

The Old Shoebox

I'm cleaning out my garage and, hidden away in a back corner, I find an old shoebox. The box is heavier than it should be. When I open it up, I find a bunch of old photos, a half-written novel and a completed book of poems. Oh yes the memories start flooding back, the photos capturing the succession of flashbacks, birthdays, christenings, holidays etc.

I flick through them, reminiscing and cringing at the bad haircuts, awful perms, the cork high heels, flared pants and crocheted tops. I am mesmerized at the picture of a young dark-haired teenage girl in a poker-dot bikini and then realise it is me, some 40 years earlier and some 40 kilos lighter. I flip to the next one, which is the back of a picture labelled King George Square 30th October 1978 and then turn it over delighted to see images of people holding a placard saying "Aust Uranium Fuel for disaster". This brings to mind that day so clearly, standing in the heat the skies clear and blue, the police and camera crews on standby. The energy from the crowd was electric, the sense of adventure and being part of something special. I recall the insane period of time in Queensland politics, when John Bjelkie Peterson had ruled street marches against the law. I fondly recall my exuberant, rebellious, short-lived Queensland Uni days. The sweet, heady, naive days, when we truly, passionately believed, we could change the world.

My attention is then drawn to a clumsily stapled manuscript, with the title Book 1 Crazy Me, then beneath it in smaller writing Crazy Us, Crazy Universe. I think I was probably a bit loopy when I literally spat out the 60,000 words of dribble, over a 2-week period! For when I re-read it, in a saner moment realised there was no plot, hero, climax or ending, in fact it had no structure to speak of what so ever!

I then lovingly stroke a plastic poker-dot folder, the reason the box is heavier than expected and recall the day I had thrown it into the box, when ravaged with a gnawing fear and panic, on realisation that I had actually completed something. What in God's name was I going to do with it now? Who apart from my family and friends

would purchase a short book of poems written by me? After much contemplation, procrastination and frustration I had finally named it "A pocket full of Faith, Hope and Love". Clearly the title did not inspire me enough to actually share it with anyone. I slowly open the first page, to be reminded the long happy hours I had spent plagiarising beautiful images off the internet and then printing them on A4 cardboard. I now realise I held the perfect accompaniment to the poems in my hands a few moments earlier. On reflection the poems were all about my family, friends and my 50 odd years of life experience, the good the bad and the sometimes even the down right ugly. It had been very cathartic to write them and in hindsight I probably saved myself thousands of dollars at a therapist. I flick through the pages, stopping at some to read them out loud and then eventually progress to the last page titled Back cover:

**Human spirit it does exist
It is not a fairy-tale or written in the mist
In times of famine, war and pestilence, it can be seen from the most distant galaxy
From the greatest of men to the seemingly insignificant
We share reserves of power beyond compare**

**Deep inside a flame no energy can extinguish
Despair, disaster not part of this vocabulary
Courage and integrity the imprint tattooed between the heartbeats
The inner sanctum of the Apocalypse, untouched by the ashes of the burning
labyrinth**

**The freedom of a creative soul, because half a life is not near enough
A will to prevail, no matter the atrocity, injustice or loss
The wisdom to forgive the unforgivable
Two hands, tips together, a pyramid of light filled with tranquillity**

**A clear vision devoid of any fear, and the faith to manifest it
Tenderness in abundance and a willingness to laugh at the twists of fate
On the bleakest of days, a pocket full of Faith, Hope and Love,
Is all you will ever need, the rest is just loose change**

(Tina Pleschka)