

Alls Well That Ends Well

By Lloyd Nelson

One

Having introduced some interesting characters in the Argus printings of The Merchant Banker and The Brewery Chemist, this short story wraps up what happens to them in the end.

In the run back from the opening of Aussie Pub No 324 (they are all standard franchised pubs with their own brewing and bottling gear), at Port Lincoln, the weather conditions are very smooth and sunny. So the Honourable George Heseltine, though he is now sailing under an ersatz name, opts to put down at Strachan for a lobster lunch.

We land in flat calm, pull out the paddles and paddle the float plane up to the wharf and moor it there. We take a walk through interesting Huon Pine Museum and look at old piney boats, used in decades past to transport the Huon pone cutters up the Gordon River .



Strachan is a great tourist town and has a fascinating water front, which is of course the jumping off point for Gordon River cruises that attract the world. We walk along a bit and pick up a newspaper and have a laugh to read that Slim Dusty and Gordon (Ned) Parsons were singing 'A Pub With No Beer' at Port Lincoln last evening, and that Aussie Pub No 324 ran out of the same. The Hon. George engineered all this wonderful publicity at no cost. He sure knows what he is doing. We find an outside table and lunch in water colour sunshine, on Port Macquarie natural oysters, grilled lobster and finish with Peach Melba. All accompanied by a biting little Tamar Valley white wine. The Hon George is, of course, well used to this style of living. Roger's lunch at the brewery is usually a ham roll, brought from his cottage, plus a half pint of Uffington ale.

Two

After a coffee and snifter of cognac, George decides he's okay to fly, and half an hour later, we are nosing our way up Macquarie Harbour to the Gordon, then the tortuous Franklin and do a sweep over Mt Field National Park. It sure is true wilderness country. They land the float plane up the Derwent a bit, handy to the city, and then run it up onto a cradle on the hard stand, and shed it away. It's easy to do. We are in good time, and about dark, the crew of the 'Spirit of Badajos' turn up at Aussie Pub No 1 at Salamanca Place. The Hon George puts on a complimentary dinner and free beer all night. He can do this, as Aussie Pub No 1 is his private



operation – it's not franchised. A beautiful blonde lady, widow of an Australian Diplomat, really runs it for him with grace and style, and I think a great deal of affection. George continues with his generosity, and at departure time, they all join in and load a big trolley of free stubbies to take with them. We are on the dock at 7am, to see them raise the sails to catch the land breeze to take them out, and wish them god speed.

Three

Next morning, they go into a car hire place in Hobart and pick up two Toyota Starions. They drive out a bit and using a farm type siphon pump out of a gallon of petrol from one and drop in one of Roger Coverly's S.O.P.P pills. This stands for Save on Petrol Pollution. These things fizz a tad, when dropped into the tank, so its best if the tank isn't 100% full on insertion. They then tip the siphoned petrol back.

"How effective is this stuff?" the Hon George asks, " and have you used it on many cars?"

"Not at all," Roger says, "Only on my motorized Raleigh bicycle, and your wife's Jaguar. Seems to work like a German band in each case."

"Okay," he says, "What's the drill?"

"Well, we just drive up to Evandale, and then out to Nile, to look over that famous country house, built by the relative of the explorer, who was the first to cross the Blue Mountains.

Then back here and we'll take turns in driving both cars, and look at what's in the tank when we get back."

They do this, stopping for a beer at the Fox and Hound, in Campbell town – hard by the brick convict built bridge there, and again at the Man of Ross at Ross, coming home. The car without the tank pill, uses a tank full and the other uses half a tank. It's quite a convincing demonstration.

"Does this affect the motor?" Hon George asks.

"Nothing discernable." Roger replies.

Four

"Jeez Roger." the Hon George says, "This has the capacity to change the entire world and make you the richest man in it. By the same token, it cuts across a lot of interests and there's plenty who would shoot you to sink the idea." Roger cogitates.

"Well broadly, it will cut fuel put in the tank to just half the normal, add a sopp pill which will cost you say, 3 litres of fuel and that's it. The money going now into the Arab world, will halve."



"Good, good," says George, whose brother goes west in Desert Storm – friendly fire of course. Roger continues,

"Shipping costs will halve. Any country with the capacity to grow, say, sugar cane to source the ethanol is going to boom. The Ord River project will be enriched at first, and then totally passed by, by irrigation schemes, stemming from a dammed Victoria or even Roper river. The hydrated ethanol finished product to go in the sopp pill, is miniscule in comparison to the liquid it starts with. There are just so many benefits. The big one which I'm working on, but which the world will not initially want to know about, is the resumption of Hitler's old expertise in turning food stuff into synthetic fuel. I've done a bit of this in the lab," he says, "it gets well towards alcohol, but the sopp works in it the same as petrol. I haven't bought petrol for my bike in two years and it runs like a clockwork mouse."

"And the rest of the mix?" the Hon George asks.

"Mundane and cheap," Roger says, "with one remarkable, but readily available exception."

“Which is.....?” the Hon George asks.

“Very confidential,” Roger flings back. He stops and then says,

“Actually, there is a mineral component, which is the catalyst to the whole capsule’s effectiveness. It used to be mined near Mt Isa. I’ve repegged and been granted a new lease of the whole shooting match, to guarantee supply.”

“And the next step,” George asks.

“Well, we go halves. I’ve got the product. You set up the company and work out what to do with the dosh, and all that sort of rubbish.”

“That’s generous,” George says, “and you have a price in mind?”

“What’s a thousand million?” says Roger.

“Oh, a billion, I think. Not entirely sure.”

“All right,” Roger shoots back, “A thousand million each and one American dollar per capsule royalty, and we’ll sell that royalty contract off to the biggest equity fund in the world, if we can. Otherwise, we’ll just sit back and collect that as it floods in.”

The Hon George is silent for a while.

“But you’d take less, perhaps,” he says.

“Oh,” Roger says, “I’m not at all greedy. 999 thousand million would be okay and 95 American cents per capsule.”

“And the time frame?” Hon George asks.

“Oh, no rush,” Roger says, “I only want money for my needs, which are small, compared with most peoples wants, which are insatiable. Actually, I reckon the Dings would stump up all the upfront money. The opportunity to make Milan the capital of the industrial world would appeal to them, and since ‘Il Duce’s’ time, they’ve always hated the Arabs.”

“You’re bonkers,” George says, “The whole of Italy wouldn’t be worth that money.”

Roger chuckles, “Their football’s good. They’re the best soccer players in the world.”



Five

George is thinking as well as talking.

“You know,” he says, “the last thing we both want or need is personal publicity, especially in association with this thing, which has the power potential to change the world.” If the Hon Patricia hears I’m still alive and keeping nit about it here, I’m sure she will arrive unannounced, take one look at my Diplomat manager and kill me on the spot. Then, knowing that you know that I’m alive and kicking, she will turn the elephant gun on you.”

They have an Aussie stubbie or three and this clarifies the planning. Roger contributes,

“All the suspicion of this deal, and the upfronting cautiously, and hedged around will take a lot of time. I’ve got my patents pending well under way and once this is through, we could simply forget about billions up front, and just merchandise it across the world, purely for the royalties. Either way, it’s the money machine of all time.”

“Hmmm,” Hon George says, “why don’t we sign the deal over to a bearer bond company – no names, no pack drill, and just make money. Mind you, the bearer bond company shares, will be the richest bit of paper ever, so they would have to be securely kept indeed.”

The Hon George continues,

“I have one of these companies. It owns an oil tract in the North Sea and it’s been a very practical way to hide the owners of the deal. With this type of company, say, 3 people might be involved. The bearer bond would entitle the bearer to, say, half of 97 ½ % each, and the accountant officer bearer, say, 2 ½%. Thus the front man, being the accountant, does the deals under direction from the other two. Proof of company share owners nowhere else. Whoever turns up at the meetings with the share certificate is the clear shareholder. It’s risky, but safe. I have a spare one of these set up. We can easily get going, but remain in very deep cover. The dosh should be shuttled between Zurich, Luxemborg, The Solomon Islands, Panama and the Caymans. However, there are ramifications for you, but not for me. You will have to live out of England for about 7 months of the year, or else the Pommy tax office will rob you blind. It’s the way they have, born of long experience.”

“Go for it, Hon George,” Roger says. “I don’t expect you will want to be going through air ports, or overseas with your ersatz passport or identity, if you can avoid it. Lets settle an email code and you can whistle me up perhaps to meet here or on the mainland when you want.”

“Fine,” says George.

Six

Roger returns to England, to a rapturous welcome from the Hon Patricia.

“Oh,” she says, “I’ve missed you, in the nicest way. Come and look at my new house.”

“God,” says Roger, “that was quick.”

Roger has suggested to the Hon Patricia, that she should change her house hopping style. This latter is that when she buys a new house, she sells the old and moves everything, the whole kit and caboodle to the new one. This is a bit hard on things and total confusion is almost a way of life. He has suggested to her that she should settle on one house suited to displaying her fine collection of English water colours and sculpture, and leave them there full time. Thus not knocking them about with multiple house moves, and keep this one permanently for that purpose, and living in when it suits her, and make her other house moves independent of the display house.

While he has been away, she has done just that. Roger is gobsmacked that he has got through to her on houses. The house is at



Kingston on Thames and is a tri-level with a basement and boathouse. It is ideal for what Roger had in mind and they move in quickly and comfortably. He still uses his own home at Iffley Lock at brewery busy times.

Seven

He buys a nice little diesel-engined cruiser with a flying bridge, and uses this at times to run up to his cottage. It's a very, very pleasant river commute. Around Easter, the University stage's a very interesting Easter Arts school idea. Dr Fergus Collins has done a thesis on Australian humour and humorists, and has invited three great exponents of the latter to the University to speak. He rounds up Paul Hogan, Sir Les Patterson (Barry Humphries) and the inimitable Max Gilles. On the day, they all turn up, except Max, who goes down with the dreaded lurgie.

Eight

Hogan lays them in the aisles with his droll Oz wit, and when he sits down, Sir Les Patterson, looking his revolting worst, stands up. But Sir Les is not too well. In fact, in Rogers view, Sir Les has been going downhill, since he appeared in the Kath and Kim Da Vinci Codes. Whatever, he is speaking from large typed notes, got going well, stopped and sat down holding his brow. Roger, who has the president of the strolling players, is sitting close by. He steps up to the plate, helps him get comfortable and produces a glass of water. Les is not kicking on, so Roger picks up the notes, lowers the mike and then proceeds. He says,

“We hear that Sir Les was out very late last night, dining on baked beans and quaffing red, so if I may, I will fill in a bit for him.”

He goes on to give Sir Les's speech, in the exact Sir Les voice intonations and even body language. He authenticates the speech, praising Sir Les's skills, using the voices of Sir Billy McMahon, Billie 'Mackie' Sneddon, and finishes on Queen Elizabeth thanking Sir Les for his sparkling performance at the Royal Variety Show. It's all a wow and Roger gets a standing ovation for which, recovering Sir Les stands also.

Roger is not the type to do this incident brown, so he departs quickly out of the side door, but is cut off just as smartly by Hugh Grainger, from the BBC. Everyone knows Hugh and Roger is no exception. We must talk, he says, soon. The press and media pick up on this televised accidental tour de force, by Roger. Roger ducks all this, as his policy at this

time is less is better. But all the same it's nice to be thanked by Paul Hogan in person. What a chap he is, and what a memorable career he has left to posterity, in his film efforts.

Nine



Grainger comes back. He is doing a film and radio documentary featuring the anniversary of the Abdication Crisis.

He wants Roger to voice Churchill, who played a larger part in this famous event than is generally known. Roger flips

through the script.

“Aw hell, Hugh,” he says, “I’m happy to voice the lot. Lets give it a quick try.”

And he does so superbly, voicing also Wallis Simpson and gruff old Aunt Bessie Merrefield. The BBC run it on radio, and later television, making the most of the feature. It draws rather amazing comments – it’s just so good.

Ten

This is the start of nearly a years part-time work with the BBC. The outer movements of which were Hitler at his ranting best, Chamberlain at his diffident worst, Baldwin explaining why he didn’t prepare for war and the inner movements that drew rapt attention – Don Bradman commenting on the Bodyline series.

We have said Roger is a fine thespian and his command of satire and mimicry, is without peer in England at this time. A coded email now turns up. Could he meet the Honourable George in Brisbane next month? He will be there opening Aussie Pub No 473, and is ready to talk on the SOPP deal, if Roger can make it. At short notice, Roger takes advantage of his carte blanche arrangement to look at breweries, anywhere, anytime and thus books out for Milwaukee, where after a short look at something of interest to him there, he flies through to Brisbane via Honolulu.



Aussie Pub 473 is in the Westpac premises, in Queen Street Mall near the old Treasure Casino. Why Westpac moved up the street, is a bit hard to work out, but it's a fine site for the pub and they have a great night opening it. Roger, after a few beers, and a bit of egging on, takes off Joh Bjelke-Petersen's being a subsidiary

speaker on the opening of a pub. It's a wow and brings the house down. It sure makes Premier Beattie look a bit colourless.

Eleven

Next morning, the Hon George, who is in fine fettle, and Roger, walk down to the city ferry terminal and catch a city cat down river to Bulimba. They are planning to breakfast at the famous eatery 'Eves', on the river. The Brisbane city cats, like the star ferry at Hong Kong, is the perfect way to see the city, and they look with interest at the huge brick wool stores at Teneriffe – now splendid yuppy apartments, and the old wharf area – once as industrial as all hell, and now beautiful board walls, with picture book apartments fronting them.

As they are looking, they hear an unmistakeable voice carrying through from the front section. It's Kevin Rudd, the new luminary in Federal Labour politics. He has a minder with him, and has been to early Eucharist, in Queen St, reading the lesson.

"Give him a serve," George says to Roger, sotto voice.

Roger is still pumped from last night. He pretends he's on a mobile cell phone to George Bush, and in perfect John Howard's tones, says,

"Well George, I expect to be re-elected. Especially if we can put that blasted Rudd in cement boots and drop him mid river."

It's wonderfully done, and seconds later, the minder comes through in a hurry, can't spot the culprits and says,

"Has anyone just left here?"

"Oh yes," George says, "they were wearing wet suits and jumped overboard."

The minder rushes to the side of the boat to look. He should have known better. Roger adopts perfectly Prince Charles' well known voice and says,

"I say old chap, is that a cannon under your coat?"

Still not thinking, the minder folds back his coat to reveal a huge Mannlicher pistol, with enough hitting power to stop a Queensland steer. Rudd, a rather likeable, laid back character, comes through.

"Bill," he says, "whatever are you doing and who are you chaps?"

Roger adopts Tony Blair's dulcet tones and intones,

"We vote for the right side."

Rudd bursts into laughter.

"God," he says, "I listen to a lot of dull talk. You pair are the best I've heard for a while. What about a coffee?"

Rudd is getting off at Bulimba wharf to walk up to his home. They grab a coffee nearby and Roger and George catch the back and forth cross river ferry and walk up to 'Eves'. They order coffee again, but with a big snifter of brandy and then eggs Benedict. George unfolds a sheaf of paper.

"It's all set, Roger," he says, "you were right about the Dings."

Business plans settled, contracts settled and Roger heads back to the UK via Milwaukee to cover his tracks.

Twelve

The Hon Patricia meets Roger at Heathrow, her eyes are shining like stars.

"Oh Roger, it's so nice to have you back. I've really missed you and I've found the perfect house."

My God Roger thinks, she's off again.

"Where," he says.

"Oh, you'd never guess. Mum is sick of the Virginia Waters climate so she's bought a big east facing villa on Malta and given me their old home."

This is not bad news, as the house in question, 'Round Hill', abuts Virginia Waters Golf Course and Windsor Great Park. It's a beautiful two storey red brick timeless sort of big

house. It's a post-war beauty, with heaps of space, very decent grounds and none of the problems of antiquity.

"Bang on Patricia," Roger says, "But have I told you my accountant now tells me that I have to spend six and a half months a year living out of Britain."

"Gosh Roger," the Hon Patricia says, "I didn't realize the Brewery was paying you that well. Where do you want to live?"

"It's up to you," he says. She thinks,

"Well, a mountain chalet with a view of the Matterhorn, a house with golf course views at Palm Springs, or a harbour view apartment at Monaco?"

"Aw, heck," Roger says, "Lets have all three."

"And the others?"

"Aw, we'll keep them too!"

