

#realstory



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ABOUT

In September 2014 I began writing my about my life as a story and sharing it openly via Facebook.

I had at that time decided to start living a life worth living, no more being what and who other people wanted me to be.

The reactions were astounding and a multitude of people de-friended me or attacked me outright. Since then I have received thousands of emails, some letters and many new connections that indicate one thing.

When we speak openly (our truth) we must be prepared to grow with the consequences of having done so.

I decided to call it my #realstory

I had little idea that it would span 202 pages, 28 chapters and 32,418 words written over a three month period.

Most importantly, I encourage you to speak, write and share your own story openly with the world.

FOREWORD

From as early as I can recall, I have struggled to comprehend how one human can treat another without empathy or care, in some cases purposefully compromising another person's well being.

I soon discovered that for those who are strong enough, life presents us with challenges to endure, to work through and to further grow our character. As luck would have it I was presented with experiences over three decades that have forged who I am, now spoken, no longer solely dictating my thoughts nor eroding my trust in others.

In my case, writing this down has enabled me to get back my story, to regain my dignity, draw boundaries with others. I speak out in the hope that I can inspire others to tell their story and to keep on sharing it widely, always.

The greatest gift we can give is in listening with empathy to others.

To trust, is the greatest gift we can give to ourselves.

HERITAGE



Image: Artist Unknown

I was born on the 20th February 1969, of parents who had settled in Sydney Australia, travelling 22,000 kilometres or so from their homeland of Glasgow, Scotland.

My place of birth, my home place is Caringbah, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, which is an Australian Aboriginal word meaning 'pademelon wallaby' which is a small, dark haired mammal that lives predominantly in bushland that surrounds this area, known as the Royal National Park.

I identify as being born on the traditional lands of the Tharawal people (Dharawal) and Gweagal (Gwiyalgal) 'fire' clan, traditional custodians of the southern geographic regions of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia where first contact (hostile) with James Cook and European occupiers at Kurnell NSW Australia was made in 1770, all within a few kilometres of my place of birth.

On the other side, my birth family, the Hayes clan is extensive and I have relatives across all continents in the world from whom I am informed that my Celtic Animal Zodiac sign is that of the Snake / Adder.

I think it describes my adult spirit very well and I will attest to it being significant in my life.

"...The Celtic animal sign of the snake has a cool exterior but are infinitely lively. They are curious and are always full of questions about how the world works, and how the people around them work (even if they aren't openly asking, you can bet they're figuring out the answers in their own mind). Snakes are natural communicators, and they can be hugely persuasive. If they are passionate about a cause they can round up the whole neighbourhood with their zeal and enthusiasm for their purpose. Snakes can be spontaneous and unpredictable too. Although they're pretty flexible, they like things to go their way (who doesn't?), and will prove to be uncooperative if pushed into a corner."

CHILDHOOD



Image: Alexander Hayes - aged 3

In 2014 I was told my totem is the bat - a black bat. I have them tattooed all over my arm.

A castle with bats. Graffiti on my fingers. Toes.

My Mother's pregnancy was complicated. Let's just leave it at that. My Father thought he was going to lose his beautiful Wife.

My parent story is classical and beautiful. Meeting in Glasgow, Scotland. Invited to a dance.

Courting. (where did that term disappear to?) Love letters and audio tapes.

My father immigrated to Australia (short stint in New Zealand) and kept corresponding with my Mother over four years. That is correct. You read right. Four years.

Eventually my Mother decided to come to Australia and they lived in a unit before buying a house in Bexley, Sydney. My great Uncles and their partners soon followed.

Sydney was booming. Sydney was at the time an industrial manufacturing hub of the world.

My Father (trained as a horticultural gardener in Scotland) found he could work at anything he wanted to. Being a very physical person he worked at many differing roles that involved manual labour and long hours.

My Mother, a gold medalist nurse trained in Glasgow, Scotland and was soon working at St. George Hospital, Sydney after a stint working at Sutherland Hospital where I was born.

We grew up religious. Church on Sundays.

Early service, mid morning service. Night services. Easter. Christmas. Lent.

Bible classes where my mother taught. Slide nights of the Minister's trips overseas. Bible readings. Choir. Fetes.

Camps.

In short, Christ Church, Bexley, Sydney, Australia was every bit that. It was our social life and little occurred out of that reference point.

Grace before breakfast, lunch and dinner. No TV. In the entire time I lived in my parent's household we never owned a TV and only when I left home as a 17 year old did they purchase a television.

Yes, we did have a phone.

A big black bakelite one. I could never understand why my parents recited the phone number to the caller upon picking up the receiver.

I remember that my Father worked incredibly hard as did my Mother. Long hours.

We lacked nothing. Everything was about us as children.

We lived humbly and we lived well as far as anyone else could see.

We lived in a home with home grown vegetables, hand built cubby houses and a steel wheelbarrow.

Seaforth Park was our sanctuary and hot balmy nights riding scooters seem to be the best memories I have. I also have memories which collide with those softer ones.

Asthma. Chronic.

Postural drainage till my ribs ached.

Skinny, I ran from everything.

Terror dreams.

Alien visits.

Climbing trees in the dark.

Exploring drains.

Smoking behind the cubby house.

Screaming, shouting and ending up in hospital with a split head and ear. Stitches.

I feared my Father.

I grew up tough but resilient.

My earliest childhood memory is one filled with blood and fear. It isn't worth recounting in detail here and neither is the myriad of sub-stories that would no doubt assure my imminent incarceration.

My Mother read me everything there was to be read.

Fairy tales spun my brain into fantastical adventure and being an inquisitive child (still am inquisitive) I explored (still am exploring) and built things and created (still creating) with no interruptions except for meals.

Sleeping was boring so I spent many hours burrowed away in books. Those books took me away from the tragedy and insanity of the everyday.

Newspapers. Flyers. Medical journals (MIMS). Comics. Arms heavy with books from the library. Curled up under my bed sheets with a small torch I was whisked far far away, from here. This place.

Bexley Primary was filled with kids from 55 nationalities.

I was the odd anglo out. "...that Scottish kid." My boyfriends were Lebanese, Greek, Yugoslav. My girlfriends were Italian, Croatian and

Italian. I do not remember a gender divide but I do remember the monkey bars, asphalt playgrounds and getting the cane.

Repeatedly.

Mr. #####, ...you are a cunt.

You took great pride in hurting me. I was your target and not even my parents knew how many times you almost broke my fingers.

At age 7 someone discovered I could draw. That saviour might have also saved me from further harm. Someone took a photo of me with a lead pencil and a drawing of a dinosaur.

I thought it odd as I had always drawn since I could sit up as a child. In chalk on the back step. In the food on my plate.

On the steam of the bathroom tiles.

Some say that evangelically we grow up as sinners, guilty, repenting and forever needing redemption. Others posit that we live here and now and that the past is past and the future isn't here yet.

It took me many years to discover that existentialism is as close as I get to a religious label. Even Buddhism has its schisms. I know.

I've lived them....a number of ism's.

Scottish, broad and alone my parents kept to themselves.

Home was always this far off land where everything was greener and covered in coal soot.

BEXLEY



Image: Alexander Hayes - aged 6 years

If you ever get a chance, take the opportunity to travel to Bexley, NSW Australia.

In that shopping centre, one of the busiest you will find in Sydney there used to be a small corner shop that sold 5 cent bags of lollies. For comparison you need 100 cents to make a dollar. Ever the entrepreneur I built a machine out of a cardboard box that dispensed the lollies one at a time.

At 1 cent each. That meant that my lolly purchase before school was worth 10 cents worth of machine aggregated sugar.

My business lasted till lunch time. I made 20 cents profit.

With that profit I bought a packet of what are known as 'football cards' which are cardboard cards with football players from differing teams plastered all over the cards. St George the most popular team followed by the Rabbitohs.

The object of the game was to stand near a wall with a predefined chalk mark away from the wall and throw the card towards the wall, flick it.

It would land and if it landed on top of another card you then were able to collect that card. Amass them. Heavy with cards I soon became aware of the power of 'things' over others.

Cards became cigarettes. I got caned for bringing (trading) cigarettes at age ten in school. My parents knew nothing of this.

Nor did they know of me stealing countless biscuits from the Church Vestry.

Climbing trees at 3 AM in the morning. Riding my scooter to Arncliffe and back before daylight.

Bexley was filled with truck fumes, the delicious cooking of Italian families wafting through long tiled corridors, the din of traffic and the screech of bats and the stench of their piss.

Occasional visits from Cousins.

The garbage truck men (yes, gender divide again) who were often muscular footballers, left us kids the toys they found discarded. We

longed for a Tuesday morning and Thursday afternoon to find out what our 'new' toys were to be.

The cat 'Poppy', a stray kept us company. So did another ginger tom cat that ended up eating the kittens under the house. Poppy went mad soon after and got stuck which required precision crawling.

One vivid nightmare had me standing at the back door of the house. Terrified and frozen to the spot a creature with no eyes or ears pushed the normally very noisy wheelbarrow down the path.

I wet myself. Again.

The dream or whatever it was repeated itself for years and my sleep walking became more widely roaming.

My book reading intensified.

I ventured further down the drain networks of Rockdale, Kogarah, Hurstville with my Brother. We became fast friends.

Forever friends.

FOREVER FRIENDS



Image: Alexander Hayes - 1979 - Kirrawee, NSW Australia

He is my brother.

He is my best mate.

He is one of many mates but with this bloke I've travelled further than all of them. I have lots of brother's but we don't share the same mother.

Something special in that. Life affirming. To the grave we have almost gone multiple times.

Protected our little sister as best we knew.

Funny how we grow up as kids with this fully connected mind, curious, engaged, hands-on and immersed. As brothers we did all of that - climbed trees together, threw stones together, shared girlfriends and friends who were boys.

Smoked together. Fought each other's fights, verbal and physical. Looked after each other.

So, at age 10 I realised that my parents were gearing up to move home. We had outgrown the nest and with three children they packed and we readied ourselves to move to Kirrawee, NSW Australia.

The Shire. Home to racist riots, aussie ockerism, beaches, national park, wealth, big houses...

I recall at the home inspection we arrived close to the private driveway and parked the LJ Torana. The neighbours wall was made of cast concrete cylindrical blocks. Of course as kids we got out of the car bored from waiting.

We rolled one of those concrete blocks down the road till it came to rest up against a taxi at the bottom of the hill. We weren't popular with many neighbours, that being the very first incident amongst countless.

We also were highly respected by many differing parents for a number of reasons that we were not aware of till much later.

Every last part of moving in happened with the help of my father's friend. It poured rain. We ran amok in this huge three storey house. Climbed into our cubby house fort that was amongst the trees that towered over the house in the back yard.

Possums, Garraway (cockatoos), Blue Tongue lizards, Pademelon wallabies, the place was a zoo without fences, without cages.

By this stage I was a skinny tall kid with gangly legs that never seemed to stop running. We started at Kirrawee Primary School and what I recall mostly is the sleazebag middle primary school teacher who had a penchant for things that he should have been adult about.

Sick fucker and again not my place to tell other's stories for them.

I let his tyres down at lunchtime in the school car park. Super glued up his classroom lock while he was in the staffroom. He deserved it. That's the only tools I had or knew how to use to disrupt him.

As fate would have it I did well in school on account of my being able to read, to stand up and recite poetry, to sing as a choir boy, to debate and to run fast and swift and so I won a number of athletic awards. Loved it, that whistling of the wind as I ran through clouds of dandelion seeds scattered in the air, the sun bursting through gums, the scent of spring and dank winter climes punching into my little lungs.

A three story house that we somehow managed to afford to move into, neighbours of all professional descriptions looking onto the Royal National Park, walking distance to the local high school.

KIRRAWEE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL



Image: 1986 - Kirrawee High School Year 12 Graduation

Yes.

It's in the Sutherland Shire, NSW Australia.

Home to the Cronulla riots much later in 2005. Strange thing is that I'd been punching and kicking my way up and down that railway line way long before TV crews turned things askew.

Alley Boys. Bra boys. Commanchero's. Bandido's. We were just that bunch of 6 foot teen kids that you didn't want to meet after midnight on Kirrawee railway station.

Cronulla was smack heaven. Drunken brawls in Gunnamatta Bay. Stolen cars. Bikes. Planes. Trains.

Ok...the planes bit you might think was an exaggeration but it isn't. Nor the mention of trains.

The Angels, Radiators, Rose Tattoo, ACDC (once) were our locals at Caringbah Inn. Sutherland disco with 1.25 litre bottles of Scotch'n'coke. We hung out Miranda Fair on Thursday nights feeling invincible.

Later as a skinhead we were off to the "dems" at Penshurst Pub. Tartan clad skimpy chicks and 18 hole Doc Martens.

Riots?

We had too much in common with the Lebanese and their blonde hashish to be fighting with them. Back in the 80's it was high hair and discos. Orange and brown was making way for chrome and lime green. We seemed to have missed all that and dressed in black, and black and black.

Back up a bit. From grade 7 at high school I was bullied.

I had a Stanley Stamford fibreglass suitcase for Christ's sake! Skinny and too fucking clever (not my words but others) and hiding away with Mrs. xxxxxxx in the art room. What a saint she was.

I was hanging out with the in-betweeners.

I was taking chess as an elective with bumbly funny chicks who giggled too much and dorky boys who played Dungeons & Dragons. Mr. xxxxx with his lack of self student discipline. Ripping pages out of Geography texts. Falling asleep in Economics.

Oh my goodness Ms. xxxxxx from English lit. My goodness me. What mischief we got up to and the world will never know what.

Studying '1984' by George Orwell in 1984.

Getting high grades. Getting caught up in mathematical formulas. Geography made real. Hand prints on pretty young girls butts. The cane. Again.

Oh that god damn cane. I must have been caned 150 times in that high school. Luckily none of those reports ever mentioned that hey?

One time it was ten of the best for dropping (purposely) a 2 kg bag of tiny ball bearings down the stairs at the change of classroom periods. Another time for a fruit fight that involved everyone in the entire school just about, pitching fruit at each other in the main quadrangle.

Yes, it did happen. How stupidly self indulgent.

Yes, someone was killed in a car accident out the front of the school during a year 12 muck-up day.

Redhead stunners, blonde surfer chicks, dudes, much-smoke kids, gamers, surfers, metal-heads, goodie-two-shoes, we had the lot.

I have memories of year 12 muck-ups going horribly right. I lost my virginity (how do you lose?) to a girl from an inter-school liaison.

So, Kirrawee Senior High School was for me heaven, a home away from the house. I must admit I wagged more often than I attended in the second half.

I can't recall the year 12 English exam.

High School represented that which saved my life ultimately, education. Life's education. People who took the time to teach me things. Good and bad, they are all important.

High school was a series of predictable timetables. Blocks of concrete with people in them. Sports carnivals where we discovered each other's bodies, fingering and fondling, beautiful healthy exploring as teenagers do.

Played hookie and smoked down at the corner shops. Had pre arranged fights on the school oval. Oh boys are so needing a masculinity re-write.

What I remember most about Kirrawee Senior High School is the 6 years of growing from a child into a man. I started high school broken (next chapter) and left a man, self aware and very very fucking angry.

I also left high school with an enormous respect for those teachers who tolerated me, who knew what was going on for me outside of the timetabled domain and who took the time to offer me a listening ear and in some cases an arm to cry on.

I will always remember my geography teacher who I spilled my story out to one day after the lesson alone with him and sobbed in his arms. He never said anything to the school psychologist and thank god he did not.

High school for many of the people I met and who continue to keep contact with me was that chapter in your life that you go back to with a conscious memory.

Cloudy at times. Experientially altered.

Friendships, first-loves and above all the first of the pallets of flagstones delivered to start paving the boulevard of broken dreams.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND BOYS SOCIETY

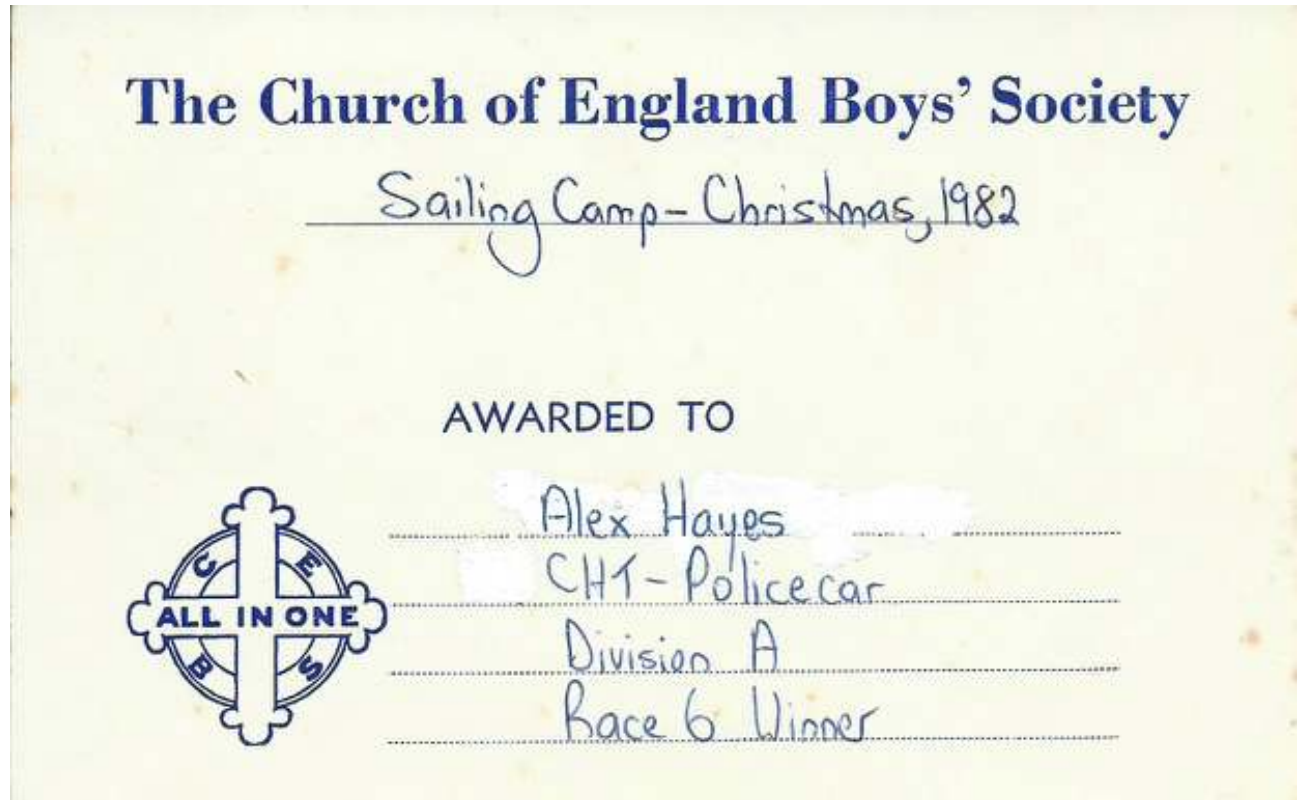


Image: Alexander Hayes - Archive document

Some say that when you have run out of energy, run out of sadness and despair that forgiveness is the only thing left to do, to reclaim that which allows peace and healing to come in.

I woke this morning and knew that this is the morning where I write about this appalling chapter in my life.

100 pushups in a row. On my finger tips.

I slept well last night and I am in a clear frame of mind this early morning as I write this, sun streaming in the windows here in my Kingston, Canberra apartment. I am still angry and probably always will be but this

next part of my story allows me to stop my life's container from rotting away at the core, may be of healing for others or perhaps even encourage others to step up and speak their own.

I owe much to Robert Scoble from Rackspace and Shane Horsburgh at NovoModus for their own courage in telling their life stories, although theirs are very different to mine.

I also need to pay homage to one young amazing woman who will remain anonymous.

She encouraged me to tell my story, supported me emotionally and almost died herself in the process even though her own story was far more tragic than mine, helped be me to be free again.

“...Alex you will have the courage to write and tell your story to the world with little more than an accolade, some haters and possibly alienation at most from your old mates. For me, if I am to tell my story, as a young woman, in it's entirety I will be ostracised from society, attacked as a victim and repeatedly subjected to the very things I have sought to escape. Go tell your story in the hope that it may prevent a young woman like me ever experiencing what I have had to endure.”

How true her words were. I experienced all that she foretold.

I will always remember in my mind's eye how peaceful she was in my arms, whimpering in her sleep, my story just a mere extension of her own, a brief moment in which she could rest as weary as an old woman, as beautiful as a golden haired flaxen vixen could ever be.

What I am about to write has been the single most destructive thing that has ever occurred in my life. It is also the single most important thing that has forged my life as it gave me the strength to endure, to be resilient and most of all to NOT live by it.

The Church of England Boys Society (CEBS) is or was a bunch of adults who regularly conducted activities which for the most part were the pastoral outreach of the Church of England, Sutherland NSW Australia. A regular weekly meeting of young men and women who participated in physical activities such as dodgeball, handball, basketball, soccer, fishing, fire making, craft, camping, sailing, rock climbing, hiking and so on.

I am going to concentrate on the sailing and camping part.

The part where parents innocently let their children go into the care of responsible adults, both women and men. The part where for all concerned the welfare of the child aged 11 - 13 is in the care of another adult for up to 10 long days and nights at a time.

In the Sutherland Shire, tucked away on the remote shore of the Port Hacking River, Sydney Australia are Christian camp sites with large accommodation blocks, sailing sheds filled with magnificent boats, dormitories, shower blocks, salt water pools and so on.

The Anglican Church also owns properties in the Colo River, NSW Australia tucked away in remote and inaccessible country deep in the eucalypt forests, where muddy tracks give way to activities such as dune buggy building and driving skill building.

If history would allow, if it could be rewound I have often thought as to how I would have torched those buildings that I had doused in petrol, blown apart that sailing shed with the homemade explosives my peers and I became adept at building.

I was subject to the depravities of only a few with one individual who led that pack.

Raped repeatedly by balding, overweight, middle aged men.

Two long years of it.

I often bit, fought, spat and screamed till I went berserk. None of that stopped their depravity.

I still have constant flashbacks. I have never recovered and may never recover from those experiences which are so numerous it would astound anyone who may have gone through an isolated similar.

I suffer from night terrors, night sweats and agoraphobia as a result. Bleeding from the ass. Which kid down you know that suffers from hemorrhoids at the age of 13?

A few mates at the time spoke of taking responsible out into the National Park to conduct our own ritualisation of torture and depravity, to brutalise and maim them.

But, by the grace of our own values, we didn't.

We endured and I say 'we' because I witnessed things that would make your heart bleed and your knees knock in rage and gain, they are not my stories to tell.

I confronted my parents at aged 15 and they could not believe it to be true.

Research shows that in many cases of sexual abuse the victim is not believed by those even closest to them given that to believe would mean a substantial rewrite of their own failure to care for their closest kin.

In my case, I just wallowed in disbelief. It was for them it seemed all too confrontational to deal with. It would mean that their own religious pure and perfect lives had been lived in vain, all for the looking good.

I was returned repeatedly into the cesspool of depravity and the viperous hand of the these pedophiles who had made me their skinny target.

Years later in my late teens I repeated the process of seeking answers with those of that could have protected us only to learn that they had literally left the country in fear of their lives from a bunch of very angry and violent 6 feet tall young men looking to revenge.

I did threaten a number of individuals with death. I did ensure that my message of retribution went back to those responsible but it was my own rough justice, largely misguided and as evil as their vile acts.

I spoke of this with my Family and significant others in my twenties, thirties and still I hit that blank wall.

“Get your fucking act together and move on buddy” would be the catch-cry time and time again from people I confided in. At age 45 I spoke of the story to my family, friends and the world and by writing this #realstory nothing has ever changed about it.

What has changed is ME.

I am me and all of me again.

I am NOT what someone thought was a permissible breach of trust, a sexualisation where it lacked in their own lives.

I do NOT forgive the Church, it's supposed sacraments, it's legal defence, it's institution, it's protectionism, its inability to empathise and most of all it's complete and utter hypocrisy in light of everything I brought it.

Repeatedly.

To the front door of the Seminary. To the Ministers. To the highest order gilded lilies in their pathetic gowns and vestry.

No, I will not go to your state sanctioned inquisition, you're supposed royal commission where those that have suffered are again abused, silenced and given supposed compensation where no compensation can ever heal the hearts of those who have been violated.

This is your fucking court assholes.

That's about as much breath as I have left to utter in contempt of you and your sick institution of colonisation and oppression.

You Pell are a fucking Liar.

You are a despicable viper.

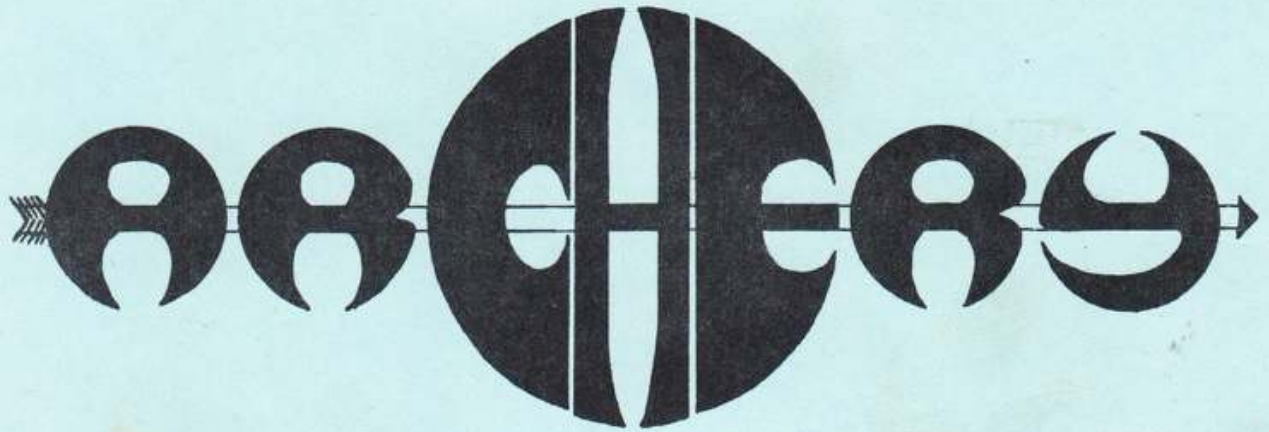
Your Church promoted you to Tome to ensure your stories would never reach the light of day and that the institutionalized rape that your organisation perpetrates is protected and further insidiously endorsed, ongoing.

I DO forgive those individuals whose lives were forged in such a way that they stooped so low as to find in company a fun that has fundamentally destroyed so many other peoples lives, led to countless suicides (and I know a few) and whose own families suffered as a result of their behaviours.

It is today that I forgive all of those who caused me such grief and heartache. It has rotted out my soul and core till now. No more.

I cannot help but sob when I write this, tears bouncing off the keyboard but it is time to forgive and to move on and be me.

All of me.



→ Alex Hayes. →

→ Archery's Promising Sex Symbol. →



→ 14/10/82 →

→ *ELH*
CHAPMAN →

CHURCH OF ENGLAND BOYS' SOCIETY

Image: Alexander Hayes - Archive document

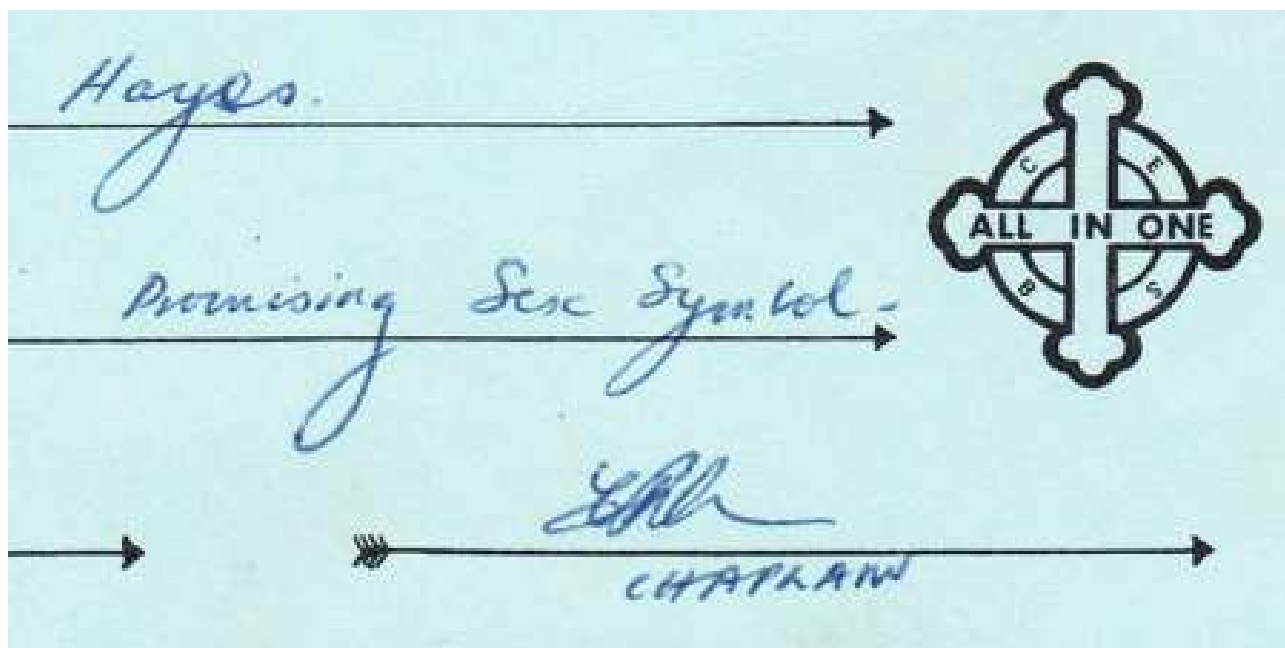


Image: Alexander Hayes - Archive document (extract focus)



Image: Alexander Hayes - Archive document (extract focus)

So, *draws a deep breath* I urge anyone who knows of my story, anyone who has always wondered why I have been an angry and out of control individual, anyone who knows of me in my various manifestations, all of you who have seen me adopt and adapt and be anything but me to UNDERSTAND WHY I have avoided being 'me'.

I have seen countless counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, healers, gurus etc. and none of them have been able to give an answer but one - be yourself.

And so I have.

I have loved and cherished my precious Children, I have atoned for my disastrous teenage life by working in prisons across Australia with the worst of the worst offenders, I have worked in Juvenile Justice and saved even a few young lives by giving them coping and living skills for their own sad lives.

I have removed children from families as parts of teams in DOCS and FACS whose role it was to protect children and generated a deep shame as a result in doing so. I have run street kid programs to give teenagers alternatives to violence and mayhem.

I have done my bit and will always do my bit and recognise that I am one of many who CHOOSE NOT TO BE consumed by the past, to live in the present moment, to speak the truth, to speak out.

I recognise that putting a noose around my neck, pulling that industrial zip lock tie closed with my teeth and kicking that chair out from underneath myself was not a solution to the hurt, to the pain of the past.

I CHOOSE life because I believe in it and that it is not inherently evil.

Yes, I do see more than others because of the depth with which I am prepared to see into living. I am open to looking deeply into what makes

us all tick. To observe patterns and to be not afraid to face demons that manifest themselves in the human form.

I will never be at peace with religion, with supposed order, with apparent confessionals, with sacraments that demand I repent.

The sins of the Church, as an institution, as a business, as a collective itself must be brought to bear. The whole institution of religion must given over to the spiritual domain of humanity.

The most fulfilling thing I have been encouraged to do is tell my story.

To speak it out aloud.

There is room and love in forgiveness. There is resolve in speaking out. To grow beyond depression, to conquer my anxiety.

I am at peace with this part of my story.

There is a way to live a powerful life.

ANGELS BY DAY



Image: 1987 - Alexander Hayes and Brian Dunlop

Devils by night.

Perhaps it was the screaming, the tension, the physical altercations we had as kids with our father's mainly that drove us onto the street.

Bligh Street, Kirrawee to be exact.

As teen kids do, they congregate, gesticulate, fornicate. With parents away with work or with lax parenting-come-alcohol-fuelled-pool-parties, there was always room in our neighbourhood to hide our true selves in.

We had a whole range of experiences that would put a teen vampire movie to sleep. Whatever drove us to steal cars, drive them into shops and ram raid our way north up the Pacific Highway at 180kms an hour can only be put down to collective anger and misguided forms of justice.

Drug dealing, drug taking and drug induced psychosis were an ever present non-reality check-in as we careened between each others houses, collapsed on trains all the way to Thirroul South or locked off trains that terminated in Heathcote. Till sunrise. Cold steel seats for beds.

Juxtaposed by Sunday School classes in the day, gracious acts of mowing lawns for each other's parents, polite breakfast conversations about politics and religion, a serene schizophrenia.

Lord knows which parent was sleeping with others but what little we knew we kept to ourselves. It was easier to get things done that way.

Every second home it seemed had a pool or a spa or some gigantic boudoir which we made good use of. Consequently I lost my virginity to a beautiful girl who was 2 years my senior. I was 15 at the time and all I recall is that my life changed the moment I awkwardly navigated my way around like a blind drunk teenager, which I was.

Discos, trips to the local mall where we got drunk on Thursday night, Friday night and Saturday night bled profusely into the school week. Fights erupted when couples turned into 'trouples' as we slipped through perfumed mornings, salt water sticking pubic hair to teeth, pizza boxes stacked high from the night before.

Well of course it wasn't all chaos but by the time we had hit 16, the homemade pipe bombs, chlorine and brake fluid bombs were emerging from E block science labs. Banned, our master mischief maker sat at a lone table only allowed to look at texts for the semester.

He still topped the form. Jailed, years later I met up with him and his wife and on the very same day conceived a child with my girlfriend at the time in their bathroom, on the sink.

Our little Daughter, Jonti Maya passed away in utero at 22 weeks in 2005.

How times mix and stories merge.

There are stories of known protections we should have taken that would have prevented abortions, there are stories galore of MDMA induced psychotic episodes across most of our 30 or so strong peer group with representations from most walks of life. Ecstasy was rampant as was Lebanese hash from the back bar at the Bexley Hotel or the Sylvania Inn.

Cracks began to appear. Life shimmered and yet we were blind to it as we careened between school, part time jobs and handouts.

Strays started to hang around and we soon found ourselves amidst the seedy bowels of smack, speed, coke and LSD trips.

Even under the under eye lids.

Running naked through Hyde Park, Sydney. Breaking into the police headquarters in downtown Town Hall.

Stolen cars.

Stolen bikes.

Burnouts.

Our streets were a mass of black snakes screaming their way over hill tops. Parents, terrified began banning me and others from frequenting their homes.

At 17 a fair proportion of use began the "who can get a bigger tattoo than the other" contest.

Grabbing the gun at Greg Arden's in Kings Cross I began what was surely the stupidest thing you can do to your body. Fingers, toes, arms, feet, legs and to this day I look down and see what I speak of right now and shake my head almost in disbelief.

Like every story, the seediest and blackest of chapters speak of suicides, stabbings, murder and mayhem.

I could detail every last part of the beautiful young men and women who pointlessly passed away before the age of 25 across our peers.

More than 50% of that peer group I hung around with are dead.

Buried.

Not forgotten.

This book is a testament to those who with resilience pulled through what for many communities out there is sadly everyday.

Neckings, picks in arms, kids careen around, screaming like mad banshees seeking love and inclusion. Not for a minute would I do it differently but what I am determined to admit, to be vulnerable and to say that I am sorry to those reading this who felt that I was responsible for the mayhem that they experienced.

I was a clever one, never got caught, did the worst, seemingly consumed as much as anyone but often commandeered those stolen vehicle from the relative safety of the back seat.

Through suburbs with Ramset guns in hand, side swipes, drive bys with thrash metal blazing, Judas Priest and Megadeth cutoffs clashing with westie flannies, Alley boys, Bra Boys, The Mob in Redfern and a whole host of other inner city mob we clashed with.

Smashed.

Two sets of braces later my orthodontist smiled in relief.

Not to mention the Royal National Park. Jumping coal trains and hitching free rides with boards to far flung beaches. Orchie bottle bongs for breakfast. Lunch. Dinner.

The vast expanse of park allowed us to grow our own forests.

Bag them. Smoke them.

Without social media, we did everything without the gaze of authority except for the odd 'ride up' and smack the cop over the back of the helmet and ride off dare or two. There are actually so many recurring flashbacks I sit here astounded I can actually sit up at all.

To be frank, fuck knows how we survived what we did.

It was a mass blur of angels by day and devils by night.

We fought, we fornicated, we somehow kept close to each other and above all we formed a bond that stands true to this day (or night depending on when you read this.)

I grieve for and atone for my part in the deaths of numerous young men (and one woman) who like me went as hard as the rest of us but lost the battle to heroin, respiratory arrest, suicide and deliberate acts of self harm.

I pulled through in the nick of time.

I chose to do one thing just in time.

Sitting on the back balcony of a friends house near Kirrawee Railway station, with one mate passed out on the concrete, one friend lining up yet another line of speed and my knuckles covered in blood from folding a punching bag in two, that I did something I will never regret.

I carefully wrote in cursive script the single word 'Perth' on a piece of cardboard.

HEADING WEST



Image: Alexander Hayes - Pickle's Car

A piece of cardboard, a texta (ink) pen, \$10 in my wallet, odd socks, a few pairs of undies, a jacket and absolutely no idea what I was in for.

1986

A departure from my life as a wayward teenager growing up in leafy Sydney, amidst palms, frangipanis and fireworks. The beginning of a definitive new life.

Or so I thought.

Let's back track though a little. My parents always had (bless them) a desire for me to do well, to "...save your pennies and your dollars will look after themselves" or "...penny pinch and pack a pound" or "...work hard and achieve your dreams".

So one night after yet another night out "on the piss" and returning from the moshpit of an ACDC concert in Sydney, covered in bruises and stinking of Port Royal roll your own cigarettes, my parents bundled me into their car and drove me overnight to Alstonville, NSW Australia.

I had been accepted into a Landcare Management degree at the College of Advanced Education (CAE) in Lismore, mid north New South Wales.



Image: Alexander Hayes

Home to floods, mango trees, proximity to the coast.

My thoughts of being at the college were obvious. It was as boring as batshit and all I was interested in was getting stoned and laid. In that order.

So what happened up there living in a strange house with a weird couple as a boarder led to some of my first life's insights with adults.

One day I decided during the first trimester break to hitchhike to Ballina, NSW Australia on the coastline, a small coastal town. I went to the supermarket to buy a can of coke.

I noticed a skinny redhead woman with three kids hanging off her skirt pinch a chocolate bar whilst in the supermarket aisle. I also noticed (being street smart) that a store detective had noticed her pinching that chocolate bar too.

We arrive at the counter to pay for the goods. She failed to reveal the chocolate bar. The store detective steps in and after some kerfuffle steps away when I pay for the chocolate bar. We get outside.

"...I suppose you need a lift someplace."

I had intended going to the beach and sleeping rough but that night found myself in a house in South Wardell down one long track amidst the sugar cane that you see in movies. Lying back with my head on her pillow exhausted, covered in sweat I suddenly realised what sex ACTUALLY was.

Spelled. Bewitched. Suddenly dreams were real in the day and the night.

I stayed 3 days returning to Alstonville via the Wardell punt over the river. Returning a week later to see my raven witch I was met with a cavalcade

of cops, careening over the river, ticker taped driveway, no one allowed down that track.

Shot.

Through the head.

Kids taken away by DOCS officers I stood in shock.

Numb.

Her boyfriend had heard of her and of myself.

It wasn't the only time he had bashed her, abused her, tried to possess her. I still cry today thinking of it all. I met her friends at the pub.

Got wasted and woke up under the pub BBQ three days later with a skinful of Datura (a powerful natural psychotropic drug).

Time to return to Sydney. Disappointed, my parents tried to "rescue" me again.

This time I was accepted into an Associate Degree or Diploma or some damned certificate in Biological Techniques at Armidale TAFE, mostly held at the University of New England. Robb College. Bachelor and Spinster (B&S) balls.

Working at the local RSL Club. Becoming their champion bartender, cocktails waiter and setting up gigs in the bush.

Apart from loving Histology, Parasitology, Electron Microscopy and the Agronomy units I spent most of my time with the xxxx family wasted listening to Jethro Tull and Lynard Skynard.

Living with one lone Christian lunatic and his sometimes girlfriend who claimed that anal sex did not count as sex because only vaginal sex was sacred in the eyes of the Lord.

Good lord and so I had to put up with him sodomising this poor woman every second day and night in the room with only two sheets of plaster between him and his fetish.

Then I met xxxxxx Smith.

At least that is who he told me he was.

Going out with strawberry blonde xxxxxx.

After a night out on the E's dancing till sunrise together we moved in together a week later. There began mischief beyond comprehension.

Free as a bird we drove to Mullaway, NSW Australia to score another kilo of prime bush buds from his brother, Richard. I got left with a lunatic who smashed the house up and held me hostage for two days.

Clint was his name. Clint was his game. Bad ass lunatic.

Heavily tattooed, the only way I could calm him down through those two terrible days was to feed him cone after cone of prime marijuana.

He killed the cat.

Drove a surfboard through the walls.

Ate Fruit Loops with Coke and cream. A certified nutter and here I was trapped in the house with him. The cops arrived finally.

I was a frigging mess.

Psychologist debrief. More counselling. I still have nightmares about that lunatic.

So, one day playing pool at the Uni bar some young chicky babe, dark hair, little raven pinched my ass. I was a gun pool player.

We ended up back in bed.

Looked deeply into her eyes and knew that things were going to happen but didn't know what. University holidays popped up. Went back to be in Sydney.

Phone call. Sweet young voice.

"...I am pregnant. You are going to be a Father."

I was 19 years old. My reply "..excuse me...but who are you?"

"xxxxxxxxxx"

"Ok...so I had better come and see you and talk about this right? "

"Yes."

"Where are you?"

"Western Australia in a little town called Bunbury."

"Where?"

Stunned, I sat and smoked another joint.

I could hear the spoken word 'Perth' resonate in my head.

Like how the fuck was I going to get there with no money and yet, hang on, I could hitch hike!

Make it an adventure.

Tell nobody.

Shock them.

Shock myself.

Ok....so a piece of cardboard, a texta pen. Parramatta Train Station.

"Perth".

I looked it up on the map.

Are you joking?

4550 kms???

WELCOME TO FATHERHOOD



Image: Summernats - 1987- Canberra, Australia

"Perth? Are you serious?"

"Yes"

"...Well jump in man because I am going to take you as far as I can go today and when you get back be sure to give me a call."

Holding my cardboard sign up I had only been standing there for less than 30 seconds. I was on my way. By nightfall I'd had three lifts and arrived in Narrandera, NSW Australia.

The beginning of the the Hay Plains which is a long stretch of wheatbelt towns, river flats and lots of other flat with little in there but sun and sand. It was dusk, it was cold and I was tired. Feeling worried I bought a can of Coke and waited in the night light at the exit to the service station.

A panel van stopped and two surfie looking dudes said "...jump in."

I knew them from the Shire. God knows why they were driving to Adelaide but off we went, smoke billowing from both the tyres and our mouths.

At daybreak I got out of the car just on the very outskirts of Adelaide.

Penniless. A vagrant.

A truck pulled up. I got into the cab.

"...in the glovebox son."

I opened it gingerly. A pipe. A tin.

I packed a cone and before I'd had time to know what had hit me I was back on the edge of the roadside, the blaring horns of the truck exhaust disappearing over the horizon and echoing in my cranium.

Now wasted and penniless, still a vagrant.

So I walked and finally got a lift with a couple into the city.

Fell asleep on the pedestrian island waiting for the traffic lights to change. In the back of a police paddy-wagon.

As a vagrant with no fixed place of address, no money, I was arrested and spent the night in the police cells.

I recall the wailing at night of prisoners being transferred and also the stench of urine in the lockup. By daybreak I was showered, fed and dropped off on the outskirts of town.

This time I wrote 'Augusta' on the cardboard sign. Picked up by a family and squashed into a Datsun 180B. With a birdcage on my lap I got out thankfully in one piece in Augusta, South Australia.

Centre of everywhere and nowhere all at once. Tough little place.

"...ok, so keep talking son and don't stop and if you stop, I chuck you out."

The Vietnam veteran truck driver had commandeered his four wagons to a stop to pick me up. Dust billowing from the bogies we roared back off back onto the bitumen. For the 18 hours we drove at an average of 140 kms an hour.

On Duramines. (car sickness tablets)

Break the tablet.

Transfer it from hand to hand until the powder is all blown away.

Wash down the crystals with a can of freezing Coke from the central mini-refrigerator.

Hair standing on end I have no idea what I was talking about but rest assured I didn't stop talking for two days straight. Which is what he asked for.

Apart from the occasional truckies-drop kip we made it into Kalgoorlie.

End to end we played tag with the CB radio and tried desperately to keep the snake of a road train on the asphalt most of the time.

Terrifying mostly.

Out I hopped into another truck going south. To Esperance, Western Australia.

Oh my god, what a beautiful place it is, beaches, aquamarine ocean. I fell in love with that town and would live there again in heartbeat.

Worked with a farmer for three days stringing fences. Paid my way and moved onto Walpole via a tourist flotilla of hippy vans.

Fruit picking.

Painting.

Doing odd jobs I ended up in Augusta East, sitting under Peppermint Trees, grubby, exhausted and hardly able to breath. Little did I know how allergic I am to that pollen from the Western Australian Peppermint tree.

Heading north I ended up seated at dawn on the front steps of the Margaret River Hotel. A town at that time of 1250 residents and a thousand tourists per minute.

"You don't look like you are a local so why are you blocking the stairs son?"

I looked up at an American Indian looking guy who glared at me sprawled in the stairwell.

"...want some work for the day?" he asked.

I ended up working with him renovating his house. Frequenting between the Boranup Commune, Witchcliffe township and the local tip scavenging timber and wire.

I knew my destination was a few hours north so I stuck my sign up again.

'Bunbury'.

A few lifts later I landed in Bunbury, Western Australia, a shipping port.

I met my prospective father-in-law and a quick reveal of our situation (his daughter and myself) had him in hospital with heart attack.

I was given the ultimatum.

"...Under no circumstance is my daughter having a child, hardly out of being a child herself. Go assure me that child will be terminated."

The rest is a bit murky but in essence my girlfriend and I ended up on a bus heading due east over the Nullarbor again. Back to old Sydney town. A couple of bags as possessions.

Four days later we stumbled down for the last time those damned bus stairs and kissed the ground, that filthy gum covered stench of a pavement they call Sydney Interchange, Central Railway, Sydney Australia.

The morning sickness was already kicking in.

I recall the faint feeling of not knowing where we were going, what would happen next. We survived four weeks with my Parents and knew it was time to set up our own abode.

Berala, close to Bankstown, NSW Australia became home.

'B' is for baby.

PRECIOUS CHILD



Image: 1990 - Alexander Hayes and Kamahli Jae Mason-Hayes

If only we had a magic wand that we could wave and change things in ways that would allow the harder shifts and changes in our lives to just go away.

Yet, what would we be if those learning curves, those experiences that forge us where to go were to disappear?

Would we be any better off?

Happier?

I reckon we are forged by what we are in the present moment, that the past is a powerful story to be proud of and to tell it, no matter how murky or hard it might seem.

There is no future - only what we have now and what we know. To learn to accept it as it is and to celebrate every last bit of it.

To step up and tell our story, point to the amazing things we have achieved. Pay homage to those fallen, atone for those mistakes we made and in making them forgiving not only others but ourselves for having made them.

Becoming a father, in making a choice to support a young woman in her own life's choice, despite the pleas of other adults to the contrary, in walking forward into life with no parenting skills whatsoever, in learning, in living, in loving, just one example of this.

Bankstown, Sydney, Berala to be exact was a time of building a home from nothing, collecting things that were thrown out streetside and building things into a comfortable nest. Playing cards together we realised it was time to head to the hospital.

The long labour.

The anguish.

The joy.

The absolute wonderment, joy and incredible gift that children are from the moment of their conception, through utero, childbirth, as they suckle, crawl, stretch, grow and gracefully become women and men.

I am blessed.

I am blessed.

Working night shift at Pickfords Records Management, at Telecom Lakemba, at Suzanne Grae, at....I can't remember now how many places.

We survived and we grew well together.

College over we decided to reconnect with family members who for the better part were coming to their own realisation that despite it all we were a family unit of our own.

The roar of Sydney, the bustle of life had us pack our boxes. We headed west again.

This time the tardis of fate would have more in store than I'd ever imagined. I felt the life lines etch themselves in the sides of my eyes for the first time.

I bit my tongue and held on for dear life.

Time to go back west, to Perth, Western Australia and face the music.

GROWING PAINS



Image: Alexander Hayes - Margaret River, Western Australia

I have never imagined for a moment myself as a writer, yet here I am at 6AM in the morning putting pen to paper metaphorically speaking.

Having an opportunity to go to university and complete a degree was never on my agenda as a young man. I had a great education experience in secondary school yet I always pictured myself as employed and travelling which to some degree is exactly what happened.

In 1991 I was encouraged to think of a career as a primary school teacher, early childhood to be exact.

My own mother used to continuously say to me that if ever there was a person who could care for and nurture children it was me. What an odd thing to say to a child right through their own childhood was my thinking at the time.

So, in 1992 I started a teaching undergraduate degree at Edith Cowan University in Bunbury.

At the very same time the very people who had helped me sit the mature age (ha!) entry test were also the very people I was fighting with regarding my own ability to parent. An unfortunate visit from interstate 'mates' soon sealed my fate.

You do not eat baby food that is in a fridge no matter what state of inebriation you are in. Golden rule.

I told that person to get out of the house and the rest is history. I ended up homeless on the same day. That wasn't the only reason for me moving out but I'll leave those reasons to the annals of time and truth.

In fact, come to think of it, it was the very day that I knew my life of fairytale cohabitation complete with white horse was all but a dream.

Damn those fairy tales! They make it all sound so good!

Living in student housing, attending my teaching degree by day and having supervised access visits to my child, my precious and eldest daughter is not a good combination.

Firstly, student housing is filled with parties.

Secondly, a teaching degree is a very demanding undergraduate activity.

Thirdly, the emotional rollercoaster of seeing your child at the behest of others and the Australian Family court system is horrific.

I didn't do well. I don't regret or feel guilty about anything rather I just now accept it as it was.

The past.

I was at too many parties, my studies were interrupted badly and I was an emotional wreck with my backwards and forwards trying to be what I thought to be a father, which would only be solved by me establishing my own space, my own home, my own timetable. Luckily again fate engineered people into my life who have to this day remained my mentors and friends.

A number of lecturers at Edith Cowan University encouraged me to do well. They sat with me and challenged me to think of life as filled with choices.

They encouraged me to think outside of the box of broken dreams and and to create new ones.

With beautiful people.

Which I did.

This book is being written with the encouragement of a person who I think fundamentally changed everything in my broken boulevard of bravado and bullshit.

I met her (saw her and fell madly in love) in a life drawing class at Edith Cowan University. What an amazing person she continues to be in my life today and what a joy it is despite how young we were and how much she hurt me emotionally at that time.

That night at the Student Guild function I decided that it was a match. The rest is history.

We rented a house by the beach, set up a household that included my daughter and we began living as a couple whilst still both studying and working. I got a part time job working at the local Bunbury Regional Art Gallery as an Art Tutor.

The days were long and hot. The nights filled with the screech of seagulls, crash of waves, the stench of too much sex and not enough study.

Things got ugly quick.

I fronted up to an inquiry into the activity or lack of it with staff at the University and before long found myself in the thick of a nasty melee, studying as a student whilst fending for myself against the workings of a then very biased family court system. To their credit my stable relationship, household, patterns of study and work were taken into account.

By 1993 we had moved to a small rural community, actually come to think of it, to an isolated farmhouse within the reach of the acrid smoke billowing from the local copper arsenate plant.

What an odd thing it is to build a fifty foot floating pirate ship only to have it burn and explode in Bunbury Harbour, Western Australia.

As an Artist that "fuck you" attitude began to grow also, that daring to challenge the taboo, resolving and settling cycle, the urge to create yet commensurately to destroy.

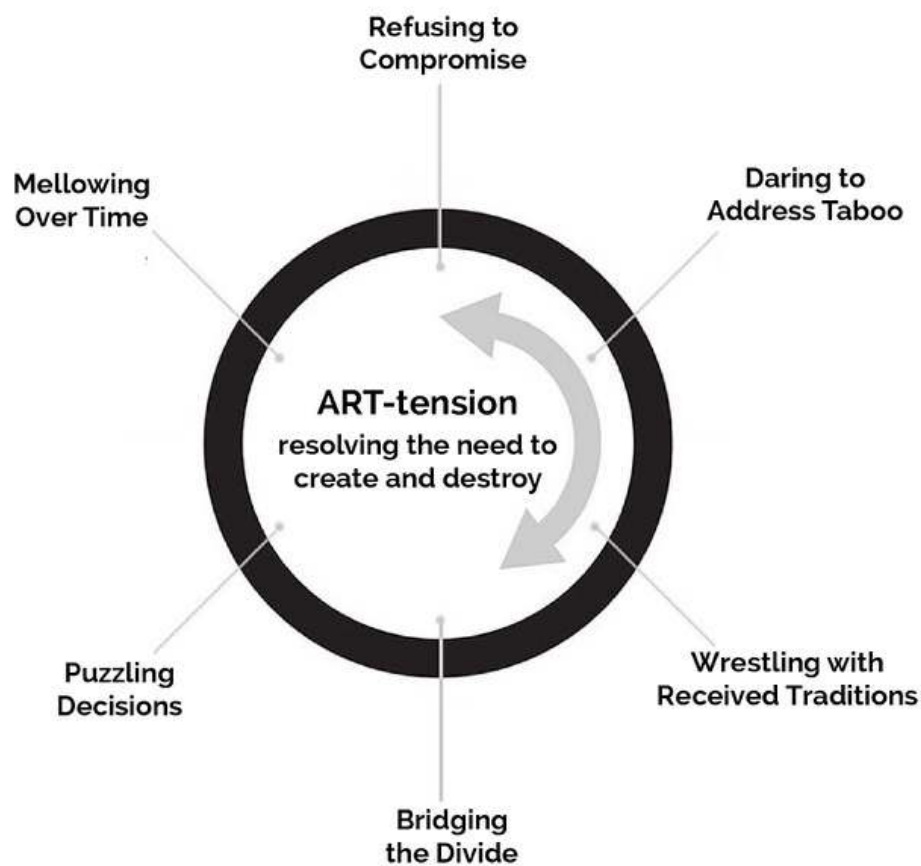


Image: ART-tension: resolving the need to create and destroy.

My art career was born with a number of prizes in printmaking, a legacy that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

A lecturer who took time to foster my arts education skills and who spent many a weekend pulling raku pottery from blazing hot kilns when he should have been at home with his wife and children. Again, a male mentor who took the time to grow me.

I soon found myself, as my media folio shows, at the centre of infamy in the town of Bunbury, Western Australia. Crazy busy completing a teaching degree, getting up to mischief with fellow artists and discovering amongst the sordid array of personal experience my own polyamorist identity.

Printmaking till 3 AM in the morning, travelling deep into the south west and creating some of the largest and most complex of prints that I think I'll ever pull off a press.

Etchings, linocuts.

Hand embellished monoprints.

Lithographs. Selling them all at figures that astound me even today.

By 1995, having travelled to Margaret River numerous times, building of a magnificent stone, timber and glass home, finished my 18 week extended teaching practicum and graduating with an 'outstanding award' it felt right to take my second marriage proposal from an engagement to that of getting married in reality. Fuck going to Kalgoorlie Primary School to teach snot nosed kids for three years.

All of my friends disagreed. My Family desperate to see me settled happily agreed.

The marriage lasted 9 months, 5 months in my mind.

Soon after we married we were returning one day from the beach to learn that the very home we had built had burned to the ground.

The two Poodle dogs were inside. Dead.

Everything was lost.

The fire so intense it even cracked the 6 foot thick stone walls in places.

Grief manifests itself in weird and wonderful ways. It has a way of disguising itself in the event of breakups.

It finds its way into every pore of daily life till the very patterns of raising your head from the pillow becomes difficult. A new and profound low after such a run of extreme highs and hope.

And so began my career as a practising professional artist.

A CONSTRUCTION YARD

COALMAN Richard Hayes felt like a change . . . so he has become a boutique owner.

He has transferred a dingy

single-end in Possilpark, Glasgow, into a swinging fashion spot.

The inside has been gutted and mod shirts, jackets, trousers and ties hang on the walls. On the walls outside there are pop-art paintings.

Richard, 24, has sunk all his savings into the shop and is determined to succeed.

He said: "I opened only six weeks ago but already there has been a big interest from the young people in the area."

Richard bought the single-end for £300 and converted it himself — he painted the figures on the wall outside called the boutique Ed Franklin and was all set to take Possilpark by storm.

Richard still spends part of his time working with his father, who is a coal merchant while his wife looks after the shop.

* * *



Richard Hayes in his new boutique

Image: Alexander Hayes - Uncle Richard Hayes

A significant and very senior public servant recently asked me, brows knitted, coffee froth over lipstick what I considered to be 'me' and how in fact do I describe myself to others.

The "...who are you Alex?" question which took me till 45 years old to be able to answer with "...I am a good person."

She asked "...How do I live with yourself Alex after all these failed marriages and countless lovers?".

Cutting.

Given it wasn't a job interview, that I was not dating that person, that they are a long time friend and colleague, I answered simply and with what I thought was as honest and cuttingly blunt retort.

No cunning stunts. No embellishments or sugar sweet.

A frank reply. I remember the wording because looking at it now I wouldn't change it again. It fits and it is accurate.

" ...well, I am a construction yard, a building yet to be complete, soaring skywards, with multiple floors that are sometimes filled with people and parties, with a solid foundation, with cranes sometimes dropping shite when they shouldn't, delivery trucks at the wrong address, baggage delivered to the right address at the wrong time. I am a story, complete with faults, bog-holes, flat tyres at times. Weeds growing amongst beautiful flowers. Brilliant views over oceans and far flung lands. I am me."

In 1995 truthfully I was a mere fragment of that me.

Separated, licking my wounds of which I thought there were many, I made friends with witches, powerful senior women who showed a great

deal of interest in this seemingly creative yet damaged creature amidst them. Bless them, they taught me more than I thought possible.

Perhaps that's why I still love red hair.

Green eyes.

Fair headed fairies too.

Black ravens.

I connected with a few young ones too during that time but the consensual admiration and physical loving was only ever skin deep with those young women. The talk of kids, cohabitation and mindless shopping giving way to dinner, dates and hangovers.

So at the grand old age of 26 I found myself dating a 42 year woman with three children. Sensible huh? I was their step-father and to this day I hold that role and time dear to my heart.

I moved in.

Along with that came the timetable I'd be craving for that put things in order. Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner. Stable. Predictable.

My family were suitably horrified.

I had not engineered it. What I learned in my years later is that women often get to a point in their life where a young man in bed with them is like gold in the safe of a banker.

That's what happened and that's what I chose to do. Later in life I heard the devastating news that my step-daughter, that child, that gorgeous and recalcitrant child of which I shared but a few years of connection had been killed in a car accident.

That fact has never left me.

It fills me still with a gentle sob.

I held my first solo art exhibition at the Bunbury Regional Art Gallery, Western Australia in 1995.

Prior a collaborative sell out solo show at Jalindia Gallery, Bunbury, Western Australia with Wendy Bandurski and Paul Fenton.

Then another sell out at Gralyn Cellars Winery Gallery, Western Australia.

Then....well the list goes on and my Artist Vitae shows the numerous things I got myself known by.

Public commissions. Sculpture of all sizes and descriptions.

Electronic installations.

The repertoire of works grew and so did my ego. Badly.

I tried my best to live down my roots to lineage of artists in the family including my Uncle Richard.

The whole time through this I was working and studying in the Associate Degree of Fine Arts at Edith Cowan University, Bunbury. We bought a block of land in Esperance, Western Australia.

Building, architects etc.

So 1996 started with a bang.

I was accepted as the inaugural preschool teacher at Bunbury Community School.

I had helped set it with prior lecturers at University. 45 parent groups. All faiths. No uniform. No pack drill.

I also worked concurrently as my Curriculum Vitae will show with the Department of Family & Children Services, Bunbury.

The Welfare.

I worked as an Academic Tutor with many broken families. Devastating really. I had no real way of coping with what I experienced.

Wards of the State. Removed, removed and lost.

Lifeskills Team. What a joke.

Shove them full of every god damned drug a psychiatrist can find to "...shut those little fuckers up" that I would hear daily from social workers.

Signing off on child after after child's apprehension orders based on truancy records, observances, my notes were gold for social workers whose grip was tighter than a Rottweiler with a bone between it's teeth.

I snuck in amongst families and played detective. I was assigned on "silent cases" where we sat watching things at night. By day wearing jeans and a t-shirt, as teacher, I also had kids pass through my school under an alias.

Mid that year I decided to extend my arts career by opening an art gallery close to the school I worked at. Silly idea. being a commercial space it required every last ounce of my time and strength.

Alexander Hayes Gallery of Fine Arts. That's right. I actually even registered that as a business name.

One crazy solo show with an Artist from Perth and it was over.

1996 ended with a bang. Literally.

Hospitalised with a broken sternum, broken left foot from dropping a press roller on it and up to my eyeballs in alcohol and gods know what else I was interned.

Locked up.

Voluntarily or so I thought.

For a long time.

LOCK DOWN



Image: Alexander Hayes - Bunbury Regional Hospital

There are times in everybody's life (well at least those that are honest with themselves) where they feel like taking the easy way out.

Ending it. Kaput. No more hurt or pain.

There are also many people I know on some form of medication that keeps them from tipping over into that hurting zone, that dark, swirling void of self pity, self harm, which, I'm not ashamed to say that at the end of 1996 I found myself there.

I know many people who have been there and a vast proportion of them didn't come back.

A combination of things got me there but as I've learned that by bottling it all up, containing rage, sucking up more pain and attracting the devils-best-dressed-to-hurt-us all comes to a head eventually. So it began that night when I dropped my print press roller on my left foot.

Christ only knows why I thought moving a 120 kg solid steel roller at midnight in the rain, drunk was a good idea.

I was told that when you hurt yourself there is a meaning to it. That an injury to your foot is best designed to ensure you change your track, change direction.

I drove with one foot to the emergency intake carpark at Bunbury Regional Hospital, Western Australia.

Drunk, I crashed the car into the lavender bush garden at the back of the emergency intake in my Valiant Hemi utility. Bloody embarrassing.

Damn I miss that car. I swear I'll buy another one just like it one day.

As I lay there in the casualty unit, a drip in one arm, a drain in the leg (to take of the fluid buildup from ignoring it for a week), 5MGs of morphine and still wide awake, tears rolling slowly down my cheeks a soft speaking man came to the foot of my bed and asked me if I was ok.

"No. Fuck off."

"Son...if you had a wish and you wanted it to come true what positive thing would you wish for at this very moment?"

I look at him perplexed. Was this person actually for real? I came back with an absurdity to ensure he left me alone.

"...I really would like a fucking holiday right now. Whoever you are can you just fuck off and leave me alone."

I didn't get the chance to continue.

His hand was up like a stop signal. He left as quietly as he came and I never saw him again.

What I did see was more paperwork and folders at the end of the bed. I was told I was being moved to "a more secure and quiet place for you."

Ward 6, Bunbury Regional Hospital to be exact. Third floor.

Upstairs. No locked doors but no way out except via the lift or one way fire escape doors. Tricky to navigate when you can't get out of your room which was locked up itself.

My ribs were excruciatingly painful and when they X-rayed me they said I'd yanked my ribs out of my costal condroids or sternum I think it is.

Unable to sit up, a few weeks later I had three women at the end of the bed. The mother of my eldest daughter, then my ex-girlfriend, then shortly after my newly minted girlfriend.

Little did I know that their personal accounts of my radical behaviour in the leadup to my own medical admission ensured I took that well earned holiday.

So for sixteen further weeks I lay, sat, stood or limped around that ward. Here is what happened over that sixteen weeks.

The pathologist came into the room in week 1 and said that she needed to take bloods.

I offered her my jugular vein but she declined gracefully. With a grin.

It was her birthday I overheard her saying in the nurses station. It coincided with Valentine's day. The newspaper boy agreed to join me in my trick.

He went and bought a single red rose and delivered it in newspaper.

I hid it under the blankets of my bed. She came to take my blood the following day. Again I gave her the offer of my neck.

She grinned and scolded me.

I then said, "...well if you don't take the blood from there will you take this rose as a token of my appreciation for the gas chromatography you conduct to determine what drugs I'm either on, have taken or continue to take."

Stunned, her jaw dropped.

On my release from hospital we met, and met, and met. Of course we didn't talk gas chromatography but I do believe she became my first ever muse. Drawings. Paintings and my first racey photography.

As Artists do. Anyway, back to the wards.

Old man hard left, younger man opposite, lunatic hard right.

Everyday was a mix of groaning, yelps, unintelligible gibberish. So old mate dies across from me. Reaches out, I stagger to his bedside just in time for him to make his last breath.

Deadpan grey he sunk to the bed.

Holding his palm, in shock, I collapsed in tears.

They tried reviving him. I can still hear the bed springs as they gave him cardiac compression to no avail.

They rushed me out the room and told me to sit in the corridor.

Full moon streaming in through the barred windows. No luck. Old man gets wheeled past covered in a sheet. Passed on.

I crawled into a foetal position and hid between the visitors chair and the wall till the morning staff discovered me and the 6 AM sunlight woke me.

Time dragged on.

As psychiatrists in all their wisdom prescribe, I was given uppers and downers and fuck me arounders. Blue ones, red ones, green ones.

They held my mouth and made sure I swallowed every last one of them.

I lost 15 kgs just lying down. Wouldn't eat.

I read everything there was to read. Even the 'Women's Weekly' magazines, till they had become a virtual reality.

I apparently had started playing with imaginary friends in the end room of ward, the quiet rooms next to the padded ones.

I built sculptures from paddle pop sticks. Told stories to faeries who visited me at night and sat with me on my bed.

I was diagnosed as everything they could find in the book.

Manic depressive, bipolar.

Schizophrenic...depressed.

Duh.

Days dragged into weeks.

Then months. I lost track of all time and space.

There was no world except for the formaldehyde and Pine-o-Cleen filled one I seemed to inhabit.

Visited by my girlfriend/s who spoke to me and asked me to accept the fact that I wasn't getting out soon.

Then it happened.

One night, in the dead of night a huge commotion. A shape of a human jammed into a bed filled with pumps, lines, flashing lights and beeping things.

Curtains drawn we didn't see anything of this human till a week later when they pulled the curtains back and revealed a person who could only literally move three fingers. Paraplegic and now in for the third time in hospital, busted up.

Run over by a F250 pickup truck whilst still on his motorbike.

Within hours he had struck up a conversation with me.

"...So you're in here for a holiday I'm told." he said.

I laughed then replied, "...well I was waiting for you to arrive so we could break out tonight by throwing some blankets over that razor wire."

He sobbed in hysterics.

A man who couldn't wipe his own ass.

A man whose whole life had been ruined by a car driving the wrong way at the right time when he was a child. A man with a heart of gold.

He laughed so hard the nurses repeatedly told him to stop or he would break his nasal feeding tube.

We flirted with nurses together. We laughed, we joked, we argued politics, religion, sexuality, economics.

The nurses left us alone.

"...You are good for each other" they said.

I looked at them perplexed. Me?

One day it dawned on me that the social worker we both spoke with each day (mandatory) was my escape out of this dreadful nightmare.

That night XXXXXX planned our escape.

He ordered pizza and had them delivered via the fire escape. We left the boxes strewn around our room and the beer cans too.

That morning every known professional visited us both. We blamed each other. As planned it worked.

We were separated. Another two weeks of bed ridden misery.

Not before he told me his life story, committed with me to a life of education and helping others as did I.

To do good as best we can. To fight our demons.

I understand that he is now a social worker. Successful and happy.

I was moved to another ward and in doing so gave myself time to come back into the land of the living. To stop self harming and talking gibberish myself.

I wrote a letter on paper to the psychiatrist and had it delivered which stated that they were holding me against my own free will. That I was sound of mind and spirit and wished to be placed in the care of my parents.

To be transported to Sydney and that I would commit to a thorough and full health assessment at St. George Hospital, which I did.

Yet again a battery of tests. Doctors after doctors.

Thank goodness my mother saw the sense in ensuring I saw the right people. No more pills. No more medication.

That plane flight back to Sydney was gut wrenching.

I spent 40 days and 40 nights settling my personal affairs, months of unpaid fines, bills and so on before getting back on that plane and returning to start again.

To do good.

LIGHT AND GRACE



Image: Alexander Hayes - Home

Please visit the following link - vimeo.com/12166998

It is a video uploaded to Vimeo of my father-in-law, David Gregson. It is a snippet from his life story that I created with him.

I dedicate this chapter to him and two other significant men who came into my life.

Senior figures whose contribution to me, Alexander Hayes forever changed my life's prospects. Whose unwavering belief in me most certainly propelled me into who I am now.

I dedicate this chapter to my late father-in-law who taught me a great deal in coming into light and grace. A man whose whole life was steeped in colour, in academe, in family and friends.

A man whose first words to me were "...it is good to finally meet you".

Despite his horrific battle with leukaemia and later with cancer (squamous carcinoma) of the skin, through times I feel I contributed to nursing him, at times when he was at his hardest, his family close by his side.

Despite extensive skin grafting, he showed the most remarkable of resilience that I have never yet seen demonstrated in anyone I have ever known.

He was extremely tough but gentle. He suffered no fools. He was cantankerous, passionate, fiercely intellectual.

A man determined to keep his faculties, to push past the dulling of morphine and whose single last love and light being that of my youngest daughter.

Upon hearing that he was to be a grandfather again he remarked that he was happy for his own daughter, the mother of my child.

He also remarked that he recognised that I already had such joy written in my eyes.

He spent long hours with me teaching me all he knew of colour theory, mixing palettes of oil colour, of how to cook terrines, provincial chicken dishes. We sat for many hours amongst his pigeons looking at sunsets together.

Basking in the mid-west Western Australian wheatbelt heat.

Waving our fingers over hills and speaking in magic tongues, drawing on paper. Oh what joy it was. What a privilege to relate as he would say often. Fast forward. Rewind.

So it came to be that I left Bunbury in 1997 amidst a terrific storm having returned to Western Australia from Sydney.

Sheltered in the home of my new found friends in Perth who have to this day remained the closest of spiritual allies. I rented a home in Bellevue, at the base of the Darlington Hills arts community.

Just prior to leaving Bunbury having graduated somehow from my Associate Degree in Arts I wrote a letter to the head of the Curtin University Art School, a Professor who in reading my letter granted me the key to the rest of my life and career as an Artist.

I dedicate this chapter also to that great man who will be reading this chapter with a grin and twinkle in his eye, as he knew just what a rascal I was and how much it meant to me to accepted into the School of Art, Fine Arts, Curtin University.

Through 1997 I worked hard with a friend in a private business and studied part-time. I lived and breathed into my soul the art school.

I met the mother of my youngest daughter and by 1998 we decided to marry after a hasty courtship.

Things happen when children are born.

Couples will of course develop and grow differently.

The metaphysical dimensions of couples move from happy-go-lucky to serious parenting and things get lost on the way.

Whilst we lived well, we felt the need to move from a grand old home in central Perth to that of the Darlington Hills. Stupid mistake but a pertinent one. Green, leafy, steeped in conservative afternoon teas and champagne cocktails or gin-and-tonic on the terrace.

Cupcakes and pin the tail on the donkey. Sparkling Shiraz as the sun sets over the ocean. I laugh and recount with mirth but truly it was beautiful. I learned the difference between cutlery sets, which crystal glasses were used for what beverage.

I was given the honour of carving roasts, selecting spatchcocks, chopping tonne after tonne of firewood. I was steeped in privilege.

During this time I worked with the Department of Family & Children Services. What a paradoxical existence. What a dichotomy.

Assigned to one child for one year. Protective services sheltering this one individual from a history of abuse. I continued to work across domains and soon ended up working within three state prisons.

The Ministry of Justice. Juvenile Justice. Casuarina Prison. Wooroloo Prison. The list went on.

I did my time inside as an Education Officer. Arts Tutor. Academic Lecturer.

Finally that of Special Services Officer, inside "chokie" - the punishment and segregation wing within the prison itself.

We ran performance art classes and my most vivid memory is being surrounded by 12 prisoners who remarked that even if I let both security alerts off to shut the prison down I would still be dead.

We made that the focus of the performance. We finally presented to the Supervisor (God) after 16 weeks of preparation.

My art performances in Curtin University followed suit. They became tough and after the 3rd altercation with my arts lecturers I was warned that my behaviour and installation works were becoming borderline for ejection from the school.

My nudity, whilst appreciated by other students was wearing thin on others. Always happy to get my kit off, lean and tanned I thought little of the impact I was having on others.

The provocateur.

Little has changed.

I was offered the opportunity to take a team of three students out to the wheatbelt town of Kellerberrin and to spend the second half of Honours year with them shooting a documentary of my father-in-law's life.

I dedicate on this third occasion also to the man, the great artist and filmmaker Tim Burns who provided me with the equipment at great risk and also the 40 hours of high definition DAT tape, where my father-in-law told his entire life story. I am forever in gratitude to that third man who

believed it was so important that my father-in-law be able to tell his story for the very last time.

A short documentary was cut from that filming and made into a media production that went to air via the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) years later.

My father-in-law passed away soon after.

Devastated I admit I lost my way. I drank. I got back into drugs.

I ended throwing my life into to some outrageous arts installation works of which I took into the doctorate. I also threw myself into working with hard core prisoners doing their master's programme in prisons. With a fellow colleague I started up the Justice Equity and Teaching in Arts (JETA) program which I believe is still in existence.

I worked also as an Academic Tutor, Designer and then Web Architect for Open Learning Australia (OLA) using a hideous Learning Management System called WebCT.

Art online was born.

The Internet was here. Floppy web 2.0 names like Moodle were born.

I had Stelarc as a Visiting Artist and Lecturer. I worked closely with Victoria Vesna.

Ric Rue.

Alan Lamb.

Oh what heady days I was amongst and in the middle of it all as a peer, colleague, student and other things not worth mentioning here.

I excelled in and loved arts history and wrote some compelling papers which to this day I quote as being the most instrumental in my arts career to date.

Relational aesthetics.

Nicolas Bourriaud.

Lovely stuff. The role of audience in the completion of art works. Oh how paradoxical considering the flack I have experienced since learning about the importance of the audience in the completion of an art work.

How the moral servitude of a nation as being always under assault and none more so than the iconoclast - the artist.

Me.

The altermodernism.

I excelled in my Honours year during which I was offered the opportunity to apply for the Creative Doctorate of Fine Arts (PhD). My application was accepted and my supervision was split between the School of Art and the School of Australian Studies.

After 10 years in universities I had arrived, or so I thought.

SOUL MINING



Image: Alexander Hayes - Western Australian wheatbelt

The joys of teaching, bringing knowledge into young minds and thwarting rabid neuroplasticity from years of solvent abuse, malnourishment and neglect.

The pain of separation from my wife and young child.

Lonely, lonely days and nights in Glen Forrest, Western Australia. That enduring silence and rolling over only to find an empty bed. I grieved and I fell hard on my own sword.

As an arts teacher in Thornlie Senior High School I encouraged my young male students to think beyond the depravities of inhumanity on the fall of the twin towers in America.

That getting their heads shaved was a natural collective response but largely misguided. The same of my young charges in John Forrest Senior High School and Kalamunda Senior High School where I also taught multi-media, arts and numeracy/literacy.

The lock-step curriculum did my head in. The pointlessness of school playground duty.

The inane professional development team building bullshit.

I witnessed kids falling through the cracks, disappearing onto the street.

So, I returned back to teaching at Swan TAFE, teaching numeracy & literacy CGEA units to Aboriginal women.

There I was, an asleep young Wadjela man with 17 women in the Nalla Maya program at Swan TAFE College. Sheesh.

I was setup.

They had me beg the next door-teacher for the use of her Wyte board markers.

Looking into her eyes we knew they had set me up. Hours later over lunch we decided that we would be mates. Soul mates.

Weeks later in my unit I had purchased in Maylands, Western Australia she unlocked a part of me I never knew existed.

Damn these witches.

She dug her nails in and tossed her fiery hair.

A soul mate, a friend, a person willing to listen to me, but sadly I wasn't yet ready to tell my story and had I then perhaps even this wouldn't have been needing to be written.

As fate would have it we travelled the world together. I miss her. I always will. I will miss those great moments where we existed with barely a worry or concern.

Hong Kong, Spain, England, France....

Losing children in the late stages of utero has that effect on you.

It cuts deeply into your soul.

Keeps repeating as sobbing decades later.

Sneaks up on you when you least suspect and despite your best attempts to put that young, fully formed foetus out of your mind still repeats through your dreams, hopes and aspirations.

We never did recover from that loss. Together we tried valiantly but to no avail. That emptiness and gap widened between us both. I disappeared into online porn, pizza's and a penchant for hard hitting hip hop.

The joy at learning of the pregnancy, announcing it across the family, to my other two children and the first trimester of change, Hormones. The fattening. Looking for small feet and movements in the belly.

The screams of anguish from the loss.

Wailing.

Beating of fists against the cranium.

Tears after tears.

The sadness never goes away. It just changes through time.

In the letting go only then does peace prevail.

They were a dynamic mob, my women students, predominantly Nyungar. I also travelled out to Northam, Mukinbudin, Kellerberrin but my favourite being that of Quairading.

Which is where I met old Mother XXXXXX

Sitting on the balcony one day utterly exhausted and perplexed as to why my Aboriginal students hadn't turned up for the fourth consecutive week I turned to this wise old lady on the balcony and asked flippantly, "...I wonder if these students will ever turn up?"

With that amazing and warm smile she slowly answered, barely audible.

"...When you are ready Son, when you are ready."

And so began my lessons in what it means to be on country, to be connected to the mob, what happens in Aboriginal communities and the whole history of which I naively had transversed.

The importance of Nura, of Booroo.

I made every mistake there was to make. The shame. Even in refusing to be married off to a young woman I'd been pointed to.

I drove over 700 kms in a round trip per week teaching in rural and remote communities till one day whilst back teaching my Nyungar ladies I was confronted by my boss xxxxxxxx who bless her heart gave me an opportunity of a lifetime in soul mining.

She asked whether I'd be interested in teaching for three days a week at a local drop-in youth centre in an off campus arrangement delivering numeracy and literacy units to street kids.

Kids prostituting for cans of coke at age 13, solvent sniffing, homeless, addicted to heroin, speed and without any one loving them as we so often come to appreciate in our own parents.

Kids that have been horribly abused, far deeper than my own sordid pre-teen nightmare. Perhaps it was my own story, tattoos, ability to understand their deep soul pain that they related to me. Trusted me.

Within weeks the centre Director had agreed to my idea to turn the centre into a creative art piece and attracted in a huge number of young street kids, to expand the program ten fold. I simply did a few things to make that difference. It became my full time job.

Seven days a week.

I got permission to completely 'bomb' the old bowling club where we were stationed in graffiti. To make it a streetscape architectural centre, a visual canvas. I began by hand painting the exterior walls in flat black paint.

A curious kid with a gold tooth from the Juvenile Justice program laughed and said "...they are just going to bomb over that tonight when you are gone."

I asked who would be bombing it that night.

Within minutes he became my first student.

We measured up the wall, worked out how much paint we needed, the cost, volume, tax, ordering forms. He had completed his maths unit and

that of his elective for the CGEA by the time we had prepared lunch together. I took a punt.

Had them build me a locked steel cage in my office. Spent the budget assigned to photocopier maintenance on spray paint. Nibs. Cans. Visiting guest graffers. We ran DJ gigs and by the end of two years just under 60 kids graduated with the equivalent of their school leaving certificate.

Perhaps the only thing they would ever attain in an academic alternative, an 'educative arrangement' as I coined and used many times over in future years.

Young men and women whose lives may have been shaped by the bonding in a program that gave them hope.

Gave them options.

Gave them a way out besides a pick (needle) in their arm and a fast road to hell. I know that I single handedly saved at least one life in that mob.

That young man still runs the same program I helped setup all those years ago. When mobile phones were bricks. When SMS was the latest way to make contact with each other.

The dawn of mobology.

MOBOLOGY

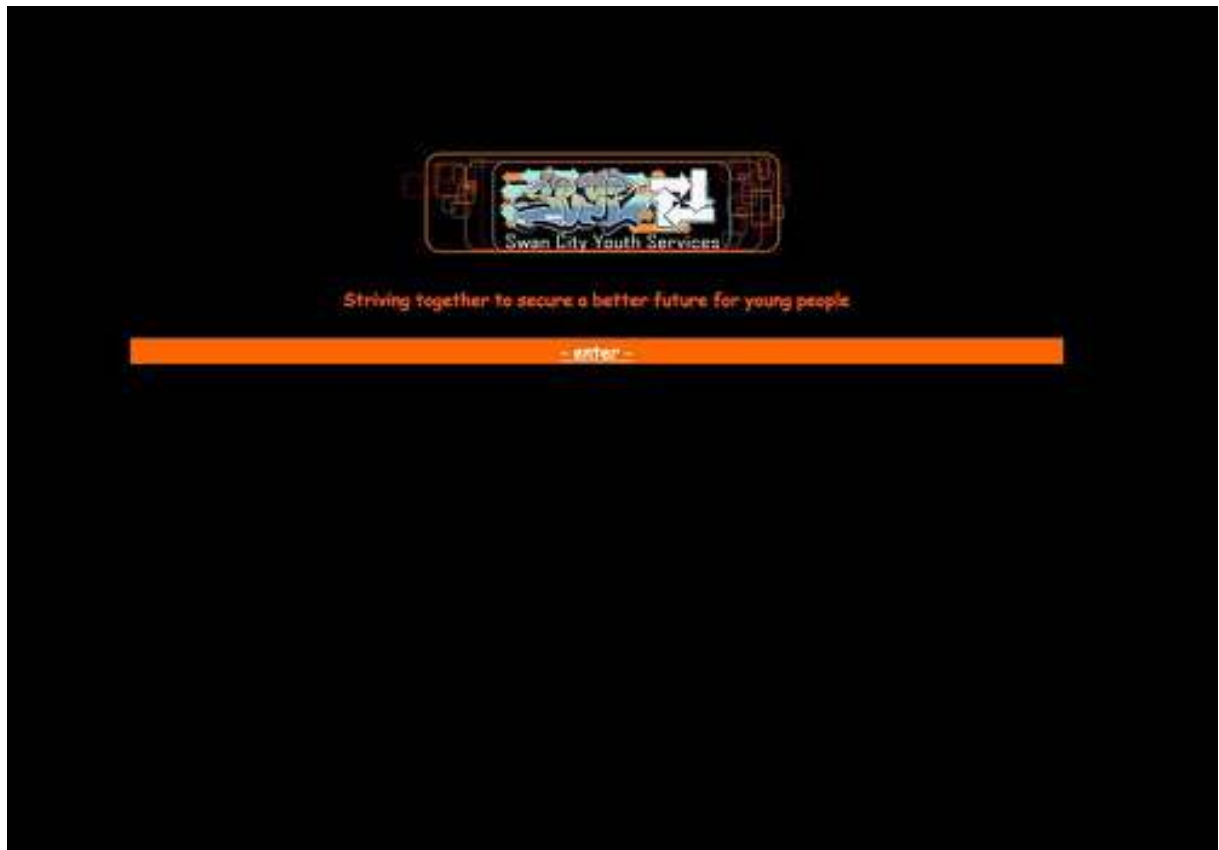


Image: Alexander Hayes - 2003 - SCYS website

In late 2002 I noted a great deal of movement in the ed-tech space where people were avidly debating the onset of learning management systems.

Later in 2005 amidst the flurry of interstate flights this - Die LMS die!

I was more interested (obsessed might be a better description) and I still am with where the onset of wearable technologies take us as humans. Mobile phones were in use in the cars when we apprehended kids with FACS as far back as 1998.

My Nokia brick phone soon after let me take calls in the field. I was the only person I know at the time spending 1/5th of my wages in phone calls.

Testing the grid.

Pinging photo data through to Glogger.mobi

Then MMS packet moblogging with Joi Ito arrived on the scene.

SMS was rampant by 2003 and the ringtone business was booming.

Makes me smile when I think of how advanced we thought we were in creating and hacking into our handsets to have our own ringtones.

Skype was in play. I graduated from the brick phone to the flip phone.

My own children loved the little Samsung Flip as it had great games on it. I traded my DJ Stanton Decks (what an idiot) in to get my hands on a 02 XDA Personal Digital Assistant (PDA).

I gave birth to the Australian Mobile Learning Network (AMLN).

We travelled and presented a paper in South Africa at the premier mobile learning conference - mLearn.

My LiveJournal account got hacked.

All I can now find is the last entries in 2006.

Three years of writing lost - boo!

I was building websites using HTML.

PHP...eeeek....even Flash !

I owned every imaginable computer till I got that first laptop. I began building websites with the kids for fun, using Frontpage as part of their curriculum.

I'd built pneumatic controllers with Stelarc powering things across the internet and the 'Fire Station' in Claremont event and loved participating in Victoria Vesna's 'No Time' web installation.

God how I miss those Club Zho gigs.

Drinking Ouzo and swooning away to Kat Hope, Lindsay and co.

Suddenly the whole world was connected up.

Everything started speeding up.

We built an 'Invisible City, together. Paul Carstairs, Caspar Fairhall, Rob Muir and myself.

My Creative Doctorate at Curtin University was in full swing. I was a fellow editor of a faculty journal.

I began public speaking and exhibiting all over the place. I've lost count of how many things I was involved in but remember fondly my days and rabid nights as a member of the Wellman Street Studio in Northbridge, Western Australia.

Our studio shared a common wall with a brothel. Nuff' said.

With a fellow sound artist we built and toured an installation made of 44 gallon drums through urban, rural and remote communities in Western Australia.

Someone spotted me using SMS with my students. I was invited to participate in a research project using SMS with 'disengaged' kids. The Australian Learning Framework (AFLF).

I travelled far and wide.

Particularly through the Pilbara regions of Western Australia. Newman even. Then my dreams came true - Punmu, Jigalong, Parnngurr communities in the central desert of Western Australia.

I'd also hit pay dirt by hanging out in London with the Moblog.co.uk crew. Rural and remote communities for longer stints. Mobdeadly.

Limitlessness.

I'd begun moblogging my entire existence.

It took me all around the world. Party, party, party.

I lost contact with lots of reality and started going full cyborg.

We lost our baby.

I pulled out of the Creative Doctorate.

Things started falling apart.

Middle child moves to Melbourne.

I got noticed and donned a suit (bad mistake) and started going public with my views in public presentations on the architectures of educative arrangement - the dawning of mobology - learning in the hand - a networked handheld computer, body worn.

All we proved was that the notion of young people being disengaged (yet they had a cell phone in their hand) was false. They were highly engaged as it was the architectures of the education system sadly lagging behind.

I started hanging out online with the teaching and learning Online (TALO) crowd.

My Father had a stroke.

FATHER



Alexander Hayes

23 hrs · Edited · 41w

#realstory · Peaceful discussions of times past and present · I love you Dad · you mean everything to me xo — at Canberra Centre



Like · Comment · Share

Image: Alexander Hayes - William Wilson Hayes

One of the most important, most rewarding aspects of my life is the fact I am now a Father to four amazing children.

It fills me with joy waking everyday knowing that it will always be the case, that the child that I lost and the four I have as being the most blessed of people I will ever have an enduring and loving relatedness with. It defies belief as to those who inflict pain on others by putting themselves between the love of a parent and their child.

So I remember the moment.

I sat at the end of the bed in Bayswater, Western Australia and made the decision to move back to Sydney. My life was not going to plan. I sold the unit I had improved in Maylands and lost money in the process. The global financial crisis was biting everyone and the mining boom hadn't quite arrived.

I continued to record my life using a moblog.

I was fighting my own demons and my partner and I were sinking to new lows.

I lived by myself in Amy Street, Erskineville, Sydney complete with dank dampness, narrow pass through, park of she-oaks, stench of traffic, bustle of noise and crashing cacophony of people of all descriptions. I swapped rent for upkeep of my rental house, painting it inside and out, repairing damaged woodwork and building a little garden of succulents which I love.

I worked at TAFE NSW in Strathfield at what was aptly named the Centre for Learning Innovation (CLI).

Train trips backwards and forwards from the city centre. Numerous Thai dinners with dear friends that I'd come to know and love.

My partner (still) then decided to come and re-kindle again this time in Sydney. Brought my step-son over and he started at Erskineville Primary School.

Lasted a few months and then one sunny morning, with light streaming in through the bedroom window she made the decision to go back home to Perth.

Devastated I recall smoking packet after packet of cigarettes till the ashtray overflowed. Drowned myself in red wine and eventually in anything I could find.

My role at CLI came to an end when I realised that each and every new idea that I put to my manager was going from her in tray into the bin.

I'd come from Western Australia filled with hope about being able to put into practice my new found ambitions in mobile learning. I took the ideas to a dear friend and she helped me win a new role with the AFLF again, employment office at the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER).

Amazing colleagues. A wondrous breath of fresh air. Deep inquiry. Deep thinkers and beautiful moments where the concepts of flexible learning were fostered.

We moved in together. We rented a large apartment that looked out over the city centre.

I began working in the tower at 1 Oxford Street in Sydney. Gay central.

Beautiful sunsets spent with her and her new partner cooking meals together, living and loving a working life never far from the computer and running many, many online and offline projects.

Train rides and lovely times going between project to project around the state. Hope filled professional development sessions where I oscillated between facilitator, technical expert to right-hand-man.

My boss and flatmate woke me with bad news.

My father had suffered a stroke.

"...Dad, you may not be able to move that hand, arm or leg but you can move the other. Let's find a way to re-teach and re-learn your way back."

I gave him an ice-cream carton filled with nuts and bolts from his own workshop. Over a period of months he gradually learned to put them back on those bolts, complete with washers.

My father had another stroke. This time far more severe.

My mother, ever the angel that she has always been nursed him.

My brother and I cut a hole through the downstairs laundry wall and jack hammered our way through tons of sandstone rock to create a new bathroom.

Complete with grab rails and room for a wheelchair if need be.

I visited my parents with increasing worry.

My father was talking poorly yet grew stronger and stronger physically by the day. He learned to walk again. He lost his balance though and never regained it.

Talk again. Hold a spoon again.

He must have been horribly frustrated being the physical man he has always been. Through tears and bitter cursing he learned to be anew again, to drop some of that anger and frustration.

He had no choice this time around.

My old street smart mates rallied around and helped me repair things in that big house that I never called home.

We fixed rust balcony poles, concrete cancer. Completing rebuilt the storm water and sewer drainage system. I travelled extensively and repeatedly returned to that place in the bush, that sanctuary of eucalypts and screeching Garraway.

Then it happened.

My father had a brain haemorrhage.

With tubes coming out of every orifice and in critical care in hospital he clung on to dear life. Drifting in and out of consciousness, in and out of recognition of who we were he was transferred to a new ward.

He began again. We began again.

TALO



Image: Alexander Hayes - TALO, New Zealand

The internet brought with it both good and bad according to some people. Designed by the military to Hoover up all humans communication, patterns of engagement and indiscretions.

I would rather describe it as possibly one of the most important things to evolve for humanity (and against it) in two centuries. An electronic resource filled with interactions around information and systems of knowledge.

An engineering feat and my key foci for future research endeavours.

I have always been (as some would know) interested in the identity management of data, particularly the identity awareness of research data.

For some reason the logic of systems comes easy to me but the complexities of humans using them along with the UX and UI design to ensure that things flow smooth, challenge me.

Humans are weird creatures at times and they often confuse me with the myriad of ways they manifest.



Image: Alexander Hayes - Colleague, Marg O'Connell - TALO

So in 2006 I attended what I consider to be one of the pinnacle global events of my education career - 'The Future of Learning In A Networked

World'.

Key thinkers, philosophers and activists from all over the globe invited to join a travelling un-conference facilitated by an enigmatic and close mate, Leigh Blackall.

I recall a breakfast conversation on Waiheke Island, Auckland where we avidly debated where we were heading as humans, pedagogically. What a joy and blessing it has been to remain in contact with this network, this hybrid of souls bound forever it seems as long as notions of connectivism and the electronic ether we call the Internet remains alive.

During this year I made firm and fast friends with people from all over the world, participated in the most amazing of online forums, mobile blogging projects, connected and flexible learning projects.

I'm keeping this a short chapter as the hyperlinks alone speak a zillion words. With the onset of Facebook and the silo of Google Plus much of these networked connections are now bound in a conservative, "private" exchange of information.

In this time I learned to be open, to value my network, to see myself as an international researcher and to reach out to others to learn and grow as an individual, part of a greater whole. I published avidly and openly to the internet and do not regret any of my interactions however misguided at times with others. My array of online personas have enabled me to see others grow and to grow along with them through time and space.

What a privilege it is to continue this journey, face-to-face and online.

SEXUALITY

I choose to live my life by one accord - Libre D'être

Free to be. Free to be me.



Image: Pansexuality Pride Flag

I urge you to access, read and try to understand the term pansexuality.

That is how I choose to be identified publicly.

It is one of the world's most misunderstood terms and yet may in fact be one of the most compelling factors across cultures in determining what

constitutes an individual's sexuality, only if you agree at all in being identified in any way whatsoever.

Many people do not identify as anything and that is their right to do so.

My sexuality is no secret and I do not attempt to keep it a secret. I choose to be publicly identified for one reason.

Personal as political. I have the right to be whatever I wish to be.

I understand that my sexuality is my own private business but in the context of this publication I am not afraid to make it known to whomever wishes to know of this fact that I am omni or pansexual.

This act of me making this public statement may serve to help those who struggle with their own sexuality, as I have for many years in my life, only to discover that in fact there is a knowledge for wisdom in being who you are and in being open about who you are.

To that end, many people are labelled simply out of convenience with the term 'bisexual', across cultures and society yet the truth may be that they are in fact mislabelled and misunderstood out of sheer ignorance. Again, I repeat, I urge you to access, read and try to understand what pansexuality actually means.

This is a serious topic but for a laugh you can also refer to this article which I think is a wonderful example of how wickedly distorted we are in society as we face and discuss sexuality according to the Kinsey Scale.

This chapter is written here because it doesn't matter where it sits, as it will remain present through all chapters of the book of life, of which we have no control over, nor of the pages, nor of the chapters themselves. The only thing we can do is go back and flick the pages over, however, we can never re-write those pages past or at the point of today.

The meaning of life is just that little dash between the date of our birth and the date of our death on our tombstone. Better get used to it.

The greatest challenge that humans have is in accepting their own mortality and so they go and create religions and promise a long way off nirvana in an attempt to control the mass on the ground. It is the single most insidious and vile form of dishonesty ever invented and is the constitution behind all wars and divisions in the world.

Hence my own declaration that I'm not only pansexual but I am also a staunch atheist. So that makes me an iconoclastic pansexual atheist, but only if you are a label lover.

So, back to sexuality. Some key things I've learned and live by.

It belongs to no one else.

It is not someone else's business.

No one has the right to determine what our sexuality is and not to tell us what is 'morally right'. Moral rights are about as wrong as day is to night.

No one has control over our sexuality.

Our sexuality is fluid through time and space and at times I have felt that ambiguity of gender too, especially through my late teens.

Our attractiveness to others may differ from time to time. People have no right to judge us by our sexuality etc. etc.

You have heard it all before.

In our western attempt at democracy we are still collectively struggling with how not to discriminate against others based on their identity it

seems. Our society is putting it mildly all fucked up. Religiously inculcated.

I firmly believe, as a work in progress, that my truth and my values are as it is to me, that sexuality is fluid, a changing domain of knowledge and is shifting the more I seek to understand it all.

An example of this is that I have a friend who at one point was known as 'Nathan' and who after a transition time became (always was) Samantha.

I was always attracted to Nathan as I am to Samantha. Perhaps now more.

In summary, I am attracted to an individual who is transgender.

That is not the only person I am attracted to who identifies as someone other than a heterosexual or homosexual or anything in between. Note, I am not attracted to their sexuality - I am attracted to the person, the soul that inhabits that vessel.

For many of you reading this book or chapter you may wish to tag, label, or group me by a better known term - bisexual.

So, if it is easier for you to refer to me as being bisexual, then I am bisexual. I am of approximately 4% of the human population who has the capacity to love men, women or other genders equally, not with a statistical differential, just the capability of loving (and being sexually attracted to) another irrespective of their gender.

Whilst we are on the topic of love, I have had many lovers in my life.

It is not boastful or egotistical, nor hedonist, rather cathartic, sad and emblematic of my life story. I have been married three times and engaged to be married at least that number again.

I have been blessed with children to people I was not married to and have children to people I have been married to. I have lost children in utero and have lost a step-child in a car accident.

I have loved, I have lost, I have grieved and none of it had anything to do with my sexuality.

I have, as many people know, been intimately involved with adults many years my senior or at times adults a number of years my junior.

A simple relationship map of my own identified partnerships confuses me enough, never mind those who often tried to draw it up for me!

My sexuality is not determined by whom I have had relationships with.

It is not bound nor determined by who I have had sex with nor by those whom others suppose I have had sex with. My sexuality is not determined by what others perceived or supposed I was doing with people who I was friends with either.

In fact, my friendships with others and my close relationships with others are as diverse and as wonderful as the sky is blue on a clear day and black in the midst of a storm.

I have friends who identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, transgender and the list goes on.

I have "gay" friends and I have "straight" friends. I have close relationships as mates, brothers, friends, buddies, friends-with-benefits and every other known combination of friendships and have always done so with people who identify as men, women and every known other non-homogeneous of human form.

It does not determine how you perceive of me nor does it entitle you to make any assumptions as to who I am intimately involved with. In fact, I

can count on two fingers how many deeply, intimately and trusting soul mate relatedness I have had in my lifetime.

In summary, my sexuality is my business and my mine alone, even though it is public. I choose to do what I want with that knowledge and to change that at any time I chose to do so.

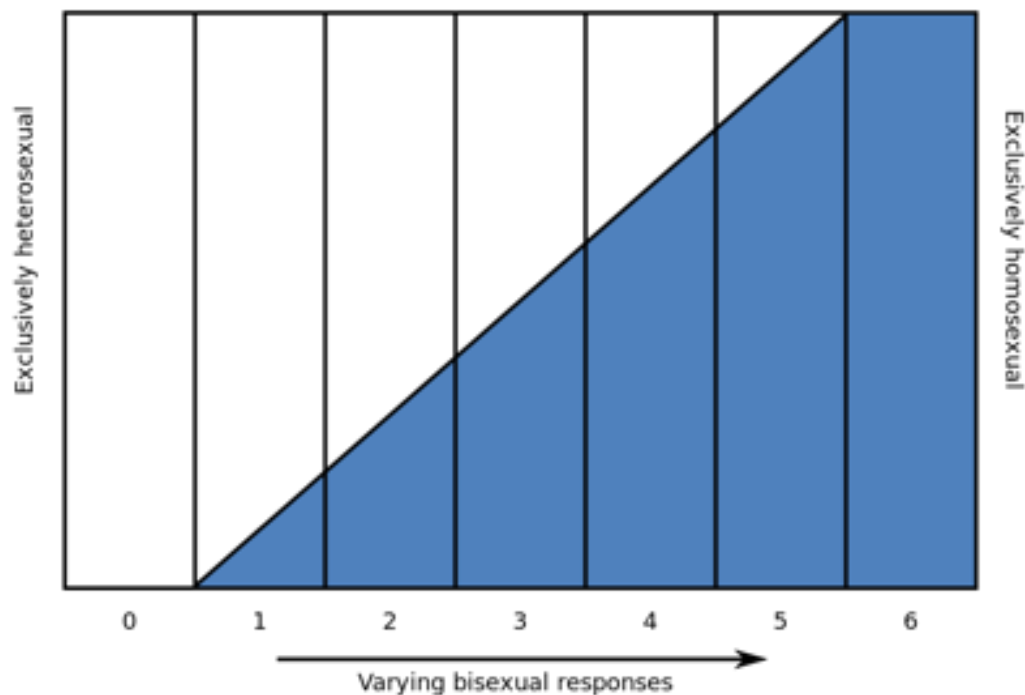


Image: The Kinsey Scale - Wikipedia

I am choosing to make my sexuality preferences known as open and public in the hope that will encourage others to accept and be proud of their own state of being which for many people is the core of much of their life's unhappiness.

I love humans in all of their manifestations and I do not discriminate against those who choose one, and one alone.

You can be heterosexual if you wish and I will not discriminate against you simply because you choose to relate sexually to one gender type.

If you so happen to be heterosexual and monogamous then no, you do not have a convenient box to put me in nor a tick-box that fits. Again, if you happen to be heterosexual, monogamous and religious then an extra no.

You don't not have a label you can use for me and neither does your institution. It never did. Your institution or your religion does not own my sexuality.

How do you identify?

IN LETTING SAD GO

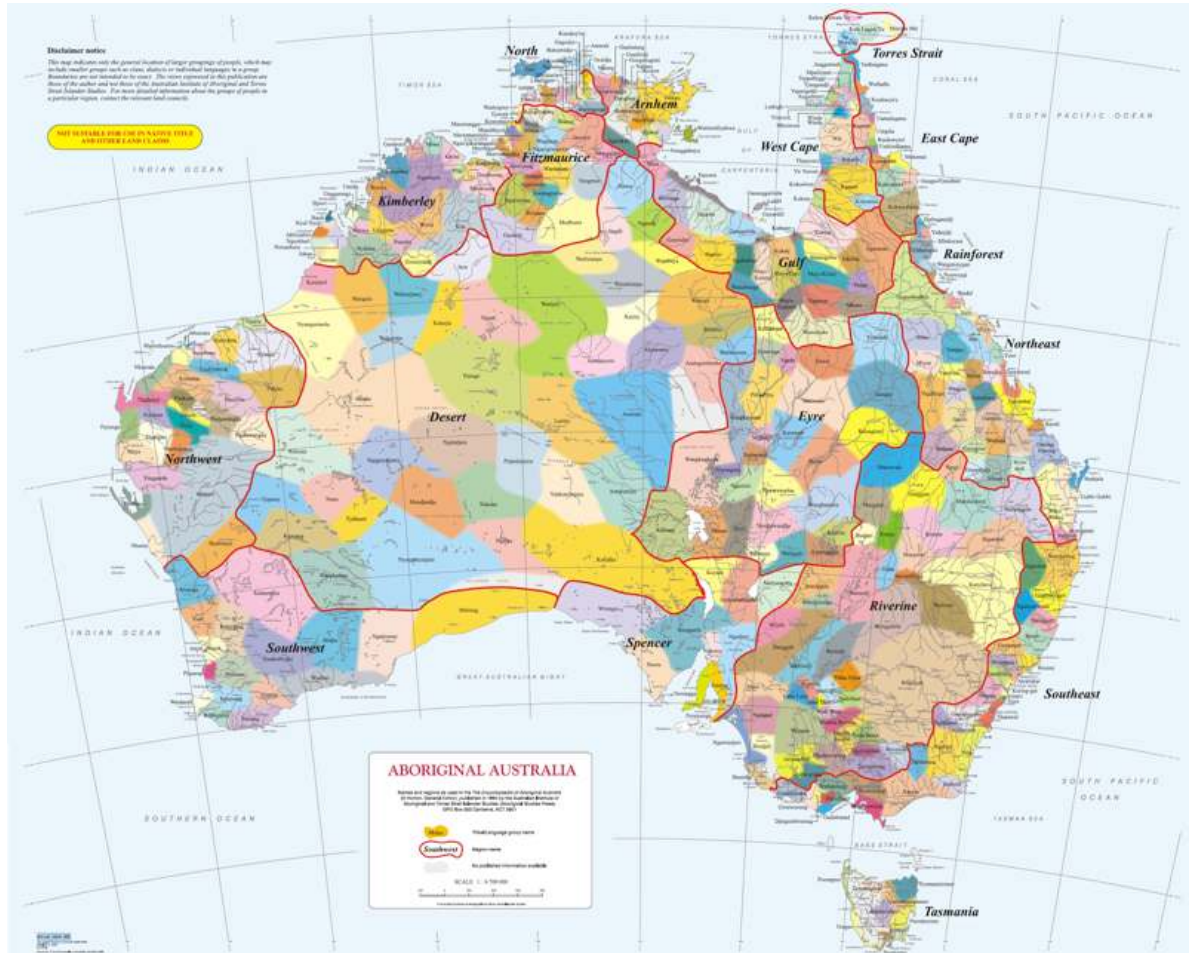


Image: Aboriginal Australia - Author Unknown

I, Alexander Hayes, have done a lot of things wrong. Some say 'wrong' is not a word but until I find something to replace it with easily it will remain. Perhaps 'shame' is the more useful term here.

A bit like saying anger is a useless and pointless emotion, where forgiveness quells the soul and then brings on the saint.

Gah...I just did wrong.

Things I still have difficulty talking of, yet, in speaking of this it has lifted what has eaten away at me for almost a decade. This chapter is one of the most exhilarating to write, one of the most difficult of all had I been cognisant of my activities at the time.

Me, the white colonisers son contributing to cultural genocide when so many many other ways could have been employed to prevent what I contributed to. A bit like saying 'native title' when all it happens to be is a pack of lies, land grabbing, resource exploitation. More genocide wrapped in language of the coloniser.

The following tracks time from 1992 through to 2005, in episodes culminating in my sorry at the end of 2014. In writing this I acknowledge the lands of the Martu, Aboriginal Australians past, present and future Elders.

I came from the land west, travelling east of Newman, Western Australia, of my work in Jigalong, Punmu and months spent in Parnngurr community great Sandy Desert and near Lake Disappointment.

Beautiful country and country for me where I put my feet in the red sand and sit down and be still. 45 degree days spent sitting under trees.

Talking with Martu Elder women about my sorrow and my sadness.

My shame.



Image: Alexander Hayes - Lake Disappointment, Western Australia

In gifted a symbol, a woven basket which I carried through workplaces, homes and which haunted me till end of 2014, bringing peace in a way I was told would later be realised.

About my time working for FACS, DOCS and later MOJ writing "soft" reporting, digging around where social workers feared to tread and gathering evidence to have kids removed from families, from the mob.

From those I came to be respectful of and by. My people.

I learned then on which land I'd been born.

Who were that people in that country.

My totem.

The Bat.



Image: Alexander Hayes - Car Kit phones

I acknowledge that I came from my time working with Noongar communities south and north of Mt. Newman, the Pilbara, and time in Sandstone and Meekatharra. I was employed by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework and Pilbara TAFE to investigate GSM 1 and 2 packet coverage.

York, Mukinbudin. Kellerberrin. Northam. York.

I've lost count of where I went, which went through me. Mt. Stirling and Kokerbin Rock. The screams of and horror of New Norcia.

To extend the network and to test the domains within which flexible learning delivery could take place. I knew it would be handheld, mobile and wearable as far back as 1995.



Image: Source Unknown

I had earlier with Family & Children Services been using car based systems as early as 1992, working alongside social workers and police in child apprehensions.

House raids. Calls from the field.

Flip phones and 2G had just hit the market by the time I'd taken off on country flights with bags full of beeping flashing things I knew little about. Tracking my every move. Packet pushing data up coverage without permissions.

The allure was palpable.

I'd swapped my Stanton DJ decks just to buy this device at the princely sum of \$1250 UK pounds. I then as a creative formed the Australian Mobile Learning Network (AMLN).

In hindsight, king shit and master of nothing.

As a researcher and educator, excited, I took mobile technologies into, in some instances, where the community had never seen a mobile phone before.

Never seen an O2 XDA PDA with pocket marketing via Telstra Countrywide trials to data stations as far away at the UK. Text America.

Holy fuck....I actually did that. Shame. Shame.

Thanks goodness of community consultation otherwise the Mobdeadly moblog would have long be turned off from it's server array, images community marked eradicated.

I sincerely thank Matt and Alfie from Moblog.co.uk who continue to this very day, a decade later to pay for the upkeep of this historical and

important resource no matter what my thoughts of shame are on it's contents.

Anyway....

Arriving in Parnngurr community I met a wonderful person.

Trish Everett who was at that time Principal of the Parnngurr Community School.

We built a Linux school ICT framework together. Patched in satellite signals. Constructed parabolic dishes to augment signal dishes. Crash coursed online curriculum across community where there was one login and password and the very same one that everyone used.

No singularity. None of the "I am me and you are you". No single accounts. No single passwords.

We planted vegetable gardens. Argued socio-ethical.

Politics. Smiled at each other lots.

Talked too much. Stood around grubby and reeking of BO without a care in the world.

Fire twirling.

The best of days.

Trish you rocked my world.



Images: Alexander Hayes - Parnngurr Community, Western Australia

Now the Director of Connectful.

Protector.

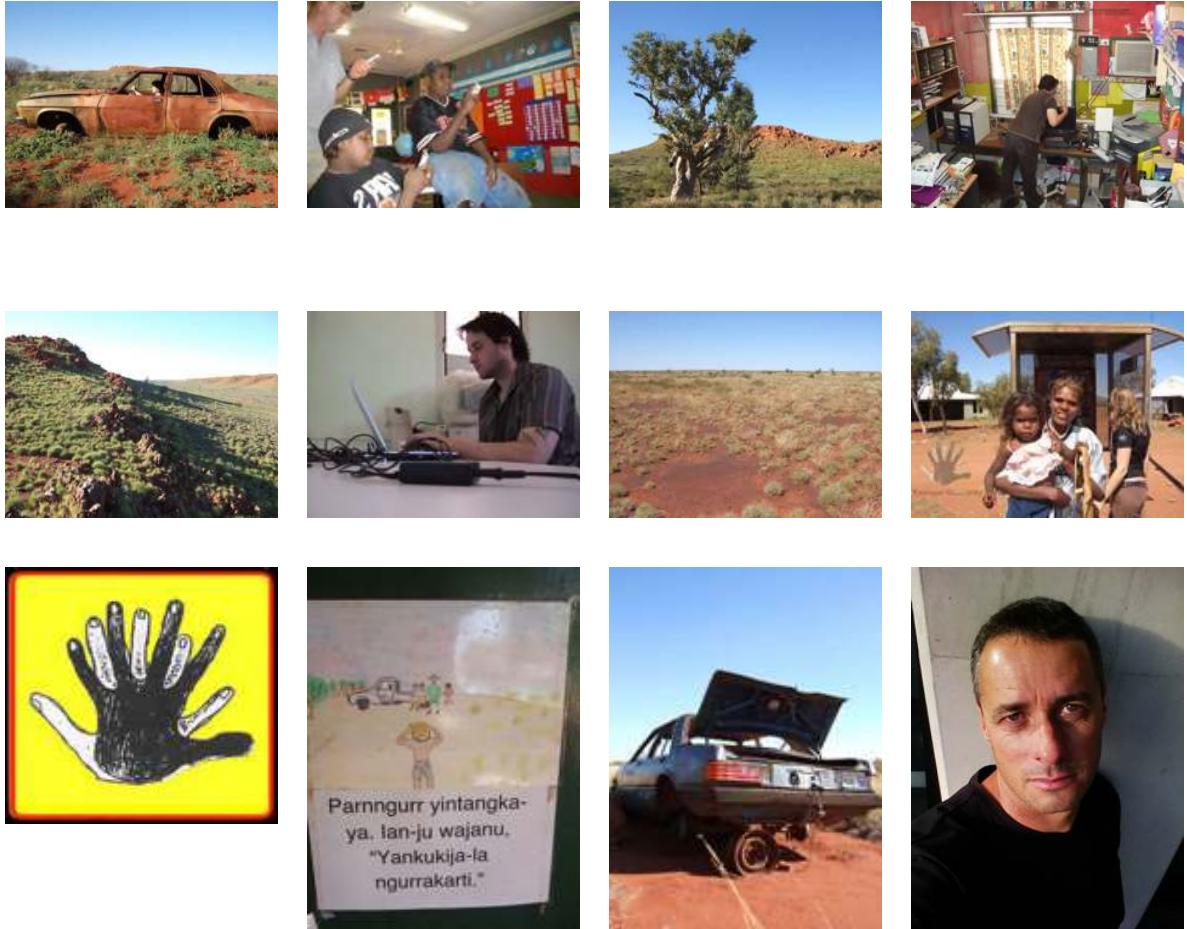
Key.

One of a trusted few.

Sometimes in life you meet soul buddies who will travel the journey with you and who urge you to let go, to speak and write your truth, who watch out when watching out is moonlit and dim lit.

Through the good times and the bad.





Images: Alexander Hayes - Parnngurr Community, Western Australia

So it comes to December 2014 when after 10 years of keeping my Elder's gift, my woven me, that I came to take those words.

Take them to ground.

When you are ready to let go of that sadness, that shame, that part of you that knows you were part of a system not the system itself, that young man who thought he was doing (and in some cases I did good), that when it comes time.

"...Put your hands to country, put your hands of the earth where you are and we will know. Put your sadness to ground and you can let go."

So I did as I was told.

I dug that hole in Reconciliation Place, Canberra Australia, that sterile civic monolith under the eye of a security guard who inquired as to why I was digging a hole by hand in the garden next to the 'Stolen Generation' monument.

That assembly of monoculture, that monument to public art Fascism.

I laid to rest my sadness.

My sorrow and sadness for participating directly in the removal of 166 Aboriginal children from families in the south west of Western Australia and the northern suburbs of Perth, Western Australia.

For POC night observation work, for "Education Officer" information and the last of the apprehension of Care for Children team across to Wards of The State team.

Clinical psychologists that moved quickly from weekly to daily afternoon one hour debriefs.

My sorrow. My shame.

My sadness taken back to country.

To lighten the ground in that sterile, cold and heartless political nightmare of monument and memorial. I knelt in front of that inscribed marble stone for almost 20 minutes until I had no more tears to cry.

I am sorry.



Image: Alexander Hayes



Image: Alexander Hayes

We the removed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children of Australia would urge you to look through our eyes and walk in our footsteps, to be able to understand our pain. We call on all Australians to acknowledge the truth of our history, to enable us to move forward together on our journey of healing, because it is only the truth that will set us all free.

"To me, they were children, that's that. I never thought about what colour their skin was... they were there for me to mother - and it had to be mothering, not just caring."

Image: Alexander Hayes



Image: Alexander Hayes

ROMANCE



Image: Kimberley Rose - Brachychiton viscidulus

Âme profonde, dans nos vies par le biais des lignes gravées yeux ronds, chemins comparaître devant nous et nous trouvons nos pas à l'unisson que la parenté. Par le souffle, malentendants ne écoute pas, ne cherche pas voir. Un sentiment-deux monde, surréaliste, conscient, que les amateurs nous marchons longue marche, parler à long parler, voyage long voyage.

En racontant, dans le don, notre vérité. Pour traiter l'autre bien , de respecter nos différences , pour montrer sa reconnaissance. La confiance, avant tout...

Magali.

Soul deep, in our lives through lines etched round eyes, paths appear
before us and we find our steps in unison as kindred.

Through breath, hearing not listening, seeing not looking. A two-world
feeling, surreal, mindful, as lovers we walk long walk, speak long speak,
journey long journey. In relating, in the giving, our truth. To treat each
other well, to respect our differences, to show gratitude.

Trust, before all else...

Magali.



Image: February 2014 - Alexander Hayes & Magali McDuffie

THE UNDERBELLY OF SOCIETY



Image: Alexander Hayes - DJ Doof Def

It is 11:42 PM and I should be asleep. I'm writing here with a continuation of the story as it flows chronologically, with a few fast forwards and rewinds amongst it.

This memory keeps coming back to me - wave after wave. It is now February 2015.

So it came to be that with the grace of Professor Ted Snell I was accepted into the Curtin University School of Art after completing the first year of the Associate Degree through the Edith Cowan University in Bunbury.

I'm using names here because all these people are very public figures.

You might want to check my facts with them too and have a laugh at their responses if they ever afford you them. Being the amazing people they are I'm sure they would love to recount as to what a rascal art student I was.

Studying under the wonderful Pat Bandurski, Jenni Doherty, Linda Skrollys, Russell Sheridan and a host of other South Westerners. I remember also during the latter period in 1995 being an Artist In Residence at Edith Cowan University, Bunbury campus.

Sticking mono-print tiles all over nude life sized mannequins.

Hilarious when I come to think of it and yes I'm currently getting them converted and ready for public distribution via Youtube. Mixing absurd sound tracks with the beginnings of video and sonic installations.

Real life learning stuff. Exploring no less.

So Curtin University, Bentley Campus on the other hand provided me with a mind expanding array of students to interact with, a huge pool of

talent, amazing artists to work alongside, international scholar guests including the likes of Stelarc and Victoria Vesna most memorable.

Throughout second year I worked full time at the Department of Family Children Services (FACS), the Department of Juvenile Justice (JJ) and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) concurrently.

Working on the most horrific child abuse cases through after attending classes in the mornings, lax tutorial groups. The whole system of tutorials, reviews and limited lecturer access time by booking them in and negotiated proposals was, in my eyes, just a cop out and a way to get more bums on seats for less.

I chose to combine my anger with some really absurd activity on campus.

My installation 'In Humanity' was treated with horror and disdain.

My 'Body Of Works' nude videography and modelling sessions were largely liked but being the conservative art school it was, not everyone appreciated me being me.

'Project 44' was born in 2002, a whole chapter in it's own right. I had started living my life in art project chunks of time with Rob Muir.

I was also treated (I thought) with contempt and disrespect by some of both peers and lecturers when I dared bring into my installation works (juxtaposition of real life assemblages) of faeces samples, used needles, used condoms and photos of glory hole graffiti, detritus from park pick up points, seedy motels, back alleys of Perth, St. Vincent de Paul Holy Mary's, crucifixes, casualty unit video snippets, roadside verge tributes to road accident victims.

My works were focussed on the the underbelly of society.

The secrets.

The unsaid.

Grief.

Sadness.

Loss.

Then going to a juxtaposition of drinking Sauvignon Blanc on the terrace at home, lobster on Rottneest Island, spatchcocks and truffles.

I considered those two years to be gritty, confrontational yet speaking directly to that of reality pitching the sublime against that of the practical and present realities of our time. The savage juxtaposition of the everyday reality we all inhabit.

The lies and deceit of 'society' and the 'looking goods'.

What a privilege it was to work with Ben Joel (you behave yourself mister!), Harry Hummerston (printmaker guru), Annette Siemen (so you didn't get me kicked out of the school after all) and the marvellous Julian Goddard who introduced me to the incredible concept which I still pitch as the most valuable learning of all time in my artist career - that of Relational Art.

Yes, you as a member of the audience complete the work.

Without your interaction, your presence, your reaction, or inaction we still get to live amongst the underbelly of society unchecked.

Not surprisingly, my artworks were not for sale.

THE CREATIVE

Ever since I was a young boy it came to my attention that people around me had pictures drawn on their bodies.

Tattoos.

I noticed the trash collectors had tattoos on their forearms, legs. I noticed that naval personnel had tattoos that bore the insignia of their troop, clan, rank. I noticed tattoos on the martial arts instructors, boxing ring keepers, weightlifting coach.

As I became older, as a teenager, I noted that many people of my own age group begin to speak of tattoos in a way which confused me. I listened to attributions of getting tattoos as a right of passage, as the transition from that of boyhood into manhood, also of girlhood into womanhood, an

My peers began drawing tattoos that they hoped they would one day be able to have tattooed to their bodies. They spoke in story, in song, as if they were entranced by the permanence of the symbol, the transcendence of one life state to another through the creative - the artist who drew, not on ink on paper, but that of ink on flesh.

At age 11 using a needle, indian ink and some cotton wool I decided to be that creative - on myself.

I recall the shock of the needle entering my skin, popping through the skin layer to the deeper sinew, muscle, bone.

Being right handed I marked the left hand side of my body. I plunged the needle ten times and created a dot just above my thumb on my left hand and it is still there.

One day a friend of mine, a very young man in his teens, Coxy came into our lives and he had several of these "homies" or self made tattoos. His sad story of how he came to have them was as a detained juvenile, uncared for and locked up for a very minor offence.

At this time aged 15 or 16 I was already engaging in graffiti art on public property, trains, cars and any surface that would take a streak of paint.

Where I could "lay up", build a piece, be seen. Our bodies soon also bore the marks of that which we "put up" all over the place.

At this age I decided to tattoo what which I was using as a tag, symbol or mark in graffiti and apply it to my body. I again, with teeth gritted used indian ink, a needle and a cotton swab created a tattoo of that tag to the top of the first digit on my left hand.

It took about 20 mins to complete and I recall the exhilaration of the pain I felt as it recovered. I was 'tagged'.

Since that age, in total visibility of everyone I have ever met, come in contact with, applied for jobs through, held babies with, shook hands with, drunk coffee over, everyone has had full visibility of that tattoo.

Very rarely did or do I get asked what it meant to me, only rather a division of those who accepted me as I was, those who noted it and/or did not accept me as I am.

At age 18 I decided to be the first of our peers and get a tattoo at the 'Illustrated Man' tattoo parlour next to Central Railway Station in Sydney. The buzz of the gun, the size of the tattoo and the fact I had it done on my left hand back of shoulder, bouncing off the shoulder blade sent me reeling.

The tattoo took most of an hour and I stumbled home ink drunk and in shock.

Over the ensuing weeks and months many of my friends, peers and acquaintances also got tattoos.

Dragons, demons, birds, snakes, love-hate across their knuckles and some with tattoos that they thoroughly regret and still express regret for to this day. At age 19 I decided to get a tattoo on my left arm.

It is a long winding path, leading up to a castle with a belfry, bats circling on a full moon. It is unfortunately tattooed in poor green-black ink and even more stupidly I was given the gun to complete the work in an act of bravado, mirror image and stencil guided.

The result is average, poorly articulated yet strongly associated with that part of my life where I did feel that somewhere out there in the world there was a castle in the sky for me.

In my early twenties I stupidly tattooed my girlfriends name on my foot, big toe last digit. That and the index finger tag are my regrets. The meaning for them both have negative associations with them, yet they are me and have always been there so now I accept them.

I am 46 years old.

I have seen many moons come and go. I have been washed ashore as a surfer riding the waves of salt water, the tides of the ocean driven by the cycles of the moon. When there is a full moon I find it very difficult to sleep.

I dream vivid dreams on the full moon.

When I was out in the great central Sandy Desert, on remote beaches near Esperance in Western Australia, walking as a young child at night amongst giant fig trees, as a teenager amongst the national park at night, it was almost always on a full moon.

To begin with I did not understand that my walks, my path, the patterns of what I was doing were in fact driven in some way by this availability of light.

A pattern. Hey. That's new!

I had a sense that the totality of that light meant it was the earth bathed in moonlight, but not sunlight.

As I grew older, found myself in relationships with older women, listened to stories from different cultures about the significance of the moon, its affect on humans, its significance as a symbol through time and space, I began to wonder as to what and why this circle, sign, symbol meant so much to me and more importantly what it meant to others around me.

So I started asking questions.

I was told by some that there is a need to pay attention to lunar activity, that the cycles of life occur cyclically, that humans are affected by the sun and moon in different ways and some profoundly so. I heard that the symbology plays out across all cultures, all creeds and transcends most other symbols that have represented deity, tribe, clan, some long gone and extinct.

Yet, enduring is the same thing that keeps us alive - the sun for what it provides us with light and the moon for how it controls and returns things to a stable core, given we are between 65 and 70% water as an adult, higher as a child.

I began to notice that the sun and moon interchanged at different times, sometime with ferocity of light, sometimes almost hidden entirely.

I noted that sun symbol (circle with dot in centre) and the moon symbol (circle) was the first of symbols used in pagan and wicca symbolisms. I

also noted it everywhere as a representation in Christian Judaic depictions, particularly in early Byzantine paintings and stained glass windows in churches...as a choir boy.

I noted that menstrual cycles, animal behaviour, patterns of natural occurrence, all happened on the full moon, that things changed in the wax or wane of the moon and the ebb and flow of sunlight wash clear those darkest of moments in the lowest of tides, deepest of wanes in flux.

The creative depiction of the sun and moon for me are synergistic, evoke a sense for me that at times we oscillate, spin through life in cycles, circles. In good times, our moods are high yet we expect the opposite and if we are true to ourselves we are able to see the return of patterns, in cycles, in circles, in our being with others, with ourselves and most importantly in relation to the rest of the universe.

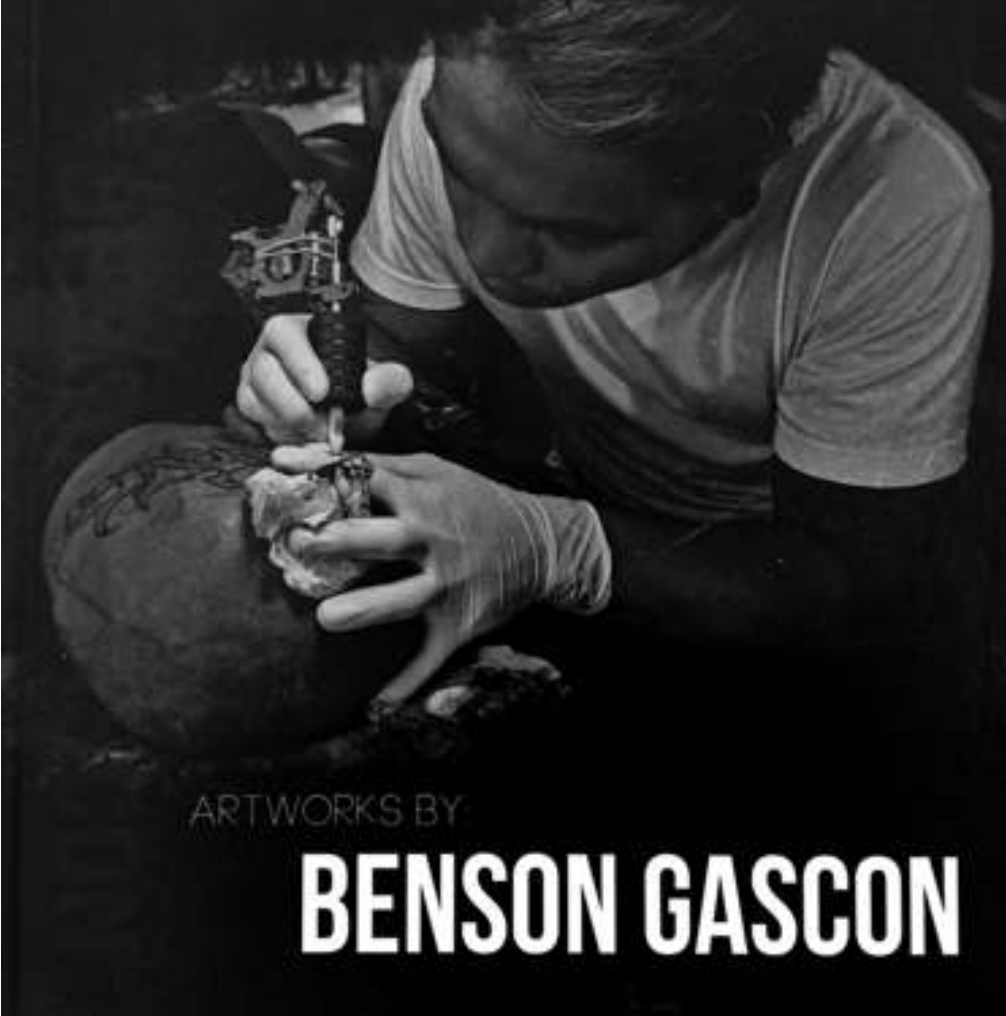
A mere speck in the totality of it all we are as humans. We are it seems seemingly insignificant.

Within our vision we embrace life with two hands, we interact with objects, we grasp, release, create and destroy things with consciousness at times and unconsciousness at others. Our hands occur daily within our field of vision, are the points of expression in numerous culture as we gesticulate, ponder, probe, point.

Our hands come in contact with keys, doors, handles, steering wheels, tools and many other things. Our hands are the foreground to what we say with our eyes and our expressions as accompaniment. Our hands become animals, fingers bent, illuminated and drawn into shadow puppetry.

Today is the day where this knowledge, this knowing and this seeing becomes as a creative expression, on me, for those to see.

BIG FISH TATTOO



ARTWORKS BY

BENSON GASCON

Image: Benson Carson portfolio



Image: Alexander Hayes - Two moons

My expression of meaning, my personal attributions for these two ancient moons I now have tattooed on either of my hands is as follows.

Symbolically those marks bear many, many other meanings far too complex to articulate in this short piece of prose. They will be seen and remarked on by others, always.

In the web between forefinger and thumb are tattoos that mean:

"...From the cycle of one full moon to the next I will embrace life with both hands, create, be as one with my people. My people are those who see me, who accept me, who know of country, what phase of life they are in, where they are headed, able to embrace change and ...who grow."

They will be attributed to many things that I am unaware of and I am yet to learn. Substantively they attest to their inception as front and centre in my life, prominently remind me of where I have been and provide me with a way to see forward in any given moment.

I thank Benson Gascon for being the creative who listened to my story, who honoured my wish and who in his humbling way, prayed before making his mark on my body.

My message to him in thanks was:

"....Deepest respect, and honour, great love for your work."

His reply:

"....My pleasure Alex as it's an honour to be part of your story and art. I'm so glad to meet you and I am more inspired by you in my art. Thank you for your kindness and openness. Stay safe my good friend and see you next time round. God bless."

ON LOSS AND GRIEVING



Image: 2006 - Alexander Hayes - Craig Golding

Encouraged by one individual, one incredible soul, a long time friend with her own deep experiences of tragic love and loss, I now write on the topic of loss and grieving.

My best friend Craig Golding passed away from lung cancer.

My best friend, my mate, my buddy, someone I confided in, hung out with, drunk with, smoked with, laughed with, loved life with. Upon the news of his condition he withdrew into his family.

I didn't have the opportunity to say good bye. I went from daily and sometimes hourly contact to nothing at all.

Silence.

Is.

Golden.

They.

Say...

Craig if you are listening, I miss you every day. I think of you often and I do my very best to be a friend to your late wife and your incredible daughter.

I want my memory of you to live on, to feel that loss and to grieve deeply, to always rejoice in the amazing time I did spend with you. Those crazy years, those naughty and silly things we got up to together.

For as long as I have been alive, as night is to day, the experience of loss and associated grieving, the letting go have been a part of me, as much as joy, happiness and elation.

It can happen in an instant, with the slide of a violin bow, a sudden memory image, a cascading of birds, a gun shot.

I can cry at the drop of a hat in an instant triggered by things that I will never be able to let go of, only to accept that they are and always will be in the past and that they do not forge my future, only occasionally bend me double, sobbing in the present moment.

The passing of my child Jonti Maya who was embraced into this world if only to live briefly in utero.

To never crawl, to never sit, laugh, giggle and play. I almost got her name tattooed across my forearm...oh the depth to what the news of other children passing does in bringing back that pain.

The passing of a friend by hanging himself in a carport late at night to be found by his girlfriend the following day. Of work colleagues grieved at the philandering of their wife, to hang themselves deep in a swamp, high in a tree.

The passing of my late father-in-law after a long drawn out illness, letting go and the family all trying to contain their sense of relief, in grief, united in loss.

Marriages ending in tears, the loss of companionship however terrible of past recollect, the deep sense of failure, the loss of connection, the profound sense of rejection and the wide wave of fallout across children, their precious souls forever scarred by the ensuing interruption and emotional and spiritual schism in their lives.

Deeply loving an incredible young woman only to know that in speaking one's truth that the separation and ensuing letting go would cut deeply into the soul, forever united by the incredible union of physical and intellectual souls but unfit for spiritual purpose.



Image: Author Unknown

The passing of friends from drug overdoses, heart attacks or cardiac failure brought on by drug use.

On the news that my step-daughter of whom I loved and Fathered for 3 years then killed in a car accident.

I can't go on writing of this. There are too many incidents, too many people who I have lost, of whom I grieve for.

What I have learned is that there is peace in accepting that they have all moved on. I have learned that in the constant letting go, the crying, the moments of feeling that pain deeply and allowing myself to cry and FEEL pain that it builds me up.

Loss and grieving are an essential facet of being human.

No matter who we are, no matter where we are from, no matter how privileged we may be, we all will suffer loss, we grieve, we let go.

The answer is not simply dismissing off-cuff these experiences with "toughen up cupcake" and then stoically pursing one's lips and pulling that grief into a bundle of hardened hate of life.

The answer is in FEELING that pain, allowing one's self to cry deeply, in confronting that fear of letting go. Not burying that pain deeper with psychotropic drugs issued by viper psychiatrists whose only mission is to flatline all of humanity.

Empathising with others, encouraging them to speak openly of their loss, standing by them through times of hardship, in being of service in listening.

In crying, our eyes are washed clear to see better with, to love deeper with, to invest in those who matter, everyday and in every way.

To love life itself and all it brings, deeper.

DEPRESSION



Image: Alexander Hayes - "Death Bend" - Coven As We Keep Collection

Strangely, this chapter does not have a locked position in time unlike other chapters in my life story.

For as long as I can recall I have suffered from depression in a number of manifestations of which I will lightly touch on to give you, the reader, the sense of what it means for me to have depression.

Of course I am writing here through a 46 year old filter so at many other stages in my life I would have been less frank with you. Prior to now it would have been highly unlikely no matter who you were that I would have never spoken of this with you, no matter how drunk.

As for any imbued sense of social stigma, respectfully I do not care what anyone's thoughts are on what I should be doing with myself, my life, now.

Depression for me is the state of mind where one is seemingly unable to shake off FEELINGS of lacking self worth, lacking self purpose, lacking in love, lacking in the ability to receive love, lacking the willpower to see beyond the negative. For me depression has many tell-tale behavioural markers and more importantly, signposts that appear like reflectors on street posts in the dark, which we either swerve into or away from.

For a long time swerving off the road was an option on every car trip yet I found better solace in manifesting lamp posts into attractive women and men and crashing myself against those wonderful beings instead.

I believe that much of my depression was a result of post traumatic stress, but not as a disorder, tag, label. I grew up in a tough household and there is no other way to think about it.

It was tough and at times I often wondered whether there was love at all.

That is my feelings that I speak of, those times as a child or as a teenager where I seriously wondered if being here in this world was of any use at all.

I know exactly when my depression started. I know the exact moment as to when it started. It started when I was very, very young clinging onto my Mothers leg in terror. I was three or four years old and I remember the day, the time, the bathtub, the sounds, my feelings and my abject terror.

I also know that my acute depression began as an 11 year old soon after my encounter with the Church of England Boys Society.

All photos after this time are of me angry and sad.

I began stealing things that I didn't need, began lighting fires everywhere, began lying to everyone and myself when there was no need to be lying at all. These are signs that there is something amiss, something happening in an innocent child's life.

I felt at the mercy of the world, unprotected and unwanted. No one lies as a child and acts up to the degree I did without there being something very very wrong.

That is how I FELT.

They were were my feelings. I know them. I was them.

One of the hardest things of all, the most terrible thing that I encountered in that time of age when it is fundamental to who you are - I felt disbelieved.

Disbelieved!



Image: Alexander Hayes - 1979

Not long ago a number of people have said to me "...Do you actually believe that story you wrote?"

My answer at the time and will remain:

"...I don't give a fuck whether you believe it or not or whether anyone else does either. I lived all of what you lot are questioning, whether being raped as an 11 year old boy is fun or whether it's filled with fear and loathing. Let me give you the straight, honest answer. I fucking lived it and I don't give a fuck whether you believe it or not."

There are numerous bodies of research that show that there are definitive links between denial from others that things are wrong with a child, abuse and the utterances by adults that a child is making things up, creating lies.

This, all these facts, the fundamental basis on which I became depressed at age 11 years old, not just the abuse itself but the inability of others to help me, the denial by others of my needs as an innocent child.

The manner in which I was consistently and systematically treated by a range of professionals who were only quick to try and medicate me, suppress me, control me.

So as a teenager I began disbelieving in everything and everyone around me too. I started treating others the same way I had been treated.

I began seeking my own determination and in doing so I found myself getting angry, and angrier and angrier until I was at an age and physical stature that I soon realised I could intimidate people.

I did. I was violent and aggressive.

Repeatedly and I felt like I was getting my power back, but of course I wasn't. This violence was directed at anything I came in contact with.

I began self medicating with everything I could find that took me into a state of non-thinking to avoid killing people I think.

I recall age 13 drinking all of my Father's Teacher's Scotch Whisky over two days. It is quite remarkable I could even stand up let alone function at that age drinking 375 mls of pure poison.

By age 14 I was drinking heavily, smoking cigarettes and marijuana - lots.

To fuel those habits I was of course finding ways to sell things, swap things, steal things, grow things, all in a savage and nasty spiral. I know that around age 14 in states of complete inebriation I self harmed myself and in ways that could not be seen by others. Stabbing myself with needles, pins and knives, particularly at high school as I was bullied and bashed a number of times.

By age 15 and 16 with hormones afire I began weightlifting and found great mentorship in Vic Sykes, instructor and long past mentor.

He probably saved my life a number of times and one occasion in particular. I turned up at the Sutherland Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) drunk and hardly able to stand. He made me go through a full session of 90 minutes of training drunk during which I vomited twice.

I never came to the weightlifting room again drunk, ever.

They didn't let me near the boxing ring upstairs after one "trial" fight during which I almost bit the sparring partner's ear off.

I grew and so did my anger and conversely so did my depression, like a long black cloud of winter that never lifted, that hung low and oppressively over my life. A state of being where the first thoughts upon waking up were negative, where I reached for a bong under the bed as

the very first thing I did in the day, sat on the back step of home and smoked cigarettes while I drank black coffee.

Smoked all day long from morning till the moment I fell asleep in bed, literally.

Through my twenties and thirties I continued to smoke, exercise rarely, eat bad foods and take drugs of every known description. I suffered from recurrent bouts of intense depression where I was incapacitated to the point of medical intervention, hospitalisation included...many times.

So by the time I hit my late thirties I knew I needed counselling and psychological intervention.

In 2005 after the death of my Daughter, Jonti Maya I went and saw a psychotherapist in Sydney for almost 6 months.

A deeply cathartic experience and to this day I believe my stories of my prior life altered the state of the psychotherapist herself, who left her husband of 20 years and who ended up closing down her practice.

Depression for me was at its worst a few years ago.

The time and location do not matter.

All I know is that fashioned a noose from a very strong abseiling rope I had purchased specifically for the purpose, deliberate and calculated, pre-meditated.

Long careful thinking through the process unlike the many nights I almost swerved at that tree or off the edge of a cliff on purpose, by myself, alone.

I tied that noose around rafters, placed my hands inside an industrial zip lock tie and stood motionless on a flimsy chair.

I knew that if I pulled that zip lock tie closed around my wrists with my teeth and kicked that chair out from underneath myself I would not survive. There would be no coming back.

It would be over and I would have absolutely nothing and everything to be worried about.

Today, I awoke happy and motivated.

I am thinking about an 8 kilometre run tomorrow of which I do so every third day.

I am thinking of the yoga I will do to help me with the pain I have constantly in my neck from a low speed car accident, the arthritis in my right ankle that was smashed at age 18, the pain I have constantly throbbing in my right shoulder from a skiing accident and the numerous other breaks and injuries I've acquired over the years.

I seek and keep close numerous personal mentors who in my reaching out have the correct ways to guide me to think positively, for me to remain focussed on my truth and who encourage me to be vulnerable with them in trust, strong in character, resilient in the everyday and to seek spiritual strength in the patterns of nature, to not lock myself into one deity or supposed truth.

I eat well and balanced meals and I am enjoying cooking for myself and for others.

I am drinking moderately and only ever in company. Alcohol is such a social scourge that I find myself cutting off whole groups of people whose very existence is mediated by how much, for how long and to the point of oblivion as a social norm.

I avoid alcohol and in doing so I feel healthier and happier. I just now have to beat this caffeine addiction.

I do not smoke anything at all. I have smoked pot in company but very very rarely.

I do not need it for any drugs as they take away my soul.

I no longer need Valium to sleep. Again, those medications that others would give me to take over the functioning of my natural state I see as abusive and disrespectful. In being healthy and in exercising and in eating well and in all this I have learned one thing and one fundamental thing that cures all depression.

Be kind to yourself! Connect and reach out to others.

That alone, that statement, applied in every single moment of the day can cure depression, no matter how deep.

Finding stillness and being present in all moments is another cure.

In conclusion, and not wanting to sound like an academic (which I am) my life will never ever be rid of depression, will always be subject to me sincerely and emphatically being true to myself first and foremost, in looking after myself first before anyone else and in doing so having then the capacity to be good for everyone else around me.

Sometimes we need a little magic.

I am enough.

LOVE



Image: 2014 - Alexander Hayes & Magali McDuffie

I live it like this.

For as long as I can recall I have loved many people.

I love my children.

I love my mother and father.

I love my brother, sister, cousins, aunts, uncles, brother-in-laws, sister-in-laws and so on.

I love them all in different ways and they don't have to love me back as they didn't get a choice in the matter. I literally have hundreds of family members all around the world, some of whom are reading this who I have never even met.

I also have many close friends.

Friends who I am close to in shared life experience that allows us to hug deeply when we meet, to do things for each other without question or at the drop of a hat.

I have friends who I get naked around and I have friends-with-benefits. I have thousands of friends of whom I get to really connect with deeply sometimes as a brief encounter, sometimes as a longtime physical relatedness, some only online.

Within my network there are literally thousands of people I admire from afar, who engage with me closely on all sorts of personal matters, that tell me their life story, tell me of their desires, fetishes and of their regrets. I often know more about them than their own partner's do because I keep.

I am to them as others are to me - keepers.

I keep their secrets until they are ready to let them out and be free themselves.

In lots of cases just to keep sharing it with themselves and then with their partner, who upon hearing of them (sometimes) lets them go and that is

when my acquaintance friend then gets back in contact with me. Then there are my keys - very special chosen people who I didn't get to choose.

People who keep my secrets until I am ready to let them out.

People who keep my story or segments of it for me in sharing and who do not EVER share that information with others.

They are in my case predominantly women, of all ages and in a number of cases living in different parts of the world.

"..I can count on two hands and two feet how many close, bonded and deeply passionate friendships or relatedness I have with men. It is a tragedy that society brings us to bear a deep mistrust of that relatedness between men that is firmly grounded in acceptance that we kill each other more often than we hug each other."

Relationships, sexual relationships make up a very small part of my life although some of you reading this may have a deep chuckle.

I agree, as a man that has been married three times, had children with people who were not married, been a stepfather to three children at age 26...you get the picture.

So even say I have had sex with 150 people in my life and perhaps 50 of those could in some way be declared as a relationship they only really make up a very small percentage of the entire count of those whom I have a close relatedness with.

It would be an interesting exercise to have everyone I am friends with, those who have passed and those who are present together on one huge expanse of ground and for everyone to get to meet each other and in doing so I wonder of those who met each other, how many of them

would then become firm friends and again, being human, how many of those would pair off and become partners of others.

Relationships for me are those relatedness moments I have had or continue to have that are not bound in time, that I understand are finite and in many cases particularly those whose groundings or foundations were bound by the edicts of marriage, simply put, the worst of my relationships.

I observe people everyday who are in long term relationships who are unhappy, disconnected from that person by their unrealistic ideals as to what it is that makes them happy, deeply sick in their bodies as they self abuse and spread toxic behaviours to others.

I observe couples who cheat on each other, lie to each other, continually bicker and in some cases actually hate each other but stay living in the same house "for the kids" or more often than not simply for convenience.

"...I firmly believe now after many many attempts at trying to be in a relationship for relationships sake that there is only one true relationship we ever have - with ourselves."

When we are at one with ourself, when we realise that we will be ALWAYS single, that in being independent as the baseline and interdependent as convenience that all those co-dependent aspects of a relationship can disappear. It needs to be an open partnership, not a lock-in relationship for it to survive and grow.

I have given up on the constitutions that churches think that they can instill in a relatedness with others that bind ourselves to an ideal that we strive for and never achieve.

That does not mean I say anything to those who feel that marriage is for them the only way to be happy in their life. It would be hypocrisy to suggest that for those who are married that an open way is any better than the one they have chosen for themselves.

Provided I don't get told how to live my life nor be told that who I am is worse than those in those marriages everything will be fine - seriously, I will not judge you if you do not judge me with commandments of the supposed Gods.

Whilst religion supposedly contains every known answer for why we exist and supposedly provides us answers as to how to be human, in many cases, it does not provide us with a reality as humans twist and turn that over time and through time to suit themselves.

I prefer to see it as a spiritual domain that guides us all, that there is Father Nature as much as there is Mother Nature.

So, after 46 years of living in every known conceivable arrangement of relationships I have come to a non-binding awareness of the following.

I have put them as dot points in a list because I know some of you might like to consider them as separate things but in essence, they are all the same and interwoven as one.

- We are single, always.
- The most powerful relationship we ever have is with ourselves.
- We have many, many, many relationships in our lives and those we have sex with make up a very small proportion of the total count of who we related too.
- We have only the capacity to have one bonded, fully articulated, affinity centred, trusted relationship - a partner, who essentially is our witness in our life.
- We can have sex with as many people as we want but we can't have as many people as we "need" as "needing" is the toxic possessive consumerist erosion of affinity.
- In being open with our partner, in being open with our Family, friends and the world we can be in ourselves and not spread out across others.

- In each relationship (of all descriptions) there are only three things that matter - treat each other well, respect each other's differences and to show on a constant basis in an explicit way, gratitude for each other.
- Above all, trust - trust is the core essence to any relationship especially with ourselves.

ON LETTING GO

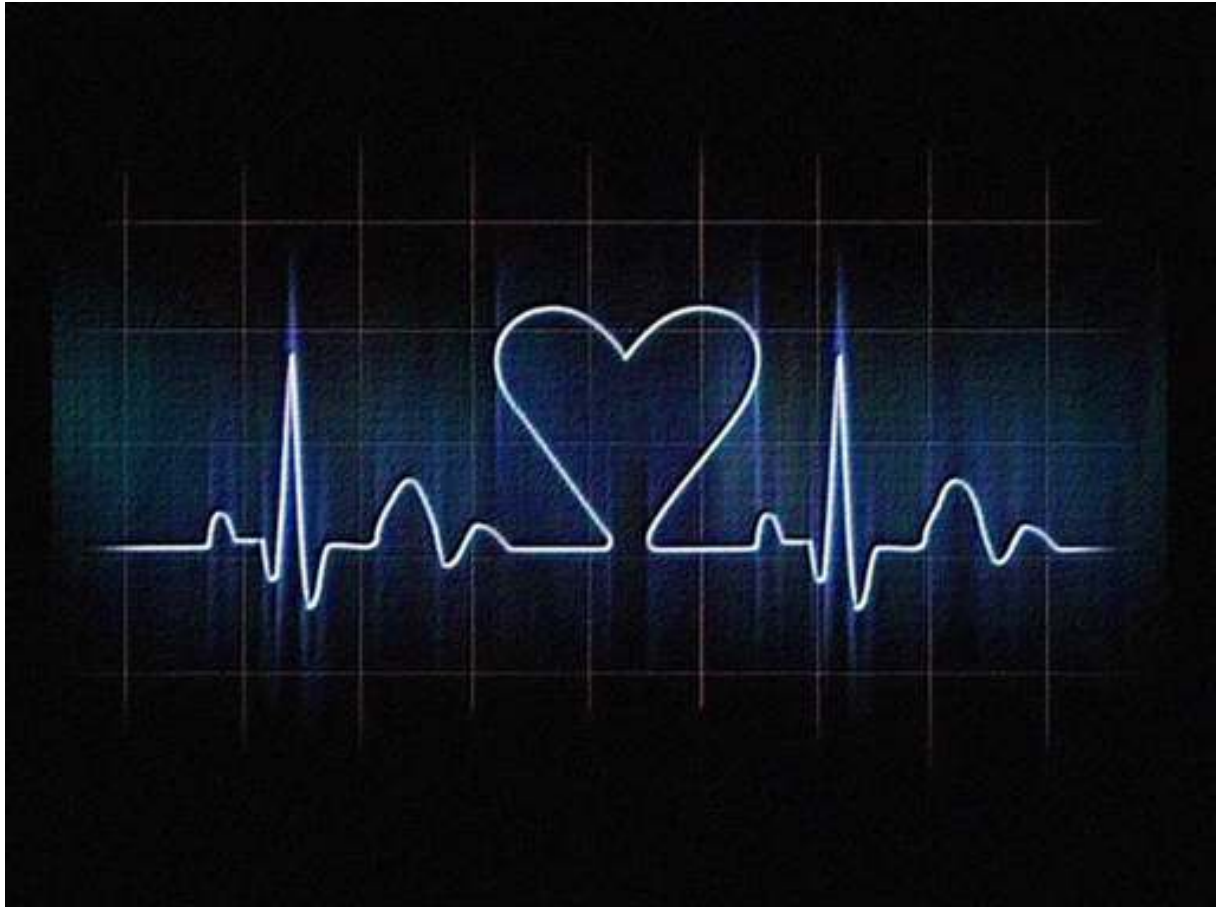


Image: Spoiled Brat - DeviantART

I got out of the car and wept.

Soft tears fell from my cheeks causing me to need to wipe them, take a deep breath and re-adjust my temperament before I walked in and paid rent this morning at the real estate office.

The reasons why are too numerous to detail but, in essence, I was in the 'letting go' mode which of late is often and I allow it to be that way. To let go of things that would otherwise consume me and cause me ongoing and undue pain.

It seems to be a recurrent theme in everyone's lives around me at the moment so I'm going to weave my way forward writing to this topic of 'letting go'.

For many people the whole idea of letting go, daily, is a very foreign concept.

It seems to me I've been doing it all my life. Letting friendships go when they base themselves in "...you are wrong and I am right so therefore you should do as you are told" being the most predominant one.

I've lost count of how many people I've had relationships with in all of their manifestations - either as lovers, wives, friends, acquaintances, professional colleagues and in some extreme cases even family - where it has been me that instigated the break, the cut of relatedness, the definitive demarcation that said "enough is enough" and then bravely fronted the ensuing retort whatever it happened to be with "...respectfully, I don't care" as a reply.

That doesn't mean I do not grieve and do not cry in the 'letting go' but it does mean that I can sit by myself and say with hope that there has to be a better way than always being pitched as being wrong, as being "...a cunt, a traitor, with no care for anyone" or even the most hurtful of all "...your kids don't love you."

As a child I heard constantly "...you should have been _____"

I can't even repeat it...it is that bad.

So perhaps when you look at another person and in conversation feigning it to be in humour then do not be surprised if others turn their attention to other more important things than your own needs to feel included despite your own wallowing toxicity. I know that you as the Reader would never engage in such behaviour but for others it's a trigger

that we all get angry and sometimes such things happen and then we find ourselves subject to the wrath of others.

Likewise, if you feel that enrolling others in conversations that bitch and moan about other others and how your relatedness with them does not meet your high moral grounds of spiritual attainment then please also do not be surprised if others stare blankly at you and change the topic of conversation. All that happened was that they "let go".

All that happened was that they are not giving that negative space in life any oxygen. If in doubt don't give it oxygen and see how long it will breath for.

So in summary, no more own emotional bonfires. Do no harm and walk mindfully in their shoes first.

I may be accused of being sharp, aloof or even hard but it is an acquired trait that has been borne out of survival.

"...Whilst I find myself constantly re-evaluating my own behaviours in this regard I'm constantly reminding myself of how far I've come, how far I have to go and how easy it is to slip into the flatliners ways of living. The people I care about are those who make it their mission to be kind to others, who live their life out of taking risks to do better and who have the capacity to forgive when what they have endured would have so easily consumed and broken them."

Here are a few things in summary I think make it easier to "let go" in life and these are which I try and live my life by:

- This is your world - your one chance to get it right.
- If it isn't at all affirmative think seriously or refrain from saying it.
- Allow still and silent moments to come into conversations that are emotional or filled with hurt.
- Put downs, bitching, derogatory language get you nowhere in life.

- Speak your gratitude to people who treat you well and in life treat others well.
- Cry and let go as often as you want - it is your space and yours alone.
- Wake up and take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth...you are alive and well and can let go of forgetting to be conscious even to breathing in your wakeful state.
- Be mindful and above all do no harm.

TENTH & BEAUFORT



Image: Alexander Hayes - "Invisible Cities"

I love digging around through hard drives crammed with things forgotten.

For some reason or another in 2004 over a three hour period I recall sitting in the St. Vincent's Town Council library after drinking a very strong coffee in Leederville, Perth Western Australia and writing three short stories....or perhaps they are spoken-word-leet-speak or best left as long afternoons pub poetry.

Anyway, 2004 seems to have been a year of living life and then living life of 5 years crammed into one. Insanely busy.

Here are those short stories for your enjoyment as they paint a picture of hanging out in the artists quarters of Perth, Western Australia or getting up to mischief with the Fremantle arts crowd.

Mother's Day and people are rushing home from the eating-houses in Mt. Lawley and Northbridge, Perth, Western Australia. It's late, raining and the roads are slippery with grease and oil.

Reflections swirl everywhere thick with solvent slick.

Across the road nestles a trendy little cafe with a newly refurbished restaurant-cum-café. The café used to be the storeroom for a small garden nursery crammed with junk and cobwebs. It now boasts a fully equipped kitchen and eight staff. Punters can now mix gladiolus and daffodils with a divine Caffè Latte.

The doors of the Café have been locked against the gale of a wind that howls down busy Beaufort Street.

Winter has arrived and so has the Fremantle Doctor. Any given Saturday this little establishment is packed with early risers. The eggs Benedict are simply 'to die for darling' according to the menu. Darling has been emphasised in capital letters on the chalkboard of specials.

The council workers who were working on the pavement all week have now gone home and the chef of the small café mops his brow while the waitress mops the floor. They have forgotten to bring the 'now open' sign in from outside on the pavement. A potential customer battles with the locked front door until the hand signals persuade him to come back another time.

An old lady across the road toddles past the tyre retreading shop intent on beating the rain, hurrying from her double brick and unkempt three bedroom post-war house two blocks away on Ninth to the local supermarket. To get to the supermarket she has to negotiate the broken pedestrian thoroughfare littered with 'Watch Your Step' signs and the odd golden retriever deposit.

Her street has one light at its entrance and she is forced to walk in darkness another 300 metres until she reaches her door. The Council has never replied to her last letter because she accidentally posted it to herself in 1986 and has never got around to re-writing another letter.

Dewson's has a steady stream of customers arriving and departing and the old woman hurries inside clutching her umbrella like a cudgel, as if ready to belt whoever comes within its swing. She has already been charged for assault twice according to the security guard at the Chemist opposite.

He shuffles from sore foot to sore foot as he recounts the story of old Mrs. Underwood.

He becomes more animated as he tells of car break-ins across the road at the supermarket car park and the increase in youth buying 'fit-packs' to shoot up before going out for the night. He looks over the road at the recently kerbed thoroughfare and shakes his head in bewilderment as an Asian backpacker couple jaywalk and almost get bowled over by a EH Holden filled with local bogans crawling down to the local for a pint.

Three hotels including the Leederville are within five hundred metres and they will be at home soon amongst the Perth Glory after match revellers. Signs litter every shop awning for as far as the eye can sweep. A motorcycle shop has a huge billboard plastered across its mantle declaring that Virgin Blue is now complete with sweet deals at "dot com dot ay you".

The awning closest to the road has been knocked off so often that the effort has been made to widen the road and at least try and take some of the bend out of it at great expense to the public.

Patterned pavements and pretty petunias poke their pert bulbs from the blackened soil beds.

The malt coloured fully licensed bistro closest to the bottle shop remains closed and empty on one of the busiest business days of the year. So do another one-in-ten shopfronts on this stretch. An empty cardboard box sits in the dusty windowsill filled with unopened mail.

An oak tree planted at least a century before spreads its wings over the bistro roof.

A liquid amber tree nestles alongside. A small alley way is shuttered with a swing to gate and a black cat pokes its paws through the gaps toying with the weeds that grow on it's insides. No one dares cross it's path and passer's by visibly avoid the cracks in the concrete pavement slabs.

The flashing lights from the wine cellar shop illuminate signs that have been hastily tagged over by passing youth intent on being seen amongst the cacophony of signs that litter the vista as far as the eye can see. A powerful utility pulls up into Dewson's car park and screeches to a halt narrowly missing two teenagers who have crossed from the Community Centre thoroughfare. The father of the teenagers berates the driver who in turn raises a middle finger as he walks over into Brumby's.

His tattoo's extend from his neck to his knees.

A sign declares that Dewson's is open 7 days a week from 8 am to 8 pm. A young couple drag a poodle through the garbage strewn garden that is adjacent to the carpark which services the photo developing shop.

Cars come and go from the supermarket car park. Doors slam and clouds roll over the electrical appliances shop.

Mrs Underwood emerges from the supermarket cat food under arm and cudgel-cum-umbrella under the other. She tucks her purse into her underpants elastic. The rain looks like it will hold off for her journey home.

She crosses the four lane road during a lull in the frantic traffic. A siren starts wailing in the distance. A Commodore hurtles down Beaufort Street at twice the legal limit. It barely makes the corner and disappears towards Galleria.

Mrs. Underwood disappears into the pitch black of Ninth Avenue.

Behind closed walls sit three cigar smoking Italian mafioso.

Music plays quietly inside and they argue over who is going to have to “fuck Mario up”.

John’s fish and chip shop next door has had three customers in 6 hours. A single light globe illuminates the black-and-white signage declaring fish and chips for ten bucks on a Friday. The service station next to John’s has been closed for years and is now a squatter’s spot complete with graffiti and broken windows.

100 metres away kids play of a day time on grassed playing fields and the average real estate value is three hundred thousand plus. Crossover Beaufort Street and it drops by one hundred. The irrigation shop has got its kerbside sprinklers on despite the fact that it has been raining all day long.

A change in Council saw the back of the Inglewood Garden Centre get chopped off and used as a dumping ground for road work signage and vehicles. A member of parliament hides in an office adjacent and for the next two hundred metres video shops ply their trade. In the old days street walkers came this far up till the containment laws pushed them over into James Street.

The closest brothel is on Guildford Road.

The pizza shop is a frenzy of fat lovin' feeders and the carpark is bathed in neon spew. A huge hotel across the way has three people playing pool in the back room and the front gig guide says "Peace, Love and all that stuff" in taught vinyl.

Two phone booths stand empty. Neither of them work as some bored and no doubt pissed punter has jammed paddle pop sticks down the coin chute. Maybe the card facility still works.

Mille Café' is packed with punters and a small child throws a bunch of flowers to the ground in a fit of "I-want-to-go-home-now" grief. Tears stream down her cheeks and get washed away by the soft drizzling rain. The guard dog at the car yard opposite barks and the girl's mother scoops her up into her arms.

The dickhead at the bottle shop overcharges his customers and eats KFC with a scowl. It's either that or some other grease ridden meal knocked down with a bourbon chaser. Backlit bus stops signs blink and the video shops bulbs blind as the streetlights sway in the wind.

Further up Beaufort Street old home units four deep start to creep. Sabrina's clothing shop has always got the trendy size eight chicks hanging around it and if you're not into second hand anything then you're in the wrong part of town.

Skinny hipsters give way to mothers laden with years of deep fried jello's and custard tart. An old man tries to operate the keycard facility and asks a passer by for some assistance.

The Inglewood Library and old post office collide with tilt up and fast brick technologies.

MOBILE LEARNING



Image: 2014 - (L) Alexander Hayes wearing the Memoto Camera and (R) Michael Coghlan wearing the Microsoft SenseCam

For as long as I have had an interest in technology, there has been this recurrent discourse that it is in fact something that disrupts the way in which we learn, that it should be excused for its rudeness by which it interrupts an educator's "flow", that those bearing such technologies should excuse themselves from interjecting amongst what is a pantomime led by the font of knowledge - the teacher.

You will notice I used the term 'bearing' in the paragraph above, as the focus of a mobile networked ecology doesn't differentiate between hand-held, pocket deposited, head worn or any other of mobile accessible combination of a networked technology.

So I began thinking of it differently around 1998 when I first began using mobile phones to communicate with base stations, regarding the whereabouts of myself and what was happening right there and then at a time when everything was in analogue.

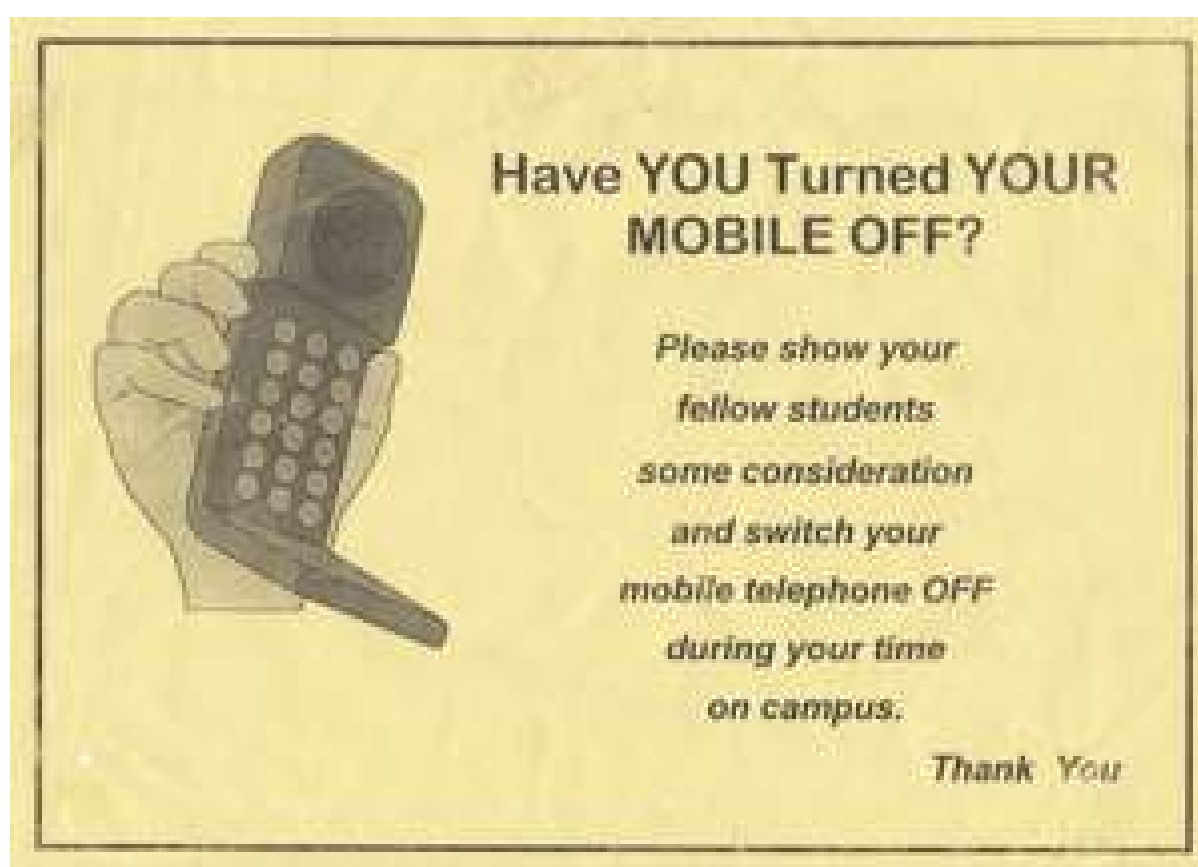


Image: Alexander Hayes - 2001 - Classroom signage

To me it seemed that mobile technologies opened up the internet to being 'on' the person rather than separate to them, that finally we could as humans connect in what I termed to be a 'mobology'.

A mobile ecology, whereby each node in the network had the capacity to contribute, to collaborate and ultimately to control what was happening elsewhere in real time.

I started using the tag of #mobology everywhere I went and soon it became synonymous with me, a digital identity through which I could capture, tag and ultimately pull forward data in time, that by using search engines that our history was as much technology mediated as it was futures driven.

In early 2000 I started using the CDMA mobile phone I had issued to send messages to other users who had the same handset and by 2002 - 2003 to use SMS messaging within an educational context - communicating with students in live time using SMS portals to engage in activities either controlled by SMS or respondent to SMS messaging in return.

Inspired by the works and thinking of Howard Rheingold and his SmartMobs project I began directly encouraging an 'always on classroom' where I told my students it was cool to preference their mobile interactions in my classroom over that of my scheduled activities, in fact the mobile technologies soon became the focus of all activities of the curriculum.

By 2004 I was engaged in an Australian Flexible Learning Framework project 'TxtMe' that was examining the manner within which seemingly disengaged students used messaging or at least what we had intended to try and influence. At that time I engaged with the TALO network and started thinking through the concept of 'educative arrangement' whereby instead of thinking of educational institutions as the centre or locus of learning that in fact learning had become distributed by the very nature of the internet.

Very Illich driven, therefore an educator's role was nothing other than another node in an educative arrangement - that learner led educational

experience allowed for experts or leaders in the field to interact with learners in a networked context rather than a localised context.

By 2005 I was out in the great Sandy Desert of Australia 'seeing' I expanded further on that concept of educative arrangement to be more likened to 'architectures of participation'.



Image: Alexander Hayes - Moblogging at Parnngurr Community

By 2007 I was leading initiatives that explored the notions of mobile learning (in the hand and in the head) as what became popularly known as 'mlearning' engaging and interacting with people worldwide on these notions of networked mobile hybridity.

As they say the rest is history.

I began using Facebook in 2007, repeatedly trying to break the damn thing.

Mobile learning became synonymous with learning when PDA's gave way for flip phones and Web 2.0 brought forward a zillion floppy names, apps and a multitude of ways to socialise.

The term 'mobology' resonates clearly for me as a stage in my life where everything that I interacted with became life-logged.

BULLYING

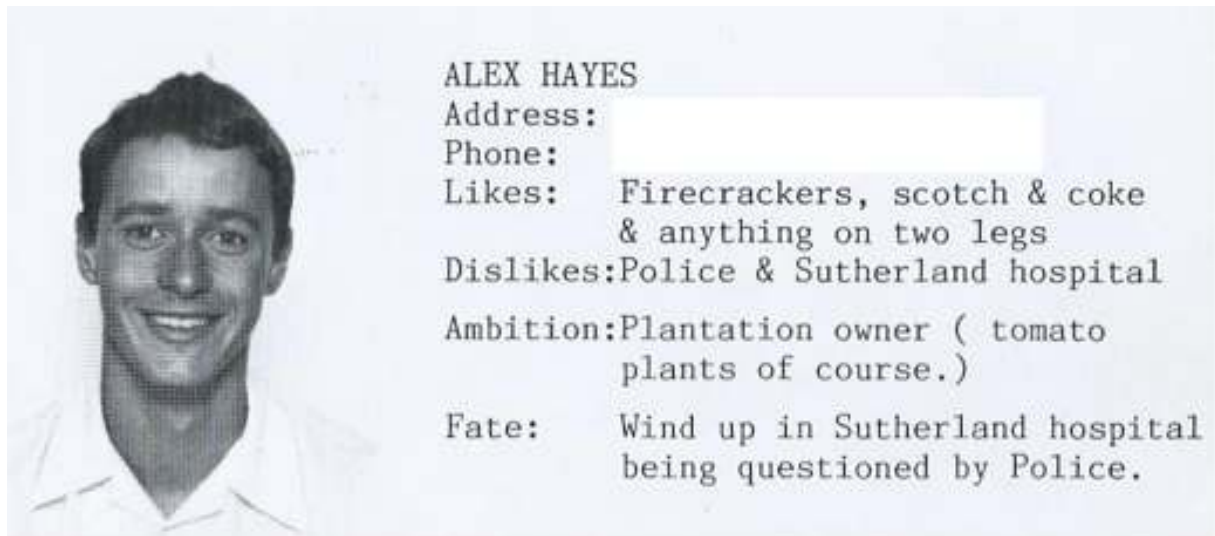


Image: Alexander Hayes - 1986 - Kirrawee High School Yearbook

Whilst looking through an old photo album tonight I came across a bunch of negatives and old developed photos from 1982.

My first thoughts were to tear them up and bin them, throw them out, discard of them and never ever see them again but the memories will never escape me. The torment, fun poking, pushing, shoving, spitting and finally violent fights.

During my years at Kirrawee High School I seemed to have seen the lot. Whilst I recall some of the times as outrageously funny or mischievous for the most part I hated the social, peer relatedness of fellow students and a few teachers who remain in my forgiveness thought bubbles.

A number of peers from that period have remarked that what they recall of me was this shy, skinny geeky kid that got picked on from year 7 till year 10, who hung out with no one in particular.

A kid who hid in the art room, in the dark room and in the manual arts storerooms away from other kids. A kid who mainly spoke with teachers, and got called 'goodie-two-shoes', 'suck-hole', 'dog', 'pidgi' and a string of other obscenities not worth repeating.

My camera was a weapon to them and they knew it.

I had it smashed from hands twice but not before I captured many, many photos of all the people who bullied me. Teachers who delighted in abject cruelty and whose favourites were the worst of the bullies in the school.

So why was I bullied?

I was sent to school with leather shoes on, polished, carrying a Stanley Stamford suitcase. I hated that case. I did everything I could to kill it but it wouldn't break. So I had to keep carrying and get it wrenched out of my hands.

My clothes were always spotless and I just did not fit in with anyone. I hung out at recess only with kids that were too fat, too tall, had red hair or who were too smart in their grades to be considered as "in". Even those kids picked on me and also I ended up in fights physically with them also.

The one day I flipped, lost it. Three continuous years of taunting, getting spat on, shouted at, things thrown at.

My anger just got to a point that wasn't prepared to take it any more. I head butted Gary so hard in the face he cartwheeled down E-block stairs and was knocked unconscious...laying there on the ground, blood pouring from his broken nose.

The pool of blood, the screaming, the "you're fucking dead Hayes" from his mates all swirled in my head as I stood there fascinated, not moving, just watching that blood come out of his face. The pool of blood grew

bigger and everything became silent finally fading away into a white cloud as I too had hit the concrete. I had fainted.

I do not recall any pain whatsoever from getting 5 of the cane by the Science Master who had gracefully reduced it from 20. Just a very deep sense of power. My Brother fought one of my fights on the school oval and that partially solved the taunting but then the fights started to come on.

I recall being ambushed in the National Park one day by a bunch of kids that had quietly followed me home from high school to confront me. I went ballistic as soon as I sensed they were going to set on me and broke one of the boy's wrists with a stick I had in my hand and buried my teeth in another kids cheek.

The others didn't hang around long... with the other two not far behind them, me screaming like a possessed lunatic.

I recall having to answer to one of the kids Father's shortly after as to "what on earth I thought I was doing" and just staring at him blankly and then I recall walking away ignoring him as he screamed abuse at me. Bullying was so pervasive, invasive, everyday, continuous and in some instances supported by teaching staff that I can scarcely remember in the whole time I was at that school a time when bullying was not rife, across all year levels.

By year ten I carried a Tiger school slouch bag, wore ripple soles shoes and came to school with a skinhead, a permanent scowl and no one went near me. By year 11 the hair was back and by year 12 (in 1986) I was known as the best contact in the school to score gunga and most likely to be called in by the police on any local issue that ended up back at the school gates.

In total I'd say I was caned at least 150 strokes of hardened rattan cane on my hands and ass during my time at Kirrawee High School. Caned for

everything from tipping a kilogram of ball bearings during a period break down A block stairwell, stealing pencil cases, pinching girls bums (sorry Sharon and Michelle), ripping pages out of the Geography text book, instigating a whole school fruit fight, super glue up all the locks in E-block...and the list goes on.

My Year 12 yearbook profile says it all. What an angel I look like.

So in reflection, bullying ripped me apart as a child growing into an adult alongside adults who thought that caning me repeatedly was the answer to helping me understand the rules of the school, amidst the carnage of rules that were constantly being broken by the teachers.

Bullying was a scourge, made me feel violated, abused, hurt and lowered my self esteem considerably. It contributed to my recalcitrance but somehow I still managed to top grades throughout my schooling. I felt alienated, not wanted, finally, totally and utterly alone.

Bullying still continues in just about every school, every institution, every workplace.

I have never been any where in my 46 years where some form of bullying, alienation, segregation, division or social sorting wasn't happening.

It seems like it is at epidemic proportions and I do not have any answers for dealing with it for anyone other than to:

1. Confront it - even if you end up with a broken jaw;
2. Report it - each and every time;
3. Do not tolerate it - in any form, no jokes, no enrolment.

I do not tolerate bullies and have repeatedly stood my ground with the most insidious of snide, bitching, moaning, whining, foul mouthed trash of

people, but I forgive them continuously provided they change their ways quick smart.

I've lost my job, put myself on the line and at great physical, emotional risk defended the rights of others in the same situation also...inside jails, in schools as a teacher, in social groups.

I grow another foot higher when confronted by those who seek to bully me, look into their third eye and keep calm.

I am a hairs width away from stopping the world a lot of the time irrespective of what gender or size bully is confronting me.

OUR NATION'S FAIR CAPITAL



Image: Alexander Hayes - Canberra, Australia

Where does the time go?

To live my life, be happy and die happy. Bah. Who comes up with these stupid affirmations?

To be happy and safe would be good!

To be with a partner who loves me respectfully, lets me grow, treats me well, respects the differences between us and expresses gratitude. Kids that are happy and healthy etc.

Easy enough you might say. So why does it take till I'm 46 to achieve that simplicity?

I sit here and reflect on a my life filled with lessons, laments, long drawn out ambitions struggling to arrive at something that is mine, rather what others want.

Then realise I own none of it anyway. It all magically disappears when we depart this place and much of that anxiety we live with is null and void anyway.

We can't take anything with us.

No 'thing' is useful to where we are going.

This land owns me, fate determines only that which I don't know.

Everyday a new one filled with challenges, joy and heartache.

I was once told by an old man that inasmuch as we grow older, we live our lives and either regret or rejoice in reflection. The choice is ours, our only destiny being to accept change or fight it and lose.

Our last gasps as laboured as the first. In being born we slept long periods of time and those graced with a gradual exit it will be the same.

The whole of life just a mere dash on our metaphorical tombstone between arriving and passing.

This next chapter in my story finds me driving or travelling by plane to and from Sydney, Australia to a small rural community by the unlikely name of Orange, the colour. In fact, orange is my favourite colour with lots of incredible snippets of beautiful green, electric blue as the weather and seasons allowed.

A provincial town, divided by a train line and savage racism.

A cappuccino strip, gold braided belts, lime green tops contrasted with that of "vegemite valley". Disgusting that such abject racism still forms the foundation for many a community spread east and westward in rural and remote Australia.

The occasional flurry of snow white amidst overtures of darkness and divide. The have and the have nots that many rural and remote Australian townships paint prettily or hide judiciously.

Despite the many predictions of long standing friends at the time I struck out on a journey of physical attraction.

Moved from a high paid city job to a fly in and fly out consultant role and as Director in a company I formed with three other people. Contracts followed with educational organisations that I brought into the use of online learning.

More parochial nepotism, new kid on the block, smart ass, dangerous with lots we don't want change, just more of the same.

"...Keep your fucking good ideas to yourself, mate."

Had I the foresight of what I know I live by now, then I doubt I would change anything in hindsight except the regretful investment I made in trying to understand HTML, in my myopia, in dreaming dreams and only partially achieving them with bunches of gagglers.

The occasional glimmer of hope and even fewer thankyou's.

I gave it "all a go" as the Aussie in me would have me say.

Long, long hours on stupidly ambitious tasks that took me away from my children, where a simple job teaching or working for an agricultural co-operative might have sufficed.

The birth of a beautiful boy and then another. Incredibly emotional, wonderful, joy filled days, weeks, months.

A flurry of prams, baby capsules, poo filled nappies and all the wonderful things that parenthood has us piled up with as we careen from workplace to home place.

Saturday in shopping malls or behind a push mower. Dunking doughnuts into rancid coffee. Annual holidays, bathing babies, goo-gooed, happy, fed. Mother's groups, Father's drinking binges, golf carts. Racist innuendos and affectations with no hope of escaping matrimony.

Trips to the local snowfields, on and off frozen tarmacs in an ill-fitting suit, long nights spent glued to a mobile phone or a computer screen, battling the renovation of a home better spent laughing with friends.

The stresses of a random income.

Those years spent driving a ute from country town to city centre blur amongst the joy of children growing swiftly, lack of partner relatedness as lost as a flock of pigeons streaking across a dusk sky without a home to roost in.

I look at the many, many photos I took at the time and wonder as to how I managed to see anything at all but for composing what I wanted to see through that damned lens.

Wanting things to be different. Losing myself. Where the tragedy of life ended up in stoic, stilted form far removed from the lilt of poetry.

The destitution of towns built on the sheep's back, drunk BBQs and walking-anything-but-mindfully all cascading amidst an entropic cacophony - a cathartic nightmare of the mundane. The lot of people living a Nietzschean hell without any knowledge of its philosophical fore-Father.

I remember with lament (but not with regret) as I struggled with deep depression amidst a seemingly perpetual state of joyful sorrow. Long plane trips to empty hotel rooms.

Beautiful cool crisp days with my two growing boys in the park. Swings, slides, climbing frames. The occasional glimmer as weekends folded into wheatbelt weeks.

Caught between spiritual states, amidst beautiful experiences, tragic and lucid sometimes concurrent.

Yet again, not able to tell my story.

Trying to find peace amongst it all and instead I buried myself in busy-ness, building gardens, drinking beer, getting fat.

Opportunities beckoned. We left Range and landed in Bungendore, New South Wales, Australia.

Top pub. Bottom pub. Spooks. Humans with dual identities and three times as many secrets.

Time to build a house, work in a university, break my arm, recover and find another job amidst the threat of bankruptcy and foreclosure.

So it came to pass that I snapped and left my third marriage.

Partnered with a young, beautiful cackling flaxen vixen faery who relentlessly woke me up. Learned, came to terms with, let go, grew.

Paid the price.

"...You are a fucking traitor."

"...You should know better c_____."

"....Go hang yourself prick."

Wrote this....my #realstory.

Forgave those who hurt me most. Came into me. There I am standing alone, dreams of a dynamic future collapsed into a fitful present day.

Alone and single.

Then the reality of it all. The realisation that we are all single. We are one person, always.

All these fairytales of two becoming one, from religion the scourge of humanity, mayhem in making meaning and controlling.

Breaking down, establish new boundaries, breaking the taboo, letting go, getting fit, getting fucked and falling over again.

I bid farewell to the company I created, to five years of hard work, to take up roles that dig deeper into the socio-ethical implications of a contemporaneous data sovereignty, data science, all things networked systems. Add wearable computing and infrastructures supporting transhumanist dreams of the omniscient Singularity.

My creatives endeavours, love of Family, our battle with a fracking consortia hell bent on destroying my country, a post privacy era where transparency is controlled and trawled by surveillant overlords.

I have landed and I am happy.

The next chapters will write themselves.

Reader, I am grateful for your listening.



Image: March 2016 - Alexander Hayes and Magali McDuffie, Canberra, Australia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people that I could list here that have inspired me to write this book and that have encouraged me to tell my life story.

Everyone that has done so already know who they are. Without your help and listening ears this story would still be colliding around inside my cranium like a crazed pinball in a long forgotten pinball parlour.

A special thank you to Greg Pearce for assisting in the final editing of this book...a mammoth task.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank all those who challenged me by being the people they were at the time that these chapters were written. All of those people who hurt me, harassed me, caused me pain and grief.

Without you, all of you, I would not be the person who I am today.

I am a good person.

SLIDE SET



#realstory

Slide #1

Acknowledgements

Scott O'Brien

Mary Hoang

...and those people who share
my story.

Slide #2

ALEXANDER HAYES

Phd Candidate

Engineering and Information Sciences, University of Wollongong, Australia

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Aalto University, Helsinki, Finland

Professional Associate

University of Canberra, Australia

Data Administrator

Our Mob Served project, Australian National University, Canberra

Administrator

IEEESSIT.org, Technology & Society.org, Ueberveillance.com.....

Slide #3

My name is Alexander Hayes - no middle name.

I acknowledge the past, present and future traditional custodians of our land, Australia. I know where I was born and to whom I identify with.

I identify as being born on the traditional lands of the Tharawal people (Dharawal) and Gweagal (Gwiayagal) "fire" clan, traditional custodians of the southern geographic regions of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. The Australian Aboriginal Gweagal people made first contact (hostile) with James Cook and European occupiers at Kurnell, NSW Australia in April to early May 1770, within a few kilometres of my place of birth.

The Dharawal people are neighbours of the Gandangara, Dharug, Yuin, Ngunawal and Wiradjuri peoples. In 1816, in a place called Appin, New South Wales only a few kilometres from where I was born a terrible massacre took place - one of many massacres that have happened in this land, my country, Australia.

Slide #4

My place of birth, my home place is Caringbah, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, which is an Australian Aboriginal word meaning 'pademelon wallaby' - a small, dark haired mammal that lives predominantly in bushland that surrounds this area, known as the Royal National Park.

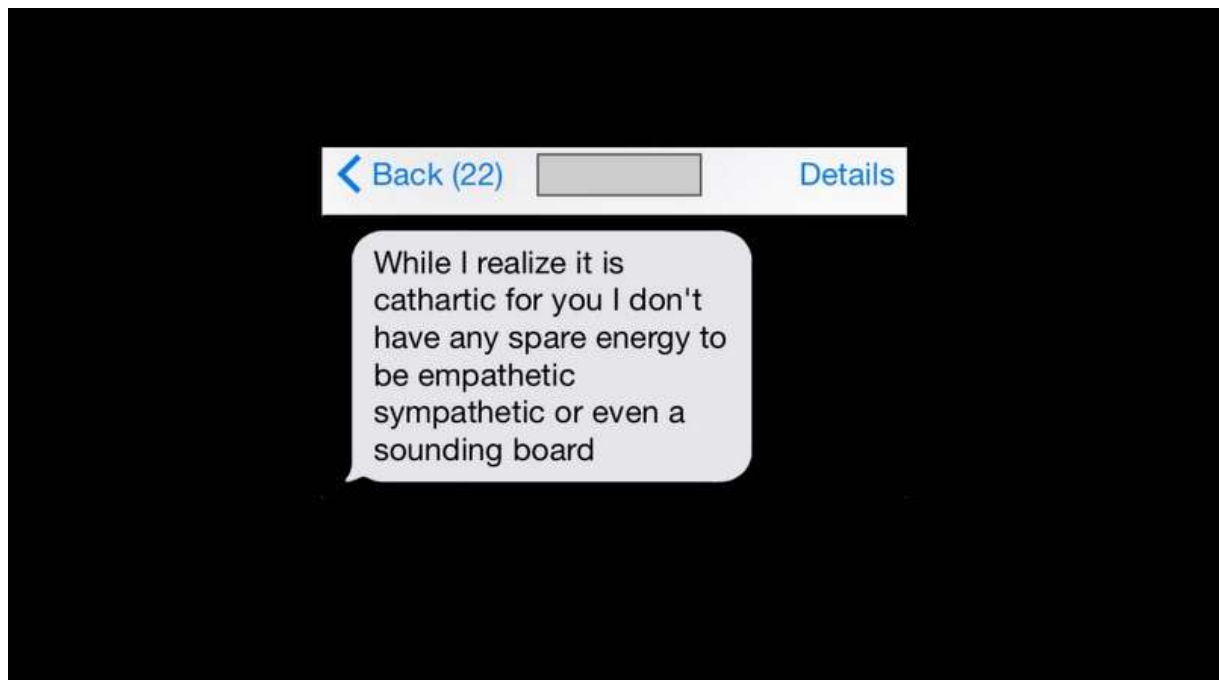
I was born of immigrant parents who first settled in Bexley, NSW Australia (Eora Nation) from Glasgow, Scotland in the late 1960's. I acknowledge my Scottish and Irish heritage, the vast Hayes clan which is spread across all continents of the world. My Celtic animal totem is that of the Adder/Snake, February 18 - March 17 (born 20th February). We moved as a Family to Kirrawee, NSW Australia in 1978. Kirrawee is an Australian Aboriginal word meaning 'lengthy'. I lived between 1989 and 2004 in Bunbury, Western Australia and Perth, Western Australia on the traditional lands of the Nyungar people. Between 2004 and 2006 I lived and worked in the mid and north-west regions of rural and remote Western Australia on the traditional lands of the Martu (Mardu) and Wajarri (Watjarri) people.

Slide #5

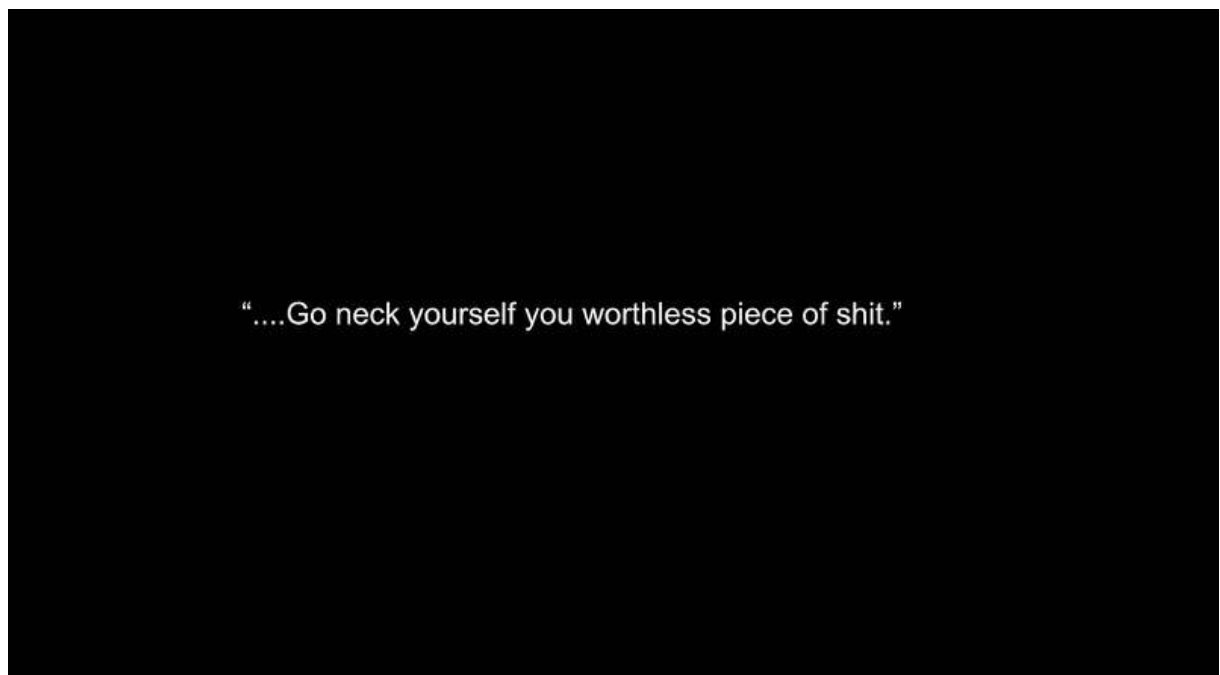
Between 2007 and 2012 I lived in Orange NSW on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people, moving to Bungendore, NSW Australia in 2012, through 2013. I now live in Canberra on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people.

In May 2014 I was told by a Dharug woman that my totem is that of the bat, which I have tattooed on my left shoulder. Soon after I started writing my #realstory and publishing it chapter by chapter via Facebook.

Slide #6



Slide #7



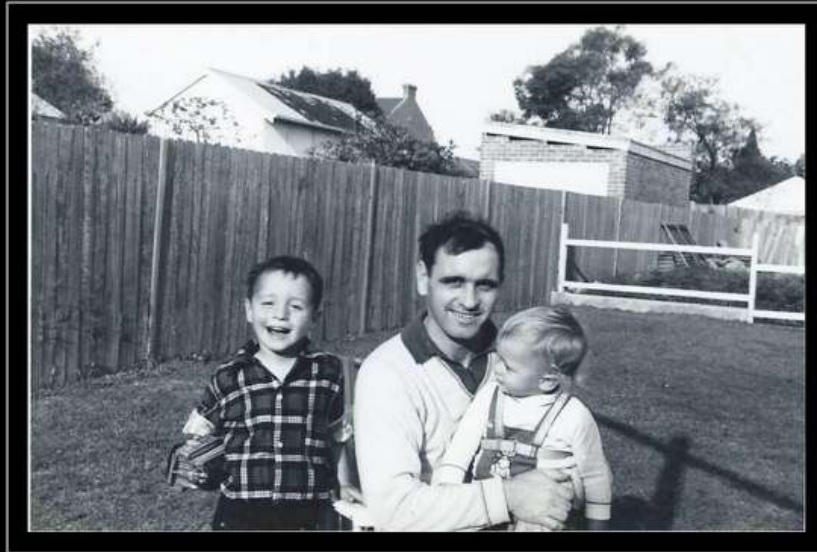
Slide #8

“....There is one thing about depressives I hate and that is that you all feel so fucking sorry for yourself...why don't you get a real life and be responsible for your own shit.”

Slide #9

“....Poor fucking you - everyone hates you and that's the reason you get fucked over prick. I forgot to add that you knew you had it coming to you prick.”

Slide #10



Slide #11



Slide #12

The Church of England Boys' Society

Sailing Camp - Christmas 1982

AWARDED TO



Alex Hayes

CH1 - Police car

Division A

Race 6 Winner

Slide #13



Slide #14



Slide #15



Slide #16



Aged 30

Slide #17



Aged 45

Slide #18

www.alexanderhayes.com/realstory

Slide #19



CHOOSE

Slide #20



Ashleigh Cawdell-Smith Alvarez Wow very powerful and courageous story. I am glad that U have beaten the demons and whether U agree or not your choice to live is greater than their choice to hurt U....U should be very proud of yourself ..
x

Unlike · Reply · 4 · January 28 at 9:48am



Brad Beach I think that it's very brave for anyone to survive this abuse and even braver to share it. 😊

Unlike · Reply · 2 · February 5 at 10:10pm

Slide #21



Carol Hogan Kudos to you, Alex, and to Carol, first for having the courage to tell > your story, and then for rising above it. I know mine was a minor role in your lives, but I still feel incredibly proud of you!

Unlike · Reply · 1 · January 29 at 1:20pm



Derek Philipson Hi alex, that left me speechless, amazing, u r one strong dude.
Derek

Unlike · Reply · 1 · January 29 at 9:28am

Slide #22



Robd Muir Axe, goodonyou for sharing your burden. Speaking out is the best way forward and you know we're with you all the way mate. I can't imagine what strength you mustered to open up with your story. Onwards and upwards from now.

Unlike · Reply · 1 · 16 hrs



I know you are creative, I remember from when I was a young teenager. I'm glad you are doing what you enjoy. I love reading your stories, please don't stop. They are my sanity

Slide #23



Rebecca Linda Murray

You are amazing not only as an artist, human being and more. I know that we have never met, I hope one day we will.

17 minutes ago · Unlike · 1 · Reply

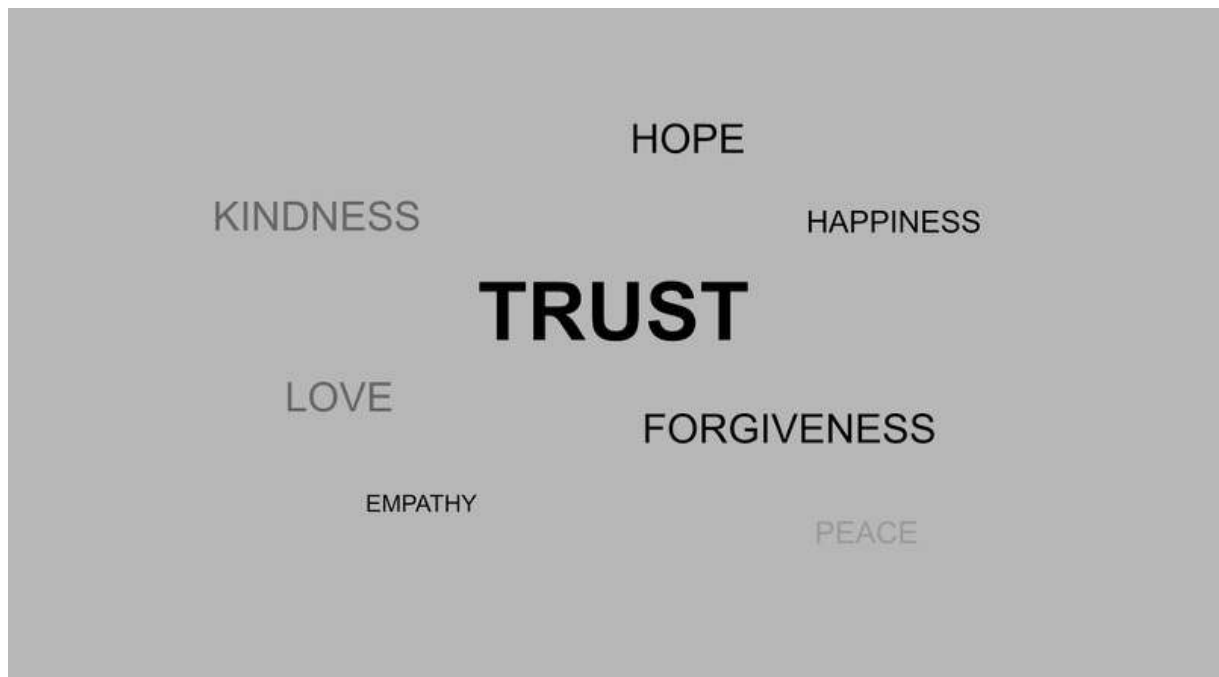
Slide #24



Slide #25



Slide #26



Slide #27



Slide #28

STILLNESS & MINDFULNESS

Slide #29

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Slide #30



Jason Bradley Hey Alex - I only had the privilege of your company a few times in the last 10 odd years, and in battling with my own demons way back you managed to have a significant impact on me without even realising it. You are one of the most intelligent and engaging individuals I have ever come across and to hear your story was devastating, but also a revelation in some way as I now understand your pain. Peace brother... There is a reason, the world needs more people like you. But I truly hope this journey does lead to healing and some quiet time for you and those you care for.

Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 13 hrs

