

# THE JOURNALIST

BY LLOYD NELSON

## ONE

I'm a journalist by trade, not a reporter of daily events. I do investigative reporting and write feature articles for any paper that will buy. I also do commissioned articles for weekend editions of the big dailies in Sydney and Melbourne and the weekend Nationals. It's very well paid work if you hit the target. I suppose you can say I'm often the turner over of nasty stones and at times I have, those that have suffered or at least received unwanted publicity from some such stone turning from me. I take precautions, the Chinese in Cabramatta have taught me survival fighting and so on. It's not pretty but its bloody effective.

But I'm something else again by inclination. I'm an engine tweaker. I'm both widely read and widely experienced in car mechanics but I'm a natural in locating faults and fixing them. I have a great ear for a car not running right. This is a skill that I never knew I had and developed it tinkering with engines at the family farm in Caulfield in western New South Wales. My Grandad would start up whatever engine was causing him angst and I'd go ahead and sort it out. I don't lean to total overhauls though, of course, I can do them. I prefer quick sort outs where you tweak



the spark, carburation, timing or whatever. I call it tweaking and if you are quick and know what you are doing you can get a car running well in a very short time. Anyway I work at a service station in Lane Cove near the T.V. Studios and I make good money four days a week fixing jobs picked up at the pumps.

The advent of self service filling stations took away the support system for housewife motorists. There is just no-one to have a shooftee at their car as in the old days. Back then the owner would be assessing each car as he filled it. If it was running rough and the tyres were

half pumped up and so on he would suggest and most often do something about an obvious and growing problem.

I generally do my journo work by investigating the current project one day in five and then writing it up over the remaining four evenings and so on. I was doing a T.V. investigation one day and I stopped at this particular service station where I have worked now for the three years past to fill up. The girl next door to me was really having car troubles and the problem, easily solved was obvious to me.

I stepped over and said "I can quickly fix that if you let me".

"My knight in shining armour" she said. "I'd love to but I have to be at the T.V. station for an hour next."

I sucked in my breath "well take my old banger and come back when you finish there, it should be right by then".

She did and I did and one hour later came back to pick up her heap now running like a charm.

"How much" she said?

"Nothing" I reply.

"Oh" she says "rubbish" and presses a \$50 note in my hand.

Off she goes and the service station owner who has lent me the spanners to do the job says "Christ that was neat work".

"All thanks to you" I say and give him the \$50. I'd enjoyed the job.

He shakes off the \$50 and says "what about coming back and doing that on a regular basis?"

I think for a moment and come back with "fine, Tuesdays to Fridays, we'll work it out as we go along".

It works like a German band. After word gets around I spend time doing about fifteen jobs a day, average \$80 and I go halves with the proprietor so we're both getting good pin money out of it and its all cash, no receipts.

## TWO

My fame spreads and one memorable morning Yvette Mason, the best known news reader in N.S.W. comes along in her spluttering pillar box red Batman type car. It's an absolute dog and she paid a fortune for it at Wallinton Sports Motors.

She minces over to the work room. She's absolutely drop dead gorgeous and naturally sweet and beautiful with it.

"Can you help me" she says? "That heap of shit is bleeding me white and running like a chaff cutter."

"Yvette" I say "it would be the greatest pleasure, take my old banger to work and call in after the news is read and done".

She does and I get the Batmanmobile running like an electric motor. It's as good a job of tweaking as I've ever done. She wants to pay me heaps but I laugh it off.

"What it needs Yvette" I say "is a good long Saturday overnight run".

"Where to" she says?

"Bathurst" I reply.

"What in the world's at Bathurst" she asks?

"The nicest little B & B in the world" I tell her.

"Mmm" she says "if this heap of shit continues to run like it is at this very moment you're on, let's say two weekends away".

Off she goes, she revises her programme overnight and comes back next morning with the car ticking over sweetly.

"If you're still of the same mind" she says "this Saturday will be fine".

"O.K." I say "can you pick me up right here".

"Bang on soldier" she says "10 a.m. sharp".

I slip down to the Good Sammy's store and find some good used casual gear for the weekend, it doesn't shriek newness nor does it cost me much money. I'm a make do person at heart. I'm also no misogynist.

I like women but I have no intention of marrying one. Women get you into a lot of trouble, particularly if you are a believer in loves sweet dream. Modern day women are their own people and while they want a bread contributor and sex and children, if any of this doesn't work out they fly the coop leaving years of endless complications around the neck of their chosen. Sex yes, you have to have it or you lose your concentration, marriage never, you're likely to lose too much of your life for very little. In high school sex was very readily available. These days I seem to pick up what I want when at the pumps.

My best ever strike is with Mrs Witherspoon, a separated legal secretary. She had a not particularly old but a very breathless car chugging at the pump one day and I walked over and offered to sort it out.

"Fine, but I have got to get to work."

"No worries" I say "take my old banger and drop in at the end of the day".

The banger in question is a very old green Vauxhall Velox, the one with the typical Vauxhall chrome flutes in the bonnet, its easy to drive and in nice order. It's the same one I lend Yvette later. She gets back after 6 p.m. and is thrilled with the car.

"\$90" I tell her.

"Can't afford that this week Andrew."

I'm running my eye over her as we talk, she's mid thirties, has green eyes and a wonderful figure. She reacts to my look.

"MMMn" she says "why not come home for a drink and a meal, we can work it all out".

I do and we do. Both the sex and the meal were out of this troubled world and we have kept it up intermittently every since.

## THREE

Come Saturday and I'm standing there, small case with me. Yvette roars in, I hop in and away we go. Bathurst isn't all that far but it's a nice run and an open one once through the mountains. We take in Katoomba and its sights and lunch en route. We get along very amicably; the girl's a bit sexually tensed but great company. We hit Bathurst and I suggest we take a walk around their famous Court House complex. It looks like something out of Florence and was built in the gold boom days here in the inland.

"Andrew" she says "bugger the Court House, where's the B & B?"

She showers and comes out in a filmy night rail over a filmy negligee and I say "Yvette, Yvette, you need nothing of that".

"Oh" she says "what do I wear in lieu?"

"Nothing for starters" I say "then a big bath towel".

We have as much fun as anyone can have with their clothes off and she relaxes and tells me that in her line of Tinsel Toned work, a poofed up work place, sex is a difficulty.

"Those that aren't gay" she says "are so up themselves that they haven't time for anyone else. And the parties" she says "are even worse and border on the vicious."

Anyway we jog along very compatibly and are back in Sydney about dark Sunday.

As she drops me off she says "where to next time Andrew?"

"MMMn" I say "let's do Terrigal in a couple of weeks."

"Right on mate" she says and we later do.

Terrigal, Bowral, Jenolan, Canberra, Port Macquarie and others follow. Between trips I see her only at the pumps about once a week, our Sydney work is a bit too time consuming.

About this time I get a gong at the Journalist's Annual Awards and while I usually duck this sort of thing I diffidently ask Yvette if she would like to come along with me. The girls a trooper and instantly accepts. It certainly made my night and she wowed the Awards event. The press coverage was rather extraordinary and probably as a result of this someone of note followed up on the published investigatory articles that had won me the Award.

Anyway I get a commission on five articles to be researched and written in London for the Murdoch Group. I have a few days to think about this.

"Go for it Andrew" Yvette says and I do.

## FOUR

I find a serviced flat to live in, it's in Ecclestone Square near where Winston Churchill once lived.

The articles are easy. I do one on rorts taking place within Sainsbury's huge stores. I have a belly laugh one morning as I sit in a sunlit window doing drafts to hear a B.B.C. programme wherein the presenter gives a famous quote and calls on one of the panel to add to it, preferably humorously. He gives Robert Falcons-Scott's famous words as he steps into the blizzard.

"I'm going out and I may be some time."

The panellist instantly adds "Sainsburys, you know, is always so bloody busy on a Saturday morning."

The second is to do with share ramping and I then dig deep into a scam where famous people living beyond their incomes sometimes paying a thousand pounds a week interest on loans of four thousand over one month. I get the photos for this article but have a near go when I beard the scammers.

I generally carry a U.S. Military Policeman's sap in my coat and this is all that got me out of it. At the one interview I had three people down and damaged all at the one time. The last one gave me the interview that clinched the article. He nursed his damaged hand as he talked.

The last two articles were bits of push overs. They were already well researched and could have been Pommy written. It seems the subject matter was a bit too sensitive to Journos with families living and easy to find in London.

## FIVE

Late morning during this spell in London I'm musing my way along old Fleet Street, hub of the printed world pre Rupert Murdoch.

I stop to look at a bust of a famous journalist and denizen of the press bars famous then around this area. A plaque beneath the bust names the writer and adds the lines 'With a few words he could lay bare the Soul of a Statesman – or the Bones of a book'.

Interesting stuff, I make up my mind and turn quickly and accost a chap who has been following me now for three days, he starts to run, I'm on him and kick one of his flying boots behind the other (a dirty football trick much practised in my youth). He crashes to the pavement, I sink the slipper in to keep him there a go through his pockets, nothing identifiable, a big Rozzer comes up.

"Ello, ello, ello" he says.

I put my foot on the miscreant's neck, produce my press pass, passport and tell him the tale. The Rozzer's not slow.

"MMn" he says "this is England, Sir, we can't beat the shit out of him to find out what he's up to, tempting though the thought is. But I will take him to the Station for questioning, ring me about 4 p.m. on this number."

He does and I do but we find out nothing as the chappie is a private investigator working for an unnamed client, he's perfectly entitled to do this. On the upside I never see him again but no-one appears to have taken his place or else they're rotating the watchers a lot.

Anyway I came home with a pocketful of money and although I didn't know it then the Kudo's for an international press award next year.

## SIX

I get back to work in Lane Cove at the tweaking place. There's a huge back log as I've been away for so long. I'm starting to get it under control when Yvette burbles up to the pumps, car still running well. She dashes over looking haggard and very un-Yvette like.

"What's up" I ask? "Have you fallen in love?"

"Andrew, I'm in terrible trouble and can't think straight. Can we talk this evening?"

"No probs" I say "shall I come over to McMahon's Point (she has a top flight rental unit there) at say 10 p.m.?"

"Set" she says and dashes off to her car.

I duly turn up at the appointed time on my motor bike and heard the sad tale. It seems when she was about eighteen, she's twenty-three now I think, at a party that turned vicious some chaps needled her with a drug know as Zac, a tiny injection behind each knee, holding a pillow over her head as they did so. Later in the night the three did her over and to add insult to injury took pictures which they have kept until she became famous and perhaps rich. They want \$10,000 for the pix and negs now (it is 35 mm stuff).

"Yvette why in heavens name didn't you tell the police" I ask?

"Andrew, at eighteen I was scared of men. After the terror of the start I really enjoyed myself and in the right circumstances i.e. with only one man present I'd have done it again."

She had, it seems, come to terms with blackmail and is at present raising the cash. She asks me to properly complete the deal. I agree.

## SEVEN

A school mate, now a rising Chemist with his own shop, calls in to have his 190E Mercedes tweaked a bit. I guided him away from the Beamer traps a while back.

"Get a used 190" I tell him "they're cheap to buy, have a deal of prestige and are easy to tweak". So he did.

"Marcus" I ask him "what the hell is Xactil?"

"Oh Andrew" he says "if you're a sleazy shrink and have a looker on your couch you slip her a needle of Xactil alias 'Zac' and a short time later you fuck her with her heartfelt consent and co-operation."

"How do you con her to have a needle in the first place" I ask?

"Oh you tell her it's a relaxant and it'll help with the analysis."

## EIGHT

I'm sort of faced with two problems. The first is the blackmailers. She will be lucky if she gets away with one bite from this mob of low lives. The second is that Yvette lives up to and beyond her huge income and the only money lender she can raise this amount from on a signature is Ed McBoy, famous in the trade. Loans to \$5,000 and interest on each week or part thereof of \$1,000. Many of the town's top stars use him. He's exactly the sort of lender that I have exposed so clearly in London town not so many weeks back.

Yvette gives me the cash in a few days and I arrive by appointment at the baddies' home unit in Woolstonecraft. I arrive at the door, squirt some quick glue in the Yale lock and quickly slip in a key that loosely fits and then snap the key off with a cutting tool I'm carrying. I then knock and am admitted. The minute I'm in I reach out my right hand to shake hands with this low life and again almost immediately sap him exactly whereon the head that Sammie Oh of the dirty fighting academy showed me, he goes down. I reopen the door, put a sign on it, 'Out at the locksmith back at 10 p.m.' and shut the door and turn on the T.V. reasonably loudly. By this time the low life is back with us and not in very good shape. I get out a flick knife acquired weeks back in the Portobello Road and nick a chunk off his ear lobe. He bleeds profusely. This wakes him up. I put a well typed statement on his kitchen table acknowledging his crimes and leaving blanks for him to fill in as to who his co-conspirators were and invite him to sign it.

"And if I don't" he says?

"Then you die" I say "here and now".

He fills in the blanks and signs. I first tell him that if anything unseemly happens to me my lawyer will have instructions to give this to the press and police.

This so far is easy. The next call about 5 p.m. next day is with the famous Ed McBoy.

"I'm here to repay Yvette's loan" I say "but I want the cancelled contract."

"Fine" he says "plus the \$1,000 interest."

"No" I say "that won't be paid".

He slams the ring binder and I guess presses a panic button as a big chap whom I recognise as a well known bouncer at the Cross moves quickly into the room.

"Toss him out" McBoy says.

I move towards the bouncer and say "well hello Kevin" and stick out my right hand and (being left handed) sap him hard on the side of the head.

Kevin crashes to the floor and I spin and slam the sap down on McBoy's hand as he opens the drawer. Bones break and there are anguished howls. I toss him on the floor and pocket the pistol he was trying for.

"Just lie there Eddie for a little while" I say and I crank up his photocopier and watchfully run off copies of about 20 big name contracts on this.

Eddie is in no position to sign any receipts and won't be for some time. I access his bank statement files and get his account number and pay the money into his account the next day, retaining the butt receipts which I later give to Yvette.

I keep this all to myself as I expect Kevin the bouncer to come gunning for me, he's just thick enough to try it. They roar up next afternoon after, no doubt, a liquid lunch and three of them start to clamber out of the car carrying steel baseball bats. I'm all prepped up for them and have a look out in place. I throw a plastic bucket of petrol over their car bonnet and immediately follow up with a zip lighter. The three narrowly escape the holocaust and their car burns like a roman candle and a bit later explodes.

This is all taking place on the concrete hardstand outside the repair shop at the Servo.

My boss sprints over and says "Holy Christ Andrew, where are we, Beirut?"

"Careful Mac" I say.

These bastards are only distracted at this point. They wave their bats, I produce from beside the door a pump action shotgun and up pump a shell into the gun, they run for their lives out onto Lane Cove Road which is chocka with moving traffic, I spray shots at them, they can't come to much harm as I have loaded these shells myself with a friend's reloader and there is only lake salt in them, but I'm stinging their backsides in no uncertain manner by the way they jump after every shot. They pass beyond shotgun range and I mount my motorbike.

"Mac" I say as I fire the bike up. "I may be gone for some time. Just mutter gang warfare when the cops and fire brigade arrive in about a minute and a half and say 'Andrew who?' when they ask."

I throw a plastic toy shotgun on the hardstand as I leave, I cart the real one away. I don't imagine the cops will get too excited if they think it's only a toy shotgun. It should muddy the waters admirably.

## NINE

I don't even go home, I just bike my way up to Grandad's farm near Narromine. I stop to stock up on clothes at a Good Sammy's on the way and closer to the farm pick up some provisions which I carry on the pannier rack.

The old chap's glad to see me. He's farming a very decent size farm in a sort of a way. My Dad went to Agricultural College and was due to take over this property but he and Mum were killed in a car smash near Dubbo. I wasn't much more than a toddler at the time and Auntie Lorraine at Parramatta brought me up. Grandad always paid for my upkeep and schooling and later Journo College plus decent pocket money. In small return I tweaked up his machinery from time to time and played hooky from school every winter start to come up and seed his paddocks with his old gear. He never stripped the crops, just left them standing in ear and put the sheep in when feed ran down. It was really quite an easy and successful way of running sheep. In later years I came up for shearing and I also had a loose arrangement with some Kiwi shearers to crutch the sheep at fly problem times. As he got older Grandad ran the sheep, rams, lambs, wethers, ewes in great big mobs. He didn't tail or castrate and it was without a doubt the best fed but roughest and most rag tag mob of sheep in N.S.W..

We get along fine and share the cooking. I bowl over a few fat lambs and fill the freezer and generally make myself useful.

After a few days he dryly asks "who are you hiding from Andrew?"

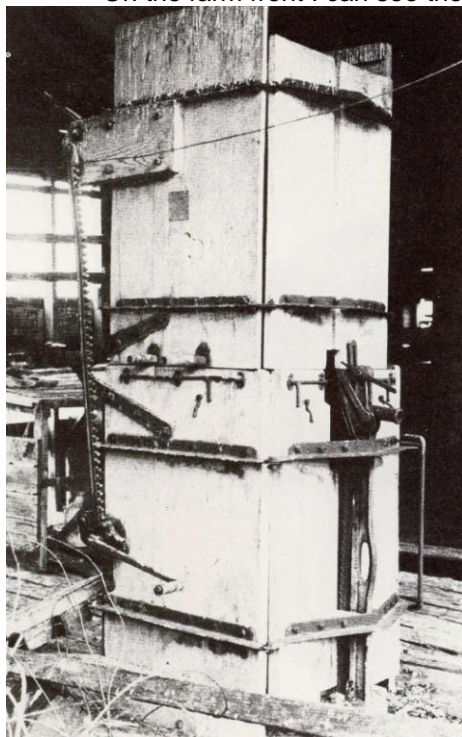
I tell him and he goes into his office and brings out a box of 12 gauge shotgun shells.

"Keep these in your shotgun" he says. (I broke down my pump action in Lane Cove and brought it up with me).

The shells are red tracer and what the Air Force used at Ballarat to teach airmen recruits deflection shooting in N.S.W..

I ring Mac at the Lane Cove servo for messages. He tells me that both Yvette and the cops check every day and a few other friends. I postcard Yvette suggesting a B & B in Katoomba and we get together very successfully. She is back to her old form and looks great. Mind you I already know that as I watch her on T.V. every night. She wants to visit the farm too (she's from the country).

On the farm front I can see the sheep need a proper sort out. But I know Jack shit about



the best way to do this and I don't want any advice by the self satisfied farm world that surrounds us and is always trying to buy Grandad out. I get a general hand job at the Dubbo sheep selling complex, ride my motorbike down three days a week and learn from day one.

The Dubbo yard has more rorts in place than Bond Corporation at their peak. I make like a harmless idiot, take pictures, meet mobs of people and work up a real and proper expose on the sheep selling business. I also learn what's worth what, who will buy and the language of the trade. I pass on the ethics of it.

In between I attend to farm matters on the off yard days. Grandad wants to pay me but I'm earning quite good money and have a heap of money left from London. Back at the selling complex I'm rapidly becoming Joe Popular as I realise I can tweak up both good and ratty sheep trucks as easily as cars. I tweak up also a heap of Tojo trucks that the more conservative farmers keep and keep. Young farm world all drive new stuff with huge snorkel exhaust pipes. They are universally callow and up themselves. Talk about spoiled young sprogs. They're known as the Chardonnay Farmers.

## TEN

I tweak up a buyer's car. He's appreciative and dinkum. I ask him over to the farm to review the sheep of which I have a sample yarding, there's just so many jumbucks the old yards can't cope.

He takes careful note of what we have and with Grandad's permission he buys from us consistently without us paying commission or carting the sheep in. We turn all the uncut rams into stags and sell them off as fats, the big wethers we ship out as shippers. We class all the ewes and buy in good fat lamb rams and as wool is going down swing more to fat lambs.

Seeding time rolls around and I get out and sow crops right, left and centre and using, for God's sake, Grandad's Lanz Bulldog crude oil tractor and his mixture of quite efficient though very old tillage gear. Farm world goes into convulsions as they see us operating. I visualise what they owe on their green Johnnies and laugh to myself.

It's rather fun chugging along with the old Lanz, they're one cylinder and have a surprising amount of grunt. Grandad's farm would be the only farm in N.S.W. running one of these as a main implement. We tow a twenty run sunduke scarifier behind it and seed with a 16 run McKay combine. We rip us, work back, harrow and then seed. We use super but no spray whatsoever. It's certainly a back to the past exercise.

I enjoy it and Grandad puffs his pipe, grins and asks "what I'd like for tea?"

Grandad cooks up chops and tomatoes for tea, farm produced stuff, we eat the same for breakfast with eggs.

"Well Andrew" he says "it's nice having you here, I suppose that sooner or later you'll want to rush off back to Sydney and marry that newsreader."

"Hardly likely Grandad" I say. "How about we go up to Parker's today and see what harvesting equipment he has in the shed."

Buying in seed grain is a bit expensive. We've just finished the winter cropping programme and as we plant crop but never harvest it, feeding it to the sheep in later summer as it stands we have to buy in next year's seed and it seems too dear to me. Parker's is a good adjoining farm of about 1,200 acres that Grandad bought walk in walk out a year or seven ago when Parker became mortally ill. It's got a nice house on it and, unusual for the bush, the machinery sheds are fully enclosed with big slider doors. I've seen it from the road but never been up there as my farm visits have always been of a flying nature. So off we go, Grandad finds the keys and we open the big sliders and look the plant over. There's a nearly 60 year old Massey 44k kero tractor, a McKay type A.L. ground drive harvester, gristers, ploughs and scarifiers and among the dross is Parker's old Landrover utility. The farm improvements of cattle yards, sheep dip, pig pens and so on are in remarkably good condition. The house, which is accessed from the road up from us, has been lived in by Kiwi shearers in recent years and is in quite tidy order.

I get to work on the gear over the next few weeks. I soon get the tractor sparking and the old Landrover, with its aluminium body, is a gem. There's a bit of grain on the ramp and I give the grister a run and crush up some wheat and oats to see how it's done.

Our staunch sheep buyer, Murray, keeps dropping in and buying sheep to fill out orders. He offers and we accept a fat lamb contract with Woolworth's. We've sown a heap of field peas, which we won't strip, to allow us to deliver fat lambs even in February. The sheep money rolls in. The cheques build up on the sideboard as Grandad hasn't been into the bank for a while. I realise that we have quite a profitable farming operation running. We're turning off a heap of sheep, particularly the fat lambs. We've got the labour intensive side down to the barest minimum and our costs, shearing and crutching and super apart, are minimal.

We buy no plant, buy no chemicals, do no mulesing and the stock and crops are really good. We feed the stock well and the place hasn't been heavily cropped for years. I spend a deal of time getting to understand how the harvester works and we later strip all the seed we need and also a deal of wheat which I grist and feed some pigs with.

I buy in a few sows and a boar and soon have a good cash flow lot of pigs going in to the buyers. It's the old style way of farming, you spread your options. Parker's has been cattle fenced in the middle blocks so we start buying murray grey heifers to get a small herd going. Grandad offers me money, it's practically running out his ears but I don't accept. I'm having fun and get good money from the sale yards and from tweaking up trucks and utes there. I still rendezvous with Yvette at Katoomba via my trusty motorbike.

The stock firms realise things are different at Caulfield and start dropping in. The stockies are very much in touch with farm world and have realised a lot of sheep are leaving the property but they're not getting a sniff of the sales. The last thing I want Grandad to feel is that I'm taking over his operation so I play the grinning idiot with the stockies and tell them I'm just here for a little while and send them over to talk to Grandad. He gives them short shift and we continue running the farm our way. I guess we're the only farm in the district that runs without using a stock firm. Mind you we're different in other ways. Grandad doesn't insure anything or buy futures. We get our wool packs and that sort of thing off a Sydney jobber at a fraction of the cost.

## ELEVEN

I'm still going like a train at the Dubbo yard. The truckies present me, free of charge, a beautiful extension light and put in a new plug near the truck ramps so that I can tweak their troubles after the sale with minimum time loss. I tweak trucks and utes and the odd car and I get into trouble fixing an old couple's ancient ute one day when they have bought in a few fat lambs to the sale and have had to have the ute pushed out of the way as they can't start it.

It's a fairly warm morning and they're oldies so I hold up things at the ramp for a few minutes while I get them up and away and a young sprog, who has turned up to see his sheep unloaded by the carrier, abuses me for the very minor hold up.

I ask him quietly whether he was born an asshole or if it's something he's learned. I particularly dislike this young sprog but have never shown it. He chucks a hard punch at me, I've been watching his eyes and know he's going to swing so I play my Chinese trained ace, grasp his wrist and taking advantage of his body momentum toss him into the unloading yard amongst the sheep shit and urine. He lands on some sheep and then rolls around the floor of the yard. He leaps up looking very bedraggled and hops up on the yard fence. It's just too tempting a target to miss so I zok him in his exposed fat belly and as he arches forward I give him a head butt. He doesn't get up this time and out of his sight the truckie silently claps his hands.

I go on with my work and at the end of the day, while I'm tweaking trucks, the yard manager comes purposefully along. I get down from the truck.

"Andrew" he says, "you're the most effective and useful and best accepted sales yard hand I've every had here, but you've punched the wrong shit, the Committee want me to sack you, his Dad (as I knew) is the Chairman."

"That's fine Lance" I say, "but you are executing a decision that will bring untold troubles on all associated with this busy yard. I suggest you go back to them and convey my comments and that I stand by my actions and that I suggest the young sprog comes down here now and we'll settle the matter man to man rather than have him try to get at me through the Committee. Tell them that, in any case, I'm prepared to take a months suspension but nothing more."

He doesn't come back, the young chap doesn't turn up and I get a cheque in the mail and confirmation of the termination of my job. I only work as a casual anyway so it's all a bit over the top.

## TWELVE

During the time I've been at the farm I haven't allowed my journo instincts to wither on the vine. I've stored up the sheep yard expose, an indepth look at the inefficiencies of Shire Councils here and there, the extent of deprivation and prostitution going on among the original Australians, stock firm rorts, the decline of religion in the bush and so on. All very well researched and interviewed for and pictures taken. To do the Church article I go to Mass every Sunday and sing in the choir. We are thorny old Anglicans but my Aunt, who brought me up in Parramatta, was a good holy Roman and was wonderful to me. I always thought and still do that it was only fair that I go to Church with her. Thus I have sung in Church choirs all my life and never minded helping out on odd jobs at the Church.

I send the articles to the Nationals and negotiate on price. They are very good stuff in that they expose pivotal matters of the bush that no one bothers to write about or more likely don't get written about as there are not too many investigative journos of independent means in the bush. It's all quite incestuous and too dangerous for any country newspaper to instigate or investigate.

Anyway the first article covers three pages in the weekend Nationals and runs in all the cities. I get very big money for it. The Committee try to attack me as a disgruntled ex employee. The papers get choked with letters from the owners of vehicles that I've tweaked standing up for me but more important still they open the door to me for a damning rebuttal of what my detractors are up to in rorts and meat substitution. This is such strong stuff that I needed their needle to print it. The pollies get the wind up and run for cover, they stop returning Committee calls. The Minister for Agriculture comes up our dusty drive by appointment to talk.

The Minister is looking for ideas so I advance my theory for an enquiry by a select Committee of three with strong investigative powers. In a bold move obviously to shut me up he later appoints me one of the three. This is the very worst move as I know where the bodies are buried. Over a long period I'm on National television often three nights a week and every country,

landline and current affairs programme. I seldom go to the city for this. I just invite the media to peddle out to the farm with a camera for a video interview. From the alleged district fool I now sound like the saviour from the bush.

Grandad takes this all in, ruminates and then says, "Andrew please don't ride your motorbike off farm again, use Parker's Landrover instead. You've stirred up some of the worst possible people and it would be just too easy to run a wire between two trees on a road you use after dark."

I go along with this.

We seem to have a lot of V.I.P.'s calling at Caulfield Farm. The house and garden fences are fine, they were originally architect designed in 1892 and have stood up well. The garden has vestiges of past glory. Fountains, garden statuary, arbours etc all as dry now as dust. I look to bringing down water from Parker's big white tank, it's in high rocky country above Parker's house. It supplies heaps of water to that house. I buy really cheap a huge quantity of poly piping from the sale of Homebush Abattoirs and truckie friends, whose engines I've tweaked at some time, bring it up in huge rolls when carting our direction.

For convenience I work up from Caulfield along the fence lines and finally get it to the soak. I slip up there one day to do the final tank conversions and find a grey anglo arab tied to the windmill trough and a nymph swimming in our water supply. She's not at all embarrassed (she's up to her neck in the pool).

"Hello" she says, "I've swum here for five summers now and you're my first visitor. You must be Andrew Green" she says?

And I say "and I'm sure you're Amanda from Melrose Estate."

"I heard initially" she says "that you were a grinning idiot and now they tell me you're the only person with real brains in the shire."

I in return say "I hear that you have a lovely Mum and a curmudgeon of a Dad."

"Bang on" she says "and they're both in care for a few weeks and I've been up here having a swim and plucking up the courage to come and see you."

"What about" I ask and she tells me.



### THIRTEEN

Let's fast forward this long and boring story five years.

I've long sorted out Melrose Estate and its running like clockwork. I've fathered two children with Amanda (all care but no responsibility). She lives with a full time Nanny at Melrose and tends her more aged parents in care at Narromine. I went to the Press Awards in London for my gong and by kind arrangement of the Murdoch Group. Yvette reads the news in London while on long service leave. I write more biting investigative stuff for the Pommy papers and get shot at once in Oxford Street.

We marry at St Martin in the Fields and thanks to Yvette's Oz and now English connections the world sees the vision. The garden with steady water inputs at Caulfield is a picture and Grandad is as good as and even richer than ever.

Amanda's oldies, as mentioned, are in the Narromine Retirement Home and I run her big place in conjunction with Caulfield Farm. Thus I control the biggest farming operation in the area.

We still dump on the stockies and have a sign on Caulfield and Amanda's place reading 'This is a Stock Firm and Agronomist free zone'. As far as we know this is the only such sign in the agricultural areas of the wide brown Land of Oz.

I still live with Grandad, Yvette is still news reading but it seems will not be having children. I have turfed the Kiwi shearers out of Parker's Farm and Yvette has turned this into a very imaginative weekender, which we share once a month when she comes up to the farm. Every so often I go off for a day and I start another investigative article. Life could hardly be more varied or better.