

太极拳

Pin and tang with yin and yang

William Verdon can do it all



Originally I wanted to be a fitter and turner. I tried to join the army twice and got rejected twice. But it was probably good that it didn't work out. When I left school I did a bunch of other jobs like fruit picking, roustabouting, mobile DJ-ing and that kind of thing.

At school, I was really only very good at art and metalwork. One day I was at the 'beach' in Wagga, by the river, and on the way home I just happened to walk past the jewellery shop where my dad went to get sponsorship for our local football team.

I thought, I'll just go in and see if they have any jobs. The guy asked me a few questions, looked at my thumbs and said they were a bit weird and maybe it wouldn't work. But I convinced him to give me a trial for a couple of weeks. At the end of the trial he said, "Yeah, you'll be able to do this," and gave me an apprenticeship.

As a result, I'm a firm believer in

people passing on skills like that. When we decided to take on Logan as apprentice it didn't have anything to do with what his hands looked like, it was more about his enthusiasm and ability.

The other part of it I suppose is the fact that we've been in Braidwood for 11 years and made a reasonable living out of a shop here and it's a way to pay back the town by supporting one of the town's young people.

When I was 19 and living in Wagga my prime goal was to get out of the place. Back in those days bastardisation of apprentices was a perfectly accepted behaviour. There were a few jerks in the workshop there I really didn't like.

The boss rented a flat in Queanbeyan and whoever was working in the shop in Canberra got to stay in the flat for free so I went there. There was no furniture, except for a mattress, a dining table, a chair and a television

with a video player. Because I lived there alone, I got really familiar with Star Wars. I was watching that over and over and over again.

After I finished my apprenticeship, my boss left the industry for a while and the workshop closed, leaving me at a bit of a loose end. I had a couple of choices, I could have gone back to Wagga to do a concrete laying job with somebody my dad knew. I decided instead that I would pack my stuff in the car, drive to Sydney and move in with one of my school friends in Lewisham and then look for a job in Sydney.

I got involved with one of the other guys who I'd met in the workshop in Canberra and he was with a meditation group. That was my introduction to Eastern philosophy. I was never very spiritual, never went to church or anything like that. But I did quite like meditation.

I started going out with Kylie while I was in Canberra and she was living in Sydney. So I'd been travelling backwards and forwards to Sydney a lot before the workshop closed and that's probably the main reason I decided to go to Sydney rather than back to Wagga.

I had a few different jobs in different parts of the jewellery industry over the years, and we had a little workshop of our own in Newtown by the time Noah had started school.

Then I was asked to manage a jewellery workshop in Canberra, so I moved back and after a year, Kylie and the boys moved to Canberra as well. We'd been there for a while, and Kylie's mother was visiting us so, for

SATURDAY MORNING'S HAPPY TAI CHI GANG AT BICENTENNIAL PARK.



BRINGING ZING TO BLING

something to do, they drove to Braidwood for a day trip and Kylie liked it so much she came home and said, "Ah, we're going to move to Braidwood." At which point I went, "What? Why?" She said, "Because it's really nice and I don't like Canberra". So that was how we ended up here.

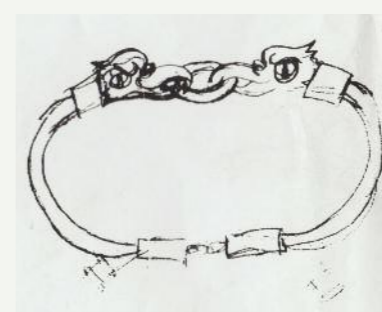
We'd been here for a short time, and because I had started my little shop in town, I wasn't doing a lot of exercise. Kylie spotted an ad in the *Braidwood Times*: "Tai Chi. Leslie Abercrombie, Thursday mornings". That's where my interest in Tai Chi began.

It started out as Tai Chi for arthritis, which still happens at the hospital with Helen Small, I think. But we moved on to do the long form with swords and sabres, which is a bit more traditional and a little less medical.

These days, if you come to our Tai Chi group, it's exercise based. It's good for your balance which, as you get older, is very important to maintain.

Jewellery

These days I like to sit down with people and make things specifically for them. That's the side of the job that I enjoy most now, on top of making little pieces of stock to put in the shop.



WHAT THE MAN WANTED AND WHAT THE MAN GOT.

Making individual one-off pieces that mean something to people is where I get the most enjoyment.

A fellow came in to our previous shop. He said, "Oh, you're a jeweller. What do you do?" I said, "I make things."

"Oh, really?" he says. "I've been trying to find somebody who can make things for the last ten years." I went, "That's odd, you mustn't have looked too hard." He had an idea in his head for a bracelet. It was basically two griffons looking at each other, but he

hadn't been able to find anybody who understood what he wanted.

I said to him, "Describe to me what it is you're thinking of." So he did and I said, "Come back in a week and I'll have some drawings for you." Anyway, he came back a week later and took the drawings and he didn't come back. I thought, "Oh well, he's just done a bunk with my drawings." That happened all the time in Sydney.

But twelve months later, he marched back into the shop with the drawings, put them on the desk and said, "Go ahead and do it — doesn't matter what it costs. You got exactly what I wanted there on the paper".

I went ahead and made them. That's the kind of jewellery that I really get a kick out of making.



Jewellery is ...



We repair, design, manufacture, clean and polish, value and remake jewellery.

- watch batteries
- pearl and bead threading
- engraving
- we can do all manner of things!

Drop by and see.

43 Wallace St., Braidwood
4842 2882

William Verdon
Jeweller

