

Common sense be damned

Don't get me started
by Harry Gumbboot

I missed the Lismore CSIRO 'Drop-in Session' after damaging yet another a rim while attempting to negotiate Lismore City Council's pothole-retention program.

By the time I'd changed the wheel, had the tyre appraised as "technically dodgy" by a North Lismore mechanic, and dropped the thankfully steel rim at a South Lismore engineering firm to be repaired, I'd decided to head home.

Which is how I found myself parked at the junction of Caniaba Street and Three Chain Road contemplating the large expanse of empty flat land to the north and west of the Lismore Airport.

Lismore, as the local Mob will tell you, is a natural retention basin. The confluence of two water courses directly opposite the CBD means that during medium to major floods, and depending on which receives the most rainfall, the Wilsons River can impede the flow of Leycester Creek and vice versa.

Four acquaintances of mine lost aircraft when the backed-up Leycester Creek flowed that way and dumped them halfway to Coraki. Anyone who can read a topographical map can see that part of town is a floodplain.

My solution before we do anything else? Create a large channel immediately west of Lismore airport to divert Leycester Creek floodwaters to Loftville Creek south of Lismore. By "large" I mean up to five-metres deep, 50 metres wide at its base, and 100 metres wide at ground level.

It would require new bridges on Kyogle Road, the Bruxner Highway, Caniaba Road and Three Chain Road, but I suspect that would still be cheaper than 10 to 12 dams in the upper catchment.

At around five kilometres in length, the excavation would provide 2.5 million cubic metres of fill for retardation works in other places, eg the western side of Molesworth Street.

Later that week, after picking up the repaired rim, I was enjoying a coffee – as we "lefty extremists" do – in one of Lismore's many fine eateries when I noticed an LCC Councillor at an adjacent table. I took the opportunity to ask them about the flood channel.

Their answer? "It wasn't included in the terms of reference for the CSIRO study."

Imagine my surprise when a couple of days later a LLC document showing proposed Employment Growth Areas on the same patch of ground west of the airport popped up on social media.

As the Romans – who were pretty good at moving water around – would say: Cui prodest?

MAYOR GETS BEHIND PLAN TO REPURPOSE POTHOLES AS MICRO-DAMS, BASINS, BOXES... SAUCERS ANYONE?

FLAT

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The deepest promise of love

A friend told me that her daughter is going on a hiking holiday with her father, and she won't join them because she is needed at home, looking after various pets.

My instant reaction was, she should go with them, she misses out on the fun and the change of routine.

I admired her calm reply that it was impossible for her to leave her responsibilities for three weeks, and that she could not possibly ask someone else to do what she did. I realised that what she represented was a mother's love.

She was the mum in the family and stuck to her duty of caring for all who belonged to the household. The same care she bestowed on her husband, and more than anything, on her daughter. And it was that love for her grown daughter that made her rejoice in the prospect to see father and daughter travel together.

This kind of devotion is a mother's prayer, the prayer for the daughter's happiness from the moment she was born. I long for the kind of deep emotional connection between mothers or fathers and their children. Why I long for it – it seems the only love that is felt in every cell of your being as being the truest and most enduring love.

If love belongs anywhere and sung from an eternal source of belonging, it's here. If it is unattainable, lies dormant or neglected, someone hurts. And that someone is not just the daughter, or the son. A mother without the touch of her adult daughter's love that may be expressed only in little gestures yet mean so much, will start to yearn for the days when the child was still in her arms.

She knew about the bittersweet Goodbyes, one by one, that accompany the growing up phase, in stages of letting go and facilitating the independence that was to come all along.

With increasing independence there is something else that grows – a parent's feeling of love that is and always will be about giving more when you feel you can't, going the extra mile when you feel like you deserve a rest.

Once a mother, always a mother. Motherhood is a sweeping field of flowers that stretches across a never-ending expanse, giving joy – under a clear blue or a grey sky.

A mother does not give up, she holds on to the tune of her heart. The heart that shares every moment of life with the heartbeat of her loved ones.

I realise that fathers can feel the same devotion and tender parental love, and it would interest me to know what precious feelings fathers experience when their grown son or their daughter agrees to go on a holiday with them.

Like some things that only become better over years of good use, and that we cherish because they have been with us for a long time and served us well – I think that, as we grow together and learn to deal with life's fluctuations, you behold a treasure that ages beautifully – something that lasts because it is crafted well and loved well.

A mother's blessing shines through the shifting sands of filial relationships, taking care that the family thread holds firm. However close it may be to thinning under certain stressful situations that could potentially mean a relationship breakdown,



by Antoinette Ensbey

severing family ties with a mother around who is tightly holding on to the thread like a life buoy, is near impossible.

It can be hard on the mother – or father, depending – to negotiate the tightrope to protect the one true thing that is the deepest promise of love on earth – with eyes fixed on the silvery horizon.

To persevere with patience and stamina and an unwavering belief that love quietly waits in perpetuity, for a mother's love can never be shift, it is a solid eminence, yesterday and into the future – that makes you feel safe.

Mum stands for being settled and secure while the child is searching, testing, venturing. One moves outward and forward while the other is the constant, looking inward. Giving birth – the act of birthing a new life – is equal with bringing on the variation of change.

The next generation consolidates the continuity symbolised by the mother in a metaphysical play of opposing forces – motion and stillness – where one cannot exist without the other and exists only through the other.

Endurance and discipline, even sacrifice, therefore belong to a mother. As the mother I represent the fixed part in the family architecture. I am the mountain, the keeper – recollection, reflection and rest make me strong and give me clarity and energy, all contained within.



The bay of Port Vila

plays (in Bislama, one of their main national languages). My heart could only feel joy at how happy they seemed.

Whether I had the chance to pause and watch them, or we were simply driving by, it was wonderful to connect with locals over their love for their teams, the terrible roads (which made it feel scarily like home, except they drive on the right-hand side), and the invasive weed species taking over their otherwise incredible countryside.

The locals are also fighting a seemingly impossible battle against rising land and property prices, development and environmental neglect.

In all this, I saw communities and people who share everything with one another. If you can afford to buy a car, you buy something that fits as many people as possible so everyone can share the travel.

A village of 200 people might have only two houses with solar panels and batteries, allowing others to charge their phones. All abilities were embraced and everyone could contribute.

These felt like an understated people. It took them a while to warm up, but when they did... pure hearts! And this familiarity made my holiday feel surreal.

These wonderful people mostly looked different, but they could have been our Lucy or Lewis or Carol or Ruben.

At the end of every day, people gathered in their marketplaces and community spaces and, in the fading light or by lanterns, the (mostly) women sat by the fires preparing food and caring for small babies while the children played football.

I will be trying to send shoes to two villages we met people from, so watch this space...

nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com

A moment

by S Sorrensen

It feels weird. I mean, I'm standing at the front of the train – right at the front – where a driver should be. But there isn't one. There's just me. Looking forwards through the front window, I pretend it's a windscreen and I'm a train driver. Down a dark hole deep under Sydney we go! And we're going fast! Toot toot!

But I'm not really driving. No-one is. No driver. I know this is normal for many people in the city, but for me it's a little freaky.

My fellow travellers appear unconcerned at our driverless predicament. They sway in sync with the train's rocking, most holding phones to their unconcerned faces, some balancing laptops on their laps, typing, concerned about office stuff. No-one is talking. All is quiet, except for the hum and rattle of the train.

A female voice cracks the silence: "Next stop is Victoria Cross. Doors will open on the right side."

She sounds friendly, and it's helpful information. I feel like saying thank you. But the friendly helpful woman doesn't exist. She is digital. She is synthetic. She is not human, despite her voice. She is a humanless voice on a driverless train.

This is a new phenomenon, the humanless voice thing. Until 170 years ago, no human had ever heard a human voice without the speaker being present. The human voice only came from humans who were there. Language, therefore, is intimate.

Over the millennia of human evolution, the nuances and mysteries of human consciousness became embedded in the sounds we make. From birth, maybe even before, we hear our mother's voice, and in it is care, safety, love. As we grow, the human voice informs our humanity: "I'm sorry", "I love you", "I miss you".

Language is the soul sounding. It is our thoughts. We listen, we reply, our voices creating a shared reality. I hear you; you hear me. You are here; I am here. Voice is human-to-human contact in real time.

Or it was.

"Doors closing. Please stand away from the doors." There are words, but no speaker. Her friendliness, the sweet lilt to her voice – a lie. The message is not from a human. Language is leaving the human domain and moving into the digital.

The new drivers, though not alive and mute, use human words to beguile the listener into comforting compliance. Train conductors (and drivers) are gone, their jobs swallowed by technology, their voices lost, their language stolen.

The humanless voice is everywhere: an AI podcast sends me to sleep; my bankbot guides me through the seven options; Miss Google directs me to the Japanese restaurant; Siri tells me the gyozas are good there. (Sometimes I say, "Thank you, Siri." Siri says, "You're welcome." Oh dear.)

Pools of water beside the tracks reflect tunnel lights that flick by as a hundred humans speed through 230-million-year-old sandstone lying under 500 billion litres of water in a train driven by a computer with an inhuman human voice. We are now under the harbour, which is dribbling in. No worries.

"Next stop is Barangaroo. Doors will open on the right side." A reassuring voice. No worries.

Inevitably, language will lose the emotional potency and complex intimations it has acquired through its long gestation in humanity. It is being usurped by a hustle of technology railroading a driverless capitalism ever deeper into the darkness while we forget how to hear people, forget how to talk to people.

Unconcerned and heads down, all intimacy stripped from the sterile words that now pushpull us here and there, we sway to the automated rhythm, we sit silent, we text, we post.

Next stop is...



DV etc in Barbault's Basket

When Pauline Hanson said domestic violence is a two-way street, for once I had to agree.

Our clients are parents of both sexes whose kids are with the other parent or relatives; the 5% or so, one or both of whom don't get it, that two happy homes are better than one unhappy one.

It makes my day when I'm sent a photograph of mum and laughing children at the contact centre; or when a father shows us some of him and his boy finally together after years of separation.

Humans can be cruel to each other in many ways. Some should not be anywhere near children, not without appropriate treatment. As Dr McCardell tells me her mother Vera said, "A human mind in the wrong hands is a dangerous thing." Court-ordered treatment of such a mind, rehabilitation and so on, can, and sometimes does, turn damaged people into role models.

We've been busy. On Sunday, trolleying bits of flood-art fence through mud, I put my lower back out. On Wednesday I'm first before Her Honour for a Compliance and Readiness Hearing. I enjoy that, she on the bench, me alone at the bar table, client behind me, everyone else on a screen on the wall.

We get our trial date, then a quick walk to the Local Court for a frivolous AVO Application dismissal. Afterwards I text my client, "Application Dismissed!" There's no reply.

That done, back to the office for an Interim Defended Hearing, before a Senior Judicial Registrar on Webex. My client's hospitalised, with a medical certificate until Monday, so it's adjourned to then.

I have a marking of 2pm for a sentencing at Murwillumbah. The charge is breach ADVO with emotional text messages. We're last on. Her Honour isn't impressed with my letters from professionals saying he's changed his life around, and gives me a stern lecture on victim blaming.

As she leaves the bench, adjourning sentence to Friday, I hear Her Honour say sotto voce, "...CCO". I assume this means she's considering a Community Corrections Order and reassure my client he's not going to prison.

On the way home, near the top of the last hill from Cawongla, from where you see Lismore laid out before you, I fall asleep, to be woken by sideswiping generously soft scrub, and am back on the road wide-awake.

In the empty office is an urgent Affidavit I scan, file and serve the sealed copy on the other parties before lower back pain (feeling unsupported – Louise Hay) meets electric blanket.

On Thursday we work late. Squid comes and realigns my spine. On Friday I rise early, shower, eat a warmed Swedish sourdough cinnamon and cardamon scroll, make a mug of coffee to drink on the way, and am back in Murwillumbah for the sentencing.

On the way, my frivolous AVO client calls from Clarence Correctional Centre but the line cuts out.

Her Honor has saved us until last. The CCO she'd mentioned was not, for some reason, in my papers. He'd been on one at the date of the offence, so she had to resentence him for breaching that as well.

It looked bad. Deciding against home detention, she finally imposed what we used to call a suspended sentence, hanging over him for a year.

Synchronistically, the abovementioned Vera, 56 years ago on the other side of the country, twice a week for two years, taught me yoga. At \$5 a year.

For a fuller version see, and please feel free to share, the forthcoming Chapter 19 of Shiva's Garden II at: johnadams150712.substack.com



Legal writes
by John 'Sindhu' Adams



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The six healing sounds

There is a popular meme on-line that shares a beautiful interpretation of the Chinese character for “medicine.” It depicts the character as being made up of “plants or herbs” at the top and “music or happiness” at the bottom, suggesting that medicine combines the healing power of herbs with the restorative qualities of music.

Although this is not the character’s original etymological meaning, many people appreciate its poetic symbolism. Interestingly, the character represented in the lower part of the meme can be read as both “music” (yuè) and “happiness” (lè), reflecting a long-standing linguistic connection between the two.

This association between sound and healing is reflected in practices within Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and qigong. One example is Liù Zi Jué, meaning “The Six Healing Sounds,” an ancient qigong practice in which six specific vocal sounds are linked with the internal organs and the Five Elements: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water.

The six sounds are **Xu**, associated with the liver and the Wood element;

He, with the heart and the Fire element; **Hu**, with the spleen and the Earth element; **Si**, with the lungs and the Metal element; **Chui**, with the kidneys and the Water element; and **Xi**, with the Triple Burner, a TCM concept describing three functional regions of the body involved in the movement and regulation of qi and body fluids.

The earliest known written record of Liù Zi Jué dates to the 6th century CE, when the Daoist scholar and physician Tao Hongjing (456–536 CE) described a breathing practice using six vocal sounds in his text *Yangxing Yanming Lu* (*Records on Nourishing Nature and Prolonging Life*).

How to practise

Today, many instructional videos on Liù Zi Jué are available on YouTube and other on-line platforms. Beginners may find these demonstrations helpful for learning the correct breathing techniques, mouth shapes, and body movements. The Simon Blow Qigong YouTube channel has a helpful video on this practice titled ‘Six Healing Sounds Complete Practise – Liu Zi Jué’.

Begin by standing comfortably with your feet



shoulder-width apart. Keep your spine upright, relax your shoulders, slightly bend your knees, and let your arms rest naturally by your sides.

Close your eyes gently and take a few calm breaths through the nose to relax the body and settle the mind. Feel your feet connected to the ground and allow your breathing to become slow and natural.

Before starting the six sounds, take a few deeper breaths. Breathe in through the nose and exhale gently through the mouth, releasing tension. Return to relaxed nasal breathing before beginning.

The six healing sounds are practised in sequence, with each sound combined with breathing, body awareness, and gentle movements. Begin with the “**Xu**” sound for the liver, followed by the “**He**” sound for the heart, the “**Hu**” sound for the spleen, the “**Si**” sound for the lungs, the “**Chui**” sound for the kidneys, and the “**Xi**” sound



by Chi Fung Lee

for the Triple Burner. Each sound is produced during a slow exhalation, while inhalation remains gentle and natural through the nose.

As you make each sound, focus on relaxing the body and maintaining smooth breathing. The movements are slow and co-ordinated with the breath, helping develop awareness of the connection between breathing, sound, and the body.

After each sound, pause briefly and allow the body to settle before continuing.

After completing all six sounds, gently swallow, place your hands over the lower abdomen, and rest quietly for a moment. You may then sit comfortably with your eyes closed, continuing to breathe naturally and allowing the mind and body to return to a calm state.

Chi Fung Lee is an AHPRA & AACMA registered acupuncturist in Coffee Camp. Phone 0478-239-298.

So they say...

Erectile dysfunction

I finally succumbed to my friend’s advances only to find that at the moment of truth, he let me down. Is it my fault? It was so embarrassing I feel like never seeing him again. Help!

– Ivana Cockburn, Bangalow

with Uncle Norm & Aunty Maj

Magenta says...

Relax Ivana, it’s not all about you. This is a big issue that is contemplated at men’s groups, women’s lunches and in psychologists’ offices everywhere. Men are not sex machines except, of course, for James Brown. And if they are, then that’s a worry in itself.

Let me shed some light by sharing some of Leonardo da Vinci’s writing:

“About the penis – This confers with the human intelligence and sometimes has intelligence of itself, and although the will of the man desires to stimulate it, it remains obstinate and takes its own course, and moving sometimes of itself without license or thought by the man, whether he is sleeping or waking, it does what it desires.”

“Often the man is asleep, and it is awake, and many times the man is awake and it is asleep. Many times a man wishes it practice and it does not wish to, many times it wishes to and the man forbids. It seems, therefore, that this creature has often life and

At death’s door

by Michael Brooke

The young woman was recovering in hospital. She had been within moments of dying.

She said that at the instant when she was closest to death, she experienced a sudden understanding, a flash of enlightenment – a sudden insight into why she had become ill, and why she was dying. It was the turning point to her healing.

What follows is her recounting of the sensation of dying; a factual experience of returning from death to life.

“I was aware of this intake of air into my body, I felt the rush of it and knew it to be my last breath. At the very moment when I might have taken this breath and allowed it to go out for ever and ever, I had a sudden insight, an astonishing revelation that gave me an instant, complete understanding of my life.

“Here was my death bed. I could feel the stopping of everything, my heart slowing and a falling away of sensation, and the lessening of air in my lungs, and the blood in my arteries pulsing wearily and diminishing, my whole body coldly turning away from life – the world I inhabited was slipping away from me.

“By chance, sudden as lightning, there came a realisation. In a heartbeat I perceived I could fearlessly allow myself to cease to breathe. Or I could breathe again and allow my heart to quicken, my lungs to fill and I could return to the world. By some strangeness of fate or will or spirit I was free to choose – nihility or life.

“Simple as the breaking of an ocean wave upon water, I chose



at the instant before death that I would live. At once I was climbing out of a deep well. I was frantically scrambling in the dark. I climbed up from darkness, up and up into the light, coughing, spluttering, gasping for air. The nurses said I swore like a trooper.”

Laughing, she clapped her hands. “I changed my mind – I wanted to live. All my problems, trials and tribulations, they were nonsense. All I wanted was to love to be alive – easy as that.”

Her elation was contagious. What she’d experienced was profound. I wanted more from her. Could she go deeper into what happened? She replied by telling me a story:

“You see, I was lost... isn’t it so, in the great fairy stories, there’s always a moment when the child who has been abandoned on the road or is



intelligence separate from man.”

Us women don’t understand the strange, fickle ways of the male member. Probably men don’t either. It’s all a mystery. We just expect it to work when we want it to.

Imagine being in the man’s shoes (well, pants) and finally seducing his Goddess, having to prove himself, to anticipate and please her expectations; his hopes and fears out there on display. No wonder some men experience this problem on their first try with a new partner. And don’t forget there’s always the little blue pill.

Take it as a compliment, be flattered, be compassionate, be understanding and give him another go. Not only may you be pleasantly surprised, but he will love you even more and hopefully treat you with the same respect when you are temporarily (hopefully) unavailable.

I started a support group for men with erectile dysfunction. It was a flop and nobody came.

Norm says...

It would seem the stereotypical traits of women being caring and nurturing have their limits when it comes to this problem. If you feel let down and embarrassed, imagine how the hell he feels.

Ivana, what you have to understand is that although a man and his schwanz are conjoined, they often act independently of each other.

Try to imagine, if you will, that a man and his penis are like our Australian parliament. You have the government, and a bunch of independents.

Your man, in this case, the government, has taken a fancy to you, but the independent er, member, has spoken. And the penis says ‘no’.

It might have a head with no brain and an eye that can’t see, but his John Thomas, rightly or wrongly, thinks there’s something fishy about you and like a good penis (politician) should, it’s simply looking out for its owner’s interests.

Nonetheless if you’re both willing to give it another try, and drop the ego, I suggest you err... pull the honourable member aside and have a frank conversation with it and see if you can’t bring it around.

If all else fails, you might need to take him to the doctor, put him up on the hoist and see if he’s got a gearbox problem.

Did you hear about the burglary at the Viagra factory? Police are looking for three hardened criminals.

Send your relationship conundrums to:

magentaappelpye@gmail.com

Oh choko

by Magenta Appel-Pye

My new favourite food is, surprisingly, the choko. Depending on where you are in the world, it is also known as mirliton, chayote, chocho, and even Buddha’s hand melon, and belongs to the gourd family.

Even though chokos are fruit, it is classified and usually prepared as a vegetable. Everyone of a certain age remembers the days when chokos were growing over the outhouse in the backyard and were in every meal. We shudder at the horrific memory of having to finish everything on our plates, including that tasteless, ubiquitous overboiled green slop.

Consequently chokos are now undervalued and even despised. For decades they have been so completely banished that you can’t even find them in the shops. But chokos kept families fed during the depression, wars and economic hardship and deserve better, much better.

The choko is actually regarded as a superfood for its nutritious properties which include

regulating cholesterol, improving circulation and reducing blood sugar which is excellent for diabetics.

They are highly nutritious, rich in fibre, vitamin C, folate and antioxidants, and also extremely low in calories. Their high water content helps keep you hydrated while aiding weight management and digestion. What’s not to like? Except, of course, how our mothers murdered them and sent them to the sin bin of vegetables.

The beauty of the choko is its mild flavour, and when used with a bit of culinary flair it is amazingly versatile. I have a vigorous vine growing over my fence and there is an abundance of fresh, beautiful chokos, so I have set myself a challenge to use a choko in a meal each day while they are fruiting.

I grate them into bolognaises, stir-fries and curries. They are lovely sauted with butter, spring onions and parsley, grilled with butter and garlic, baked with cheese, battered with cornflower and turned into chips.

They also make an



excellent chutney. I par-boil them and add them to salads when they are cool. I eat the smaller ones raw, like a cucumber. You can even stuff them with meat.

Chokos are easy to grow and care for, and make a lush leafy cover for backyard sheds and bare fences. Yes, you do have to prune them back sometimes, but the production of food you get from one vine is incredible.

As we are becoming more aware of low food miles and potential food shortages, it seems a no-brainer to find a wall to plant a vine. With a change of attitude and common sense – here is fresh, abundant, chemical-free food in your backyard for the picking and sharing.

*What did the sweet potato say to the choko?
“I yam what I yam.”*



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