my lament at not being able to find a copy of his book "Love is an Attitude", despite years of searching. With dedication and the resourcefulness of a beaver, she presented me with a copy in mint condition proving that Love is indeed an Attitude and to inspire me to write and write from the very depths of my heart.

The universal life force has conspired to take me all around the world to have many experiences and continues to do so as I embark on this creative adventure. This faith in the universal life force is spirituality. I can only describe the Macedonian people as secular in their religious beliefs. I more so to the point of outright rejection of all forms of religion - yet spirituality is extremely strong, in particular in recent years (New York of all places to develop it) and getting stronger.

Perhaps I am just another spirit having a human experience? Whatever the case, I feel spiritually connected to Tibetan Tassie. As she is the most influential energy at present she gets the first recipe dedicated in her honour.

Mind you this was no easy task. Tibetan Tassie is very fond of desserts, but we Macedonians (those from the villages of Crnicani and Meglenci - my Mother's birth village) sadly lack in this regard.

To make things even a little more difficult, the lady is a vegetarian and strictly speaking there should be no animal products in this recipe. I think we come close with only a few eggs from very free spirited chickens roaming the farm yard.

This recipe is pumpkin and egg based and turns out almost a saffron colour, which happens to be a holy and sacred colour in Tibet.



Tibetan Tassie Tikvarnik

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC (mandatory and most important ingredient of all in village recipes, as well as life). As Stefano Di Pieri will tell you, put a little something of yourself in the recipe - without it, it is simply nothing;*
2. *The ripest, sweetest, freshest (straight from the vine) and most bright yellow pumpkin available anywhere (preferably grown in your own back yard ensuring pure organic status - well as organic as we can get in Metropolis);*
3. *One and a half eggs per person (so if making for you and your lover you need three eggs), from the friskiest and free spirited chooks that you can bargain with (as always preferably from your suburban pen);*
4. *Milk (one cup full fat) and half a cup of sugar; and*
5. *Small amount of icing sugar to glaze the top and make it oh so sweet, just like your lover.*



Soul Stirring

- A. *Wash and chop the pumpkin into quarters (about 250 grams per person), removing the skin;*
 - B. *Boil the pumpkin for about half an hour or until fairly soft but not fully cooked (the fresher it is the less cooking time required) - on moderate heat (never cook on full heat);*
 - C. *Remove and drain well; Scoop pumpkin and mash in large clean bowl; Mix in fresh eggs, milk and sugar and beat by hand until well mixed;*
 - D. *Spread into a layer of about 2-3 cm's in a flat pan;*
 - E. *Sprinkle icing sugar very lightly on top;*
 - F. *Bake in oven on 175 °C for about 40 minutes; and*
 - G. *Allow to cool but serve warm as Tibetan Tassie Tikvarnik.*
- Devour with Passion!*



Miss Merriment's Maznik

"Miss Merriment"

*How we met I know
Why we have experiences shared?
Ask and there is a blank look
Perhaps it is because we simply cared?*

*In moments of deep darkness
You opened your heart
And did not pass judgement
Right from the very start*

*Looking into your eyes
I see the bubbles of your soul
Your hair glows with bright radiance
As does the Australian sun through the ozone hole*

*Then there is the smile
Of pure innocence and joy
Often turning into spontaneous laughter
You see in children playing with a toy*

*I admire you and in particular your courage
Which has inspired me to emerge from my strife
Discard all the fears, apprehensions and limitations
Go out and create for yourself all that your heart needs
and desires in life*

This little ditty is about Miss Merriment, who is one of the people that have had incredibly important influences in my life and to whom I am dedicating Macedonian village recipes. In my eyes she is affectionate, warm, inspirational and enthralling.

Miss Merriment and I met late in 1996, when she joined the firm I was working for in NYC. Literally I was on my way out and she was on the way in.

My mentor at the time, a gentleman (in every sense) who gets a dedication later in the piece and goes by the novel nickname of "Tiny Apple" is an extraordinarily generous man. The farewell function was a NY harbour cruise. Anyone that has lived in NYC would know that this is not an everyday occurrence due to prohibitive expense. In any event the expense was approved without hassle - what really raised hell was the flier for the party which although designed by a woman was deemed sexist, politically incorrect and in poor judgement (merely by having a cartoon caption where a lady asks a man whether he has seen the latest tax regulations and he responds by requesting she tell him tonight on the "Love Boat").

As it was too late to cancel, in spite of the controversy, the cruise proceeded and turned out to be a farewell to be remembered and remembered it is by many, including Miss Merriment. The poor little lady gets sea sick (as I do - but being euphoric and melancholy does not allow much room for sea sickness) and spent the evening laid up trying to avoid throwing up. So that was our inauspicious meeting of sorts.

Having returned to Australia for all of a period of ten weeks, only to return to NYC, I can't help but feel that many people especially management felt particularly cheated for having splurged on a lavish farewell, yet here I was back in no time.

This was early 1997 and whilst I often saw Miss Merriment in the office, I did not get to know her until late 1997, when I really needed a friend to turn to and chose Miss Merriment. I asked her to accompany me to a Monet exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art - an exceptional museum and comparable (although smaller) to the Metropolitan but of course suffers from the lack of exposure and proximity (like Australia) to tourists.

We had a wonderful day out and I was ever so grateful to have a lady's full attention for a day, to distract me from my troubles. From thereon in Miss Merriment and I became extremely close and remain so (to the point where she is coming to Australia to work and live with me for six months). I love her dearly and it was her touching sentiments (in the first poem she ever wrote) and the gift of a beautiful book by Frederic Clement titled "The Merchant of Marvels", that is one of the main inspirations for my creative adventure.

Miss Merriment is an extraordinarily interesting young lady of humble Asian origins. She was born in NYC, grew up and lives there today. She epitomises cosmopolitan NYC.

Whilst I can't possibly do justice to her life story, there are just a few remarkable features that really stand out. Growing up she somehow did not pick up the language of her ancestors. Sadly not an uncommon occurrence amongst children of migrants and minorities.

Remarkably she is still bilingual in of all languages Spanish. Having Spanish speaking school friends and an interest in the Latino culture, she pursued her interest winning a scholarship to study the language in Spain.

Growing up she also tells me that as a child she did not know how to smile and has no photos of childhood with a big cheeky smile on her face. Thinking about it, I am probably in the same boat. Anger was my emotion.

With persistence and poise she has overcome such a tragedy and now is all smiles all of the time - and she has the happiest and most gorgeous smile. Like the sun's radiation on my face on a cool Autumn day in Melbourne.

Miss Merriment, like many people, also had some difficulty expressing her feelings. In particular she was not big on public displays of affection (which obviously was not helped by us being work colleagues). I am very happy to report that after a couple of years of encouragement and me not being able to keep my hands and lips to myself, things have changed and she now sends me "endless hugs" to show me her affection.

My choice of dedication being a flaky pastry with fetta cheese, seems inappropriate for she does not like fetta cheese (says it is too strong), but that is the spiritual force working its creativity. The flaky pastry, when it is baked separates into fingerlings, reminds me of Miss Merriment's tiny, slender fingers.



Miss Merriment's Maznik

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *A large bowl full of self raising flower;*
3. *Warm water and a pinch of salt;*
4. *Finest virgin olive oil (from Spain); and*
5. *Fetta cheese (from Macedonia and if not available Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece or Tasmania).*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Mix the flour, water and salt into a soft dough. Knead with passion adding champagne bubbles throughout the dough. Let sit for about an hour while you sit back and recover;*
- B. *Cut into four equal pieces and roll as thin as possible and then place on a clean bread cloth on the table and stretch even thinner (a few breaks are allowed - this is no perfection exercise);*
- C. *With a fine brush, lightly brush some olive oil here and there;*
- D. *Sprinkle fetta cheese all over to your hearts content (or budget or desire for fetta);*
- E. *Roll one end over and towards the other end to form a long lumpy rope with bits of fetta hanging out the side and then in a round baking dish form into a spiral. Repeat with other three sheets until you have a curled up snake filling the baking dish;*
- F. *Bake on 200 °C for about 40-45 minutes (you can't be really precise because you can only cook to perfection by tasting at intervals after half an hour); and*
- G. *Allow to cool a little covered with bread cloth and consume while steaming. Add extra fresh fetta if you are a real cheese freak.*



Brasilian Beans

“Eternal”

*Oh how I showered you with gifts
Flowers, fragrant as fields of lavender in Provence
Silk scarves to flow in the wind as you sail the Nile
Jewellery simple and in stark contrast to the world
around, and
Art works of your icon, Audrey*

*Oh how futile and insignificant have been my gifts
Even if they were all wrapped in my passionate love
One day they will all perish and be forgotten
You my darling have gifted me
Something Eternal, a heart filled with Love*

These words I penned in October 1998 during a moment of complete darkness and so the sentiment was very different. In this moment of euphoria and inspiration, I have changed three words to give it the loving sentiment it deserves, for this dedication is for my special lady from Rio and a period of Brazilian influence culminating in a visit to this city of contrasts, rainforests, beaches and amazing football skills.

It all began the second week I was in NYC. One of my colleagues who took it upon herself (for which we must all be eternally gracious) to help new arrivals get socially networked. Especially eligible and financially sound men, for most of her friends (and she too) were looking for a knight in shining armour (as Faith Hill was to tell us with a soft touch, a kind heart and a fast horse) to ride up from Wall Street. My colleague invited me to her friend's house warming party. Quite a treat so early on in the piece.

It wasn't difficult to spot this lady, for she was literally your classic Amazon woman, tall, solid, fair and strikingly beautiful. Standing next to a petite Indian lady, it was almost comical (Laurel and Hardy - metaphorically of course). I summoned the courage to introduce myself and make some small talk. Cracked a joke about "snags and eggs", at which she burst out laughing. I thought I was a chance.

Decided to run, so I asked for a phone number - got a business card (strike a light - she worked for the same firm). Over the next two weeks I put in a couple of calls - no response. Obviously not interested? A couple of months later a friend was leaving and the firm threw a cocktail party - perfect opportunity to try again. This time a positive response only to be stood up last minute (tired, headache you know the usual story).

Three months in and NYC is starting to get lonely. Another friend leaves (nature of our firm in NYC - revolving door of expats) and I decide to throw a farewell dinner party. Strategy this time is invite the lady to the dinner party with a couple of other ladies (thought she may be more comfortable), even though I had never cooked for anyone but myself. And that was during the last few months since arriving in NYC, as I could not handle full time restaurants and take out food - really needed village foods. Before that I had always been pampered by my blessed and dearest Mother.

Nice concept, except for the minor issue that my repertoire of recipes was limited to about half a dozen dishes. All Macedonian and certainly not particularly presentable to a lady of the world. Decided on chicken noodle soup and several styles of grilled capsicum, served with fetta, vine ripe juicy tomatoes and a few cloves of garlic for the adventurous.

As it turns out, none of these ladies have any inclination towards cooking of any form. So the mere fact I put on this dinner party was enough to impress. I could have simply boiled a few eggs.

The dinner party went wonderfully well. Mission accomplished, except for one of my wild friends suggesting I may be gay because I walked in a similar manner to one of our gay colleagues. The lady I was courting was already of the view that I was a pisshead from Australia in keeping with the reputation "Fostered" by the award winning commercials (that I do not drink was not relevant because she thought I behaved as if intoxicated at the party). To boot I was in NYC for a good time not a long time.

Having survived all of these misunderstandings, we somehow managed to start seeing each other, became intimate friends, eventually becoming passionate lovers and of food.

The lady exposed me to many a fine restaurant, of which NYC undoubtedly has the most and best in the world, yet what I really craved was the *Sensual, Simple, Sustenance* I whipped up at home. It reminded me of childhood flavours. I could smell it in my nostrils, imagining it. Little did I know that our sense of smell, via the limbic system, is the most primitive and memory-evoking part of the brain and lingers in the memory the longest!!!

She even introduced me to coffee - Brazilian Beans - I was awake for three nights the first time I tried this potent brew. And Starbucks Mocha Frappuccino (a delicious blend of coffee, chocolate and crushed ice).

Her grandmother is a wonderful cook and a sweet soul. I was fortunate to sample a few dishes one Christmas. The irony in all this is that, although cooking was despised as a menial task and best left to the servants (of which most well heeled families in Brasil had one or more), the grand-daughter is an avid collector of recipes from all over the world (several volumes collected) and when she put her heart into it, the lady could really cook superbly. One Thanksgiving the turkey (which was large) disappeared before her very eyes and she missed out on sampling it - was delectable!

Instead she chooses home delivered Chinese (Moo Shu is her favourite - still have no idea what is in it but tastes bland and looks sloppy). I was so frustrated and could not get through to her that her attitude towards nourishing her Amazon body is reflective of her attitude towards all important things in life.

To paraphrase something I have read: If you truly love yourself (which you must do before you can offer love to anyone else), cook candle lit dinners for one. As crazy as it sounds, for most people today would not do a romantic candle lit dinner for two, let alone for one, I often do.

The Brazilian influence was pervasive during a period of about three years. Years ago I discovered the art of Susan Seddon Boulet. Words can not describe the visions of this lady. I was so inspired I bought a shop, set up a company naming it Seddon Boulet Gallery and wanted desperately to establish a gallery dedicated to her art and other spiritual artists - this dream still haunts me. Years later I found out she was born to British parents and raised in Brasil.

On a visit to San Francisco, I walked from down town to the Golden Gate bridge, to be awe struck by its beauty and grandeur. On the other side was a sign for Sausalito. I had heard about this place, a one time artists enclave, and despite feeling exhausted I wanted to see it. In Sausalito I visited a Native American Indian gallery where I discovered "Navajo Dreaming" by Brazilian artist Ozz Franca, an apparition of a Navajo Princess capable of existing only in the imagination of the painter.

In addition to being exposed to the highly sensual Portuguese language, there was the wonderful feel good story telling of Paulo Coelho. In NYC promoting one of his books at Barnes & Noble (the most awesome book store), I listened and watched this brash writer in stark contrast to his humble characters. I spent several hours queuing for an autograph.

In a copy of his book “By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept”, which was given to me by my sister as a birthday present, I asked Coelho to inscribe for my special lady (merely mentioning her name) a little something in Portuguese.

Coelho inscribed:

“Let Love be the Guide”.

This is the legacy of my special lady that will remain forever.

My dedicated recipe is Brazilian Beans, because it is so common (just like a village boy) in Brasil and Macedonia and the recipes are identical, except in Brasil they add tripe (which you can take or leave).

Brasilian Beans

Fat of the Land

1. **TLC;**
2. *Beans of your choice - one bowl;*
3. *One fresh red capsicum;*
4. *Two large onions;*
5. *Two cloves of garlic;*
6. *Two juicy and aromatic tomatoes;*
7. *Crushed red pepper; and*
8. *Dry mint leaves.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Wash beans thoroughly;*
- B. *Allow to soak overnight - will aid to open up and release flavours during cooking;*
- C. *In pot together lightly fry chopped onions and capsicum with a spoon of olive oil. Then add chopped tomatoes and fry a little more. Add three bowls of water into pot and bring to boil. Then add beans;*
- D. *Boil for about 90 minutes (depends on variety of beans) until beans are soft. Add chopped garlic and simmer for another 5 minutes;*
- E. *Beans should form a thick broth; and*
- F. *Serve with crusty, dry bread - sprinkle crushed pepper and dry mint on beans. Dream of love in a simple village paradise in the South of France.*

Angel's Ajvar

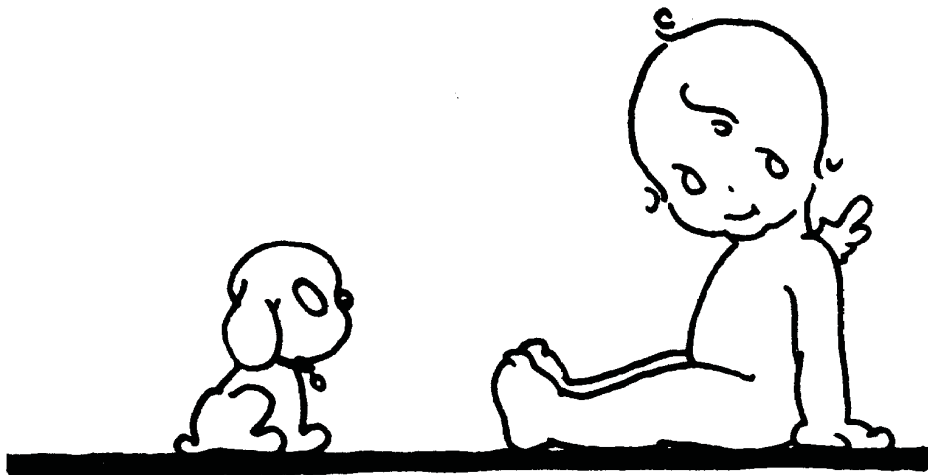
"Gift of Crying"

*An emotion born of tears
Cleansing and soothing the soul
Absent for many years
Even though I have tried to cajole*

*Innocence of a child's conscience
Last experienced when not quite turned nine
Shattered by the shadow of darkness
Realising all in life is not fine*

*Often it takes not much
For the chin to quiver
Still something holds back the wail
So I lay back and shiver*

*I long wait for the day
A stream will flow down my face
In happiness or sadness
Simply a state of grace*



The man responsible for me going to NYC in large part was “Tiny Apple” (more on the name later). Despite the fact that I had many reservations about going to NYC and being able to survive, none the least of which was my own vow “never to return to the shit-hole of a place”, Tiny Apple was able to allay any fears I had.

I guess that was part of his character - being able to make people warm to him and get comfortable very quickly. There had been much said about Tiny Apple around the firm. So much that I was sceptical such an individual could exist and prosper within the confines of a professional services firm.

One of my friends who had met him briefly described him as JFK Jnr. (may he rest in peace). Years later when I told him this he had a chuckle. I tend to agree with my friend. Tiny Apple like JFK Jnr. is tall, handsome, suave, athletic (representing Australia with his brother in a long lost sport called Royal Tennis), charming and very happy.

With a wife that reminds me of Selma Hayek (with a PhD), I should be extremely happy too.

The first day I arrived at work in NYC, Tiny Apple happened to be out at meetings in the morning and then was playing Royal Tennis during lunch at the only and very exclusive (still strictly men only) club in Park Avenue that had facilities for this unique game (hybrid of tennis and squash as far as I can tell). He requested his secretary send me around to this club for lunch.

Arriving I was treated like a VIP (quite an uncomfortable feeling really), signed in and shown upstairs where Tiny treated me to lunch. This was a wonderful start to what turned out to be the most rewarding two years of my professional life, which has now spanned a mind boggling thirteen years.

He treated me with respect and was always so positive in his outlook and encouragement, during the good times and also when things were not so bright. All this encouragement restored lost faith in my “people” skills.

A very personal episode in his life, happened to touch mine in the deepest way possible. More than he can possibly imagine.

We were preparing for an important meeting with the Director of Tax for BHP (at the time Australia’s largest corporation), when Tiny took a call. With a look of unusual seriousness he announced that he had to leave as something had happened at home.

Tiny and his wife had three livewire boys and a little Angel who had struggled since joining us for a human experience. I had the pleasure of meeting this little Angel when Tiny and his wife hosted an Aussie BBQ at their place in the suburbs of NYC.

The image will remain with me forever. I looked into her sparkling little eyes as she sat still on the floor. Her brothers proudly introducing her to me. I much enjoy the company of children and like to give them cuddles and kisses. This little Angel deserved much more than the usual share of kiddie cuddles, for she was as soft and sweet as Turkish delight.

For a while I sat nearby and watched this little Angel spirit struggle in the human world. Sadly, the struggle was relentless never allowing her to build strength. The struggle continued for just on three years.

For three heartbreaking years the little Angel's mother watched and agonised, when finally one evening a faint sign of hope. This beautiful little Angel must have touched her mother like never before by voicing an expression of love.

The following morning the little Angel decided to return to the spirit world, having used up every last ounce of strength to show how much she loved her mummy. This was the fateful call that Tiny took.

Such an event ordinarily would devastate most families. Somehow Tiny and his wife managed to get through this period in their lives, with remarkable strength and faith. I guess a true reflection of the character of these two wonderful and loving parents.

Like many others from my firm, I attended the little Angel's remembrance. Since the age of nine, I had heeded the words of society that "real men do not cry" and despite many moments of heartache and sadness, had not been able to shed a tear.

That was until a lady read an eulogy from the little Angel's aunt in Australia. These words rocked my bluestone foundations and like lava from a volcano, tears started to stream down my face, sobbing uncontrollably.

The words I can not remember, except for their reference to the little Angel and all the things she taught those whose lives she touched. Sentiments expressed in the family's thank you note which read:

"We will always remember eyes which searched our souls, a smile that warmed our hearts and courage which gave us strength. Our beloved angel on earth and in heaven."

In my case, I received the gift of crying - oh so precious to a boy wanting to become a real man!

I dedicate this recipe to the little Angel, for it was and remains my favourite sandwich filler (despite kids in school being horribly mean and saying, "er yuck, are you eating tomato sauce and cheese?"). Actually, it is orange coloured vegetable spread (perfect for vegetarians like Tassie and she tells me that it is delicious, with or without crumbed fetta). You have probably figured by now that fetta is a shepherd boy's staple food.

This recipe tells how to make the stuff. If you are lazy, most continental deli's also sell it in jars under the name of "Ajvar" or "Lutenica" (although of course the commercial product lacks the *TLC* so just doesn't taste as exquisite as the home made stuff).

I haven't forgotten "Tiny Apple". It is a play on his name. The daughter of a colleague (American - who else would not think twice about having a name like Tiny Apple?) yelled it out to her dad, telling him that Tiny Apple was on the phone and wanted to talk.

Angel's Ajvar

Fat of the Land

1. **TLC;**
2. *Chillies - lots of them and red as they come. End of season for preserving;*
3. *Fillers such as eggplant and carrots, although I choose to avoid; and*
4. *Rock salt and olive oil.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Grill chillies on a coal fired BBQ lightly burning skin so will peel;*
- B. *Allow to cool and peel. Place on a slightly elevated strainer and allow water to drain off;*
- C. *Leave overnight. Next day either rip into strips (hard yakka) or put through a mincer. Add salt and olive oil;*
- D. *Fry up in a big pot for about 90 minutes and allow to cool again;*
- E. *Pack into jars and add small amount of preservative in warmer climates like Australia. In places where you have cold winters can avoid preservatives. Store in a cool spot or fridge; and*
- F. *After a couple of weeks, ready to spread on sandwiches with crumbed fetta. Simply divine like the little Angel!!!*

Krasni Kralicek Kaša

“Bohemian Princess”

*Of the finest crystal the world has to offer
Beautifully translucent, delicate and fragile
Brought to life by a master craftsman
Perhaps even a Zen man, ever so agile*

*Aquamarine blue eyes
So deep, penetrating into the soul
Clear, creamy smooth skin
With not even the tiniest mole*

*Lips full of life and laughter
Rarely covered by lipstick
Seldom graced by the embrace of a man
But all in good time, for life's plot is thick*

*She has travelled to far away places
In Nepal, high enough to reach for the heavenly gate
Searching for inner peace and happiness
And a simple, caring, sharing soul mate*

*Fear not Bohemian Princess
As your destiny unfolds under the moon
All you need is your harpsichord heart
Listen, listen, listen as it plays a perfect tune*

Bryan Adams sang a song about the summer of '69, but it wasn't until the summer of '98, that this Bohemian Princess ventured across the Atlantic to visit her friend Tassie in New York City.

For every person that finds their fortune in Manhattan there are no doubt a few more that happen to come by misfortune. Somehow this lady fell into the latter category. She is still not quite sure how it happened, but somewhere between arriving at the airport and hitting mid-town she lost all the money she had so desperately saved over the past year or so.

So here she is in Manhattan, one of the most expensive places in the world with a full week of travel and events planned and not a dollar bill in her pocket. Many would have been completely distraught, beside themselves and wanting to wallow in self-pity. Not this lady. With red teary eyes, puts on a brave smile and heads out to take on Manhattan.

I was meeting my great mate and former mentor Tiny Apple at Mickey Mantle's for a drink after work. It's almost as if I knew that this lady would need a helping hand to get her through her travels. Knowing Tiny's generosity, at least she would be assured of a few decent drinks to take her mind off things, in addition to being charmed by his charisma, so invited her to come along.

Tassie had already agreed to have the Bohemian Princess stay, so at least she would have a roof over her head, of which many citizens of the self proclaimed capital of the world went without. Showing great generosity Tassie also set her up with some funds to at least get by.

I have a soft spot for the battlers of the world and felt for this lady, so decided to do whatever I could to ensure that her stay was as pleasant and memorable as could be in the circumstances.

To make things even tougher she was recovering from an illness and so had severe dietary constraints. Never to shy away from a challenge I thought I would give it a go. Starbucks Mocha Frappaccino's are always a great and novel introduction to NYC culture. Still wondering why it hasn't as yet hit Australia as no doubt it will be huge when it does.

A couple of home cooked dinners never seem to go astray and suitably impress modern women.

NYC restaurants are no doubt amongst the finest and most expensive, especially Les Bernadin (exclusive and top notch French seafood restaurant), which is downstairs from the office. It was off limits because of past indiscretions by free spending Frenchmen, not helped by a new boss that made Scrooge look like Kerry Packer (an Aussie big spender).

Throwing caution to the wind I took the Bohemian Princess and Tassie to Les Bernadin and the waiters certainly made them both feel like Princesses. The food was exquisite and probably (only just) better than my home cooked stuff!

The weekend we decided to venture over the incredible Brooklyn Bridge to a place that once rivalled Manhattan. Sadly this is no longer the case - perhaps if it did it would not have the same allure today.

A morning with the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir was uplifting and we were all blessed by the sisters and brothers. Certainly enough to work up an appetite. Brunch at the Living Room which is a funky place in an old theatre at the top of Prospect Park West. Walked through Prospect Park, which even during summer is pleasantly uncrowded. Atop the war memorial at the entrance to the Park, we gazed at the stirring Manhattan skyline - no other city will ever rival all of its skyscrapers.

Gently strolled over the bridge, reading about its incredible history. The vision and single minded dream of one man that killed him, crippled his son and took thirteen painstaking years of his daughter-in-law's life to transcribe her husband's instructions (now that is truly a labour of love). Ironically, the bridge that was intended to link Brooklyn with NYC was to lead to Brooklyn's fading from the limelight and the bridge that took the city's name has become more famous than the city itself.

Finally, dinner down in SoHo at a Portuguese restaurant Pao, where they have an excellent rabbit dish. The Bohemian Princess does actually originate from Bohemia and her friends call her "Krasni Kralicek", which translates as beautiful rabbit. It also happens to be our family nickname (after my great grandfather who upon his return from America at the turn of the century after three years seeking a fortune, having saved enough for a horse and a rifle, shot a rabbit from an unbelievable distance and so it stuck).

Whilst rabbits are usually fluffy and cute, for this recipe one from the wild is recommended. Rabbit meat is lean, gamy and really lends itself to being battered. In the village rabbits were scarce and a delicacy. In Australia they are a pest and not appreciated except by connoisseurs like my family.

Krasni Kralicek Kaša

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *One whole rabbit or hare;*
3. *Rock salt and olive oil; and*
4. *Plain flour (small cup).*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Boil rabbit until cooked;*
- B. *Lightly fry up in a pan until golden brown and crispy on outside. Remove meat from pan and keep warm;*
- C. *Using the same pan with juices from frying, slowly add flour and stir until light brown tinge appears;*
- D. *Add half cup of water to flour beating gently with a wooden spoon to avoid lumps forming and keep adding water until quite thick but not solid;*
- E. *Serve piping hot with rabbit pieces on top;*
- F. *Mop up with bread and blending with pieces of rabbit;*
- G. *Extra special - pickled vegetables go well as a side dish; and*
- H. *Become Bohemian.*

Patricia's Pickled Melons

"Moment of Innocence"

*Wake in the middle of the night
Toss and turn like a salad
All the while wanting to go back to sleep
So switch on the radio and listen to a ballad*

*A thousand images flash past
Of amorous things said and done
One like a bright star on a clear night
Stands out as pure fun*

*Morning after a fateful night
You dressed in your sexy little uniform
Bring us together nice and tight
And again tempt fate, crossing your legs over mine, left across right*

*Feeling you next to me
I listen to your comforting thoughts
Overcome by melancholy
At our imminent parting of sorts*

*You lean forward wanting your lips on mine
I unsure of your feelings pull away
Rocking to me one more time
'Til between our lips there is no light of day*

*Everyday I think of you
This moment of innocence comes to me
Prompting a radiant smile
For all the world to see*

*Whether it was out of sympathy or affection
I may never know
But I guess it matters not
Except my heart trembles like a lamb born in Autumn snow*

In 1993 I was successful in obtaining a Rotary scholarship to partake in a four week exchange in Washington State and British Columbia. This was on the back of a quote from Ainslie Meares which I forgot in the middle of my presentation and cannot recall now, and a story about an aphrodisiac.

One Saturday a group of about thirty candidates were required to make impromptu speeches - a nerve racking experience at the best of times. Fortunately, I made it to the third round on the Sunday.

As often happens when your surname starts with the last letter in the alphabet (English - in Macedonian it is near the front), I was the final candidate on the Sunday, in the afternoon. During the morning decided to kill some time. As I'd never been to Bendigo, thought I'd do some sightseeing to keep the nerves under control.

Driving around came across St. Mary's cathedral. Although not a religious person I have always been fascinated by church buildings, especially blue stone, so much so I came close to buying one several years ago. Stopped to admire when I heard choir voices coming from the church.

Walked around a couple of times and the temptation to enter was uncontrollable for this choir was simply superb. My reluctance stemmed from the hypocrisy of not being a believer and yet entering a House of God. For reasons still unknown even today, I went against my better judgement and decided to go in. Perhaps it was the sheer power of attraction of the choir voices?

As clear as it was at that moment, I can hear the choir. The acoustics in the church are so perfect that I have never heard such clarity, be it on quality hi-fi equipment, live concerts or any other transmission of sound.

I sat in stunned silence as this choir of teenage girls and boys sang their hymns. Some may have been cajoled into their roles, but for the most part these kids were giving it their heart and soul. You could feel it reverberate through your body.

No idea how much time passed during this service which was ever so delightfully accompanied by the choir. Upon exiting the church I got the shakes and felt a great fear - the fear of God. Somehow I knew that I had been chosen as one of the five candidates to be granted the privilege of the Rotary scholarship.

All I had to do was a final couple of impromptu presentations. The final topic was "Tell Us About Your Favourite Food". I was horrified for at the time I saw food only as a biological necessity to nourish the body. The mind was blank. Thank God there were a few early takers which gave me time to think.

Strike me down, the thought of an awesome fresh strawberry and ice cream dessert topped with strawberry sauce came to me. I'd always feel frisky as a dog after having this dessert. If it could do this for a young stud in his early twenties imagine what such a story could do for a group of fifty something Rotarians (actually the average age was probably closer to sixty). Pre-cursor to Viagra!

Sure enough the story worked miracles and off I went. For four weeks we were treated like royal guests. Pampered, wined, dined and offered the warmest hospitality.

Will always remember a trip up the Skagit river with snow capped Mt. Rainier as a backdrop, in a flat bed boat - so cold we needed two fishing jackets each. When we got to a fishing shack there was the most incredible fire burning and I just warmed my buns until they were like toasted marshmallows. They served us chicken which had never tasted so good, even if it was from Safeway.

After this most amazing four week exchange, I booked a Contiki ten day tour of the Canadian Rockies. Waiting for the tour bus in Vancouver to arrive from Seattle where it picked up the first batch of tourers. The bus arrives and they struggle into the bus terminal - obviously a heavy first night out. In walked Patricia and I was instantly attracted to her, despite the fact she was only about five feet tall.

For the next nine days I tried to get close to this lady and all I managed were a few obnoxious responses and signs of despise.

As amazing as the Rockies, on day ten she came and sat next to me on the bus and actually chatted to me. We were near the end of the trip and so I gave her my card and suggested she contact me back in Australia. She did likewise except hers was doused in Fendi perfume with a request for a birthday card on July, 3rd.

Fendi perfume was to become a weakness. Amongst the pollution of the cities, I can detect it on a woman. A few I have followed with the wind wafting it through my nostrils.

We shared a coffee in Vancouver, a few more stories and my leather jacket. Departed with a kiss and a cuddle.

Back in Australia, I did oblige with the birthday card, phone call (response was "oh its you - what do you want?"), flowers, Montego Bay and a whole lot more. All to no avail.

One time Patricia came to Melbourne for a conference and I asked her to stay the weekend. Thought I could tempt her with a true aphrodisiac - pickled rock melons.

After some initial reluctance, she did taste them, but would only eat the inside fleshy bit with the baby seeds. The crunchy outside skin she left behind, which I of course ravished.

Maybe this aphrodisiac only works for boys from the village?

Patricia's Pickled Melons

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Baby green melons (no larger than a tennis ball) from vines at the end of the season where they have not had any opportunity to ripen;*
3. *Rock salt, vinegar (white) and water; and*
4. *Pickle barrel or jar (large).*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Wash baby melons thoroughly;*
- B. *Prick with knife end in four spots (north, south, east and west);*
- C. *Arrange in barrel or jar;*
- D. *Mix brine - handful of rock salt, cup of vinegar (sadly the synthetic stuff works best) to a half bucket of water;*
- E. *Pour in brine and lock tight. Shake well to distribute and dissolve salt;*
- F. *Come back in three weeks and munch; and*
- G. *Ponder the sensuality.*

Cruddas Carp Corba

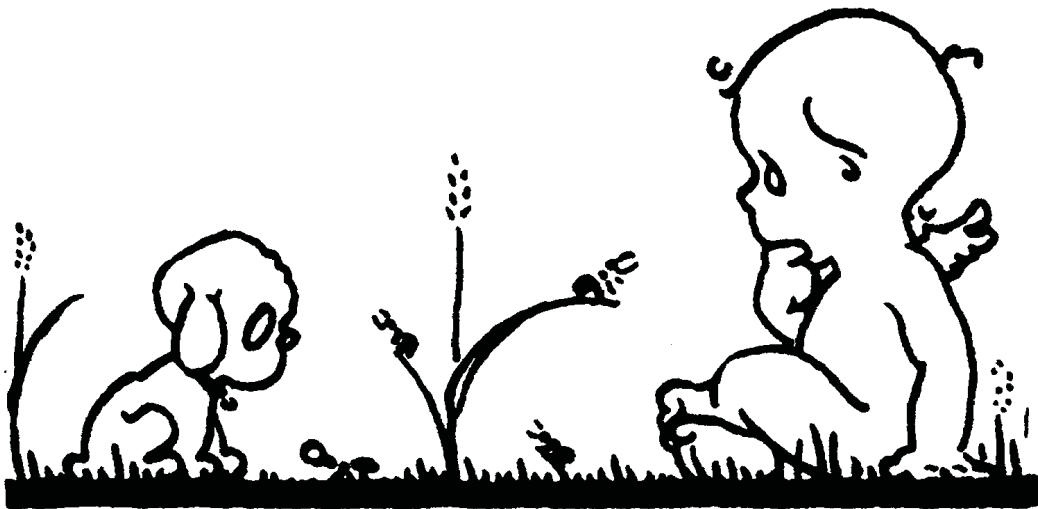
"Ants In An Anthill"

*As a boy I spent time watching
ants mulling around their
homes at break neck speeds,
constantly bumping into each
other, then simply continuing*

*At the time, it seemed so futile
Aimless activity in pursuit of nothing*

*As a man spending my
days atop a skyscraper
I have observed the same
phenomena amongst
mankind*

*I guess we are nothing more
than ants in an anthill!*



Within days of arriving in Australia, my family signed me up at the local primary school. Being considered free settlers, my family borrowed to pay their way to Australia and fended for themselves when they arrived. There were no migrant services and no assistance.

Teachers have always been important in the development of human beings. Some have been so brilliant that their teachings have endured thousands of years - only to be distorted and misused in order to achieve power or personal gain.

In many societies, including the village where I was raised during my formative years, there was no formal education system. What limited knowledge (but much more wisdom) did exist was passed down from generation to generation. Mother to daughter - Father to son. Just like the indigenous peoples of the world (American Indians, Australian Aborigines, African and Amazonian tribes) and the nomads of the world (Gipsies, Bedouins of the Sahara, Mongols).

Being removed from the village at the tender age of five changed the learning process drastically and irreversibly. Coming to Australia I was literally thrust (kicking, screaming and crying) into a completely foreign institution. Completely foreign, completely impersonal and completely threatening (psychologically and physically).

So there I was in a class of twenty odd kids, scared shitless and not a word of English. I have to say that this was the beginning of an extremely tough road - enduring many hours of discomfort because I did not know how to ask nor had the courage to ask permission to go to the toilet.

Humiliation at the hands of Anglo-Saxons who did not appreciate my home made sandwiches, nor I their “Australian” foods. Many a day I went without because these insensitive and ignorant sons of bitches simply dumped my lunch in the bin.

Frustration’s arose a plenty coping with a regimented approach to learning, against which I rebelled and do to this day. Life could be made more tolerable by conforming and merely abusing the systems that have been put in place where necessary, as so many others do, but that just ain’t my way. Unlike Michael Jordan who advocates getting around walls of injustice, I prefer to break them down, even if it leaves scars on my forehead. After all isn’t that what foreheads are for?

On this road to obtaining an “education” in order to make a life, much has transpired. None the least of which was the sacrificing of my own instincts in order to substitute these with knowledge. Rather than impart wisdom, the education I was to undertake sought to impart worthless knowledge. Many hours studying algebra when all one needs in life is basic math skills (hence the appeal of my Amish friends who consider eight years of schooling adequate).

Only now am I returning to the pursuit of wisdom - life skills which do not easily reveal themselves and certainly not through Western style education. Still I am grateful for the education that I have received for it has given me the gift of writing.

My teachers have all played a very important role in my development. In particular they have acted as substitute parents in many ways, for Australia was an even more foreign land for my parents than it was for me.

To this day my parents have not acquired even basic language skills to cope with daily life (certainly no easy task when you go to a country as an adult and have to fend for yourself and children, in addition to scratching out a living). So how could I possibly expect them to provide me with any guidance, when they could not even work out the basics of Australian culture and way of life?

If I sat down I could probably write at least a chapter on each of my teachers all the way from primary school through to high school. Each would be deserving and worthy of being written about.

I have chosen one particular teacher, for even though she is most likely not even aware of her impact, she touched my heart deeply and is more responsible than anyone else for me achieving all that I have achieved and even getting to the point of writing to preserve a part of my culture.

As a teenager I was a huge fan of lawyers and TV. I was always prepared to take on an argument with all and sundry, including my teachers, often with great success. So I fancied myself as a bit of a hot shot lawyer, ignoring of course my limitations including average language skills. Still I had a dream of becoming a lawyer. Seemed like there were many prominent people that started out as lawyers - little did I realise there was so much more to success than mere merit.

I was prepared to pursue my dream and sacrifice a great deal to achieve it. That was until I told my career adviser that I wanted to go to law school. His response was "Do you realise only the cream of the cream go to law school?" To which I responded by walking out in a state of devastation.

My dream had been shattered by a single question from a heartless man who was supposed to provide guidance (hope this illustrates the major deficiencies in the education system I was a part of). So shattered in fact that I considered quitting school all together. The devastation only lasted until lunch time.

The lady had been my art teacher several years earlier and we had little contact since - my artistic aptitude was nil so I can understand her giving up on me. She sent a message saying I was to meet her at lunch time in her classroom. I figured I was in trouble again!

What transpired was not only entirely out of the blue, but it touched me so deeply that whenever I find myself struggling for self belief, I think of this moment for strength.

She looked me in the eyes and started to talk, explaining that news of the incident with the career counsellor had got to her. Not quite sure how - not that it mattered at all. In a soft caring voice came words of intense emotion and comfort. Words that showed she understood how I felt, why I walked out and the devastation that negative comments can have on an impressionable and emotional young aspiring lawyer.

My chin began to quiver and my eyes filled with tears. Only the false belief that real men do not cry held back the tears.

Perhaps my art teacher in a whole year could not free my mental inhibitions to allow my artistic streak to flow, but in ten minutes she made my heart melt. Simply by a show of faith in me and telling me that I was good enough to be anything I wanted to be - even a shit hot lawyer.

Choking back the emotions all I wanted to do was give her a hug, but couldn't. I somehow managed a thank you and left, feeling like the Birdman recharged by the sun's penetrating rays.

I have dedicated this recipe to my art teacher for like chicken noodle soup, it warms the cockles of your heart and having fish and leek it is actually great for your heart.

I don't know where she is or what she is up to, but her husband (whom I suspect was the conveyor of the incident, showing he also had a heart) went on to work for the Heart Foundation.

The world needs many art teachers to inspire Artists of Life!



Cruddas Carp Corba

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *One medium sized carp (living in a land locked country, fish thriving in the murky depths of the river is what we had);*
3. *Two leeks;*
4. *Three juicy tomatoes; and*
5. *One red capsicum.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Chop the capsicum and lightly fry up in pot;*
- B. *Add chopped leeks (large chunks as will break up with cooking);*
- C. *Add chopped tomatoes and mix in until forms a thick broth;*
- D. *Add three bowls of water and bring to a boil. Simmer for about thirty minutes until leeks are soft;*
- E. *Throw in pieces of carp and simmer for 10-15 minutes (fish boils quickly); and*
- F. *Serve like a soup, with fresh crushed pepper, a spoon of red wine vinegar and crusty bread. Be an artist.*





Cheerful Cherub Chives

"Life is a Garden"

*Born of a seed
Spreading one's branches out towards the sun
Learning and developing with the experiences
of each season
But why simply be a tree?*

*Why not Monet's Garden?
Or even your own personal garden with
colourful flowers, exotic orchids, green grasses
Lush and succulent leaves
Attracting birds, bees and all gorgeous animals
to our garden of life!*

Late in the winter season a group of colleagues decided they wanted to ski one last time before all the snow disappeared. They organised to go up to Vermont for a weekend. I had often heard of people raving about Vermont - the mere mention of the place conjured up all sorts of wonderful images. Hues of brown, red, yellow and orange of the fall leaves. Mountains and mountains of snow in the winter. Blissful blossoms in the spring. Endless dark green fields in the summer. I think I've watched too many episodes of "Little House on the Prairie" and "The Waltons".

Not being much of a skier, less so after an injury several years ago attempting cross country skiing, which compared to down hill skiing seemed harmless. That is until you try it on icy packed trails at the end of a season, lose control completely and contort your knees in ways that not even a yogi could achieve. End result partially torn ligaments in the left knee.

Three years of pain and many offers of surgery by a very "reputable" and high profile orthopaedic surgeon. God bless the soul of another surgeon operating out of the local public hospital. After only one examination he concluded, much to my relief, that surgery was not the answer. I have always been extremely wary of offering my body for mutilation. His profound advice was to exercise and strengthen the muscles around the knee to take pressure off the ligaments. The most accurate diagnosis and prescription ever given. As for the first surgeon - I figure I was just the source of another lavish fee.

I decided to tag along to Vermont knowing there was no way I was trying skiing. Arriving to hear the temperature was way below freezing and with more people on the slopes than there were tourists on Fifth Avenue, definitely decided to give it a wide berth.

My colleagues generously agreed to allow me to have the rent-a-car for the day whilst they went skiing. I was to pick them up later in the evening.

Early next morning after only a few hours sleep they all staggered off for a day's skiing. I stayed behind in the cabin to play with the open fire. A pastime which I find fascinating and incredibly relaxing. There is nothing quite like the heat of an open fire. It heats your buns until they are like toasted marshmallows. For me it also penetrates so much deeper - to the core of my soul.

After a couple of hours sitting in front of the fire, I decided to venture outside. Bitterly cold was the air as soon as I stepped outside. All rugged up, started along the road, with the wind howling and penetrating everything I was wearing. I was tempted to turn back.

For some odd reason I wanted to experience this extreme of temperature. About half an hour passed when I came to a river. Along the banks, sections had iced over. In total contrast to the fire, the ice represented the other side of nature's mysterious ways.

Slowly I inched my way to the riverbank, crushing the snow with my boots and took off my gloves. The water was crystal clear and only its velocity kept it from freezing over. Experiencing this icy cold water was most exhilarating. Kind of a rebirth. I think this happens when you experience new sensations or bring to the fore memories of experiences long buried in the recesses of the infinite sub-conscious.

It may be exhilarating but in the interests of self preservation one must get out pretty quickly, dry the hands and put the gloves back on. Race back to the cabin and thaw out in front of the awesome fire.

Having thawed out and played with the fire some more I decided to go for a drive as I was sure there'd be any number of small towns around. I can't remember the names of any of them or much about them at all, yet it is less than two years ago. What will I remember in old age?

What I can remember is visiting a big old place, a mill in its heyday (Bridgewater Mill Antique Centre) that was selling antiques and all sorts of things from yester year. Being fond of such things (but not a hoarder so am very selective as to what I buy - it has to have special significance or show some sign of synchronicity), I spent a long time in this old place. Maybe an hour or more. I was about to leave when I came across a stack of old books, amongst which was a book by Rebecca McCann entitled "The Cheerful Cherub".

This lady led a remarkable life achieving so much in such a short period. Her Cheerful Cherub caricatures, all 1001 are full of life and accompanied by some profound wisdoms. I connected with this book and bought it, to become one of my treasured possessions (as I said not many).

The Cheerful Cherub also reminded me of a friend that is a huge fan of cherubs. She has made it her life to bring cheer to those around her, as all cherubs do. She surrounds herself with cherubs so she can continue to see the world through the eyes of a child.

This cherub had visited NYC once before, but being so afraid she did not venture out at night. Frightened by the evil spirits of the adult world. It was also during summer and not winter, so she could not ice skate in Central Park.

True to her word, the cherub came to visit NYC just after Christmas 1997. As always, full of gifts and cheer. Ever so grateful to experience NYC at night and to be able to ice skate in Central Park (one of her life dreams).

A couple of New Year's Eve parties later she would be off to Montreal. One evening whilst dining alone she heard some familiar English voices. Turning around as a child only would, she asks "Excuse me, are you Mick Jagger?" Only a cherub would ask such a question for all other humans know the rock legend. He replies "Do I look like Mick Jagger?" So that is how she met the famous rockers and they even gave her a ticket to see their concert. Start me up sister!

Life is definitely stranger than fiction. On the train back to NYC, she met a Stones fan that had been to forty odd concerts all over the world and never even got close to any of the Stones let alone have dinner with them.

This cherub stayed a few more days in NYC. In parting, she not only tidied the apartment, including my bed which I rarely made because I would only mess it up a few hours later - lazy I know, but left a piece of her soul behind.

When I arrived home I noticed it was all neat and tidy. As I was about to turn in, lifting the covers I noticed a card and a gift of French aftershave from L'Occitane. I was pleasantly surprised for she had already brought me a beautiful gift on arrival.

Opening the card to read its cherub sentiments I was blown away. Inside was a ticket to the Stones at Madison Square Garden. This gesture was truly that of a cherub and it touched me so that I wept openly and loudly.

Later I was to learn that the concert was sold out and she literally had to beg one of the ticket sellers to sell her a ticket. One heartless human refused. Another cherub soul obliged.

I dedicate this recipe to my Cheerful Cherub for its childhood simplicity.

Cheerful Cherub Chives

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Chives - Onions or Garlic; (alternatively if available fresh spring onion or fresh garlic leaves);*
3. *Rolling Stones Rock salt;*
4. *Your favourite vinegar; and*
5. *Extra Virgin Olive Oil.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Chop chives into 1 centimetre bits;*
- B. *In a wooden bowl add a little salt. With a pestle crush gently to release colour and flavour;*
- C. *Add cool water, olive oil and vinegar to taste and stir; and*
- D. *Wonderful summer salad with crusty bread. Enjoy with the smile of a cherub!*



1954

Ossie's Offal Soup

"Autumn Leaves"

*I sit on a rock in Central Park
Bare chested under glorious sunshine
A ladybug lands just above the heart to make its mark
To remind me to reflect on a time oh so fine*

*An oak tree nearby, its acorns gently shed
Without resistance and acceptance of nature's change of
season
Countless uncontrolled thoughts come into my head
Why can't I let go as easily as the Oak tree - Is there a
reason?*

*A breeze brings a waft of the horses
Young lovers take off piggyback style
The homeless push their US Postal Service homes with
superhuman forces
For God only knows how many a mile?*

*Autumn leaves ever so slowly drift to the ground
In hues of red, brown, yellow and orange
People trod on them and they make a crinkly sound
All I want to do is fall into a mountain of Autumn leaves
- how strange?*

Doormen are synonymous with NYC, perpetuated by the hundreds of movies made by Hollywood but which are set in NYC and TV series like "Seinfeld", "Mad About You" and "NYPD Blues" amongst many others. Still for some reason I used to think that it was all a fantasy, contrived for the movies. I would never have imagined that I would actually experience life with a doorman.

Doormen play an integral part in the life of NYC and probably enjoy one of the highest levels of social interaction. NYC despite its hustle and bustle and high energy levels is a pretty superficial place. In a place where one in three people lives alone, social relationships come to resemble business relationships. Brief, dynamic and to serve a purpose.

I think D.H. Lawrence might have described NYC as a city without a soul. That may well be the case but there are still some amazing people with incredible souls. You just have to be fortunate enough to meet one for more than fifteen minutes.

When I first went to live and work in NYC, I was sent a set of keys to an apartment on West 53rd Street and Eighth Avenue (Hell's Kitchen). I arrived on April Fool's day just after midnight. The apartment building was a six level complex and at a rough guess just after WWII (it must have been for it had a nuclear shelter in the basement).

There was no sign of any doorman confirming my suspicions that they were only for the movies - of a bygone era. I opened the outer door without hassle, but the inner door would not work with the keys I was given. A sense of panic set in, after all it was pitch black, I knew no-one and had no idea how to get into this place.

Fiddled around for about ten minutes, when I saw a counter to the left and an old style switchboard looking thing. Walked over and looked at it. Did not make any sense. There was a button labelled "Super". I figured this must be the building supervisor/manager.

I thought twice before pressing the button, as it was the middle of the night, but I had no option. A man answered and said he'd be out shortly. This was no April Fool's joke - the lock was playing up and he politely let me in and understood the situation, being a recent Irish immigrant he still had a sense of humour.

Next evening as I'm returning from the office - low and behold there is a doorman and he opens the door for me. Asks where I'm going. I explained I'd just arrived from Australia and was living in Apartment 6F. He welcomed me and said I'd enjoy my stay in NYC.

I lived in three buildings in NYC, all with doormen (the last even had a twenty four hour concierge - all a bit much for a boy from the village really). Each building had several doormen, but there was one very special character.

He was a short stocky gentleman in his early sixties. Originally from Argentina he spoke with a strong accent and as Spanish speakers tend to do had a bit of a lisp. There was something very unique and quite special about this character. We often spent time chatting about all manner of subjects - American way of life, politics, economics etc.

The man was indeed worldly and very well read. Often when he finished reading a quality UK newspaper on world affairs (Manchester Guardian), he would pass it on to me, which I very much appreciated. The only place to get a bit of news on Australia.

There was an incredible warmth to this man. I would often shake his hand, which was incredibly strong especially for a man his age, and I could feel his warmth.

The zest for life was quite insatiable and the work ethic even greater. I was to later find out that not only did he work an eight hour shift as a doorman in the building where I lived, but then went to do another eight hour shift as a building supervisor (which involves some tough physical labour - maintaining, cleaning, repairing the building etc.) in the building he lived in, which was only a few blocks away. Would you believe it - he has been doing this double shift for all of the seventeen years since arriving from Argentina?

I asked him why he works so hard as I really struggled to understand it (I doubt I could do it for seventeen days let alone seventeen years). The explanation he gave to me was that he loved working. My interpretation of this is that he had discovered the elixir of life, so didn't really see it as work. To see the constant smile and happiness in his face should have been enough to convince me that he was truly enjoying his life experience.

After I moved, I did not see him all that often, but when I did walk past and he was working, I would always stop by and say hello. We moved from a handshake to a man's embrace and always a smile.

This doorman was a kind of father figure and in some ways resembled my father. They both have a similar build including quite rotund bellies - obviously enjoy their food and quite a few beers. They both migrated to give their children a better chance in life. They both have worked extremely hard over a very long period of time. So it is for such similarities that I have dedicated this offal soup to my Argentinian soul mate.

It is the salt of the earth, incorporating all the left overs of the sacrificial lamb (guts, heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, tripe, brain, tongue etc.). It is my father's favourite dish and I'm quite sure my doorman mate would enjoy it immensely.

And for anyone contemplating going to NYC - I leave you with a profound thought from a wise NYC doorman:

"NYC - it sucks you in. You will never leave."

Ossie's Offal Soup

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Sacrificial lamb leftovers (head including brain and tongue), heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, tripe and guts - all very well cleaned and processed which is an art form;*
3. *Stock cubes (two) - either beef or chicken will do, soup packet (Knorr or Podravka brands are best);*
4. *Fine semolina egg noodles and fresh parsley; and*
5. *Wine vinegar or fresh lemon juice.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Wash all the offal pieces and boil for about 10 minutes and discard water;*
- B. *Measure number of serves and add fresh water to large soup pot and boil until offal pieces are nearly cooked (about 30-40 minutes), removing excess foam and fat in process;*
- C. *Add stock cubes and chopped parsley;*
- D. *Take offal pieces out and cut into bit size chunks, throw back into soup pot and stir for about 5 minutes releasing all flavours;*
- E. *Turn off heat (if using electricity place on a cool hot plate else noodles will over cook) and place a handful of crushed noodles and stir in, together with soup packet. Allow to sit for 10 minutes;*
- F. *Beat two eggs with two spoonfuls of red wine vinegar. Slowly add small amounts of soup (to avoid cooking egg). Allow to cool;*
- G. *Add egg mix to soup pot gently stirring in; and*
- H. *Serve and taste. Then add fresh cracked pepper and red wine vinegar for aroma (or fresh lemon juice as a substitute). Eat with the Gods. Battle your father for the tongue and give the brain to your baby sister.*

Kouros (Yiannis) Kolbasi

“Big Chief Sitting Bull”

*Hey pale face
Me get heap big box from cowboy ridin' steel horse
Say him from Fed Ex
Open up; inside icon of “St. Mike's Hotel”
Must go there one day to buy fire water
One day
Must go
One day
For the Gods
Thanks
Little Chief Running Crazy*

You probably think this little ditty is going to be about Indians. Well not really as it is about my great mate, “Little Chief Running Crazy” who is actually of Greek origins. But as the Indians well know but have not been able to get it through the thick skulls of the “pale faces”, *All Things Are Connected*. And so it is with the Indians and my great buddy.

I was driving from Phoenix, on my way to Window Rock (capital of Navajo nation in search of Indians the way I imagine them in a bygone era). After a long flight and a few hours driving I arrived at a very picturesque little town (one time capital of Arizona), high up in the mountains. Prescott was to be my first stop along a two thousand mile pilgrimage (driving that is, not flying!).

Driving along the main street, this big old hotel, with a sign hanging over the street stood out like dogs balls. The name of the hotel was St. Mike's and so I immediately connected as this is my great mate's name. I decided I'd stay there the first night.

What I didn't count on, for I never make detailed travel plans, was a long weekend and St. Mike's being fully booked. I decided that the Navajo spirit was in the air and I'd rely on instincts more than ever before. I could feel that despite the "No Vacancy" sign at St. Mike's hotel on old whisky row, I was still going to stay there.

Walked in and asked for a room. The guy behind the counter said they were booked solid for the long weekend, as would be most places in town. However, I should return at 6 p.m. at which time if another guest who was booked in did not show I could have the room.

Wandered around this beautiful town for the afternoon, smelling the wet straw at the street market. Even though Arizona is predominantly desert, Prescott was atop a mountain range and received lots of rain.

I also tried a few other places, but as expected they too were all booked out. So you'd think I'd be pretty concerned walking back to St. Mike's at 6 p.m. Not at all for I knew this other guest would not show and there'd be a room, and there was. It was a shoe box, but it had a shower, a bed and the spirit of St. Mike and that was more than enough for this pilgrim.

That is the story of how my great mate got a poster of an old hotel in Prescott with his name on it. How we became great mates is not so easy to write a story about.

It was many, many years ago and almost half a lifetime ago, so the memory is being tested. My recollection is something like this. The first day at Melbourne University (a place I signed up for a three year program purely on reputation and prestige for even though it was in the heart of the city I had never bothered to visit - not sure what this really says about my aspirations?), was chaotic. Some kind of alcoholic binge fest. At that time I found alcohol abhorrent and would not go near it. Not a great start.

There were less than a handful of students from my high school that made it to Melbourne Uni and none in the Commerce faculty. So I was like a lost sheep amongst a flock of thousands, not knowing which way to turn.

Fortunately, there was at least one other soul in exactly the same predicament. A little dude from Donny High who was even shier than I was and suspect probably even more afraid of this alien environment. The universe conspires to bring together souls that need each other. To say that we needed each other would have been plain obvious.

We met, we introduced ourselves, exchanged stories and decided to stick together. Despite a lack of common interests, we developed a rapport initially and as time went on a strong friendship.

We not only studied at the same place but socialised together and even frequented a few bars and night clubs trying to meet a couple of decent ladies. Needless to say two black sheep stand out pretty easily and so didn't stand a chance amongst the packs of wolves.

Being a black sheep is not easy at the best of times. Just before Christmas a couple of years ago two great dark clouds descended upon my great buddy's tense shoulders. In one foul swoop the universe conspired against him. Christmas was saddened immensely with the passing of his truest and best mate, his dear old dad - a gentle soul he was. Shortly thereafter I left to return to NYC.

Oh how I felt for him in the circumstances but I was helpless to do anything for him. Little did I count on his resilience, courage, determination and persistence to overcome such adversity. The words of US President Calvin Coolidge (1923-29) typify my mate:

"Persistence"

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.

Genius will not: the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan "press on" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

Calvin Coolidge (1872 - 1933)

Whilst he went into his shell more than usual, he increased his focus on his running inspired by the greatest Greek ultra marathon runner Yiannis Kouros.

Little Chief Running Crazy has completed several marathons and I really wanted him to try the NYC marathon (as with all things in New York - the world's most famous). My chin quivered and tears welled in my eyes as I watched young and old, able bodied and not so able bodied push themselves to superhuman feats to finish the NYC marathon. I could see Little Chief Running Crazy. I haven't given up on the dream as yet as I know it will happen one day.

I dedicate this recipe to Little Chief Running Crazy. It is a recipe for home made pork sausages, for as a young man in my teens I used to feast on a whole bowl of fried sausages and a loaf of bread and venture to the Western oval to watch modern Greek gladiators do battle. These sausages gave me stamina and invincibility.

Kouros (Yiannis) Kolbasi

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Fresh course ground pork, including fat but not rind - about 5 kilos;*
3. *Pork sausage skins;*
4. *Ten large anions;*
5. *Salt, crushed red pepper - handful of each; and*
6. *Hand mincer with a funnel attachment.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Chop onions (medium and not fine) - you will get teary eyed, but just wait until you taste 'em;*
- B. *Layer all ingredients and mix in well in a large pan;*
- C. *Blow into sausage skin (metre lengths are just right) and roll onto end of a funnel attached to hand mincer;*
- D. *Load hand mincer and slowly fill sausage skins, releasing slowly so as to pack tight and not leave much air in sausage;*
- E. *Tie ends tightly only after sausage is full, with a tough string and hang onto a pole;*
- F. *Hang out during cold, dry winter days for a week or two to preserve and blend flavours (avoid heat and flies); and*
- G. *Grill on a stick over hot coals. Eat with plain crusty fresh bread. Feel like Zeus.*

Sveta Zlata's Zelnik

"Santa Thereza"

*When I am a poet
I will write beautiful romantic lines
for all the women in my life
especially those with lovely curls and jade eyes*

*When I am a Zen master
I will meditate to be at ease
with all the women in my life
especially those with the name and roar of a lioness*

*When I am a peace activist
I will move to save the Amazonas
for all the women in my life
especially those choosing the sacred gift of life*

*For now as only an artist of life
who is neither poet, Zen master nor peace activist
I offer you my presence
wrapped in my love*

I have read somewhere that there are only four ways to spirituality, *Singing, Dancing, Meditation and Story Telling*.

The first three make some sense, but story telling? In my case the first two must be eliminated to avoid butchering these two beautiful and moving art forms.

Meditation I have tried many a time without any real success. When I achieve a state of complete relaxation, it is such an unusual and strange state that I can not hold it for more than a minute or so before the body goes back to its contorted self and the mind starts to do bizarre things.

Story telling I guess is an art form that I have always enjoyed. Back in the days of the village, that is all there was, in particular from my grandfather. The enjoyment of story telling has stayed with me to this day. Although I do not really know any "classics" such as the fairy tales or myths, I enjoy telling people real life stories, in particular stories about my life and the people in it. This I guess must be my way to spirituality.

One lady in my life is incredibly spiritual and it is not at all surprising for she has been dancing for most of her life. If quantum counts for anything then I'd say this lady is probably as spiritual as Saint Teresa of Avila. She not only dances but dance is life, teaching it at a college in Santa Monica, directing the dance program at the college and on top of all of this dancing, she runs a foundation for fine arts.

On most flights people treat each other as complete strangers and say little. I happened to have the amazing good fortune of striking gold on a flight from LA to NYC - first time around.

Despite feeling completely spaced out (I am not a great flyer as it usually takes me at least a couple of weeks to recover from jet lag), I sat next to a lady who was just bursting out of her skin. There was no way she was going to sleep on a short five hour trip. I on the other hand had already been travelling twenty four hours.

We got chatting, introducing ourselves and unlike most flyers we were both in free flow. I fascinated to meet a real life dancer and she perhaps a real life tax adviser for she'd been through hell with the IRS. Two more diverse backgrounds you could not possibly find. One an artist, the other a tax professional. One an American from the Mid-West, the other from Australia via a village in Macedonia. One an experienced traveller the other just a babe in the woods. Not even an age gap could dampen this spiritual connection.

Now I tell you, maybe some of my stories are half decent but I dare say not five hours worth of laughs. Yet that is exactly what happened - we talked and talked and she laughed and laughed. The most incredible sense of humour and ability to laugh from deep within.

All this laughter made the last leg of my journey pass so much more pleasantly. In the process I also somehow managed to score an invitation to the opening night of the dance program in which she was performing at the Lincoln Center.

Being a cultural Neanderthal, or perhaps just a Neanderthal man, I knew I would not be able to fully appreciate the program. Still not being able to touch my toes, I could appreciate the incredible flexibility required to perform.

So with trepidation I ventured to the Lincoln Center and sat nervously in a small intimate theatre, where everyone seemed to be in the know. I really felt out of place, grunting and snorting like a Neanderthal in an attempt at appreciation.

I sat through the program eyes fixed on a lady with a loose hessian outfit contorting her body to make me cringe with pain. The only other recollection I have is of her much older silver haired partner. Like nearly all male dancers (must be a prerequisite) his tights were so tight that he resembled a bull in the most masculine of respects.

I can't recall how we hooked up after seeing her dance in NYC, but I came to rely on this wonderful lady to cheer me up with her infectious laughter whenever I was blue. No matter how busy her schedule was, there was always time for her friend from the village.

What really struck me about our friendship beyond the ability to stay connected on opposite sides of the country, was the fact that whenever she came to NYC, which was a couple of times a year, there'd always be time for a drink, coffee, dinner whatever.

It occurred to me that this lady must have a whole host of connections in NYC, yet she still wanted to catch up with me. Quite touching! Never having discussed such a deep and meaningful subject, being honest I have no idea as to her perspective on the friendship and its meaning. All I can say is that it is very special and precious and if all friendships were just like this, then the world would be an even more wonderful and spiritual place than it already is at present.

The recipe I have dedicated to my vivacious and spiritual lady is a soft moist pastry filled with leek to warm the soul as it did mine as a child when I was physically ill, which unfortunately was often.

I have named it after Sveta (Saint) Zlata of Meglenci, for the name Zlata is the feminine for the word “gold”, which is my friend’s surname. This Saint was also from a place with the same name as my Mother’s village - not sure how to find out if it is the same village. Just like I am not sure how to find out the spiritual feats that allowed her to become a Saint in the Orthodox Christian religion.

So I have chosen to make Sveta Zlata the patron saint of “spiritual” dancers (even though only a few days after writing this I discovered that Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of dancers, singers and poets).

Love & Smackers!

Sveta Zlata's Zelnik

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *A large bowl of self raising flour;*
3. *Four large, fresh leeks, one large red capsicum;*
4. *Two large juicy tomatoes; and*
5. *Olive oil and salt.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Make a crater in the bowl of flour and add warm water (about half a cup) and a pinch of salt. Mix in well until formed into a soft dough;*
- B. *Knead dough to smooth out lumps and bumps and to aerate and allow to sit while you cook up the leek;*
- C. *Chop the red capsicum and lightly fry up with two spoonfuls of olive oil in a medium size pot;*
- D. *Add chopped tomatoes and release juices;*
- E. *Chop the leeks into chunks and add to pot, with a few more spoonfuls of olive oil and fry up. Leeks need only to break up and be softened and not fully cooked;*
- F. *Roll pastry into three sheets (one at a time), about 2 millimetres thick. Place first sheet in a round baking pan with sides, so that hanging on the edge of pan. Layer next sheet on top of the first, again hanging over the side of pan;*
- G. *Spread the leek mix evenly over pastry;*
- H. *Layer final sheet of pastry on top of spread leek mix;*
- I. *Take the three sheets of pastry and roll back over the edge of the pan so that now sitting inside the sides of the pan and forming a rolled crust;*
- J. *Bake for about 40 minutes on 200 °C. Top and bottom pastry sheets should be "gold" and lightly browned. Let breath for about ten minutes under a clean cloth; and*
- K. *Serve in large slices and find out meaning of Love & Smackers!*

N's favorite



Papa's Popara

"Portrait of a Lone Soldier"

*Look into the eyes of a Vietnam Veteran
You see that he is haunted by the past
Tormented by an uncertain future
In the present treated as a social outcast*

*I have never been to the battlefields of Phnom Penh
Or been awoken in the middle of the night
By the sounds of gunfire or American choppers
Yet I imagine the shrill of a buddy losing his sight*

*Empathy fills my heart
Not for the physical suffering endured
Which can be overcome by mind over matter
But the psychological agony for it cannot be cured*

*As you pass through life
Listen for his cry for help
May bear the scars of life not war
Without you, turbulent waters will swallow without a
yelp*

Military history abounds in truly amazing stories of incredible courage, endurance and heartache. As a pacifist I pray that I shall never be touched by the horrors of war. How ironic it is that my most powerful story rises from the epitaphs of two world wars in Europe.

It is the story of my grandfather, God bless his gentle soul, father of my dearest Mother and a great soldier in battle and more so in life, in my mind.

Some time around the turn of the century he was born in a village, probably close to Meglenci. That we know not exactly when and where is testimony to the very basic and simple lives that my forebears lead.

The only reference points we have are the memory of his cousin, who sadly passed away a few weeks ago but could vividly recall the events of WWI and the fact that my grandfather was orphaned at a very young age during this period.

Raised by relatives and his elder cousin until she married (who throughout her one hundred plus years of life expressed the most incredible fondness for her younger cousin), I can only imagine the lot of an orphan. Hungry, cold and deprived of love and affection.

Somehow, against incredible adversity and harsh Macedonian winters this soldier grew up to be brave and strong. In an era when marriages were arranged and dependent upon a man's status and assets, being a penniless orphan with no inheritance did not bode well. As the lifespan was short, marriage was arranged as early as possible, usually early twenties for men and younger for women.

In my grandfather's case, such time came and went (as it has for me well and truly). As my Mother explains it and she would have heard it from her parents, even though most of the villagers were relatively poor no one really wanted to betroth their daughter to a man with few material possessions. So he waited until his late twenties to score a bit of a coup with a young lady from a village a fair way off, some ten years his junior.

Together they had six children (plus a couple that chose the spiritual world after having a brief human experience), three girls and three boys. My Mother was the third eldest. In my eyes all have become wonderful citizens of the world.

Things were probably going extremely well for my grandfather and his now fairly large family. Life was probably pretty tough, as the hills surrounding the village were steep, rocky and quite unproductive. Feeding the family was a constant struggle, but struggle he did with immense determination and strength.

World events were to turn his world upside down once again. WWII arrived and the frontline was just outside the village. With little choice, leaving wife and young children behind, off to war he went.

Somehow the human spirit endures even through four years of hell, abdominal wounds and rudimentary surgery without anaesthetic, hygiene or antiseptics. After all this the soldier returns to his family to battle on against life's demands. For years he endured pain from the war wounds. That is physical. The psychological I can only imagine for he was a reserved man of few words.

Perhaps if I had managed to spend some time with him, I may have heard some more stories. As it is, perhaps I saw him a few times a year until I was five when we moved to Australia and only a few times since. That he can have such a lasting impact is testimony to his greatness.

His endurance is the stuff legends are made of. Sadly very few of these legends endure. I am intent on preserving the legend of my grandfather. If I could I'd like to say to him:

*Grandfather you need not commit your words
to paper
For they are etched in my memory
As were the tombstones of the Pharaohs
To remain until time is no more*

The nearest town and market was some twenty kilometres from the village. As there was no transport he would regularly make this journey with his donkey. Setting out before the crack of dawn and returning after dark, all for the love of his family to buy simple sustenance and trade some of the goods he produced on his few plots of land, purchased with blood, sweat and tears.

One such journey will remain with me, as his enduring legacy, even though I was not even born when it happened. Having travelled to the town and traded his goods, he set off to return home, when a most horrendous storm set in. Wind and pelting rain.

My grandfather knew a fellow soldier that he had served with during the war that had a house on the outskirts of the town. Having endured so much together, he thought perhaps there was a bond. A bond which would allow him to ask to stay overnight and see out the storm.

Trekking though the storm he arrives at the fellow soldier's house and calls out to him. The dogs also start barking. The fellow soldier comes out and they greet each other. My grandfather explains the obvious, that there is a monster storm and that he is a long way from home. He asks to stay the night.

The fellow soldier explains that his wife is pregnant and that it is not convenient. My grandfather tells him that he understands (remnants of five hundred years of Ottoman rule when another man, not even a fellow soldier, was allowed near one's wife) and that he is prepared to sleep in the stables with the animals, just so he and his donkey can get some shelter. His fellow soldier, a man without a heart turned him away. And so my grandfather set out on a six hour journey in a monster storm.

These images move me every time I think about them. It is these images that immediately come to mind when someone asks something of me. So I do all I can when asked, in honour of my grandfather's legacy and legend.

Some eighty or so years may have wearied his body but his heart remained until the very end. I visited him in 1986 (one of the harshest winters in about thirty years). I, a young man in my prime, escorted by my cousin of similar prime and here is this war time hero insisting that he walk us through the snow some three kilometres away (six round trip) to the bus stop to ensure that we were not attacked by dogs or slip on the slush.

Insist he did and off we went together. This is one of my enduring final images. He was dressed in very thick woven woollen garments, including a brown butchers style apron, balaclava, rubber shoes and his walking stick, leading two grandsons a third his age. Oh how proud he was, as my eyes well up with tears.

He lived in a stone wall house of a couple of rooms. The sleeping and living room had whitewashed walls, mud floor, a wooden bed with mattress and pillow filled with straw and a thick woven flokati blanket.

A simple life that he was proud of. To show his pride in his family and me in particular, grandfather and grandmother changed out of their village clothes and dressed up in their finest western clothes sent by my Mother to have a photo taken, so that we would all be proud of them. If only they knew. Sadly, we probably never told them how much we loved them. Such are the vagaries of distance and a culture where expressions of love are a foreign concept.

A blue cotton shirt, navy cardigan and corduroy pants and lace up boots. Oh what a beautiful man with a heart of gold. May we be joined once more in the spirit world.

Another enduring image. Nearing the end of his life, my mother called to speak to him on the telephone. Still concerned with my welfare, he inquired of my mother whether I had a "woman". What character and spirit. In his eighties and thinking of a woman and his grandson.

I dedicate this food for the Gods, for it is so simple and sufficient to sustain for over eighty years one of the world's greatest soldiers.

It is plain dry village bread soaked in goats milk.

Papa's Popara

Fat of the Land

1. ***TLC;***
2. *Fresh goats milk, straight from the goat.
Grandfather milked his goat right until near the
very end of his legendary life; and*
3. *Dry village bread.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Pour warmed goat's milk into a bowl;*
- B. *Soak dry village bread in the milk; and*
- C. *Live to be a Legend!!!*

Swearing San Francisco Spaghetti

“In Your Eyes”

*It is so clearly illuminating, filling the horizon
It is accompanied by a thunderous roar
It is electric
It is a giant tear in the sky
It is followed by thirst quenching rains
It is then that a calm envelops
It is a clash of the titans
It is doing the work of God
It is more nimble than a Kirov ballerina
It is reminiscent of childhood
It is brief yet memorable
It is of unknown origins
It is simply amazing
It is not to be understood
It is exuding vigour and might
It is volatile
It is a force which can not be harnessed
It is able to make big waves to lash the frightened shores
It is capable of setting fire to earth and man
It is unpredictable
It is always threatening
It is at times destructive
It is vain to look for a defence against it
It is filled with terror
It is seductively sulphurous
It is “In Your Eyes”*

Pope wrote, "Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes".

This one line perfectly and eloquently says it all about an acquaintance of mine, formerly from Seattle, now living in San Jose. As much as I'd like to describe her as a friend, for she possesses so many wonderful qualities, I can't really for I have had dinner with her once only.

We became acquainted a couple of years ago over the telephone working on a mutual client. She in Seattle and I in NYC. The assignment was brief but for some reason I decided to try and keep in touch. Perhaps it was her seductive voice. I often imagined this lady purely based on her voice.

Somewhere along the line she transferred from Seattle to San Jose for a year or so, leaving her husband in Seattle. Another modern day love story shrouded by the tyranny of distance and the dictates of the corporate world - seems nothing, not even love is sacred in today's world.

On one of my numerous return trips from Australia, I decided to go via San Francisco, to see the city by the bay and to walk the famous Golden Gate (very spectacular but a bit eerie with emergency phones to reach counsellors just before you decide to go over - barriers would probably be more effective - but that's not the way of living on the edge of the San Andreas fault line and in full view of the infamous Alcatraz).

I e-mailed my acquaintance and suggested we do dinner, as the Americans say (except most of them don't seem to mean it). When she did not show at the agreed time, it did cross my mind. Lucky for me that was very far from the truth. A message from her mobile phone to hotel reception that traffic was a nightmare and consequently running about an hour late. As I

was pretty exhausted from trekking across San Fran on foot I could do with a rest.

When she did show some quite amazing things happened. I'm not really sure what I expected, but it certainly wasn't the tall blonde standing in front of me. Nor the smile and effervescent sense of humour after being stuck in traffic for hours.

What is more remarkable is that this was the second time that day she had done the San Jose to San Fran trip (some sixty or so miles). All in the name of dinner with a guy she had never met before. Literally exhausted we ventured to the nearest restaurant, which happened to be a few doors from the hotel. Neat little Italian place.

Then a bombshell. You see in all the time we had spoken on the phone and e-mailed over a year or so, I can't once recall the use of foul language. So I pictured an extremely prim and proper lady. I tell you, she swore like a trooper. A lady after my own heart for I too swear a good deal (a remnant of my days growing up in a rough neighbourhood and a poor excuse for an inadequate vocabulary).

Instant rapport. Relished the dinner and more so the deep and meaningful conversation - just as if we had been friends for years and years. For several hours until the living lightning flash'd from her eyes. After a monster day of some sixteen hours and several hundred miles on the road, you could see how tired she was simply looking into her eyes. Red raw and with contact lenses still in and a long drive home.

Whenever I think of this wonderful lady, I visualise her eyes and the effort she made to come have dinner with a guy she had never met. As with the images that lightning evokes, so it is with my blonde swearing trooper. One bolt and touched for life.

I dedicate my favourite spaghetti recipe with fetta cheese (Macedonian staple) to this gorgeous gal. Some poetic and culinary license was required. For you see there was no spaghetti in the village. Still I think it exudes a very Macedonian flavour - go on give it a try!

Swearing San Francisco Spaghetti

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Semolina spaghetti (from Italy, Australia or San Francisco);*
3. *Tomatoes - two, large and juicy;*
4. *Onion - one small one; cloves of garlic - depends on your fetish (two or three); and*
5. *Herbs, spices and fine fetta.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Chop onions and brown lightly in a pot with a little olive oil;*
- B. *Add chopped tomatoes, herbs and spices - allow to cook well;*
- C. *Add bowl and a half of water;*
- D. *Add spaghetti - stir regularly (will take longer to cook as simmering in a broth and not boiling in water), until most of the water has evaporated, leaving only a little liquid;*
- E. *Add finely chopped garlic; Serve with crumbled fetta on top and crushed black pepper if you like; and*
- F. *... Swear by it!*

Close Talking Chillies

“Mama, Kangaroos sont partis?”

*Les enfants devinent ceux qui les aiment;
c'est un don de la nature que l'on perd en grandissant*

Paul De Kock



For several weeks now I have struggled to elucidate my feelings for a mystical mother, Kanga and her most loving and precious Joey. Day in, day out I asked myself why are my feelings so strong for Kanga and Joey, when I hardly know either of them?

It was about this time last year that I flew from Australia to attend a conference in Greenwich, Connecticut. Jet lagged and tired I rented a car and drove to Connecticut, stopping on the way to visit Kanga and Joey.

Kanga and her husband had decided to move from Brooklyn to the suburbs to provide Joey with space to grow amongst the lush green forests and with deer in the backyard.

Joey was just starting to walk and I was so much looking forward to seeing her and to get a kiss and cuddle that I would have driven in a state of coma. All I recall is Joey being a livewire circling around the table and Kanga glowing with immense pride, ever so vigilant to make sure her precious little one did not tumble over a few steps from the decking to the lawns.

Some months later Barnes and Noble were promoting a book by a local author. The cover had two irresistible children on the cover and from my fading memory the subject matter was something like modern motherhood. Unfortunately, my memory is not good enough to give this lady any credit for the awakening that she gave rise to.

The reading by the author made it clear that the book was not really about motherhood but rather a feminist political agenda. There were two other middle aged men in the room and me - perhaps we were the three most gullible in all of Manhattan?

The lady described herself as a struggling writer in her early twenties when she became a single mother. She described how heart wrenching and ridden with guilt she felt leaving her crying baby at home with a babysitter whilst she went out to earn a living. It had never quite occurred to me how traumatic such an experience could be for both mother and child and to be repeated on a daily basis can only be devastating.

These images took me back some twenty five years or so. I recalled how my baby sister would scream her tiny little lungs out and cry so hard there'd be no tears left.

It was obvious that my baby sister did not want to be parted from my Mother to be left to a stranger that showed no caring. In fact, the heartless old bag even tied my baby sister to a kitchen table to restrict her movement. This my father discovered one day returning early from work to pick up my baby sister.

God may be the only witness to what other traumatic experiences these kids endured, for my sister was one of several left to this totally unskilled and unqualified child minder. Sadly she was all that was available to our Macedonian community.

At the time my baby sister's trauma was self evident and it hurt deeply to see her suffer. My Mother's trauma, however, it would seem was as great if not greater for she was fully aware of my baby sister's suffering. But it was masqueraded as she headed off to the filth of the factories to earn a living.

The guilt that my Mother must have endured on a daily basis can only have been unbearable. Today she still carries remnants of that guilt, and letting go seems just so impossible. I have tried many times to assist her to come to grips with it and let go. It is so deeply embedded that I am convinced it will accompany her into the after life and many lives in the world of the spirits.

It is this indestructible bond between mother and child and the trauma associated with its severing, even if for a short period of time, that puts Kanga's sacrifice into perspective and explains my deep feelings for her.

You see one of my colleagues bestowed upon me the honour of a farewell party at his apartment and invited all our colleagues to attend. Kanga being the super woman that she is (working, studying for a Masters and super mum all at the same time) made an incredible effort to drive an hour and a half from Connecticut to Manhattan to spend a few brief moments with me. More profound and touching is that she endured separation from her darling Joey to see me off.

In a world where people no longer make an effort to write or even phone each other, this gesture of friendship has touched me deeply and will remain until time no more. I could not elucidate the reasons at the time, but I could certainly feel it in my heart.

Kanga could also feel my exuberance. So much so she was forced to tell me I was a “close talker” which I said to her at the time would haunt her for a long time to come. Although slightly taken aback by such a comment, Kanga remains a dearly beloved friend. Joey, I love her as I do all kids for they are truly sacred little creatures.

So I dedicate one of my favourites (probably as a result of being weened on the flavoured water with bread dipped in) to Kanga and Joey. The main ingredients are extremely rare in Western cities, just like Kanga and Joey. These are dried, whole long red chillies.



Close Talking Chillies

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Dried whole long red chillies - finding these will be a challenge. You may get lucky and score at a market some place, otherwise look for a Macedonian friend with a generous family that is into the traditions. Last resort is dry them yourself, which is real easy. At end of summer buy long, red and thin chillies (ones that have stripes usually preserve best), string them up with a big needle and tough thread and hang them in well aired place and wait to dry. Three to four weeks;*
3. *Olive oil, rock salt, red wine vinegar;*
4. *Crusty village bread (for dunking and soaking up juices and awesome flavour) and fetta cheese (yet again!!!).*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Wash dried chillies and split along length (about 5 cm's). Fill inside with a little water and a few crystals of rock salt. Lightly grill (under a modern griller or on a hot plate) just to give a few lightly burnt spots on chillies (for colour and flavour);*
- B. *Boil water with two spoonfuls of olive oil and four spoonfuls of vinegar (more or less of both to personal tastes);*
- C. *Place chillies into boiling water, submerge with a spoon so as to fill up with water and keep down as they will tend to float. Cover and simmer for twenty minutes (this will rehydrate the chillies and make them like they have just been picked) - smell the aroma as your are cooking - to kill for;*
- D. *Serve in a bowl, with chillies and some of the juices in which they have been boiling, dip crusty bread and eat with a piece of chillie and fetta. Pur Magie!*



Affectionate Adventurer's Aphrodisiac

"Merchant of Marvels"

*Words of endearment
Praises and cheer
Your kind words mean much
Do you understand, my dear?*

*With you I feel witty, intelligent and wise
I feel like a beauty - outside and inside
Such words aloud, I can never repeat
Nevertheless, can you hear me, my sweet?*

*Through my smiles, with my eyes
My sincere gratitude I send
My fondness for you
Can you feel it, my friend?*

*The emotions and thoughts you help to evoke
Tear at the seams of my thick, worn cloak
Are you my angel - my saviour your calling?
Do you believe me, my beacon, my darling?*

*Will I emerge assured and true?
With happiness galore and laughter too?
Hearing your words, perhaps I can
Words of encouragement from my Rocket Man*

A shy poet

Often I have been asked by those close to me, and in particular the women in my life, how I managed to become a “close talker” (to use an expression coined by Kanga). Capable of freely expressing my emotions and affections for those close to my heart.

I too have wondered about this many a time. Up until now I have usually come up blank. At times I have thought it was the lavish affection of my Mother. Certainly this has contributed - but I suspect that I wasn't much different from most men in that their mothers would have lavished similar affections on them.

Other times, perhaps it was the affection of some of my companions. Again no doubt this did contribute, but did not really make complete sense as the affection was there from the very beginning even with my first companion. It seems more likely that these ladies provided an avenue through which to channel my affection.

Testing the memory, but I am quite sure that I have always been pretty affectionate, especially with my baby sister while she was young and happy for me to slobber all over her.

This leads me back to my formative years in the village. The person that I spent most time with (after my dear Mother) was my Affectionate Adventurer of a grandfather. My Mother has often mentioned how my grandfather would hold me for hours on end, dote on me and spoil me with lavish affection. All this was a bit odd to the rest of the family because I seemed to get singled out - I became the chosen one.

The Affectionate Adventurer was not big on work so whilst everyone in the household would go to work the fields, he was happy to hang at home on the pretext of looking after me. No one could really understand his patience for such a task, for he had an extremely short fuse. Lucky for me, I was the chosen one for I never incurred his wrath.

During my formative years I always had my grandfather for company. Wherever he went so did I. All the time receiving his attention and affection.

I got to ride the donkey often, ride on the bullock dray (he was most proud of having the finest and strongest bullock team in the region - my Mother tells stories of how he'd rise to feed and groom the bullock team before doing anything else) and can vividly see and hear him screaming instructions. On narrow dirt roads with heavy loads, controlling them was no mean feat.

I also recall venturing out in search of snails (one of the few sources of protein in the village). These poor little creatures were in amongst prickly blackberry bushes infested with snakes. Even though they were destined for a sizzling griddle, they probably weren't as afraid as I was of the snakes.

When I was about two and a half years old, my grandfather was with a group of elders from the village having a chinwag. I was playing in the dirt nearby, when a herd of donkeys came charging through and trampled all over me. Somehow I survived with a few scratches and a mouthful of dirt. I can still taste that dirt in my mouth today.

Needless to say my Mother was livid with my grandfather, for as she put it standing by and watching. In reality it all happened so quickly that there probably wasn't enough time to react. Donkeys aren't renowned for being creatures that respond well to human commands.

From that day onwards Mother was much more reluctant to allow me to travel with the Affectionate Adventurer. A few years passed before we returned to Macedonia and she either forgot (unlikely) or forgave my grandfather's indiscretions.

On one occasion we went to visit my father's blood-brother from his days in the army. Some fifteen to twenty kilometres away. The Affectionate Adventurer suggested we ride our bikes and let grandma hitch a ride. Mother thought it sounded crazy but I was excited. Getting there was easy. A truck driver picked us up and we threw the bikes in the back.

On the way back we decided to ride. Twenty kilometres on a bike was nothing for him as he did such trips regularly. For a ten year old skinny kid, recovering from hepatitis it was one hell of a ride. All the way he urged me on and told me I could do it. Finally we somehow struggled home pushing the bikes up the last hill. Again my Mother was hysterical upon seeing me exhausted. I just slept it off.

A few months later, with winter approaching my grandfather decides he should go in search of firewood and asks me to go along. I feel like a real man, going into the forest to assist in the provision of firewood. Mother is very, very reluctant to let me go, but caves into the Affectionate Adventurer. Despite his lazy nature, he had a real way with people. My father is of the view that life would have been infinitely more difficult without his ability to persuade people to extend credit to him, including the money to allow my father to come to Australia.

So off we go at the crack of dawn. Grandfather walking leading the donkey and I riding. A four hour trip up into the mountains to the outer-bounds of civilisation and into bear territory. We saw only one village on the way.

You had to travel such distances into the forest to try and avoid the forest ranger for removing timber was illegal - but when you have no money and winter approaches you have to rely on mother nature's provisions.

The Affectionate Adventurer starts chopping saplings. In the quiet of the forest you can hear their cries as they are chopped down. You can also hear the roar of brown bears nearby. Fear strikes at my heart. My grandfather is unmoved, his courage resolute. No bear was going to bother him. In fact he was so much more concerned about the ranger than any bears.

By this time I was absolutely starving. I grabbed a few green hazelnuts for that was all there was in the forest, not even a stream to drink from.

After an hour or so, grandfather had chopped two small loads of wood and started loading the donkey. Poor old beast, fully loaded it has to jolt all the way down steep mountain passes on a four hour trek. Such is the lot of a donkey - no wonder they are so stubborn.

Going up the mountain was easy. Coming back with the donkey fully laden, I also had to walk. By the time we returned home I could barely stand. This time my Mother was really concerned, accusing my grandfather of gross negligence and putting my life at risk. He simply smiled and snuggled up next to me on the bed. By the morning we were both as good as new.

The Affectionate Adventurer probably told me many things in the few years I spent with him but being so young, not much of his advice is conscious. I explicitly and clearly, as if he were speaking to me today, recall him telling me to achieve greatness. I lived with the massive burden of this expectation until fairly recently. I saw myself as a simple boy from the village so how in the hell was I suppose to achieve greatness? I studied and worked hard for many years without getting close.

Recently I came across "The Tao of Being" by Ray Grigg. Chapter 58 is on "Simple Greatness". "Greatness arises from the ordinary, is rooted in the ordinary". Perhaps a simple village boy can be great in the eyes of his Affectionate Adventurer of a grandfather?

His other classic line was that all things are possible except life without a wife!

One of his long held wishes was to come and see our adopted homeland. As he was illiterate he had to rely on others to communicate via letter. In one such letter, he promised that if they would only allow him to hang onto the wings of the plane he would indeed come to Australia. And come he did in his late sixties. Sadly the culture shock was too much for him and grandma. After only a few months they returned to live out their days as simple village folk.

For this Affectionate Adventurer who will always remain in my heart with a huge smile, shaved head and hand chopped and rolled tobacco, I dedicate a recipe. A recipe that has sustained me for all these years and acted as an aphrodisiac of life, for no matter how often I eat this stuff it never gets boring.

Affectionate Adventurer's Aphrodisiac

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Variety of long chillies - yellow, green and red;*
3. *Tomatoes (fresh, aromatic, ripe and definitely juicy - best if home grown); and*
4. *Fetta cheese, olive oil, rock salt and garlic.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Grill chillies so as to burn the skin only - under a grill or on a hot plate. This is hot work as you have to watch over the chillies and turn very regularly else they will be charcoal and add to the greenhouse problem;*
- B. *Peel the chillies after cooling;*
- C. *Chop or preferably rip with a fork whilst holding the stem, into a wooden bowl*
- D. *Add a little salt and with a pestle smash lightly;*
- E. *Chop and throw in tomatoes and again with pestle smash lightly - just enough to release juices;*
- F. *Mix well with a fork;*
- G. *Top off with olive oil and crumbed fetta (garlic as well if everyone likes the stinky stuff or on the side if a few conservatives with squeamish lovers that can't handle garlic breath!);*
- H. *With crusty bread scoop up (finger food only so no utensils) and get a real donkey kick out of life; and*
- I. *Ladies best of all - virtually fat free and will keep your figure for many a year.*

Cock-A-Noodle Soup

"I know"

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I joined the physical world
And gave every experience and emotion*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I came to New York
And the drive behind the choice to leave*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I experienced coffee
And Mocha Frappaccino is an elixir*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason at 2am I stop
And listen to "Tonight You are Wonderful"*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason my heart is cracked open
And slowly filling up with love and dreams*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I can see different shades
And no longer suffer from severe tunnel vision*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I can follow my instincts
And not be trapped by fixed thoughts*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I have lightened up
And do not take all in life so seriously*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I have travelled a long and hard road
And feel weary but strong*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason I am an artist of life
And write poems to all the women in my life*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason my world has changed
And I have grown so tall I can reach the stars*

*I can not see, yet I know
You are the reason my passion burns
And refuses to be quenched no matter how hard it rains*

Some things I do know. One thing I do not know is my maternal grandmother. In my formative years, which I can barely recall, we would only have visited on special occasions even though she was only a few kilometres away.

There was no road and no transport. It was rough mountainous terrain. I vaguely recall one visit when my father took the bullock dray across to my grandmother's place, in the nearby village of Meglenci. Going across all went well and we made it. On the return trip things got a bit hairy. The mountain path was steep and narrow. In many sections there were smooth boulders through the pass.

The wagon had steel lined wheels and no brakes and so it was up to the poor beasts to hold the entire load down this slippery path. Ever so loyal and obedient they did their task with incredible skill and might. Muscles rippling in their legs and buttocks to hold back the wagon. Beads of sweat forming as they inched their way down the pass.

Unlike some hoofed animals, it was not possible to shoe the ox for they were too dangerous. So they had little grip going down the pass. All it took was one of the animals to slip slightly and the whole escapade would be perilous. On this particular occasion one of the poor beasts must have hit a wet spot covered with lichen and slipped.

Having lost its footing, it was unable to take its load and the wagon tipped to one side. As we hung on for dear life, my father the man that he was, and is, yelled at the beast still standing to heave and gave it an almighty whack with a staff (not a whip but a staff made of wood probably an inch thick).

Our bullock team worked wonderfully well, but there was quite a size difference. One was at least a hand span smaller than the other and likely not as strong.

Well it seems that the larger and stronger of the animals was willing to repay my grandfather's love and affection. With all its might to the point of putting its own life on the line, for it could quite easily have broken its neck, it took all of the weight of the wagon. Heaving until it almost burst, it took a few short steps just long enough to enable the other animal to get back on its feet to re-balance the wagon. All this happened in a flash and with everyone's heart in their throats. My father allowed the animals to catch their breath before continuing on home.

These animals provided many years of service until my grandfather retired and very reluctantly sold them to another farmer.

With travel adventures like this, it was quite understandable that we did not make the trip all that often, especially as winters tend to be long, cold and bitter. At times snow falls were over a metre deep making everything impassable.

I do have a few photos of my dear old grandmother, mainly from a trip I took to Macedonia in late 1986. I ventured out with a friend from Australia and I recall my grandmother being quite touched that I, a boy from the big smoke in Australia, with patent leather shoes, would trek through the cow dung and the mud to the village of Meglenci. If only she knew that the heart was of a simple village boy and that I was ecstatic to be returning to the village of my Mother's birthplace.

My dear old grandmother in her seventies at the time insisted that she cook lunch for us. I did not want to put her to the trouble but she had it all worked out and that was that. She had selected her youngest and finest cock and it was to be sacrificed today. A special meal for her grandson all the way from Australia.

My friend and I tried to catch this young cock without much success. I suggested to my grandmother that maybe any old chicken would be fine, for they seemed much more willing to be caught.

“No”, she stated plainly. It had to be the young cock. So my friend and I chased this cock all around the farm yard for about three quarters of an hour until he was exhausted and finally caught him. A mighty fine cock he was. With gold feathers covering the head, neck and shoulders. Grey and gold splashes on the wings with white tips like a mighty eagle.

My friend and I looked at each other and wondered which one of us was going to sacrifice this mighty bird? Both of us assuming that grandma was too old to do it. Certainly not. We stood and watched in amazement. Knife in hand, stooped over with an immense smile on her face - truly an act of love, be it somewhat bloody.

We helped to pluck the bird and process it and then grandma did all the cooking. On a small wood fired stove with so few utensils, and even fewer ingredients.

The Cock-A-Noodle soup was oh so smooth, aromatic and taste that still lingers to this day. The meat from the cock was just so tender and stuck to your lips like honey. Contrary to Western notions that poultry meat is “white”, if the bird is fed natural food and grain, its meat is actually red except for the breast which is white and stringy.

That was the last time I saw my dear old grandmother, for a few years later she decided, like the cock, that her time was up and passed away in her sleep, at peace with the world.

Next time we meet I will be doing the insisting and will be cooking my favourite recipe which is Cock-A-Noodle soup. Just not sure whether they have cocks as mighty as eagles?

Cock-A-Noodle Soup

Fat of the Land

1. TLC;
2. *A mighty cock;*
3. *Chicken seasoning (stock cube), soup packet (Knorr or Podravka brands are best);*
4. *Fine semolina egg noodles;*
5. *Two farm fresh free range eggs;*
6. *Fresh parsley; and*
7. *Wine vinegar or fresh lemon juice.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Wash the cock and remove excess fat, chop into pieces (leg, breast etc.) as will cook quicker and nicer;*
- B. *Measure number of serves and add water to soup pot;*
- C. *Boil cock with small amount of salt - removing excess foam and fat in process (about 20-30 minutes - will depend on age and toughness of the cock);*
- D. *When nearly cooked, add chicken seasoning, stock cube and chopped parsley;*
- E. *Take out meat and rip with a fork (do not cut) into bite size pieces and put back into pot for another 5 minutes;*
- F. *Turn off heat (if using electricity place on a cool hot plate else noodles will over cook) and place a handful of crushed noodles and stir in with soup packet. Allow to sit for 10 minutes;*
- G. *Beat two eggs with two spoonfuls of red wine vinegar. Slowly add small amounts of soup (to avoid cooking egg). Allow to cool;*
- H. *Add egg mix to soup pot gently stirring in;*
- I. *Serve and taste pure ecstasy. Then add fresh cracked pepper and red wine vinegar for aroma (or fresh lemon juice as a substitute); and;*
- J. ***Find out what Heaven is all about!!!***



Macedonian “Killer” Meatballs

“Life is a Contradiction”

War to make Peace

Marx and Communism - Evolution through Revolution

Politicians (vocational liars) become our masters

Poverty and famine in a world of excesses

Food engineered to please the eye - not

grown and ripened to tantalise the taste buds

Torch the Amazon to feed the obese beef

*Environmental regression (pollution and extinction) in
name of progress*

Oil more precious than life giving fresh water

Michael Jordan \$100 million p.a. vs American Bald

Headed Eagle (near extinction) barely \$3 million p.a.

Loneliness amongst millions in Metropolis

Individuality through conformity

Spirituality buried in rubble of materiality

Eternal search for knowledge instead of wisdom

Ignorance and prejudice in age of information overkill

Ph D's with no life skills

Man the ultimate possessor of all things seeks freedom

Man the ultimate creation of nature seeks alienation

*Man the ultimate dependant at birth becomes predator to
all living creatures*

We may not be direct descendants of the most famous Macedonian, the all conquering Alexander the Great, still we seem to have inherited some of his spirit. The spirit that created the greatest military commander the world has ever immortalised was present:

- ❖ When my father endured a harrowing thirty six days at sea on his way to Australia;
- ❖ When my Mother, to make ends meet, was forced to work in disgustingly dirty factories where the sheer stench would nauseate you so badly, you'd bring up your mother's milk;
- ❖ When my sister graduated from the University of Melbourne, following her dream to teach kids; and
- ❖ When I survived ten of the loneliest weeks in an isolation ward - no visitors, no bath, no TV, not even fresh air from the balcony.

The same spirit that lead a man to have a vision and the courage of his convictions. A vision of globalisation long before it became a trendy term in business circles.

The courage to keep the faith in the face of many nay-sayers. The courage to put his career on the line many a time. All in the name of creating the first truly international tax practice, in order to provide gopher's like myself with an opportunity to play in the Big League.

Sure there is an element of bias, and greater pride, but in my view this man leads the world's pre-eminent international tax practice. He does this with the military precision of a general, the calibre of Alexander the Great. Able to operate in many dimensions simultaneously.

Like the Dalai Lama waking long before the sun has risen, not to meditate but to start his working day (who knows, maybe to him this is a form of meditation?). Travelling at the speed of light (that is how it seems to a slug like me), in and out of meetings in a flash yet fully comprehending the deal and able to intuitively guide it to its ultimate destination.

Trekking the globe throughout the year, sharing the vision and the passion. Energising those that have slowed or become jaded. Relieving those (of their duties) that have been wearied by many battles.

Surviving it seems on a few snacks along the way and pure adrenalin. As for sleep, who the hell needs sleep (I for one - at least eight hours a night and not even an expectant mother).

The contrasts between this mighty leader and me are stark. Still I am full of admiration and respect. For the simple reasons:

★★★★ Despite his Godly state he is prepared to talk to all and sundry, including me (which is all important since I am the adjudicator).

A powerful leader and an egalitarian - Life is a Contradiction indeed.

★★★★★ Despite being the busiest man under the sun, not only running a global practice, but at the same time maintaining leading edge technical skills and still having the respect and courtesy to respond to each and every message sent to him.

A swamped leader with time for everybody - Life is a Contradiction indeed.

Big Guy you are the Grand Master and for caring enough to leave me voicemails at 4:49 a.m., I salute you and dedicate this recipe. It is hot as hell, especially on a real charcoal BBQ and the closest I can get to the killer instinct.

Should you ever visit my humble abode, I promise to grill them especially for you - just like Alexander the Great did two thousand years ago.

Macedonian “Killer” Meatballs

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Ground Meat - either veal or mixture of veal and pork (about half kilo for four serves);*
3. *Two large onions - chopped into fairly small pieces (not fine); and*
4. *Crushed red pepper (a little on fiery side), cracked black pepper, rock salt and fresh parsley.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Place layer of meat in large wooden bowl;*
- B. *Add salt, crushed red pepper, cracked black pepper, chopped onions and parsley in a layer over meat; Next layer of meat and repeat;*
- C. *Mix in well with vigour and killer instinct (definitely not for vegetarians!); Make into flat or oblong shaped meat balls; and*
- D. *Grill to perfection and consume while piping hot and imagine your a lion devouring its meal on the Zambesi.*

Baba's Bread

"Impermanence"

*The Human Body at peace with itself
Is more precious than the rarest gem
Cherish your body, it is yours this one time only*

*The Human form is won with difficulty
It is easy to lose*

*All worldly things are brief, like lighting in the sky
The Life you must know as the tiny splash of a raindrop
A thing of beauty that disappears even as it comes into
being*

*Therefore set your goal
Make use of every day and night to achieve it*

Tsong Khapa

The spirits of the modern day Tibetan peoples and the modern day Macedonians are somehow connected. It may be the spirit of the Nomads? The Yak herders of Tibet and the shepherds of the Carpathian mountains. Who knows in time past whether these nomads come across each other. Even if they did not physically, their spirits certainly have.

On the dawn of the Age of Aquarius, the fledgling nation of Macedonia, only a few years in geo-political existence (remaining sadly unrecognised by the government of my new homeland), reached out to its spiritual brothers and sisters, who have been crushed by a nation without a soul. In the face of adversity and grave threats, the Macedonian government was the first to recognise Tibet as an independent state.

I must say that there haven't been many moments or events in Macedonian life in the last thirty years over which we could express genuine heart felt pride. The recognition of Tibet and its peoples rights to maintain their culture was truly such a moment.

Whatever pitfalls the Macedonian government may encounter from here on in, no-one can take this achievement away from them. It will forever remain one of their greatest achievements, in my psyche.

This is definitely not diplomatic (that is why I choose to write), but to use the vernacular of another great man, "Mr Football," E.J. Whitten - "Stick it right up 'em." I bow to his statue at the oval where I loved watching the football (the Whitten, formerly Western Oval), every time I walk past.

I can not explain this spiritual connection with Tibet. I have never been there (although it is one of my dreams to undertake such a pilgrimage), I have never actually met a Tibetan, nor have I undertaken any studies of the place or its people. Just the occasional flashing image of a beautiful smile on the face of a Yak herder high up in the mountains.

Still some major revelations have occurred around Tibetans. Earlier this year I attended a Tibetan Buddhist New Year's festival at their centre in Yuroke. A young Lama, with a very cheeky grin and a wicked sense of humour was scheduled to speak. Unlike Westerners these people do not engage in celebrations, drinking and indulgences in food to bring in the New Year.

They sit quietly, gazing at the beautifully bright colours in which they have decorated their place of worship (saffron is dominant), meditate, contemplate, reflect and grow. Just like Spring.

This Lama looked very youthful, although obviously older and wiser, for he has been in Australia for over twenty years. His English was broken, but he made up for that with body language and the occasional use of colourful language - a man after my own heart.

The Lama spent an hour discussing the issue of "Impermanence" and how to come to terms with such an awareness. How to make life more meaningful and not less, even though, we are dancing on this Earth only a short time.

His revelations were like four arrows right into the heart of my cortex - why had it taken me so long to understand such fundamentals of life?

The four principles are:

- »»» For every gathering there must be a dispersion.
- »»» »»» For every rise there must be a fall.
- »»» »»» »»» For every meeting there must be a parting.
- »»» »»» »»» »»» For every birth there must be a death.

My paternal grandmother had no formal education, was illiterate, had never heard of Tibet let alone come across any of the Tibetan philosophies on life. But you know what? I think my grandmother understood perfectly - the concept of impermanence.

She was fazed by very little in life. Whether it be a birth in the family or a death. She came to grips with it immediately and carried on with life as usual.

Not prepared to allow her secrets to be discovered she was aloof. Consequently, getting to know her was extremely difficult. I have two striking visions of this lady. One was feeding the chickens and she would call “piri, piri, piri”. No-one has any idea what this means and surely the chickens did not comprehend?

The other is of my grandmother baking up to sixteen massive loaves of bread in an old brick kiln. These loaves really were quite large and up to fifty centimetres in diameter, but only about ten centimetres thick. She had to do such large batches because it was so involved to feed and fire the kiln. Also having to feed up to ten people for up to two weeks at a time, you need a lot of the staple.

Only she knew how to do this bread to perfection. Slaving away in the early hours of the morning before even the rooster has woken everyone, she would be up mixing the flour, yeast and warm water, to make the dough.

Kneading it must have taken enormous effort. The dough heap could have buried me as a kid - I could have come out as the ginger bread man! She did it with pride, week in week out.

Shaping the loaves, she would let them sit for a couple of hours near a warm fire covered by a clean cloth, powdered with flour. There they would sit undisturbed except with a few cat paw prints from time to time (the cat was preferred to the mice and so got to sleep under the rustic stove, which doubled as a heater).

At day break it was time to fire up the kiln. This was no oven, this was a kiln the size of a single car garage. To get the loaves in and out you needed a two metre long flat timber shovel. Using straw from the summer harvest, she would light a fire inside the kiln (I was always fascinated how the bread did not come out with soot all over it - but this was an incredible piece of engineering).

Once fired up, she carefully swept away the burnt straw and ashes using a home made broom - how it did not burn I again have no idea.

How she knew when the kiln was hot enough no-one will ever know. She could not tell the time and don't even be stupid and ask about a thermostat. This was a half hemispherical brick kiln, lined with mud - with an opening. That was it.

Then she carefully placed the loaves neatly inside using the timber shovel. The metal cover went over the opening and was sealed with fresh ox dung (once the stuff dries from the heat it forms a perfect hermetic seal - simply amazing).

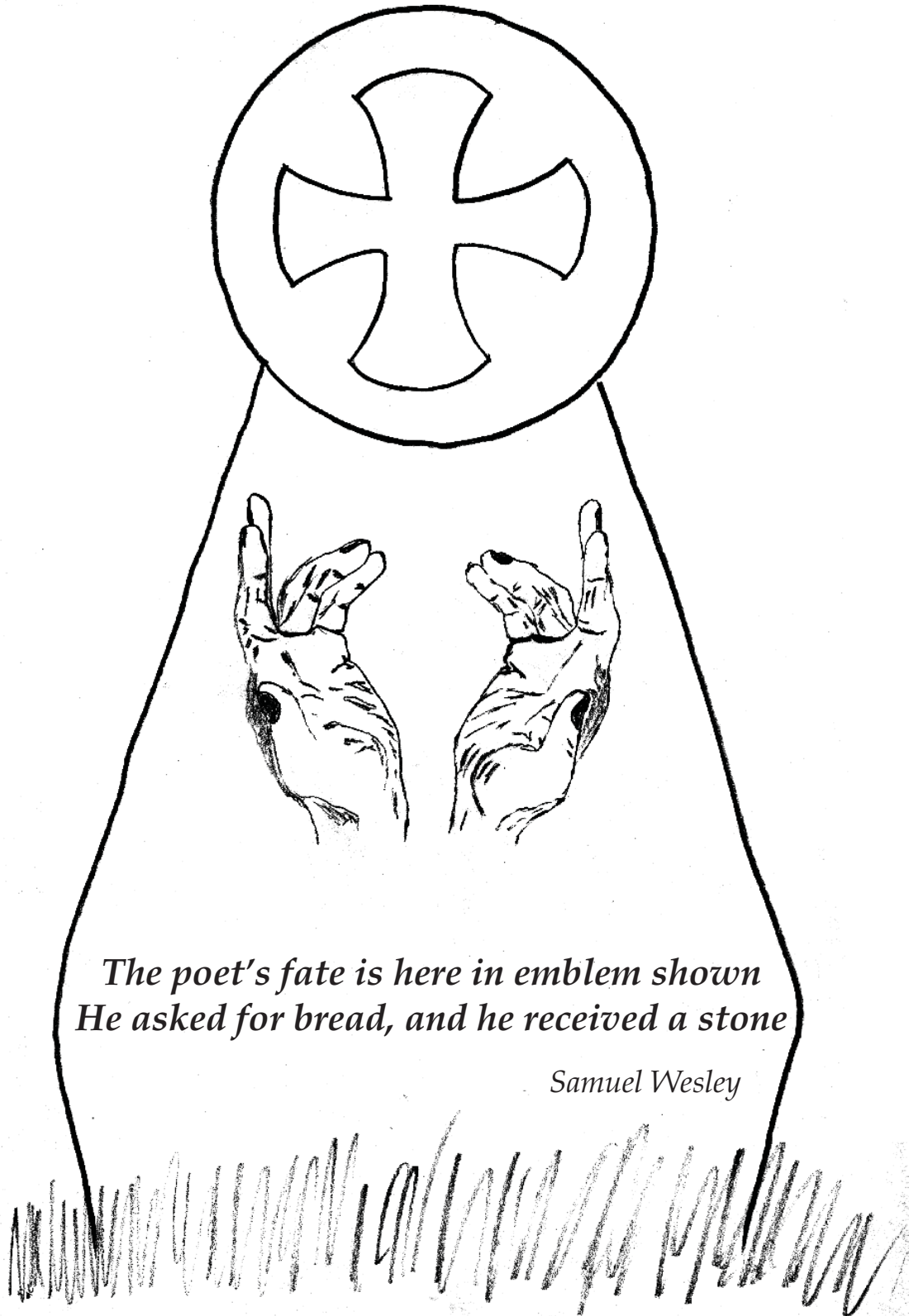
Most fascinating of all was the timing of the baking process. No watch, no time, no nothing. Using some sixth sense, she just came back after a while (no-one had the sense to actually time her, for no-one was really interested until the smell of fresh baked bread hit their nostrils), opened the kiln and there were these perfectly baked loaves. A crust which shattered like crystal, piping hot inside and smelling like nothing else ever will.

Baba would call me over, give me a huge piece of the loaf, a piece of fetta almost as big and tell me to sit on the balcony steps and indulge.

Being so aloof, I have erroneously assumed she was indifferent to me. Writing this story, it has dawned on me that she was engaging in the Tibetan Buddhist form of love - having a genuine wish for others to be happy.

I dedicate Baba's Bread recipe to my grandmother. To demonstrate the truth in the Tibetan Buddhist philosophies, it too has passed away with my grandmother.

Baba's Bread



*The poet's fate is here in emblem shown
He asked for bread, and he received a stone*

Samuel Wesley

Sweet Sister Sarma

“Sweet Sister”

*Where has my life gone?
All I recall is your sweet innocent face
Fragile and scared
Struggling for identity*

*Before my eyes but not it seems
For my memory fails me
You have become a woman
Leaving your childhood behind*

*Why is it so?
That you are no longer
A tiny little bundle of joy
I can keep close to my heart*

*Regrets I thought I had none
Until this very moment
A childhood forsaken
So little to recapture the memories*

*My heart is oh so heavy
Knowing the past shall never return
Feeling cheated by life
I want to always be near enough to feel your beat*

Oh Sweet Sister!

I have up on my wall a very colourful print from Brian Andreas, "Angels of Mercy" and it has the following wisdom on it:

*"Most people know that
there are angels whose
only job is to make
sure you don't get
too comfortable and fall
asleep and miss your
life".*

I feel like there has been a dereliction of duty on behalf of my Angel of Mercy, for I seem to have missed most of my darling sister's life. Most of my really solid memories are from when she was very young and in very recent times. The rest is simply a blur.

On the very same date as my Mother, my baby sister came into the world. A little prematurely and with a few complications it would seem. Matters of the womb were deemed taboo for small boys, so I have no real grasp on what the complications were. Nor can anyone in my family shed any light, probably due to the lack of language skills and total absence of support services for voluntary migrants at the time.

The stay in hospital was not long and she was soon home, to be doted on especially by Mother and brother. Baby photos are scarce. I am quite disappointed that there are not many more.

We have one photo when she is just over a year old and learning to walk. She has rosy cheeks and a beautiful smile, while reaching out no doubt for Mother. Sadly my father had this horrible notion that you should shave kids heads so that they would have stronger roots and healthier hair - never mind the deadly impact on self image. On me I could forgive him but not my baby sister.

My baby sister was a very frightened little child and not fond of strangers. So she was literally clinging to my Mother at all times. She was also inseparable from her blanky with sky blue satin trimming (without it there was no way she was going to sleep).

We have another photo when she was just over two years of age. It is in a sterile photo studio. My baby sister is sitting on a counter top (very classy studio), in a light blue top, olive green pants, blue socks and brown shoes (my father's fashion sense). She looks like a scared little monkey, with little ears sticking out and a boys hair cut - at least she's got hair by now.

My favourite photo is in a church at a christening and has Mother holding my baby sister (about a year old, with very little hair, a serious look and pursed lips, digging into a packet of chips). It shows how cute my baby sister was but also my Mother in all her youth and beauty. Tall, thin and extremely elegant in a short pink dress.

My father is an Elvis look alike with dark hair flicked to the right side and long sideburns - but missing Elvis' wicked rock n' roll smile.

Me, I had my maroon shirt with purple trousers doing a Jimmy Dean rebel pose with thumbs tucked into each of the trouser pockets. No smile of course.

As beautiful as she was, her Angel of Mercy seemed to have allowed her to go through some hellish experiences. Just as she was learning to walk and talk something happened to her precious little left eye. After many tests it was diagnosed as a squint. Supposedly one of the muscles was a little weak which allowed her left eye to deviate too far and so her vision was out of focus.

This was the start of an extremely difficult period in the life of the whole family. Her treatment required her to wear glasses, which lead to all sorts of taunts at school, as well as wearing a patch over the right eye to try and make the left eye work harder.

Regular visits to the Eye Department of the Royal Children's Hospital for about ten years. In the early stages it was every month or so to check on her progress. My Mother would take time off work and I time off from school to act as interpreter.

How a child of eight can act as an interpreter is difficult to comprehend today, but that is what I did at the time. Whether I did the right thing by my sister I am not quite sure for communication is such a difficult thing for adults, let alone a child and in two different languages. I can never be sure that I translated things correctly so as to ensure my Mother and baby sister did things as required.

I recall one particularly disturbing incident. After all the initial treatments and glasses did not work, the doctors suggested another form of treatment. The doctor suggested an eye operation. I had this vision of them cutting my sister's poor little eye and became horrified. I went berserk and started yelling at the doctor, telling her there was no way I would allow them to cut her eye. She would become totally blind. I wanted to protect her from these butchers. I wanted to grab the scissors on the table and cut out the Doctor's eyes and see whether she'd like that?

After a few minutes I was settled down by the nurse and they explained that it was a minor procedure on the eye muscle - I was still very frightened and did not want them to do it. Meanwhile, my parents embarked on all sorts of alternative remedies.

Lots of faith healers and even midnight rendezvous. To my horror they even tried acupuncture - again visions of needles in her eyes. I could quite easily have killed my parents for allowing such torture.

When we returned to Macedonia, my parents made a three day pilgrimage to a sacred monastery. All to no avail.

Upon returning to Australia, my sister did have the surgery, but with no real success. With age the squint has largely cured itself, although she still wears glasses as does the whole family so it is no longer odd.

Having gone through all these rough times and being small, frail and scared of strangers, my parents did not want to sign her up for school at age five. I convinced them that she had to start the following year.

Being so attached to my Mother, the separation was excruciatingly painful. As I was six years older I had left primary school by the time she started so she had no-one to look after her.

For the first few years, my Mother worked afternoon shifts, so she'd take her to school and drop in on her at lunchtime. She had such a weak appetite we literally had to force feed her mortadella sandwiches day in and day out.

Still, she was gorgeous with her bop haircut (my father's skills had improved over the years) and her textured green blouse with white frilly lace bits which she seemed to wear all the time.

School photos are also quite interesting. In one she was wearing a long dress down to her ankles. What was my Mother thinking at the time, sending her daughter to school in a gown?

I think back to all this suffering that my baby sister endured and it really hurts. As far as I was concerned I did very little to alleviate it. If anything I added to it.

Along with my crazy uncle (who'd jump up and down with the action like a kid), I was a fan of World Championship Wrestling. There was a big fat guy called Butcher Branigan. Because my baby sister was so skinny, I'd tease her by calling her Butcher Branigan. How cruel can a big brother really be? To add insult to injury the name stuck, although now a term of endearment, I still often call her "Butchy".

My Angel of Mercy I love you dearly and miss you terribly (even if I am not very good at expressing this and certainly not often enough).

I don't think there are any foods that my Sweet Sister is really mad about, but for some reason Sarma (cabbage rolls filled with rice and meat) stands out and so I dedicate it to you my darling baby sister, which you will always be no matter how much time passes me by.

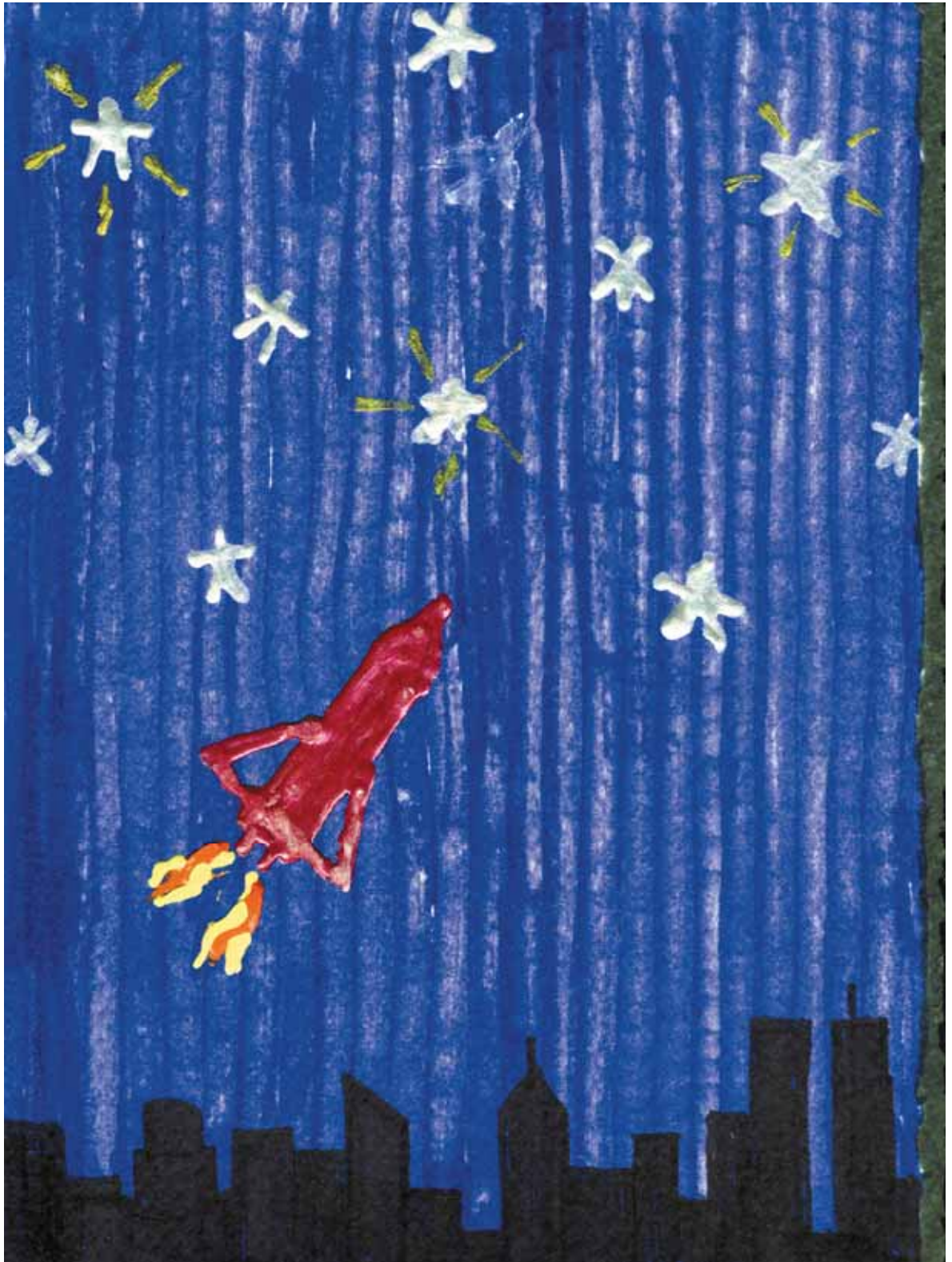
Sweet Sister Sarma

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Picked whole cabbage;*
3. *Ground veal - about half a kilo;*
4. *Two cups of rice;*
5. *Two onions; and*
6. *Paprika and flour (cup).*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Chop onions (finely) and fry up with veal, paprika and rice until brown;*
- B. *Take a whole pickled cabbage leaf and place a spoonful of filling and place in middle. Tightly roll leaf into a ball shape;*
- C. *Place neatly and tightly in a pot, top up with water and cover with a steel bowl to avoid flotation;*
- D. *Bring to a boil and simmer for about 90 minutes; and*
- E. *Fry up oil, flour and paprika and pour in and simmer for another 5 minutes. Allow to cool and serve carefully to keep cabbage rolls in tact. Eat with crusty bread and sing Sweet Sister.*



Village Boy Vinegar

“Grass Roots”

*I can see a little boy, brown as a berry with thick black curls
Sitting on a woven mat
The mat protects him from the dry, harsh earth surrounding the house*

*He sits and watches his mother and grandmother preparing for dinner
The older lady is removing still warm feathers from a chicken
His mother is gathering kindling for the stove*

*The young boy is drinking in his surroundings
So curious and full of questions he cannot yet even verbalise
Little does he know he will be asking similar questions until his last breath*

*Fascinated by all surrounding him touching and smelling what his plump little hands can reach
Aromas from the kitchen arouse him
And remind him of his hunger*

*This child will grow into an intelligent, witty, friendly and attractive man
But it will be his empathy, unselfish manner and questioning of injustices
That will ensure he will never go hungry for want of love*

Tassie

All of this could well be true, except perhaps the last line. For most of my life I was the "Angry Young Man" that Billy Joel sings about. I was definitely angry at the world and all it had delivered to me. Injustices were at every turn. My fuse was extremely short and whilst the temper was volatile there was never any really violent or self destructive tendencies.

Not being able to extend love to yourself is not particularly conducive to others extending love to you (except perhaps your own Mother - Mothers seem to have greater tolerance than the cables supporting the Golden Gate bridge!). As a consequence I have pretty much been a bit of a loner for most of my life. Perhaps this is the way of all mystics and pilgrims?

Such a "sour" attitude may have been in direct proportion to my consumption of vinegar. It was about as close as I have come to a form of addiction.

In the village, with food being so scarce all vegetables were well preserved to get us through the long and harsh winters. Anything that was green and left on the plants at the end of the summer was pickled - cabbage, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes and my favourites - melons.

Cabbage was generally plentiful and was pickled in large barrels. I can recall as a young child standing next to a barrel, into which I could barely reach. I rolled up my sleeve and reached in. Pulled out half a cabbage and started munching away, with brine dripping all down my chin, arm and lips. The stuff was so sour that my teeth became numb, so much so I could grind them, make horrid noises and feel nothing.

My Mother as always, ever so concerned that I would fall into the barrel and drown. Of course this was most irrational and unlikely.

When we arrived in Australia, the food was much more plentiful and the climate warmer (not as conducive to pickling vegetables, although my family still maintains the tradition), so pickles were not as much a part of my diet.

Substitutes were not hard to find. Everyday for six years in primary school I had fish and chips for lunch and dinner, with loads of vinegar. Often with a pickled onion thrown in for extra flavour. At lunch time we would race to the world's greatest fish and chip maker, Nick the Greek to try and score a free 10¢ flake with our "school lunch" for 25¢.

Even potato crisps which are supposed to be crunchy, I would soak in vinegar and eat them mushie. Quite sickening I know.

Still it gets better, whilst most teenagers were into trying alcohol and tobacco, I would swig on the vinegar bottle and get a buzz that way.

The sense of smell being the most primitive, the strong aroma of full strength wine vinegar wafts in my nostrils. I can still smell the aroma of the red wine vinegar as my grandma mixed it into the Cock-A-Noodle soup.

One of my father's friends thought he was a bit of a wine maker. Drinker perhaps - but definitely no wine maker. The home made wine went off and turned to vinegar. The fool was going to pour it down the drain, so I took it and for a whole year I was getting a buzz just from the exotic and erotic aroma.

In addition, to the incredible taste delights, the Western world is discovering what village folk have known for many a millennium.

Vinegar has medicinal and healing properties. As a teenager, I suffered from headaches on a frequent and regular basis. Rarely did I have to resort to pharmacological medicines. Instead I would usually rub vinegar onto my forehead and have a whiff and this would usually release the tension and ease my headaches. Pretty amazing hey!

With the onset of the adult ageing process my desire for vinegar has somewhat dwindled. Also the fact that I can not get the aromatic red wine vinegar that I remember from the village makes it easier to go without.

Still I like to mix various types of vinegar, including balsamic, into my salads. I am convinced that salads and vinegar have kept my family fairly healthy, especially considering our high levels of meat consumption. I think the vinegar helps to cleanse the body's various systems.

One of my favourite salads is Cos lettuce (although Butter and Boston lettuce are very nice too), with vinegar dripping. Especially if you can grow it in our own garden and pick the Cos when it is very young and tender.

A word of caution. It is definitely finger food only, so not advisable for a dinner party with friends unless you are all on intimate terms.

A final word from the Countess of Blessington:

*"Love matches are made by people who are content,
for a month of honey, to condemn themselves to a
life of vinegar"*

Aah! A woman after my own heart finally!

Village Boy Vinegar

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Fresh Cos Lettuce (Butter or Boston works well too);
and*
3. *Aromatic red wine vinegar, rock salt and olive oil.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Wash Cos lettuce thoroughly and allow to drain well;*
- B. *Mix red wine vinegar, salt, olive oil with cool water to
taste; and*
- C. *Fold Cos lettuce into shape of spoon, ladle up Village
Boy Vinegar mix, smell it and recall your first love.*



Pilgrim's Pivtika

"The Pilgrim Father"

Oh Pilgrim

Where will you travel to?

To the lands of the Goddesses

Oh Pilgrim

What will you see?

Sights majestic and unsurpassable

Oh Pilgrim

Who will you meet?

Faces of love and wisdom

Oh Pilgrim

Which emotions will you feel?

True bliss and inspiration

Oh Pilgrim

Why must you go?

Because it is your destiny

There were days when my father survived on rations of raw onions and stale bread, just like the builders of the pyramids. In a family of seven children, mum and dad, as well as grandparents and limited means of production, food was often scarce.

There were days when my father went without food even though life necessitated extreme hard labour, chopping and hauling logs several times wider than his emaciated and bony frame. To add insult to injury, the logs were often sold with every last dinar going to pay pre-existing debts. Seems the family was constantly battling with chronic debt syndrome - so much for socialism!

There were days when my father had no socks and no shoes and was forced to walk bare foot on the dirt tracks full of thorns and sharp edged stones.

There were days when my father would sit by the fire, half naked and embarrassed waiting for his only shirt to dry so he could go out to the village square to socialise with the other youths.

There was a time when things were so desperate that at age twelve, my grandfather arranged for my father to be taken in as a foster child by a family better off in my Mother's village. The deal was my father would be a shepherd boy and tend the flocks in return for food and the most primitive of shelter. My father hated this form of bondage and speaks of it today. He also hates the capitalist system for he sees it in the same light as his horrid childhood servitude, which was fortunately only to last six months.

There were days when things were a little brighter for my father met my Mother during his stint as a shepherd boy in the village of Meglenci. Seems all things have a purpose.

There were days when my father dared not ask for my Mother's hand in marriage for there was nothing of any substance to offer, even though they were childhood sweethearts (liberals in a world of marriages arranged by matchmakers).

There were days when my father's nose bled until there was no more blood and he would have to lay down in bed to regain his strength.

There was a day when my father and Mother got married and there was no suit, no wedding dress and not even a photographer to capture the momentous occasion. Fortunately there was the bravado of my grandfather to pull off a wedding celebration on borrowed wine, borrowed plum brandy, borrowed money and perhaps even borrowed time.

And then there was a day my father decided that there had to be a better way. The day he decided to become a "ΠΕΣΑΛΔΑΡ" (fortune seeker) and a pilgrim. Begging my grandfather (for that was the convention of the time), to give him permission to try his luck in the land of plenty - Australia and to borrow the funds necessary to arrange for paperwork, a ticket on the ship and all of a few dollars to get by.

My father is an intensely proud and courageous man, with an incredible work ethic (he is always first on the job and last to leave) and a steely determination. For him to come to a decision to abandon his dearly beloved homeland and family, times can only have been totally and utterly without hope.

With an incredible amount of naivety (which was critical for no-one in their right mind and having any concept of the trip, let alone the future would embark on such a pilgrimage), he decided to try his luck.

I have often contemplated how he came to do it - no language skills or any skills for that matter, no real idea of where Australia was, no comprehension of the hardships which lay ahead. I can only say that if I was in his shoes I could not do it, although I think I have infinitely more resources at my disposal.

It was December 1969 when my father left a young wife and two year old son to embark on what turned out to be a harrowing thirty six day trip on the ship from Yugoslavia to Australia. Around the bottom of the African continent stopping in Capetown. My father first set eyes on black people. This sounds like the first fleet arriving in Australia in 1788.

My father had a paper suitcase, not that he really needed it except for the flokati rug that my Mother had hand spun, dyed and woven upon her arrival into the household, and six or seven American dollars which even in the 1960's was not enough to feed a cat for thirty six days let alone a grown man.

Not that he could stomach anything with the massive seas tipping this old ship from side to side and stern to bow. My father sings the praises of some distant relatives that had the sense to bring along a few jars of pickled chillies, which they shared generously with him and enabled him to eat some bread from time to time and just sustain life.

On his arrival in Sydney, he found himself all alone. No-one to greet him in a totally foreign land. Fortunately for him there were many in the same predicament. Somehow he managed to find his way to my uncle's place who had arrived in Australia several years earlier.

In the late 1960's Australia really needed factory fodder and accepted cheap labour from Eastern Europe and luckily Tito needed foreign currency so wisely exported his only commodity which was his citizens. Finding work, if you can call it that, was not difficult. After only a few days my father started working at the steelworks in Port Kembla, only to break out in hives from the intense heat. So he left that job not bothering to collect his few days of pay and went to work for the brickworks.

After about a year he decided to move to Melbourne where another of his brother's had settled. Now working at the Borthwick's abattoirs. Living on the cheap he saved enough to pay his debts and bring Mother and I to Australia. Bless the inventors of the jet plane for by 1971 there was a service from Belgrade. Even though we spewed our guts out we did actually make it, which would certainly not have been the case on the ship.

Despite severe bouts of homesickness and one failed attempt at repatriation, this year is my father's thirtieth year in Australia. He would never have dreamed it would turn out like this. The idea was to spend about five years and save enough to create a better life in the homeland. What happened?

His work ethic has meant that all thirty years have been spent in tough labouring. It seems almost ironic that he has achieved a series of promotions at his factory at the ripe old age (for a labourer) of fifty-nine, plus a mobile telephone. All this at a factory making the Aussie icon, Four-N-Twenty pies, under the ownership of an Idaho potato farmer J.R. Simplot.

In all of his thirty years in Australia he has never taken a real holiday. Everything he has earned has gone towards providing for his family (including rising at 5 a.m. so that he would be first at the Queen Victoria market to buy the freshest produce as they were still setting up their stalls) and ensuring that we do not endure the hardships that he did.

We may not see eye to eye on many things, but I am full of pride for my dear old dad.

I dedicate this recipe because he is so fond of fat - says you need it in this country. It is also one thing we do see eye to eye on - that is a mutual enjoyment of this jellied pork dish with all sorts of bits like ears and hocks thrown in.

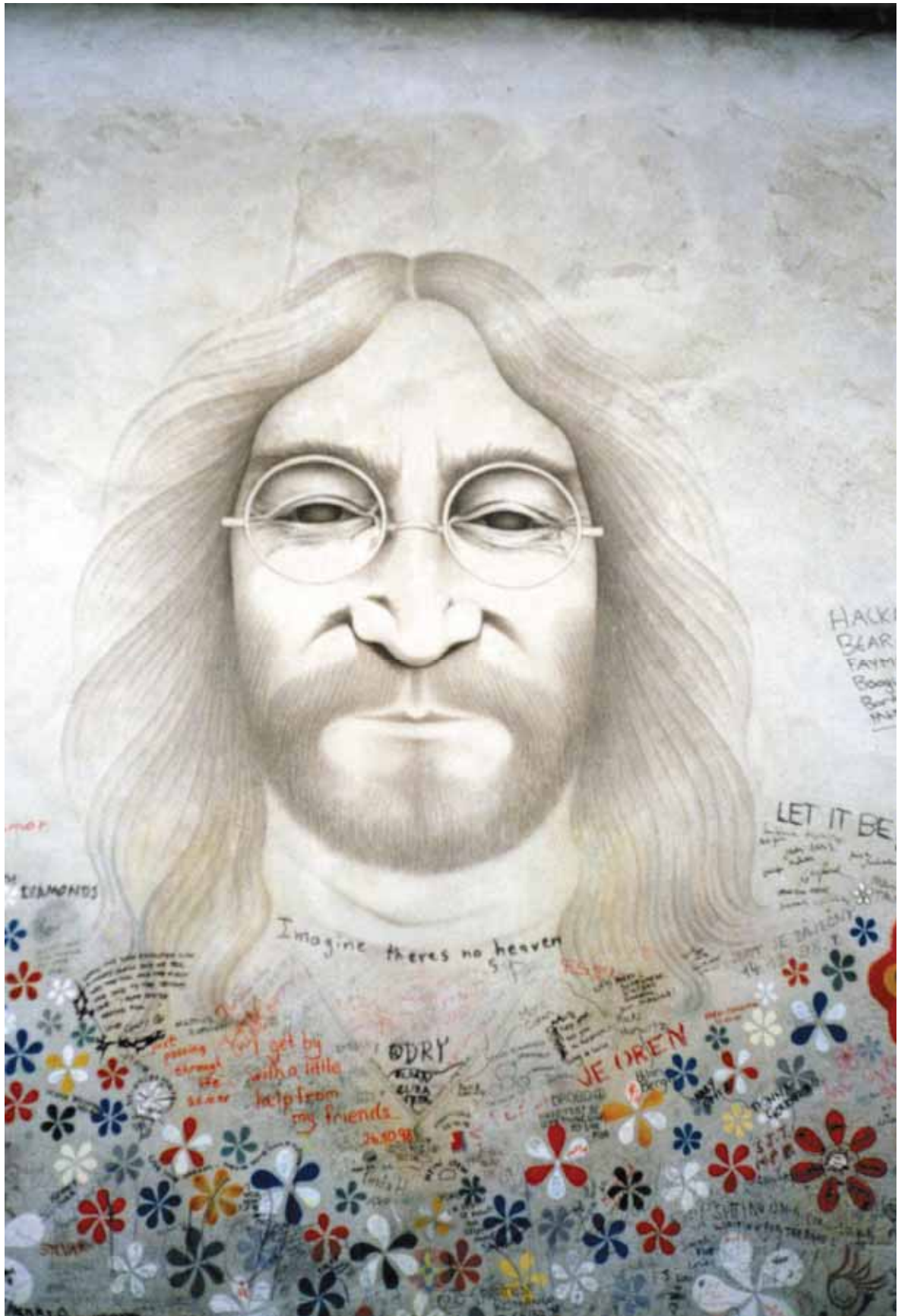
Pilgrim's Pivtija

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Pork spares (hocks, ears and a few chunks of pork meat and fat);*
3. *Garlic (lots of it); and*
4. *Salt.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Salt pork spares and boil in a pot for about 90 minutes;*
- B. *Pour into bowls;*
- C. *Crush garlic (enough for two spoonfuls per bowl) and add to each bowl; and*
- D. *Allow to sit in cool overnight (winter recipe only). Garlic, fat and cold will make it set. Just a few calories.*



Mother's Love

"Mother"

*Mother chooses the feminine
Mother is gifted curls
Mother grows tall, slim and extremely elegant
Mother always treads gently
Mother sacrifices and toils
Mother embraces family life
Mother suffers the pain of birth
Mother gives of her breast and soul
Mother becomes selfless
Mother fondly kisses and cuddles her babies
Mother frets and watches
Mother cherishes her children
Mother has aspirations
Mother nurtures dreams
Mother offers love and affection
Mother weaves rugs
Mother cooks Sensual, Simple, Sustenance
Mother likes sweets especially rice pudding
Mother enjoys company
Mother laughs deeply
Mother amazes at times
Mother cries when touched
Mother touches and heals
Mother angel of compassion
Mother relieves pain
Mother tolerates father
Mother curses occasionally*

*Mother supports ceaselessly
Mother values truth
Mother proves resilient
Mother simply is complete
Mother means universe
Mother feel the force
Mother nature is mysterious
Mother does not understand
Mother scares at sight of her shadow
Mother bravely fight your demons
Mother needs reassurance
Mother believes in the Almighty
Mother wants a daughter-in-law
Mother fears flights of fancy
Mother senses dissent
Mother feels rejection
Mother encourages son to find a wife
Mother tries to overcome destiny
Mother torments herself
Mother deserves peace of mind
Mother smell the flowers
Mother age with beauty
Mother forgive all my failings
Mother let me be your salvation
Mother there can be no other
Mother you are a Goddess
Mother trust the soul
Mother see Aquarius dawn upon us
Mother be fulfilled in the twilight
Mother discard yesterday
Mother wonder not of tomorrow
Mother live today
Mother Imagine there is Heaven on Earth!*

Imagine salvation from suffering.

Imagine all beings living happily without fear or danger of drowning in the ocean of cyclic existence.

Imagine!

John Lennon immortalised himself and his beliefs in his song "*Imagine*". During his short but rather controversial life, he used his profile to highlight the extreme suffering caused by acts of war - which rage across the globe. He sang and pleaded with us all to "*Give Peace a Chance*".

A very noble gesture for which he may have paid the ultimate prize - his life.

If all warring activity ceased tomorrow would there be a dramatic reduction in the level of human suffering? Or would simply another form of human suffering take the place of the misery of war?

Like Lennon I am a pacifist and having read about the horrors of WWII in Erich Maria Remarque's chilling "*All Quiet on the Western Front*", I do not wish such misery upon any creature. I can not *Imagine* such horrors, let alone come to grips with life after such an experience. Yet that is precisely what many people did including my grandparents. They were able to deal with the suffering, whereas many others were not able to do so, their spirits destroyed.

This leads me to think that suffering is not necessarily caused by external factors, but more likely dependent upon an individual's inner states.

Take for example Nelson Mandela. After a lifetime of slavery, punishment and twenty-seven years incarceration, he emerged from prison with a smile to lead his country.

Another amazing South African activist who refused to suffer the intolerances of his detractors, despite severe beatings and torture, Bantu (Black) Stephen Biko:

"I am going to be me - as I am - and you can jail me, or even kill me, but I'm not going to be what you want me to be."

Bantu was officially part of his name to show his pride in his race. An intensely proud and wise man whose inner states were such that no matter what punishment the security forces dished out he refused to be broken. Only in his physical destruction could they also destroy his spirit.

Given the choice would you choose a life free of sickness and suffering?

If I were able to do so I would free my Mother of her illnesses and suffering. Not by eliminating events occurring in her life, but by giving her the wisdom and capabilities to deal with such events.

My Tibetan Buddhist friends have taught me, that suffering takes place where there is grasping and attachment, which must be eliminated. Grasping and attachment, in turn, are caused by three factors:

- ♣ Greed and desire for possessions - which is overcome by an attitude of generosity and charity. As you will see I think my Mother rates well on this one.
- ♣ Hate - which is overcome by an attitude of love (like the love we have for children) and friendliness. Again I think Mother has this one worked.
- ♣ Ignorance and delusion resulting in not being able to see the world as it really is. We all suffer from this to a degree, however, in my Mother's case, migrating from a village to a Metropolis, from a basic life of sustenance to affluence without language skills has made life really very difficult. To overcome ignorance you need understanding. To achieve understanding you need to concentrate the mind to alleviate the agitation and attain wisdom.

Such are the vagaries of language and vocabulary that although I know there were many wise old people in the villages, I have no idea of the term for "wisdom" in the Macedonian language. So I look it up in the dictionary (the Macedonian word is "MYΔPOCT") and I assure you I have never heard it during my lifetime.

How do I convey these concepts to my Mother? How do I help her to attain the necessary wisdom to free her of suffering, so she can enjoy endless happiness and riches in her twilight years? How?

My Mother no doubt suffered at birth, being at home and into an environment of extreme poverty. One of many children where food was scarce. Shelter was hardly adequate with stories of sleeping on damp dirt floors with nothing but a straw mat beneath you, huddling together to stay warm and dry the damp.

No sooner can you walk and talk that you have responsibilities. To care for siblings at a very tender age, to work to help the family sustain itself, fetching water and endless more tasks.

When a little older, but still in her teens, even harder labour collecting scrap metal from the *WWII* front a few kilometres from the village. Spent shells, German helmets and lots of barbed wire collected with her bare hands. All carried on her back and all for a pittance.

Harvesting and then threshing loads and loads of wheat by hand (eyes and throat full of dust). Still food was scarce. Clothing and decent footwear even scarcer.

My Mother adorned herself with earrings of stoneware, which eventually split her earlobes, only to put them in again, as if to spite herself.

All this effort and struggle, yet she reminisces with fondness of those old days. Dressing up on special days, singing and playing with the other young ladies.

Sadness and tears well up when she recalls that there was insufficient money to buy a decent dress and shoes for her wedding day. Tears well up in my eyes and my heart gets heavy when I think that there is not even a photo of this wonderful day. Just a touched up photo which has a wedding dress and head piece airbrushed onto an image of my parents. Surely she deserved more!

Staying at home well past the marriageable age because she was not much of a prospect, or so she thought, even though she was tall and possessed elegance and beauty like Princess Grace of Monaco.

The forces of the universe brought my father (younger and shorter – double taboo in Macedonia) and Mother together. Only months later my father was drafted for over two years of military service.

My Mother became a new bride in a family of strangers, including a great-grandfather suffering dementia who kept asking her when she was leaving. Coping brilliantly, toiling hard, cooking, cleaning, working the fields and weaving rugs (some of these creations remain today) for the whole family, endearing herself to the Affectionate Adventurer. He thought she was an angel (not only by name) sent from the Heavens to bring renewed hope to the family.

On my father's return, as was expected, they decided to start a family. I was born in the middle of winter and a major snowstorm. Such subjects are still taboo, however, I gather it was a homebirth involving incredible pain.

This I figure as I was born on 7 February 1966, according to my Mother and I'd expect this date to be etched in her memory. Yet I was registered on 9 February 1966 because I guess it took two days for my father to get to the nearest town some thirty kilometres away.

This was followed by guilt as Mother was not producing milk to feed me - so it was with a little borrowed milk from the neighbour's (we had no cow), a little chamomile tea straight from the hills and a lot of prayers that I survived.

As Mother tells it, I must have been one wretched kid in total discomfort for I cried and cried ceaselessly. Mother did not get a decent night's sleep for two whole years and on a few occasions in total exasperation asked the Maker to take back one of us to alleviate the other's suffering.

This seems totally out of character for Mother is a most caring and loving person, who would take the last morsel and offer it to her children and go hungry.

The suffering must have been intolerable. Many visits to doctors and even more to faith healers, all to no avail.

A few years later more suffering arising from migration and having to create a new life, starting from nothing - actually being significantly indebted. Arriving in a foreign country, foreign culture, foreign climate - simply another world.

Working in horrendous conditions - freezing abattoirs, stinking fish factories and cotton mills where it was impossible to breathe. The resilience of the woman is just beyond belief.

All the while looking after her family, by this time another wretched little kid, my baby sister.

It has been said that the poor suffer physically whilst the affluent suffer mentally. So it seems ironic that the laws of nature push people towards affluence. As was the case with my family, from a life of poverty in the village where they suffered physically to a life of affluence (relative to the village) and they are experiencing suffering of the mind.

Mother especially struggles with how much suffering she is enduring through ill health and the aging process, notwithstanding all the creature comforts - warm home, running hot and cold water, power, car, etc., etc. She finds it so much easier to comprehend the suffering in the village.

It seems impossible to make her understand that with the aging process, ill health and debilitation does occur more frequently and is to be expected. To maintain health one needs to increasingly focus on well-being by eating properly, exercising and keeping the mind still and peaceful. All of this is extremely difficult with a sedentary lifestyle with few interests. Instead she expects the cures to come from external sources such as doctors and medicine bottles.

Last resort was to send my Mother and sister to a women's health retreat for a week in the hope that through demonstration of a healthy lifestyle she may be able to feel wellness and be convinced. Alas, the language barrier is too much and it proves fruitless.

A day after returning from a week of spas, mud baths, daily massage, walks in the fresh air of the bush and wholesome vegetarian food, the mindset is back to the old ways. Agitation of the mind and delusion (psychological pollution) which leads to unhappiness.

The final phase of suffering is the return to the spirit world. She *Imagines* it is just over the horizon.

My Mother has given me the spiritual gift of life, which is without doubt the ultimate gift. In return I can only try and give her a spiritual gift of salvation from suffering.

In the meantime, we will continue to share Mother's Love.

Mother's Love

Fat of the Land

1. *TLC;*
2. *Rice - one cup;*
3. *Raw sugar - half cup; and*
4. *Real milk.*

Soul Stirring

- A. *Boil rice in water for about 15 minutes (reduces risk of burning milk, which just does not taste good);*
- B. *Water should be soaked up by rice - if not drain. Add milk and sugar and simmer (stirring all the time so that rice and milk do not stick to pot) until rice is soft and milk is soaked up - leave moist and not dry;*
- C. *Serve in your favourite bowl as hearty rice pudding with cocoa sprinkled on top; and*
- D. ***Imagine** your re-birth!*



esprit d'escalier

All my friends and loved ones, I would offer a sliver of my heart but I am afraid there may not be enough to go around or that it may be rejected by the vegetarians.

Instead I offer you all a piece of my limitless soul and my life.

Follow your heart through the Third Millennium and beyond.