

## Wednesday's with Harry

10th February 2021

Well Facebook seem to have finally given up reminding me that I haven't posted anything on Wednesday's with Harry for quite some time. Clearly, if one disregards the opportunity to post with joy and enthusiasm when entering a new year, without so much as a hint that this space will continue to be filled with dribbling commentary, then their expectations are lowered and reality can be restored. Facebook's algorithm for solving the random nature of these posts will be exhaustively tested as indeed, I myself have no idea when the urge will come to plonk some words together. Reading this so far, you could accurately conclude that today is yet another futile rambling and begin to question, well firstly, your will to continue and secondly, my medication!

The fact of the matter is that the days of Wednesday outings with Harry seem to have drifted into memories and whilst Covid has certainly contributed to that, our own routines and individual lives have also played a role. Who would have thought that a 21 year old male would object to spending time with his mother! Anyway, when the mood hits, I still may come on here and comment on life, the universe and everything. So in my own guide to the galaxy, today's topic is: GREAT EXPECTATIONS This morning I scrutinised the fruit bowl and carefully selected what appeared to be a juicy ripe peach. My anticipation for the succulent taste of summer was quickly shattered with that familiar disappointed feeling when I bit into the bruised inner layer. Deception by stone fruit. Of course when in the process of actually purchasing produce, I do realise that expecting every piece to be a perfectly formed agricultural miracle is not realistic...however I live in hope.

I opened this topic of conversation with Harry. He is very much of the opinion that having low expectations is the only way to go. He explained that by aiming quite low, it lessens the chance of being disappointed. He justified his ideals with examples of his passing his university exams. 'Mum, if I aim for 50%, that is a pass and I'll be happy with that and anything higher is a bonus.' I, of course, am horrified to think that he is actually only expecting 50% and start to question who has raised him. I remember a line from 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' When the Hugh Grant character was to wed and having second thoughts, his mate Tom had to stall the bride entering the church. He came up with an excuse about the flowers and then said to his mate, 'the great advantage of having a reputation for being stupid: People are less suspicious of you.' He also had low expectations when discussing a future partner. 'Oh, I don't know, Charlie. Unlike you, I never expected "the thunderbolt."' I always just hoped that, that I'd meet some nice friendly girl, like the look of her, hope the look of me didn't make her physically sick, then pop the question and, um, settle down and be happy. It worked for my parents. Well, apart from the divorce and all that.'

So I immediately leap into parent teaching mode and try and reason that low expectations can also lower your standards and sadly be satisfied with second best, whereas greater expectations creates a positive and determined attitude. Then he reminds me of all the football games we have attended with anticipation and high expectations for a win, only to be left traumatised and disillusioned. Well I think traumatised is a tad dramatic and I explain that is character building and

creates resilience and unlike some teams, we have actually won plenty of premierships in the past. I am forced to admit that in my youth I would watch Carlton play and fully expect a victory and more often than not was rewarded. The fact that Harry has missed out on those halcyon days may explain his attitude. He declares that until Carlton make the finals, they will remain on his list of low expectations. Ahh...so you have a list! That would suggest that you also have high expectations. I probed him for further information. His list consisted of No, Low, and High expectations. If football and uni exams were low...what would he actually consider high? After a little thought, he declared that he had high expectations that I would regularly annoy him with these pointless discussions. The roll of the eyes suggested that this conversation was quickly going to end.

My list of expectations are as follows:

#### NO EXPECTATIONS:

- That housework is done by others
- That I will get an uninterrupted night's sleep
- That I will win Tattslotto
- That the diet I start on a Monday will last until Tuesday

#### LOW EXPECTATIONS:

- That manners will become popular
- That the aging process will be kind
- That everyone knows the difference between 'your and you're'

#### HIGH EXPECTATIONS:

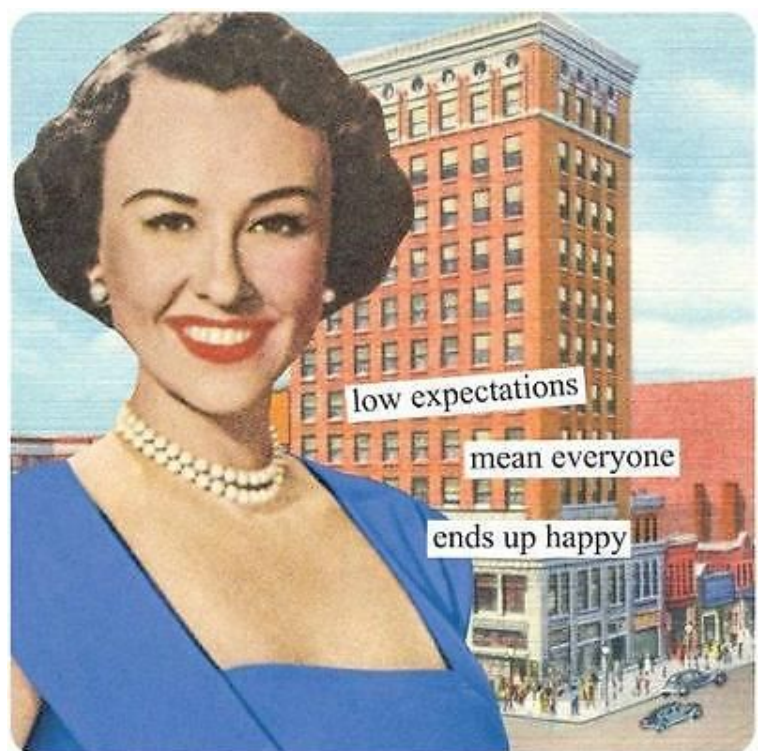
- That I will actually reach an old age
- That Carlton will win a flag
- That Bridgerton will return for another series
- That Harry will pass his exams
- That all fruit is edible
- That miracles happen
- That I will continue to write nonsense

Now I need to sweep the floor with no expectations, be only mildly affected by linguistic issues and fully expect that the plum I am about to eat will be delicious! So there you go...





"Could you please downgrade this A to a C? High expectations bring out the worst in my parents."



## Wednesday's with Harry

### Thursday 4th March 2021

In-between the start of a new Uni year for Harry and scooting around various appointments, we found ourselves with 4 days in which we were both keen to have a mini holiday. I suggested various Victorian locations whilst Harry began to research fares to Noosa...of course! After putting the kibosh on that idea and convincing him, (not really) that Lorne was the Noosa of the south, we packed our bags and headed off down the Great Ocean Road.

It wasn't long before the usual tug of war began in selecting a radio station. The fact that the steering wheel houses a button that controls radio options, clearly indicates choice and power belonging to the driver. So with Don Mclean and myself warbling out all 27 verses of American Pie, our journey began. I do suspect, that whilst Harry appeared somewhat impassive, he secretly admired the fact that I knew ALL the words. Ahh, yes, the glimpses of confusion when your child occasionally realises that you had life before them. And what a life it was!

Eventually the battle over radio rights was inconsequential as all stored stations screamed out static ruckus until they were deemed kaput. In the search for further stations, Harry discovered internal media options that, in the 2 years of owning this vehicle, I had no idea existed. Sounds of Nature, Lively Forest, Calm Sea Waves and Open-air Café sound tracks were provided, seemingly to cater for times of stress. I feel quite confident that I would either fall asleep at the wheel or deliberately drive off a cliff if forced to listen. So with further scanning, we were left with either K-Rock – Home of the Hits in Geelong or AM options. As Harry was truly horrified with the thought of listening to talkback or gardening shows, K-Rock it was. Now there is possibly those of you reading this who are screeching with frustration and totally dumbfounded by our stupidity in not plugging in a phone and using Spotify. I blame Harry for such an oversight and finally on day 3 when K-Rock, Home of the Hits Geelong started to flounder, the lightbulb moment occurred. Hello! An extraordinary plethora of musical choice. Ignoring the fact that Harry was now in complete control, I bamboozled him with requests and singalong consequences ensued. Tom Petty's Free Fallin, The Cranberries Dream and Paul Simon's You can call me Al, were on repeat and whilst Harry didn't verbalise the words, I do suspect he was vicariously belting out the tunes with me.

Enough about music...well we made it to Lorne, settled in and decided the Lorne Hotel was the place to eat. More technical issues arose as the ordering system was completely digital. Scanning QR codes and menus, logging into Paypal and such was done with blind faith that the fish and goodness bowl would be delivered to table 43. When a chicken schnitzel rocked up, it was assumed my ignorance was to blame. Assume not! Schnitzel was redirected to its correct order at table 34 and fish was hurled in my direction. Food seemed to take up much thought over the next few days as when you are not required to cook, you tend to mull carefully over what some other bunny has to prepare.

Erskine Falls provided amazing nature and also a true test of my lung capacity. Always be wary of vertical descents that require you to return. Passing many fellow



tourists huffing their way up should have been fair warning that this body was going to be pushed to the limit. Of course fitness freak Harry was totally unsympathetic with my heaving issues whilst I questioned the date of our ambulance subscription. It did cross my mind that a wench on a helicopter may be the only option.

Afternoon lying on the beach and to my surprise Harry was engaged in a book...with many pages. Okay it was Jerry Seinfeld, but I do believe that the last book he may have read was Specky Magee, 10 years ago. The comedians seemed to be the go as I delved into the light reflections of Kitty Flanagan.

So obviously it is ridiculous to venture along The Great Ocean Road without agreeing to be blown about photographing the 12 Apostles and Loch Ard Gorge. This part of the trip is when you play tag with fellow tourists...some of whom you recognised from Erskine Falls. Every sightseeing bay you meet and politely nod in recognition. The couple of leather jacket wearing 75 year old Motley Crew fans who had overindulged in black hair dye, the family trying to contain their children from falling off the cliff, the young girls attempting to control their hair extensions, and the middle age couple trying to find a toilet. We read the relevant information signs and note the tragic outcome of the Shipwreck Coast. One of the signs that is repeated explains that there are fragile cliffs and venomous snakes. I felt fully confident that I would be okay with the fragile cliffs and as it was a pretty chilly day, assumed any reptile would be out to lunch. About 50m along one of the paths, Harry spotted a snake in the bush and 2 steps further I saw another on the side of the path. Now I realise that many will think I may have overreacted when I grabbed Harry and ran...yes ran back to the car. I will agree this may be the case, however none of you were with me in 1990 when I worked on a cattle station in the Barkley Tableland and where a King Brown decided to become closely acquainted. Fortunately this time it was not standing up to greet me and a bottle of rum was not required! Well 4 days is not a long time to holiday but really enjoyed the break.

I recently watched a movie – The Chef. A young boy decided to create a video by filming 1 second of footage and putting it together. So that is what I have done...some a little longer than a second. Not that interesting, but there you go.







Wednesday's with Harry,  
March 24th 2021

Do you ever wonder what happens during your slumber that affects your mood for the day? My sleep routine is generally less than ideal and if I am not being woken by bladder challenged dogs, then I am being transported psychologically, (and what also feels physically) into wild and imaginative dreams. It is indeed exhausting surviving a treacherous encounter with a gang of sea monkeys when attempting to be the first woman to sail solo around the world on a banana skin. The ocean is composed of port wine jelly, the oars are hoola hoops, the sails are full brief knickers and the struggle is real. To the right is Ibis Island, the habitat to 5000 scavenger straw-necked Ibis and where a volcano of spewing molten lunch wrappers erupts into the sea. To the left is a buzzing reverberation, a squadron of mosquitoes with malice intent, bearing down and about to attack.

Here it is. Now is that moment...that moment when actuality interrupts, at first somewhat vaguely, but then quickly by the full force of reality. I find myself with one foot still sailing on the banana skin and the other stepping outside my dream as I realise there was one very determined mosquito who was targeting my face. With stealth and cunning attributes, it eludes my sleepy objections and confidently buzzes louder as it darts towards its prize.

I am now fully awake, cursing the mosquito's existence and find myself trying to out-think the predator by wrapping my doona tighter and hitting myself violently in the head. The buzzing is momentarily silenced and I cautiously rejoice in my victory. It is my experience however, that one can never truly be confident that the mosquito will be discouraged. Sure enough, it strikes again, this time from the other direction and with greater noise and determination. Thrashing wildly about and blindly slapping myself in the head was clearly no deterrent for this blood-sucking assassin.

Finally the buzzing subsides and my bruised and battered body can sink back into slumber. It is a restless sleep however as I despairingly and drowsily scratch my little finger....the bastard! I have come to the conclusion that mosquitos are one of the deadliest animals in the world, not only for their ability to spread infection and disease, but for also causing self-afflicted head wounds. I discussed this with Harry. He admits that sleeping for him means entering a world of complete and utter comatose oblivion and has yet to awake for anything...and certainly not for the likes of a tiny pest. I am now about to spray a suitably toxic chemical throughout the bedroom in the hope that it will obliterate my enemy and create a barrier for blissful sleep. So there you go.

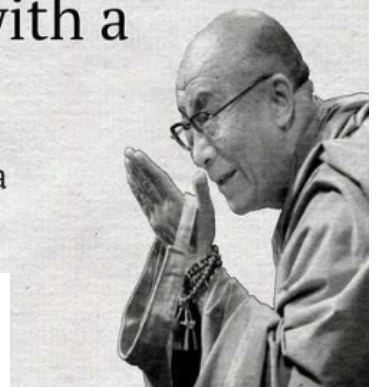
## HOW TO SLEEP WITH A **MOSQUITO** IN YOUR ROOM?

– GET RID OF IT!



If you think you are  
too small to make  
a difference, try  
sleeping with a  
mosquito.

- Dalai Lama



Wednesday's with Harry  
April 14th 2021

What does it say when your son declares that a trip to the National Gallery of Victoria is where he would like to spend today? Unless alien artistic culture gremlins infiltrated his brain during the night, the only explanation is that we are having a scheduled power cut, which of course ends all forms of life as he knows it.

Harry had heard that the 'Triennial' exhibition was worth a gander and so with very little research realised that it ended on Sunday and was free entry. Perhaps he should have researched a little further to discover that you still needed a ticket and school holidays meant hordes of desperate parents seeking free holiday entertainment were also on the prowl. So now I found myself questioning whether the pull to experience another mother/son art gallery encounter was greater than the hassle of driving 1.5 hours, parking, traffic, queuing, crowds and all whilst nursing a head cold.

Sidenote: During a time of global Covid pandemic, it is not wise to acquire a cold/flu cough, sneeze, hay fever, allergies or anything that indicates such symptoms. The consequences from the sneeze police are stares, glares, judgement and condemnation that is certainly without sympathy and punishment more aligned to burning at the stake. I did in fact have a Covid test on Monday and of course it was negative. Perhaps they should also issue a tee shirt or neon sign announcing such results!

As you would have now gathered, I packed some tissues and off we popped to the gallery. After queuing for a ticket and then queuing to enter I began to believe that many of this art loving population were simply just seeking where next to queue. Was it the queue to the toilet or the queue to look at miniature people by Tamooki Suzuki that persuaded and encouraged this pied piper approach? From desperate bladder bursting looks, particularly from middle aged females, I quickly surmised that those looking for the loos were horrified to find themselves herded into any line that formed and were sadly standing in front of a tiny sculpture instead of sitting down to pee. When I eventually discovered toilets, away from the madding crowd, I was met by a sign 'Self-Identified Female'. Ahh...the gender issue. I quickly established that I identified myself as a female...relief.

The Triennial exhibition is aimed to be a unique, thought provoking view of the world from various artists, some known, some up and coming, displaying different perspectives and genres. It was a mixed collection of art, design, science and technology all seemingly wrapped up in a statement. Issues such as race, gender, environment, climate, social inequality – you know, all the big ones, appeared to be the overwhelming theme.

There appeared to be an emphasis on pushing the traditional boundaries of what actually constitutes art...and that is why I found myself staring (although somewhat briefly) at a chair covered in blue plastic shards and indeed questioning 'What is Art'? Harry was standing next to me looking at a stack of PVC pipes and his judgement was not so philosophical. His assessment of that particular display was...WTF! Actually that was his assessment for many of these exhibits. It was also at this exhibit that I overheard a father explain to his 12 year old, that in order to understand these artworks, he would have to read the associated blurb. His son very quickly replied. 'Dad, this is not a reading day. I am on holidays and I only read when forced to do so at school.' The dad had no reply.

I often find myself 'people watching' when attending such events. It was very evident that this particular crowd could be divided and assessed into three groups. First was the already recognised parents with young children, attempting to occupy another day in the holidays that was free of charge and who were desperately hoping the Wiggles were on display. They walked rapidly through the gallery sniffing out anything bright, colourful and kiddy friendly that will appease little Mason, Harper, Logan or Amari ...they breathed a sigh of relief at the Plastocene exhibit by Porky Hefer. Whilst its theme was regarding toxic waste in marine life,



the humungous orange octopus created from hand-felted cigarette butts was a big hit with the kids. Perhaps the massive polystyrene coffee cup hovering skyward filtered in the message of waste products, or perhaps it was simply a fun object gawked at by the kids before they started chanting for Maccas.

The second are the... 'we are here, but not sure if enjoying it' group. This is Harry's people. They have heard it worthwhile and so took the risk. They question why so many people were there with young kids, concerned themselves about the length of queues, open minded enough to look at all the exhibits yet judgemental enough to think much of it pointless. Find reading the blurbs a little too taxing, so take a random guess at the purpose and mostly declare WTF. They concern themselves that someone called Fecal Matter created Pinocchio's Reality and cannot understand the link to climate change. They walk down the dark hall to trigger the black body Air Dancer but with all due respect to the history of violence against black bodies, find the giant inflatable prop more associated with used car lots and they cannot help feeling the urge to eat pizza. They honestly don't care to watch the video of the Faceless sleepless girl in bed, wrapped in her doona, sending text into cyberspace regarding her love life. They finally feel at home when they enter a room full of sporting trophies, only to learn their inscriptions are about racism and classism and clearly scoffing at the obsession with triumph and competition. They ponder over metal tapestries claiming that 'You are Not Tequila' and they gravitate towards the interactive exhibits such as the Humming Room. A completely empty room with a security guard out front and simply the instruction...' In order to enter the room you must hum a tune. Any tune will do.' If they wanted to look at fine porcelain plates they would watch Antiques Roadshow however they did enjoy the shoe laces creating the 'Last Words of John Brown'. And finally they believe that making their own art is essential to complete the visit...see photo entitled 'Shadow'. All in all they are glad they went, but would rather watch a football match or go to the pub.

The third group are the true art lovers. They are easily recognised by their crushed linen uniform and no care hairstyle. They are truly there to spend as long as it takes to ascertain every detail and underlying nuance from every piece of work. They have their NGV membership card tattooed on their forehead and walk with a calm yet resolute stride. They know exactly where to find the toilets without a queue and they are experienced to seek out the limited seating. They sit and contemplate the artist's views and intricacies and appear to accept that art is whatever it needs to be. The creative practice of this changing landscape reveals a new paradigm and they are up to the challenge. They have no desire to eat at Maccas nor the need to photograph their shadow.

So there you go...

