



PAUL AND HIS BEST FRIEND WHIP.

And the best of luck to you too

By Paul Dann, 28 July, 2016

Life may be little more than a way of filling in time between birth and death. But surely the happiness or sadness of life is so very dependent on luck or chance or whatever is the appropriate term for the concept.

I was conjecturing on this recently while lying back, as one does, in a cancer ward, and it came to me that I've been extraordinarily lucky in my life; and despite that trite old saying "You make your own luck", the luck of my life has had nothing to do with me ordering it. Nor has the bad luck, terrible luck of countless millions of lives has been little more than just that — bad luck. Bad luck to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, bad or good luck to not possess the ability to avoid (or accept) bad (or good) situations.

Anyhow, that's my simplistic view with which few will probably agree. But accepting the role of chance, what are some other factors that might, according to Paul Dann, be important in this life business?

When the final bell is about to gong, it seems appropriate to me to just accept what is to happen, rather than be frightened about it. However, to cover this simplistic approach there are some caveats.

There should be a minimum of pain. And the technology of healthcare seems to be heading well down this track and seems to be increasingly more compassionate, at least in a



STAYING PUT

wealthy country such as ours. Part of this is probably due to the caring and compassion and cheerfulness of the people involved in healthcare (don't talk to me about the exceptions, the people who don't fall into this; I know). And in this country, the contribution of a large proportion of African and Asians to our health system is surely a help — where would we be without them? In my opinion, roll on multiculturalism, and roll away the white supremacists. The question here of course is: shouldn't of these acquired skills of the guest healthcare force be put to helping the frighteningly deserving folk of the home countries of those who help us?

Why should terminal comfort be only the province of the rich?

The surroundings for the end of life experience should be comfortable at least. Terminal cancer in a remote African village would generally not be such a great experience.

The comfort of care should not be constrained by lack of money. Highly political, this, though it shouldn't be.

For many, one would think, end of life is made less depressing by the presence of good family and friends. Many long term relationships can really be cemented by the closeness and intimacy — physical and spiritual — of friends and family presence. Not for everyone, of course; some may prefer to face end of life alone.

And dogs and pets can well be part of the end-of-life support. For Mongarlowe's bitter winter nights the presence of a dog or two can be a bonus in terms of providing the input for a two-or-three dog night.

Belief systems may help. For some, or

GETTING OUT THERE

an increasing many, this does not have to be in the form of belief in an after-life or a higher being. For someone like myself, unable to accept such a concept, there are plenty of other beliefs; beliefs of the here and now, of the moment. A few: the first cry of a newborn; the gentle nudge of a favourite old dog lying on the lounge; the thrill of a lurking trout taking a carefully placed fly; the thrill of standing upright on a well-waxed board

careering down the wall of a wave; the spell of standing in contemplation in front of the Mona Lisa or the Taj Mahal. So it goes on, for me. Others have their own experiential beliefs — beliefs of the moment, not of antiquity. And finally, if all these, and other, caveats are in place, I can see no problem for the person who is at the end of life. Once dead, isn't that person — a person no longer — out of it, and no longer around to know what he or she

is missing? A different matter for the loved ones left behind, however. Surely grieving should be for the bereaved, rather than the dead. Perhaps accepting this might help the awful pain that grief can have for many. The knowledge that the dead was lucky enough to have had a good life, if that is the way to put it, might be some consolation.

And boy, have I been lucky enough to have had a great life.



TRAVEL LOGGED

Cecile Galiazzo

A decision earlier this year to have a "gap year" brought me, in my trusty Toyota HiAce to Mparntwe (Alice Springs), the third largest town in the Northern Territory. Population approx. 28,600 — 19% are Indigenous Australians.

Noteworthy stops included Creightons Creek, Point Lonsdale, Port Fairy, Meningie Lake, World of Music Festival Adelaide, Hawthornedean, Port Augusta and Coober Pedy.

Experiences to treasure — camping in the West MacDonnell Ranges and exploring the East Macs', working at Santa Teresa teaching Community Services and Aged Care, making paper at Curtin Springs, The Beanie Festival, bike ride to Simpsons Gap, watching the women make bush medicine, and as I write — teaching visual art at Ti Tree.

This has been a journey of many firsts and difference. Witness to a red, eternal, ancient landscape. The privilege of being with First Nations People, and sharing of knowledge. There is a sadness too, the evidence and scars of the trauma of colonisation, the inequity of resources — food and housing. Complex situations and decades of varying opinions as to how to 'fix it'.

There have been four deaths in my circle of family and friends since leaving Braidwood in February, a reminder of the gift of life and the love of a great community.

Things I've learnt — a new palette, to be grateful, people working remote in the territory have big hearts, how to be alone and at peace.

I do miss the Shoalhaven though and look forward to being back on the river by summer!

Save as Travel logged (Me and Alice), click send. Thanks Paul.