

## *From the Kitchen*

2 September 2009

Earlier in the week I decided to do some (more) cleaning out of old stuff. There are boxes in the roof that went up there when I moved to Mount Eliza thirteen years ago. Some I have not looked at in all that time.



One box's contents I hadn't seen in more than twenty years. Most of it consisted of memorabilia from a number of former lives, including an address book from my almost four years of travelling in the 1970s. Dozens of people I'd met and/or stayed with, and their contact details (pre-internet, of course).

I remember that as I wrote each one into the book, I was determined to keep in touch. With a few exceptions, I didn't. Last year my wife and I spent three weeks in California, partly to attend a niece's wedding. We met people and wrote down their contact details (including email addresses) with the intention of keeping in touch. Except for the niece and other family, we haven't. Even a lovely couple we stayed with for the best part of a week, haven't been graced with even a 'hello', after an initial 'thank you'.

I spent hours yesterday trawling the internet, looking for confirmation of the whereabouts of people in my thirty-year-old travel address book. Not one positive in more than thirty names. I could send them each a snail-mail letter and see what comes back – it would be an interesting exercise.

What happens between the warm fuzzies, the good intentions, and the amnesia and inertia? Is it that, outside any common interests generated out of the travelling, there is no meaningful overlap of lives? There are and always have been people who correspond with a raft of others for decades, so it can be done. Remember the book, and the film, *84 Charing Cross Road*?

These days, of course, millions of people keep in touch with others all over the world through social networking sites on the internet and through texting on mobile phones. I've joined a number of such sites in order to receive regular information from a theatre group in one case, a not-for-profit fundraising group in another.

I can't get over the number of people who want to be my 'friends' or who want to 'follow me'; people I don't know and who don't know me. Am I failing to play the game by saying 'no thanks'?

This weekly blog *is* a way of letting people know something of what I'm up to and thinking, tongue-in-cheek. But it is *not* keeping in touch the way old-fashioned correspondence would. It's no more personal than putting messages up on a community noticeboard or on a billboard.

While travelling in Europe thirty-plus years ago, I did engage in a form of pre-internet blogging: I wrote a travel diary on sheets of airmail paper and mailed them to someone in Australia, who then photocopied them and mailed the copies out to a list of friends and family. That's something else I found in that box in the roof: bundles of blue A5 airmail paper held together with decaying elastic bands. It's all there – three-and-a-half years of travel commentary, thoughts, observations and drawings. There may be a book in that, or I could start another blog and post the daily scribbles on their thirty-fourth anniversary, starting in May next year. Would anyone notice any anomalies if I used the current date at the time of posting?

Back in the roof, I found another box filled with empty 35 mm slide frames. On my travels in Europe I had my film processed but not mounted – cheaper to send back home that way.

I was going to mount the thousands of slides on my return. I didn't. Now I have the equipment and software to scan them. Anyone want to buy a 35 mm slide projector and two thousand (empty) slide frames?

I've given up using a camera based on film, even though the camera is a gem with a good lens. I can no longer find high-quality 35 mm film. The Olympus OM2 sold in 1986 for more than a Canon 5DII does today. Anyone want to sell me a second-hand Canon 5DI?

I still use my fountain pen, although finding bottled ink is becoming more of a treasure hunt with each passing year. The other day, in a large, well-known stationery store, the young attendant responded to my request for a bottle of fountain pen ink with "What exactly is a fountain pen?" Is he missing out on some of the treasures of my world, or am I missing out on whatever is the latest way of doing things? Oh well – whatever!