



A couple of swells



The nice policeman found out where to take me home



"I'm sure I left the fish sauce around here somewhere!"

Two Gentlemen Sharing – In November 2008 I met Nam Duong, an electrical engineer from Vietnam now working in Adelaide. Over the break last Christmas, Nam came to stay with me at Brighton. However, even after the break, he wound up spending more time at Brighton than at his own place, and so in May I invited him to move in. Having lived on my own from the ages of 22 until 50, this was no minor event. As many of you would know, I have been the epitome of the academic bachelor, and the thought of my living with someone else seemed as probable as my living on the moon. Against all the predictions, I have yet to strangle him and bury the body in the garden – and don't be so cynical as to suggest that the only reason I haven't is my loathing of gardening! (The police car in my driveway above is a mere coincidence.)

So, the transition from confirmed bachelor to "two gentlemen sharing" has been accomplished. My cupboards have been completely rearranged, all those things that "I might need some time" have been thrown out, and I don't know where anything is anymore. When I had moved back to Adelaide from England in late 1983, I had borrowed a fridge, little bigger than a bar fridge, from friends. After 25 years, the borrowed fridge is now in the garage and a shiny BIG new fridge sits in the kitchen. Nam and my mother picked it out – I just sighed and had a long lie down. Indeed, I have completely surrendered the kitchen to Nam who does all the cooking. Not that I am complaining about the cooking bit – I haven't eaten so well in years, even if most things do come in fish sauce.

Nam had never driven a car before, and so there was the ritual of driving lessons and log-book usually associated with teenage children. Anyway, Nam is now duly licensed. He drives quite competently – it's just that he gets lost backing out from the garage. If you ever find a silver Toyota with a bewildered Vietnamese inside, just turn on the GPS and press "Home".

The Poet Laureate of Pessimism – A musical highlight of the year was a concert held in the grounds of a southern vales winery by Leonard Cohen. Having never seen him perform live before, and given that he is in his seventies and so I am unlikely to again have the chance, I paid out for reserved seating. It was well worth it. Even before the interval he had sung *Bird on the Wire* and I was in tears!

It's Not Just the Fat Lady Who Sings – Of course, as always, I attended as much opera as time and money would permit. There were three operas in Adelaide, the stand out being Richard Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*). (Yes, I am still on the Committee of the Richard Wagner Society!) There were also two trips to Melbourne with two operas each.

Flying North – I have known Gary and Rod for many years. We were thick as thieves back when they lived in Adelaide in the early 90's, but for some time now they have been living in Queensland. Rod called me to let me know that there was a party in July for Gary's 40th birthday, and so Nam and I made a quick trip up to Brisbane and surprised Gary for his birthday. Gary seemed to be about twice the height of Nam, so the photograph below took some skill to compose.



Nam's first ever birthday cake



Four-of-a-kind; Gary's 40th



Nuns on the Run

Nuns on the Bay to Birdwood Classic Run – On September 27 the biennial Bay to Birdwood car run for classic cars was held. The Sisters of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence occupied three cars in the rally courtesy of Sister Evacuatus, the petrol-head in the Adelaide House. I took great delight in being the passenger in an ‘EH’ Holden, waving to the spectators and posing for many photo opportunities.

Travels Overseas ... to Kangaroo Island – Just before the start of the fourth term, Nam and I took the car on the ferry over to Kangaroo Island for a few days’ holiday. We had a delightful time, with spectacular scenery and diverse wildlife to entertain us. I’ve included a few photographs to make you jealous!



My domains in Kangaroo Island



A picture of the wild-life – and some kangaroos too



Look what can crawl out from under a rock

Knight in Rusty Armour – In late 2003, I founded a friendly society, which I named with my usual modesty “The Sagacious and Antediluvian Order of Richard Plantagenet, *Coeur de Lion*”. The information flyer for the society says, “Sir Alan de Brighton, Prior of the Order, may frequently be found in vigil at various bars. Just ask one of the bar staff to point out the guy in the rusty armour.” This turns out to be uncomfortably prescient. Because of my chronic condition Crohn’s disease, and the corticosteroid/immunosuppressant drug cocktail I take to control it (“Is the cure worse than the complaint?”), I have regular blood tests. My physician has noticed over several years a steady increase in my ferritin reading. Normal blood levels are 30-300 ng/mL for males – I have now hit 910 ng/mL and rising, indicating a severe iron overload in my system. Tests have revealed that I am homozygous for the H63D mutation of the hemochromatosis gene – apparently you can tell by the way I walk. Now all this is unrelated to the other condition, and it was just happenstance that it was picked up. According to one physician, it is often only diagnosed at the autopsy to discover why someone has suddenly had a heart attack, or liver failure, or ... name your favourite organ. For many years I have noticed an increasing bronze blotchiness of the skin on my legs and feet – *RUST!!* So how is it treated? Hemochromatosis (iron overload) is treated by good old-fashioned 18th-century medicine – every two weeks I go to the hospital and 500mL of blood is drained and discarded. I am thinking of auditioning as a victim for the next *Twilight* movie, and in the meantime I am steering clear of magnets.

Associate Professor – My former supervisor, Janet Verbyla, now Dean of Sciences at the University of Southern Queensland, encouraged (nagged?) me to submit a promotion application this year. Putting one of these things together is a mammoth undertaking – the application itself wound up being about a centimetre thick, and the additional information was nearly a ream of paper. After an excruciating number of hours in preparation, I finally submitted the application in May. Various aspects of my case were debated by no less than three different panels, each meeting on several occasions. Finally, towards the end of November, came a letter informing me of my promotion from Senior Lecturer to *ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR!!* I owe a great debt of thanks to Janet and to many other people who argued tirelessly for my case. In the middle of the year I stepped down as Deputy Head of the School after seven years in the job. It was a great relief to get respite from the stress of that position, especially given my health concerns, and it also allowed me to start spending more time on academic matters. Indeed, my colleague, Gobert Lee, who was to attend the Radiological Society of North America Conference in Chicago, suggested that we jointly author a poster that she would present at the conference. *Bias in Radiologic Studies: A Review* was awarded a Certificate of Merit in the Education Exhibit of the Conference! So I stride towards 2010 with a spring in my step ...



Best wishes for 2010,

with love from Alan and Nam

Alan the Builder! YES HE CAN!

