

# MALA MESSENGER

**Newsletter of the Mature Adults Learning Association Inc. Rockingham Branch**

**JUNE 2020**

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## **FROM THE CHAIR**

'COVID-19', 'social distancing' and 'home isolation' will no doubt be some of the new inclusions for the latest Dictionary update. Looks like all three will be here to stay for a while yet. A mood of tempered optimism seems to be creeping into the population as we give thanks for the thankfully small death toll that WA has recorded. We send our sincere condolences to those who have lost a family member or a friend. We do appreciate how hard it is for you when the small toll that is so celebrated includes someone dear to you. Our thoughts are with you.

Unfortunately we have no news on when we can resume classes at present, but I dare say if you are like many of the people that I have talked to you will be filling your time well. Your house may be cleaner and more organised than it's ever been and your garden is no doubt blooming too with the investment of excess time into its care. Piles of books are being finally read, movies and documentaries watched and that unfinished project list has at last finally begun to shrink. I believe a few have even been forced into the world of technology, to keep in touch with their family members. Zoom and Skype and are booming. On line courses have been popular too.

We have no idea yet as to when we can resume courses. It will be very difficult for us to do much until restrictions on physical distancing are eased. The problem for us is that our venue is a small one. The small lecture room could only cater for 5 people, and the large one for 14. That is even allowing for the fact that the hire of these room is available again, which at present it is not.

We are optimistically working towards 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> term, but that is with fingers crossed behind our backs and having had a good stern word with Murphy to find someone else to bother. As the song says 'what will be will be'. Meantime, poor substitute that it is, the newsletter will be all we can offer to keep you up to date.

**Bronwen Usher – Chair**



*In life it's important to know when to stop arguing with people and simply let them be wrong.*

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

*Our first contribution come this month from Prof Charles Oxnard, our Science and Medicine Guru. This time however he ignores the science facts and figures he is so well known for and we find out a little about his early life in medicine.*

Dear MALA Friends

This wondrous isolation time, helps me write yet another book, I can't seem to help myself. The tentative title is "A Doctor of a Different Colour". The book tracks my and our life in Medicine. Here is a sneak preview with just a few excerpts of things that have happened to us on the way. Writing is a great way of keeping me out of Eleanor's hair in these lock-down times.

How do I start? Most medical students in our era married nurses (a great help in practices). Being quite a studious type I spend a good deal of time in the medical library. At 4' 10", the cute medical librarian couldn't reach the books on the top shelf! At 6' 1", I could! Married her! Best thing I ever did.

Being studious, I wanted a life in medical research. I decided though to go into practical medicine first. Why?

There were a few reasons. Reason one was to get top medical jobs and good references! Secondly I enjoyed practice, and not yet ready to give it up. Thirdly: research also means teaching and practice experience is good for teaching. A fourth reason, one I only realised later was that a knowledge of 'real' medicine opened up research questions that a non-medical researcher or a non-research doctor might never have seen.

At the time I did obstetrics, the rules were changed. Instead of being "on the district" a la "Call the Midwife", four students 'lived in' the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, UK. Problem: four beds, one room, three women! We all complained - we'll fix it tonight, they said, but - nothing done so I slept with the women – or should I say slept in the same room. (I do wish I could remember who they were now). Next day: still no room. That night I slept on the labour ward. No one took a blind bit of notice! So, third evening I rolled my bed into the Prof's office. I was still asleep when he came in next morning. Result: extra room that night! How to handle administrators! Of course, this was before we were married - I can't remember telling Eleanor about it!

Now married, Eleanor and I shared many medical experiences in those early days.

Our major 'obstetric' experience was when my boss The Prof was to deliver our first child. If you're only 4' 10", and small, and a breech, it is likely to be a Caesar. So, Eleanor climbed onto the operating table herself, and watched the Prof and his Registrar, in red rubber aprons, and white wellingtons, scrubbing up to their elbows at the sinks. Do I really want to be here, was her thought! The Prof didn't want me hanging about so I had to go to my research lab to wait. Much later, after another Caesar, another breech, and another boy, we called it a day! The family was complete.

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Still at the Q.E., (now rebuilt, brand new and taking injured Military and Malala cases) El knew only too well that I was working 80 hours a week for the princely sum of 5 pounds a week! Eleanor especially hated Christmas. I was on duty, couldn't have Christmas with the family. One year she dearly wanted to go to the Medical Ball; but unfortunately had had Chinese 'sweet and sour' for lunch, and was ill that evening. Still she was determined to go to the Ball. The results were predictable and I had to send her home to mother in a taxi. To this day she hates 'sweet and sour'.

My first practice in Internal Medicine was with Drs Smallwood and Hawkins. Dr Smallwood did wonders for my abilities in phlebotomy. He decided that I (not the students) should take all the 'bloods'. Lot of extra work and I was quite cross about it, but I did become very good at it! Was he telling me I ordered too many blood tests? Dr Hawkins gave me a book: Steven Potter's "'Supermanship' (subtitled "How to Continue to Stay on Top Without Actually Falling to Pieces"). Was 'The Hawk' also telling me something?

On to bone surgery with old, crusty Mr. Donovan. First day and my first operation. Two feet, with bunions "You take this foot, I'll take the other!" Donovan said. I'd never seen that operation performed before! Donovan cut into the patient's toe; so did I. What he did, I did in reverse. He was fast; I was slow. I got further and further behind, but I got there and just maybe my toe might have been better! I never knew!

The next operation was to remove a metal plate from an infected bone. Disaster hit when a small screw fell in the wound and was lost in the pool of blood. We prodded around for twenty minutes with long forceps looking for the screw. (No hands were allowed in a bone operation). Mr Donovan was getting very irritated. When finally he turned his head aside for Sister to wipe his brow. In a flash, the eagle eyed Registrar put his fingers in, found the screw, put it into the forceps, and said: "Look, I've got it!" Situation retrieved.

I enjoyed practice and Eleanor and I learnt to live with an 80 hour working week and the 5 pounds a week regime. By now I was ready to move on to research and teaching. My consultants were disappointed that I did not go into practice, but they strongly supported me for research. This meant much travel, and Eleanor (and often the boys) almost always came with me. Those adventures are for another time. I will tell you more about them later.

Years later, when I returned to the University to receive a D. Sc. in Science and Engineering, those same consultants all came to the Degree Ceremony!

El and I have had a great life, and continue to do so, in the world of research.

For now, sleep well everyone, stay safe, and hope to see you all next semester.

Many thanks to Bronwen for 'softening' my 'hard' academic writing style!

**Charles and Eleanor**



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*Many thanks to Anon for this poetic ditty about our current plight.*

## 2020

Isolation is upon us, Covid 19 is the cause  
A nasty little viral blighter putting our lives all on pause.  
Handshakes gone- now elbows do for greeting all our mates,  
Looks like that's here to stay 'til we can vaccinate.

Social distance is the buzzword by which we all abide,  
And now at the shopping centres people quickly step aside.  
Loo rolls disappeared and sanitizer vanished too,  
And flour and rice and pasta meant standing in a queue.

Grandchildren were all but banished to the realms of Skype and Zoom  
Their loves comes electronically 'til our normal hug life can resume.  
We try and mind our mental health with phone calls, texts and tweets  
It keeps us all connected and helps us stay upbeat.

For those who have their kids at home we also spare a thought.  
A new appreciation of our teachers is one things this virus taught.  
Work and school from home is easier said than sounds  
In the world the little virus has turned so upside down.

Borders shut, nowhere to go, holidays a dream of long ago.  
Coffee dates and movies gone, and MALA class, what a blow!  
The realization hit us hard, how much we took for granted.  
Let's hope some of the good it's brought will stay with us firmly planted.

Even Anzac Day fell victim to this deadly viral threat,  
But true to form we found a way for Aussies to reset.  
And so at dawn in our drives with candles in our hands  
We gave thanks to all those who bought us freedom in our native land.

So with sanitizer at the ready and handwashing now an art  
Our surfaces are sparking clean as we all play our part.  
I sure that we can all settle in find things to keep us sane,  
Until MALA can start up again with more food to feed our brain.



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*Martin is back with the :*

## SHAKESPEARE INSULT GENERATOR

The words in each column in the chart below are certified Shakespeareanisms. If you wish to use the chart, simply combine one word from each of the 3 text columns, and prefix with a “Thou”.

e.g. ‘Thou errant beef-witted foot-licker!’ Nobody will get the better of you ever again - and it’s fun - Try it!

### COLUMN 1

artless  
bawdy  
beslubbering  
bootless  
churlish  
dissembling  
droning  
errant  
fawning  
forward  
impertinent  
paunchy  
mewling  
puny  
rank  
qualling  
rougish  
surley  
vain  
reeky  
venomed  
unmuzzled  
yeasty

### COLUMN 2

base-court  
bat-fowling  
beef-witted  
beetle-headed  
clapper-clawed  
dizzy-eyed  
dog-hearted  
flap-mouthed  
fly-bitten  
folly-fallen  
idle-headed  
ill-bred  
ill-nurtured  
milk-livered  
onion-eyed  
mottle-minded  
rough-hewn  
rump-fed  
tickle-brained  
swag-bellied  
tardy-gaited  
toad-spotted  
pottle-deep

### COLUMN 3

apple-john  
baggage  
barnacle  
bladder  
bug-bear  
coxcomb  
codpiece  
fustilarian  
foot-licker  
harpy  
lewdster  
lout  
maggot-pie  
mammet  
minnow  
measle  
miscreant  
ratsbane  
strumpet  
puttock  
vassal  
varlot  
skainsmate



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## WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID ABOUT GOVERNMENT

<b>Long's Axiom</b>	An elephant is a mouse, built to government specifications.
<b>Wiker's Law</b>	Government expands to absorb revenue, and then some.
<b>Diogenes' First Dictum</b>	The more heavily a man is supposed to be taxed, the more power he has to escape being taxed.
<b>Katz Law</b>	Men and Nations will act rationally when all other possibilities have been exhausted.

All leading to :

**Neville's Conclusion**            There's no special reason: it's just government policy !

Maybe that is why we need diplomats and :

**Robinson's Law**                    A diplomat is someone who can tell you to go to hell in such a way  
that you look forward to the trip.

### BOOKSHELF

*Submitted this month for your reading bookshelf were two very different offerings :*

#### **Radio Girl by David Duffy**

This is the story of an extraordinary woman Violet McKenzie who was Australia's first woman electrical engineer. Mrs Mac, as she was known, was the mainstay of all the amateur wireless community in the early days. She was a strong advocate of women in the armed forces and trained women as Morse code operators for WWII. This is a great read about a talented, determined and inspiring women who has sadly been all but forgotten.



#### **The Good Turn by Dervla McTiernan**

I picked up this book because although I knew Dervla McTiernan was Irish she now lives in WA. Basically the book is a "Who done it". The book is set in the well drawn Irish countryside and deals with the battle of middle ranked police against the corruption in their higher ranks, Murder and mayhem abound, but the characters drawn you along and the story line is complex enough to keep you interested to the resolution of the story.



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## QUIZ

***A quick quiz for you :***

1. What is the most common colour of toilet paper sold in France?
2. Henry VIII introduced which tax into England in 1535?
3. Which country has the most tornadoes by area?
4. What is the correct term for a question mark immediately followed by an exclamation mark?
5. The average person does what thirteen times a day?
6. Coprastastaphobia is the fear of what?
7. What were the first ice hockey pucks made out of?
8. In which country are there six villages called Silly, 12 called Billy, and two called Pratt?
9. True or false: You can sneeze in your sleep
10. Who invented the word vomit?
11. Which European country has 158 verses to its national anthem?
12. What is the collective noun for a group of unicorns?

***Answers in the next edition.***



*Remember. Amateurs made the Ark. Professionals made the Titanic.*

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## **STOP PRESS**

We have just heard the bad (for us) news that our Enrolment Officer, Anne Wright, has resigned. She and her husband are relocating to Bunbury. We will greatly miss Anne's input to our group and her efficiency and ever willing helping hand. Thank you Anne for your wonderful work for us. Our very best wished go with you both. Our loss is Bunbury's gain.



**Also Hot off the Press is a message on our website [mala.org.au](http://mala.org.au)**

This message is from the Association and regards your attitudes for our gradual reopening and our possible trialling of some electronic sessions. Please read it and contact us on the Rockingham link, so we can gauge your thoughts on the matter.

Many thanks



**\*\*\* HOTTER STILL \*\*\* NEWS FROM ROCKINGHAM COUNCIL \*\*\* HOTTER STILL \*\*\***

ROCKINGHAM Council is not letting rooms to anyone. Limited numbers, physical distancing requirements and the cleaning code for successive use of spaces in a day are too onerous at this stage to consider reopening.

As soon as it is considered viable they will they will be in contact with us .

Reading between the lines I have a feeling that Term 4 will be the earliest that we can look forward to meeting face to face again and that is with fingers crossed behind our backs and the wind blowing in the right direction!

## **THAT'S ALL FOLKS**

When everything feels like an uphill struggle, just remember there is a great view from the top of the hill.

I always say that if plan A doesn't work the alphabet does have 24 other letters and at MALA we are working our way through them!

**Bronwen Usher**

