

PERTH MALA MATTERS : June 2020

- **MESSAGE from the CHAIR - THE TIMES, THEY ARE A CHANGING**

~Times that require us all to respond, re-evaluate and share ~ *from Julie Ginbey*

Owing to increasing personal responsibilities, Chairman Frank Dymond has tendered his resignation effective immediately, hence this report comes to you from myself, Julie Ginbey, stepping up to that executive position from the position of "Vice".

We send Frank and his family our very best wishes and thank him sincerely for stepping into the roll of Chair, just 6 months ago. Who would have anticipated such a year?

Though members haven't enjoyed much MALA activity, behind the scenes the committee have been working and considering options as restrictions are lifting. We surveyed Members who receive email, as those members would likely be the ones able to access the online format should it be adopted. The survey also asked how comfortable people were about returning to GBLC if and when the centre was again open for lectures.

Thanks to those of you who responded, giving the committee an indication of how to move forward, considering financial feasibility and compliance with Government social distancing issues.

The Survey has highlighted the MALA difference from online learning, that social engagement is the very significant appeal of our programme, and we do not need to repeat the online lectures that are available elsewhere. Consequently we have asked our Course Convenor to prepare a programme of just 4 lectures, using two rooms and two sessions to commence on October 16 to finish November 13. GBLC has just 2 rooms with capacity for '2 square meter per person' spacing that we could use, so numbers in class rooms will be limited.

Perth MALA AGM will follow that last lecture date and we ask you to consider the reality of a viable and strong committee. No voluntary organisation operates without guidance and commitment from its members. Owing to Frank's resignation we have currently a vacancy of Vice Chairman and possibly other long serving committee members will also have to step down. More about that later.

Sincerely hoping you are all keeping spirits up, finding renewed interests in hobbies at home and above all staying well. How grateful we are that our well-researched medical advisors have been listened to, that few have had to socially isolate even though we have all reduced physical contact.

This monthly newsletter can keep you informed about MALA and contributions to the newsletter can be sent via email to enrol.perth@mala.org.au or info@mala.org.au.

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- **COMMITTEE COMMENT**

from Sue Higgs

This virus has certainly made a big difference to many lives, and our own organization. MALA has been one of those coming into both situations I suspect. We all miss seeing the others, and enjoying sharing the stimulating and interesting lectures. It will be good to begin again in October.

- * **AGM & the Perth MALA future**

November 13 / 2020 is the date set for our next Annual General Meeting and this year there are to be a large number of resignations from the committee in compliance with our Constitution which stipulates the time one can be in any position. This will require new people to step up and take our group forward. It is an exciting chance to be part of our normally active group. We ask that you give early thought to this prior to the AGM date. **There will be vacancies for all places on the committee.** Please ask us if you are wondering what is involved and how much time it takes etc. We are very willing to share, and help you understand any details about which you have questions. The groundwork has been done already, and we operate well... BUT... Kindly know that **a new committee is a very necessary thing for us to continue successfully.**

- * **Thank you for your response to the Email Survey :**

It was wonderful to have responses from so many of you. Thank you! There were many great suggestions for topics which will be directed to our Course Convener, including many history topics, music and composers, geology, mining, how will the world and its institutions move forward now, travel, volcanoes/earthquakes etc, Aboriginal culture, oceans, China, Judaism, climate, archaeology, flora and fauna, and so many more. Thank you again for replying and sharing your ideas.

• **BOOK BROWSING** -

from Celia Cole

Books can take us on a journey through time, place and story – give us language, knowledge, art and shared emotions to stir our imagination. They don't have to be new, they can be ones you may have missed along the way. You don't have to like the same book as others, or the ones which have won awards – just enjoy the ones which speak to you!

BILL BROWDER - 'Red Notice. How I became Putin's No.1 enemy' (2015)

True story of high finance, corruption, murder and one man's fight for justice. Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian lawyer in Moscow, was hired by American investors to investigate fraud by Russian Government officials. He was imprisoned, tortured and died in prison. Browden is leading a campaign to uncover endemic corruption and human rights abuses.

DERVLA MCTIERNAN – (Irish author, now living in WA.)

CRIME NOVELS : 'Ruin' (2018) 'The Scholar' (2019) and 'The Good Turn' (2020)

Set in Galway, Garda Cormic Reilly tries to investigate cold cases, police coverups and ethical dilemmas. Beautiful atmospheric novels. Writing, murder, deception and criminal conspiracy in small communities. Who can you trust?

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A HOT TOPIC - DOES EATING CHILLI GIVE YOU A THRILL, OR A CHILL ?

by David Thorne

The chilli pepper has always fascinated me. As a child I didn't particularly like them (in fact my "meat and three veg mum" didn't ever buy them or use them in any of her cooking.) As I grew older and more independent my culinary experiences widened.

Not so many years after my graduation as a medical doctor, I travelled to the island of Phuket in Thailand. There we enquired about 'the best' authentic Thai food and were instructed to go to the local hospital!



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"What?"

It turns out there was an abandoned building on the hospital grounds - that I suspect may have served as a mortuary in its' early years! (It had stone walls nearly a metre thick – probably essential in the days before refrigeration or air-conditioning.)

A former teacher of Thai cooking had retired from Bangkok to Phuket and decided to open a small restaurant in the building. It wasn't flash. No doors as I remember, and plain wooden tables and chairs. The celebrated culinary teacher who had become local chef showed us a picture book of available dishes and I must have still looked confused, overwhelmed and uncertain what to select. He offered to choose for us, beginning with only mild dishes.

We returned regularly over the next 10 days, probably eating there 5 or 6 times in all, and on each successive occasion the chilli heat was turned up!

To this day, I am addicted to chilli, particularly in Thai cooking, and the aroma or the taste brings wonderful memories flooding back to me. The local family eating at the next table: a youth with a pet monkey on her shoulder that would run onto the table and steal fruit from the centre bowl!

In medicine I eventually became a specialist in palliative care, particularly pain management, and my connection with chilli was reinforced as I learnt the importance of capsaicin receptors in burning pain sensations. Capsaicin is the main pungent ingredient in chilli, and yes, the "hot" taste (as opposed to the physical temperature) of a chilli dish is from activation of capsaicin receptors in our mouth, tongue, throat – and sometimes *much* further down!

For newcomers to chilli, the capsaicin is definitely an irritant, but is something that you adapt to, so perhaps pain can become pleasure!

Paradoxically, it can not only cause pain, but if it is continued the constant stimulation depletes the capsaicin receptors of a chemical messenger responsible for passing the pain signals on. Capsaicin preparations can thus be used to modify and diminish pain (particularly burning nerve pain) and in Australia it is sold as a topical cream for just that purpose.

There's more to the story though: my 20-year old companion parrot (a sun conure named "Ricky Martin") loves chewing chilli peppers! It turns out that most birds, perhaps even the whole species, possess receptors that are insensitive to capsaicin – so for Ricky the hot chilli is nothing more than a sweet treat!



Photo credit: David Thorne

Why did I include "or a **chill**" in the title?

That comes from recent research suggesting a *possible link between eating chilli and the risk of developing dementia*.

Although the chilli had previously acquired a reputation for being a healthy food by contributing to lowering excessive blood pressure and body weight, a 15-year study of over 4,500 Chinese adults aged over 55 years has now provided evidence of increased cognitive decline in the high chilli consumer group, and excessive risk of dementia.

Men and women seemed to be equally affected. There may be other (as yet undiscovered) reasons for this unexpected result, but it has certainly sparked interest in further research, both here in Australia and overseas. In the meantime, Ricky and I will continue to enjoy our chilli – everything in moderation!

I still recall with some chagrin my last meal at that Thai cooking master's little restaurant. The meal for four people, with beer, was only a few dollars *in total!* I tipped generously, and the culinary maestro asked for my feedback. I remember saying how wonderful the food, the attention he had given to us and the overall experience had been. My only criticism was that I felt he was undervaluing his own amazing talent by not charging enough for the meals. His admonishment still stings me to this day, "*if I raised the price, the locals would not be able to afford to eat here!*"

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- **And some 'interesting' definitions :**

From The Washington Post's Style Invitational, people were invited to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding, subtracting or changing one letter, and supply a new definition - and from the winners came these :

- **Cashtration** (n.) *The act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period.*
- **Sarchasm** (n.) *The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it.*
- **Inoculatte** (v.) *To take coffee intravenously when you are running late*
- **Glibido** (v.) *All talk and no action*
- **Arachnoleptic fit** (n.) *The frantic dance performed just after you have accidentally walked through a spider web.*
- **Caterpallor** (n.) *The colour you turn after finding half a grub in the fruit you are eating.*