



bands in Melbourne. So, that sort of music, 'We Shall Not Be Moved' and songs like that were part of the repertoire of those bands.

When did The Seekers last perform together?

We last performed together doing a New Zealand tour in November 2014. After Judith had her brain haemorrhage in 2013 she recovered really well from it and we were able to complete a UK tour in the middle of 2014 followed later that year by New Zealand. Yes, I suppose that was the last time — November 2014.

Was there a downside, do you think, in having fame? Like being at the Top of the Pops number one, or whatever, for a series of years. Did you sacrifice something in terms of just being able to wander down to the shops?

Actually, we've all been really lucky in that we don't get harassed by fans. I think there are some bands that do have issues with their fans, but we never experienced that. We just experienced wonderful loyalty and respect. It's just great that they respect us as individuals and as human beings.

You didn't have teenage girls climbing up the outside of the hotel like they did when The Beatles were here?

No, nor in the inside of the hotel as it turns out. No part of the hotel did they ever climb up for us.

What sort of music interests you now? Are you still arranging your own material, or do like to do some of the older stuff?

My music interests and influences are very varied and I try to keep in touch with whatever's popular. When it comes to my concert material, well, it's a combination of new and old really.

When I do my solo shows I like to do some songs that meant a lot to me during my school days.

Then I take it through in a kind of chronological fashion, but I'm writing a lot of songs at the moment. I'm trying to get those finished — it's one of those things where I have to keep working diligently, trying to get them completed.

Then hopefully by the end of this year I'll have my fourth solo CD ready to go and that will contain all new material. But I may revisit some older songs, who knows?

Do you miss the interplay of harmony and stuff, or do you think you might sing with another person?

Yes, I do miss it. In fact, on my recordings, I generally do my own harmonies to fill in that little gap. The

GOLDEN OLDIES

sonic gap, shall we say, of the harmonies. Yeah, I love them. I love harmony singing, and Elizabeth and I sing melody and harmony from time to time. Not professionally yet, but you never know.

I've been writing songs with Allan Caswell, the renowned country singer. He and I have finished five songs which we're demo-ing at the moment. Either I'm doing the lead and Allan's singing harmonies, or Allan's singing the lead and I'm doing harmonies. So, that's another venture that I've embarked on.

So, here you are in Braidwood. How did that come about?

That came about because I met a lovely lady, Elizabeth Hawkes, and then we became an item. We travelled a lot after we first met, because The Seekers were still touring at that stage. Because of her expertise and creativity with a professional camera, she became the official photographer for The Seekers, so that became a positive connection for us all.

We've known each other for four years now and she already had this property in Braidwood. After all that travelling, we decided that we would settle in and complete the restoration of it. It's been a decision that we don't regret making. It's great.

Are you involved in the music scene in this part of the world nowadays?

Well, as involved as I can be, I guess. I still perform solo concerts and I've just been in Victoria performing. Before that I was up in northern New South Wales, doing some solo concerts, and I am hoping to perform again at the National Theatre at the end of this year. We haven't got a final date for that, but it's probably going to be late November, early December.

I am involved in the committee that's helping with the renovation of the National Theatre. So, I'm gradually in my own little way getting more involved as time goes on.

Is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to just say anyway, as part of your contemporary life here in this part of the world?

Well, I think you've covered it pretty well, Paul. What should I say? My activities around town are generally pretty low key, and I just appreciate the fact that people can say, "Good day," and I'm just another bloke in town, really. A lot of people know where I live so it's not as though there's a great wall of secrecy around my day to day activities.

It's wonderful and I enjoy it all hugely.



THE COMMUNISTS RETREATED TO THE BEACH TO FIND THEIR BOATS DESTROYED. SURRENDERING SEEMED LIKE A GOOD CHOICE.

Heavy industry

Not many factories have their raw materials arrive by air, certainly not through the roof. Kinmen is different.

In the early hours of October 25 1949, an armada of hundreds of wooden fishing boats with 9000 troops on board set out from mainland China. Its mission was to strike the first blow for Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China in its quest to conquer finally the Republican forces of Chiang Kai-shek.

During the Second World War, in a sector not much covered in our history books, the Sino-Japanese war cost the lives of 10-25 million Chinese civilians and about 4 million soldiers on both sides. The Japanese invaders were being fought by two distinct Chinese armies — the 'people's' army of Mao Zedong and others, and the 'official' Republican army of Chiang Kai-shek.

After the defeat of Japan, the two Chinese armies turned on each other and the Republicans were eventually

driven from the mainland, by the People's Liberation Army, falling back to Taiwan and the small islands of the Kinmen archipelago.

With these islands being but a few kilometres from Xiamen on the south-eastern coast of China, it must have seemed to Mao Zedong like a good place to start the end game — the conquest of Taiwan.

But on that October night, the Nationalist forces were better prepared than the communists had been led to believe. Then, fortuitously for the defenders, one of their own night patrols accidentally detonated a mine and when flares were sent up to investigate, the approaching invaders were caught in plain sight.

Many of Mao's soldiers died in their boats and many more were cut down as they fought their way on to the

THE BEACH OBSTACLES ARE STILL THERE.

