

MALA MESSENGER

Newsletter of the Mature Adults Learning Association Inc. Rockingham Branch

AUGUST 2020

FROM THE CHAIR

All being well, and if the little COVID virus doesn't have different plans . . . MALA will be BACK !

At the time of writing it is looking good for a re-start on the 26th August. Luckily we have been able to re-engage most of the lecturers who would have presented in Term One, so those of you who were looking forward to those courses can do so again. Victoria's outbreak is a worry but hopefully that can be contained and all will be well here. One variation in the program is Art. Unfortunately Carl has been unwell, but rest assured he will be back with us next year. We wish him well with his recovery.

Carl has a worthy replacement however in Meera who is back with more Philosophy.

For those of you with concerns regarding COVID. We are having to adhere to the distancing and class number structure that is laid down by the Library. We do have our COVID Safe certificate. Signage and sanitising stations will be in place. Cleaning of chairs, desks etc will all be done for each new class. So as far as we can we will ensure MALA classes will be a safe place to be.

With our restarting, the need for Publicity is great. Fortunately we do have a brand new team onto the print media but we would love someone who could volunteer to be our Facebook person. The job would entail keeping our Facebook page up-to-date.

The results of the Writing Challenge are published today.

Chapter Two of the Oxnard Chronicle makes for a jolly good read and should make us all very thankful that we are able to enjoy medicine as it is today.

Looking forward to seeing you all again in Term 3 !

Bronwen Usher – Chair

I hope like me your blood type is B Positive!!



***A big GET WELL wish goes to CARL ALTMANN who is recovering from a health hiccup.
We look forward to welcoming him back in top form again next year.
Best wishes from all at MALA Rockingham !***



BREAKING NEWS

Classes for Term 3 will commence on the

26th of August 2020

Enrolment Day for Term 3 is the

19th of August 2020

10:00 to 11:30 at

Rockingham Central Library on Dixon Road



For those of you who have ongoing membership and courses already paid for just :

Phone Esther on 0417 904 404/9528 7133 or 0455 373 589

or register at : malarockingham@gmail.com to ensure that your name is on a current class list.

Please contact us by the 12th of August to confirm your place!

After that time the classes will be open to all members and the general public.

You will find details of the Term 3 courses on the following pages.



COURSE SYNOPSES

At The Rockingham Central Library – Dixon Rd – Rockingham

Wednesday the 26th of August and the 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd of September

9:30 – 11:00 Let's Get Going and Write - A Life Story with Rhuwina Griffiths

This course looks at how to structure your writing, considers some of the benefits you may gain from writing about yourself, suggests ways to go about research and gives plenty of practical advice on the different elements that go into creating a good story. There are opportunities to learn from published authors and practice what is covered in class. The pivotal role that memory plays in life story writing is examined which leads onto the tricky question: "Is what I'm writing true or false?". This is part 1 of 2. Each part of the course is a stand-alone unit.

Rhuwina Griffiths has had 25 years of experience throughout the world training others how to get the best out of their writing. She specializes in life stories in a nurturing, lively, practical and supportive way.



9:30 – 11:00 French Conversation for Beginners and False Beginners with Kathy Gecan

What information would you wish to be able to exchange with a French person sitting next to you on a train or in a café? The emphasis in this course will be on learning to speak (and, of course, to understand) French. The natural starting point of the first lesson will be greetings and introductions. This will be followed by a discussion of the students' reasons for wanting to learn French as a way of determining the topics to be included in the remainder of the course. The intended objective is to be able to exchange information with French speakers about self, Australians and Australia on topics of interest and to develop a greater awareness of the impact of 'invisible cultures' on intercultural communication.

Kathy Gecan has a Diploma of Education from Besançon, France and has devoted her professional life to the development of Languages Other Than English in the Western Australian education system and has worked in government, independent and Catholic jurisdictions and evening classes for adults at TAFE. Her passion for teaching means she always striven for better ways of catering for my students' needs and bring a sense of joy and achievement in students



11:30 – 13:00 Learn How to Strengthen Your Writing Talent with Rhuwina Griffiths

An ongoing course - This course is for students who know the basic principles behind writing a life, or other, story. It will explore how to write in layers that are more nuanced, bringing in feelings, emotions and creative language to enhance the depth of your writing. Each week you will have an opportunity to write on a set theme, analyses how other authors have approached this task, and learn techniques to improve your writing skills. For those who are interested, there is an opportunity to produce an extended piece of writing over the semester.



11:30 – 13:00 Philosophy: Wonder, Curiosity, and Big Ideas with Meera Finnegan

This course will introduce you to the foremost fields of western philosophy and the great thinkers from classical times to the present day. Philosophy asks ‘why?’. Why are things the way they are? And should they be that way? To explore such questions, we will ask - what can be known, what is worth valuing, what is reality, how should societies be structured to allow for human flourishing? Exploration of these questions can generate learning that contributes to the growth and development of individuals and communities. If you enjoy interesting discussion, thinking outside the box, and exploring big ideas, then this course is for you.



13:30 – 15:00 Protecting The Ageing Brain with Dr Belinda Brown, Stephanie Rainey-Smith (Research Scientist) and others

There is a big focus on research into factors that prevent or delay the onset of dementia. Dr Brown’s work looks at the role of physical activity and how it can be used to enhance the way in which our brain cells communicate, increase the size of our brains and reduce proteins that we know as associated with Alzheimer’s disease. Dr Stephanie Rainey-Smith investigates the effects of sleep and sleeping patterns on the ageing brain and its possible link to Alzheimer’s Disease.

Dr Belinda Brown PhD, Senior Research Fellow, Murdoch University, whose works investigates the effects of exercise on the ageing brain. Dr Stephanie Rainey-Smith who is doing research on Sleep and Dementia. Other researchers will be also doing other classes – and you will be informed when they are confirmed.



13:30 – 15:00 History - Murder, Mayhem, Myth and Mystery at Sea with John MacDonald

This course covers a brief history of the triangular (Atlantic) slave trade, trafficking from Africa to the Americas and the terrible conditions on slave ships. Pirates on the Spanish Main – the heyday of piracy and the personalities involved. Nelson’s Navy - Myths and legends exposed. Murder, Mayhem and Mutiny on the High Seas. Some familiar and some not so familiar mutinies are discussed. Mysteries of the Sea, what happened, where and why? The Bermuda Triangle, Mary Celeste and other mysteries will be delved into. A course of fascinating facts and entertainment.

John MacDonald spent over ten years in the Navy, followed by 32 years lecturing in TAFE. Since retirement he has completed a Bachelor of Arts in History at Murdoch University. He lectures often at MALA and UWA venues, as well as other organisations. His major interest lies in Naval and Military History, especially the Royal Navy 1793 to 1815 and British Military History 1837 to 1901 (a special prize to anyone who realises the significance of these dates!)



At The Autumn Centre

Friday 28th of August and the 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th of September

13:30 – 15:00 Jewellery Creations with Judy Kirkpatrick

This course will teach the techniques of jewellery making. Working with wire making earrings, bracelets or necklaces. Stringing, making eye glass holders or necklaces. Making bookmarks and clips for scarves and open tops. Making Shamballa type jewellery using Macrame knots and bead weaving with wire, making butterflies, dragonflies and flowers. Stringing beading and multilayered stringing all will be covered. Participants will be creating handmade jewellery for themselves or as presents for others. Be it earrings, necklaces, charms or broaches you wish to create, this workshop is for you.

There is a one-off \$10 surcharge for the cost of materials for this course – tools, beads, wire, strings and boards, and please bring a box to carry home beads.

Judy has been making, teaching and selling jewellery for over 20 years. She is currently the President of the Rockingham Visual Arts Society.



WRITING CHALLENGE

The first Writing Challenge has come to an end, and challenge it was. We use words without thinking about how many burble from us. The same happens when we write, the story takes over and words mount up like To be limited to 100 words to begin a story is to say the least challenging. Thanks to all of you who accepted the challenge and sent in entries to Rhuwina. Thanks to Rhuwina for her tantalising challenge and her time to read and select a few for publication for us. Read and enjoy – and just imagine, if you can, where these beginnings will end.

From Rhuwina : Thank you to everyone who submitted an entry to the first MALA Writing Challenge. We were thrilled to receive so many well written and thoughtful introductions to an incident from your life. It has been extremely hard to select a winner so this month, a treat. Here are the beginnings to three stories which really hit the mark.

First from David Abela :

The Joy of Flight

“Then go around again” was the reply to me from my Flight Instructor ...

I was about to fly an aircraft, solo, for the very first time. I was so confident in myself, that I had just asked if I could conduct a second circuit of the aerodrome after my first perfect landing.

My belief was high as I began my roll down the taxiway - at the beginning at least. I began to check everything.

After a brief pause to make a positional report on the airwaves, I checked everything again!

That’s when I noticed the dryness in my mouth.



Start writing no matter what - you can't make water flow til you turn on the tap.

Louis L'Amour



Next a contribution from Joan Westcott - of a time not easy to forget :

I devoured my main meal of the day which was an Oxo cube dissolved in a cup of hot water and a slice of grey bread, bid my Gran goodbye, and began the long return trek to school. I had left the houses behind and was a third of the way when a rumbling sound filled my ears. I saw that distant shadows etched on the blue sky were low-flying planes coming towards me. Sensing danger I ran back to the nearest house, banged on the door but no-one answered. The planes descended and then the firing started."



Everything is life is writable about ... The worst enemy of creativity is self-doubt.

Sylvia Plath



And finally from Bronwen Usher :

The day was already hot, the east wind blasting its way across the dusty playground. Lined up in two ranks was the sum total of the school, standing to attention as the National Anthem blared out from an ancient record player. Seventy six assorted kids, white, black, foreign, rich poor and dispossessed. Girls and boys from five to twelve.

“Good moooorrr-ning Mzchester” forty little voices chorused as forty little faces looked up at me, some curious, some apprehensive, and a few defiant.

“Good morning to you all” I replied, smiling widely and hoping like mad that they could not sense my inner turmoil. “Today” I began, “our first lesson is one you all have to teach me”.



And remember a professional writer is just an amateur who didn't quit.

Richard Bach



Thanks again Rhuwina, your work and challenge have been much appreciated. I know that those of us who will be at Rhuwina's upcoming classes are in for a treat.

The second Writing Challenge asks you to imagine for a moment that you could do the impossible and go back in time.

In no more than 200 words, what moment in your life would you like to relive - and why. It's the 'why' that will get you the prize.

Entries by August 12th to rhu@thisisyourlifestory.com

The winning entry will be printed in the September edition of the MALA newsletter.



CONTRIBUTIONS

The Oxnard Chronicle continues this month with us having left Charles and Eleanor, who had given up her paying job as a medical librarian, surviving on 5 pounds sterling a week . . .

I undertook various jobs after my medical degrees in order to get a 'lick' of practice and importantly to increase our finances!

One such job was to be found at the Mortuary. A post mortem required two signatures. My signature earned us two guineas a time. I got the 2 pounds, and the mortuary attendant got the 2 shillings! Eleanor and I had friends who saved up all their 'mortuary money' to buy their wedding china. I am afraid we ate out on our 'post mortems'!

Extra money also came in from moonlighting as a teacher. My first of many teaching jobs was in pharmacology and therapeutics, teaching, about drugs acting on the heart, and about antibiotics.

One sign of serious heart failure is ankle swelling. In the olden days metal tubes were used to drain excess fluid. You can imagine just how often they became infected - aren't you glad you live today! (I never actually saw Southey's Tubes being used!). In my time, we used diuretics of which there were only two in those days. However, to get the students thinking, I introduced them to new experimental drugs, such as Spironolactone. I didn't ever realize that one day it would be an accepted part of every medical kit-bag. Nor did I realize that I myself would need it to treat cerebral oedema of my own later.

It happened on a flight across the Pacific. I became unwell and Eleanor had to call for oxygen. The Second Pilot, coming back to assess the situation, wanted to know if they should put down in Fiji. I came around just enough to croak "No, No, Go on to Hawaii!" The Stewardess said that I couldn't be all that ill because Eleanor didn't seem too concerned. Obviously, she's missed Eleanor's frantic call for oxygen and not appreciated the churning going on inside her belly!

I was forced by the airline to go to hospital in Hawaii. Four hours on an EKG (they thought it was heart. Cost: US\$4,000! In the 1960's!). Of course, with four hours on the EKG machine, it is necessary to go to the loo. The bill was itemized: cost of a bottle: US\$8.00! Finally, they decided I was suffering from high altitude sickness. I was given a diuretic for the remainder of the flight. While waiting to fly on the next leg, we both remember walking up the beach in Waikiki, with me stopping into each hotel as we passed, to go to the loo. Diuretics do work!

I must also say that I feel that totally 'failed' in the teaching of antibiotics. I strongly emphasized: that patients should take the whole course (not stop when symptoms disappeared), that doctors should use antibiotics sparingly (not for every snuffle), that demands for the new miracle drugs for everything, must be avoided, and that pharmaceutical companies over-prescribing aims, must be resisted.

Much antibiotic resistance today may be laid at the door of, among other things, my failure (and that of many other teachers of my generation) to get these ideas across!

Another route I took was 'locum tenens' in general practice. On my first day, I saw about 30 patients in two and a half hours! Five minutes each! I was horrified! But I was far more horrified to find my colleague saw 60 patients! He was a good GP. It was the NHS that was horrifying!

I also did a locum for a practice with a 'lockup clinic'. That is, the main practice had a subsidiary clinic. The locum, me, would open it up, do the clinic, and lock it again! These places were also known as a 'one syringe clinic'. There really was only one syringe that had to be boiled up for each patient! There was also only one needle. One had to ream out the dried blood, re-sharpen the point on a whet-stone, and re-use it! Nothing disposable! But infection was not the only danger for a young solo doctor. One evening three teenage girls came to the clinic. This giggling group wanted to see a doctor with a beard! In a lock-up clinic, no nurse, no chaperone! I got rid of them in a flash!

Medical students were not the only teaching opportunities. I was paid to teach 'anatomy, physiology and common medical conditions' to insurance students! It was a real challenge to get those students excited about what they thought was just going to be rote learning a lot of big words that appeared in their insurance policies. They 'hated' that! But I was not about rote learning, I told the stories behind the words. I tried to make the 'big words' sing. The insurance students loved it. (I even use this technique now for MALA).

I taught Emergency Medicine to the police and the St John's Ambulance Brigade. Of course, in those days there was no external heart massage technique, no defibrillator, it was even before the Heimlich Maneuver for dislodging something stuck in the throat (now not recommended).

I taught how to estimate (approximately) blood loss. I splashed a cup of milk on the slate floor (milk shows up well on slate), and then a pint of milk, to show the area these different volumes can cover. I told them how much blood could be hidden in the chest (2 pints), in the belly (2 pints), even in the thighs (2 pints each), the lower limbs (1 pint each): a total of 12 pints. Interesting - There are only 10 pints in the whole body! And how much does a baby have to give?

I even tutored nursing students. They, too, assumed anatomy was just a feat of memory. Some of them hated it. I got great pleasure from the wonderment in their eyes as they came to realize that if they understood the underlying science, the anatomy becomes easy! And all this is still good when, today, I give talks to you guys in MALA!

A once in a life time money making effort was acting as 'the doctor' at the ring-side in amateur boxing for 12 year olds. That was when I discovered just how vicious parents can be! Came the inevitable moment when blood was spilt, from memory from a bloody nose, and I immediately stopped the fight. I honestly thought those angry parents were going to lynch me. No amount of money would ever persuade me to be a duty medic at ringside again. Never have I attended a boxing match since.

We had many friends among the nursing, police and ambulance personnel. When I went with an ambulance, I would hang out of the window, ringing the bell, as we raced through the streets. No sirens in those days! Once when I had to appear in court after a road accident, the police and ambos came as 'character witnesses'. Didn't help though, I got the 'hanging judge' - fine: 10 pounds!

I always intended building my clinical experience on a wide basis so I did various clinical rotations that gave me a few weeks each of ear, nose and throat, eyes, skins, obstetrics, psychiatry, and so on. That was a quick view of many subjects but it did give me a little breadth that, subsequently, proved most useful for teaching.

I am not sure I approved of everything I learnt though! My dermatologist's cures left a little to be desired with teachings such as, "If the lesions are wet, apply a drying agent, if dry, a wetting agent, and for all else, coal tar!" He taught us the old saw: "Do dermatology: your patients never die, and they never get better!"

I have never forgotten my stint in psychiatry. One could do six mornings in a local clinic or a fortnight in residence at a very large psychiatric hospital. I opted for the two weeks in residence. The hospital was deep in the beautiful Warwickshire country side. As I did not, at that point, drive, Eleanor, with whom I was not yet married, drove me there. We drove through a magnificent gatehouse, up a long winding drive, through what looked like a broad park, with stands of trees, undulating lawns, flower beds and bushes. The sun shone and it seemed idyllic. There were a lot of benches sprinkled around the grounds with people sitting seemly enjoying the day but then, as often happens in England, a small, quick, dark cloud brought a sudden shower. It was then that we realized where we were. The people just stayed sitting in the rain until 'white coats' ran out from the buildings to take the 'sittees' back inside.

That time gave me experiences of psychiatry, especially emergency psychiatry, which I would never have got in the clinics. One case I especially remember. A woman, wandering in a local village in her night-clothes, was brought into Emergency by the local police. She showed a 'fugue', a mental state of flight, like the flight of instruments in a 'musical fugue'. It seemed a clear cut psychiatric case.

It fell to me to examine her. I found a breast lump (cancer?). She had a cough: X-rays showed shadows at the lung root (cancer spread from breast irritating bronchus?) She had backache: more shadows next to the spine (more cancer spread?). These shadows were close to the spinal cord, and could float up to the skull, and seed out in the brain: this could cause a state of fugue. Such beautiful anatomical 'reasons' for an apparently psychiatric case!

We had the residents flat for that first evening. The time arrived for Eleanor to go home but to our consternation we found our door locked. She couldn't get out. We phoned the hall porter but he couldn't leave the hall. Eventually it transpired that the resident psychiatrist on the floor above had locked us in, for fear we would wake his child! Who were patients and who the doctors in that place?

Experience came from unlikely and accidental sources too. I had stopped to fill up with petrol at Eleanor's father's garage, where I was pretty well known, when an attendant called out "Hey Doc, this old guy has just fallen off his bicycle. Could you have a look at him?" So I did. I described him as 'an old man of 65', but I was a youngster then! He had indeed fallen off his bicycle but had hobbled into the filling station.

I asked him if he hurt when he walked. “Yes” he said but he thought he just felt a bit bruised. However, as I watched him walk I realized his right foot was turned outwards by nearly 90 degrees. “Has your foot always been turned out like that?” I asked. “Yes,” he said “all my life”. One must listen to patients, but I didn’t believe this one. I sent him to hospital. Lucky I did, as an x-ray showed a fractured neck of his right femur. The thigh muscles had turned the lower thigh outwards; hence his foot was turned outward. But the rest of his fall must have driven the neck of the femur back into the shaft in the new position so that continuity was restored, but with the foot pointing outwards. Amazing as it sounds this was why he could still walk with a broken leg!

These many and varied early experiences fascinated us and filled our lives. There was an acute excitement in practice; we enjoyed the contacts with patients and their relatives. Eleanor, of course, as librarian, knew all the senior doctors. And nurses, lab technicians, even mortuary attendants, and the hall porter, were important to me as a young doctor.

Even at night, I always attended whenever a nurse called me to see a patient; sometimes to help a patient; sometimes to reassure an anxious nurse; often to cover my own worries and inexperience. I was taught so much by the nurses; often things that doctors could not teach!

It was my habit whenever I ordered a new clinical test, to go the laboratory (why were the labs always underground in those days) and ask the technicians to explain how it was done and what it was about. I learnt so much from them, and they were delighted that a ‘young doctor’ was interested to see what they do instead of just sending down a peremptory request. Of course, whenever I did need something, the technicians would willingly oblige.

Visiting the dispensary was important too. Once we had a patient in severe pain from a rapidly enlarged liver that had not responded to any medication. He complained and complained. Finally, my consultant ordered ‘leeches’! That was news to me and of course, I was the one who had to get them. Where to source them – certainly not from the river! In the dispensary under a bell jar were leeches. Just put mustard on their tails to empty their stomachs and they are ready for work. We placed half-a-dozen leeches on the patient's belly around the liver region. It worked – or at least, he never complained again!!!

Eleanor and I have often wondered what our life might have been like if we had stayed in practice. But a research career called and has taken us halfway across a world via USA to Australia.

Now, a virus has changed our lives. We have both been ‘fired’ from our work. El from her work at the New Children’s Hospital (she was 30 years at the Old One), and from the US Consulate downtown, where, again for 30 years, she has helped Australian students who want to go the USA; me from MALA! But we keep contact with you all by these letters. Next letter, perhaps, about American experiences. Lovely to talk with you all, keep safe, stay well, until we meet again in person.

Eleanor and Charles

Footnote: Good News - Charles is scheduled to be back with us in Term 4 !



THAT'S ALL FOLKS

A picture's worth a thousand words.

Social Distancing Right and Wrong :

