

## CHAPTER 8

### **Hey! You Street Kids Come Let US Paint the Town Red – Blue, Yellow and .....**

Driving into my old gravel driveway to the home we once lived in felt so ghostly. The empty house and studio was ever so cold. So in a blink, I filled my mind with all the warm loving memories of the past 10 years.

I had popped in on the parents-in-law and Seymour followed to help me unload the trailer and set the house up. We also went back to collect most of my art supplies and fitting that he had stored, to liven up the studio and plugged in the stereo.

I/WE arrived back in good Spirit in that ideal perfect mildly hypomania state of being, feeling so happy to be back in Tara and Simon's space, to be in touch with their daily lives. Keen to rebuild and start mixing paint again. Sue, however, preferred that I set myself up anywhere but here in her small town of Harvey. Knowing the dangers I would face I needed to take the risk to be under the town microscope again. Had to be careful who I smiled at but after ten months away from Simon and Tara, no-one was to stop me from returning to be with my children, not even an army, it was my decision.

It was so exciting to see and touch Tara and Simon after they finished school and by the weekend everything was well presented down to flowers in the rooms. So I invited the family over for a house warming dinner. Simon and Tara were able to reclaim their old bedrooms back, I was hoping they would be able to sleep over on odd weekends, but sadly that never eventuated.

Being in ONENESS although living alone, I wasn't. The first week or two my heart was stretched between the farms and Harvey, particularly at Red Gums where Rene was missing her colourful bird who flew the nest.

Although Rene and I held a strong platonic relationship, these initial days became emotional for all concerned, naturally enough, it cut deep for Rene being sensitively emotional and honest to her feelings at a critical time mentioned to George,

*“It’s not the same, George, without Kelvin, I’m really missing him. I have strong feelings for him”*

*“How strong?!”*

*“Like you I guess, he feels part of me, and I keep thinking about him, hoping he’ll be O.K. in Harvey”*

The conversation continued giving George some suspicious doubts, which could have jeopardised my future homely returns. I needed to consolidate my brotherly/sister relationships with George. Once achieved, Rene and I, with the family, made regular and frequent phone calls and shared many letters. Rene and I would often dwell into Life in philosophical and spiritual depths; her biblical studies and beliefs kept US from drifting off too far into the Light of God. When on the farm, she would take me to a non-denominational Christian Fellowship most Sundays and occasional bible studies evenings. I found interesting as I reserved my own opinions on the scripture meanings.

Overlapping all this from the three and a half hour drive to Perth with Olivia, who gave me a tour of her small private hospital in Subiaco, we compared notes from her private doctors and system to my abusive government ones. With this common health link we shared interesting conversations and were able to help each other. We took interest as we opened up our life stories to one another. Sadly, her drama’s commenced at four years of age when raped by a brutal sick paedophile from which Olivia merely survived intensive care.

Just prior to Christmas I returned, for a couple of days, to ‘Red Gums’ catching up to all the Slade’s receiving a warm welcoming as we celebrated George’s 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday. While there I called in on Olivia meeting her daughter Emy, a cheerful nine year old. We immediately

connected on a fun soul level. Emy was eager to show me her library in her room. She was a well advanced reader, thanks to Olivia's bedtime reading and story telling. Something seriously lacking in most busy households today as we focus more on computer literacy.

There was one book that specially grabbed my attention. An aboriginal well illustrated story with a glossary page with the word 'NGang' jumping out with its meaning – PEACE. That took me straight back to the elder at Ciandra Mission east of Kalgoorlie in 1988, when the elder hold my hand and told me:

*"You are NGang!"*

Yes I accepted that NGang (Peace) my Spirit is the true essence of myself, the unconscious Godly part – the WE/US part of me. So from here on whenever I, Kelvin, allowed my Free Spirit to fly, to glow we will use NGang. At this point I was certainly happy, free to BE, to be PEACE.

On returning to Harvey for Christmas, Sue rented a holiday house out at the beach for the holidays; I visited on a few occasions. The Christmas Day and lunch was special, I felt an outsider to Sue but still the family Father Figure to Simon and Tara, they all loved relaxing at Binningup Beach.

Meanwhile, I continued to develop my garden, creating new beds and started laying out a peach sign veggie patch (as I did while at the Canine) in front of the studio and between the house. While digging the grass out two young boys curiously rode their bikes up the drive. They had heard of me from Harvey High students that were there when I was – the cool gardener dude.

*"G'day boys, whatcha up ta?"*

*"Were you da gardener at the High School?"*

*"Yep! In '92, don't recall you guys"*

*"We kinda start this year"*

*“So does my daughter Tara”*

*“What Tara McKenney your daughter, ah bullshit, she’s so beautiful, she was our head girl in primary”*

*“Put a good word in for me!”*

*“Do that yourself, Tara is my little Queen. What’s ya names?”*

*“I’m Justin”* and the other getting off his bike *“Marcus!”*

*“You can call me NGang – the Rainbow Peaceful Warrior”*

*“Cool”* with Justin reaching over his handle bars to shake hands, then Marcus approached my saying,

*“How duya say it – NU.ng”* Shaking his hand, I explained, *“NGang, Nang it’s my spiritual name meaning Peace”*

*“Oh Cool, what’s ya makin’?”* inquired Justin.

*“It’s going to be a Peach sign veggie patch”* I went on to explain, *“I’ve laid it out with the string, now I’m digging out the four patches and the lawn forms the rest”*

*“Can we do some?”* Marcus hesitantly asked.

*“Sure, if you like you can pull some of the cooch out as I loosen it up”*

*“Na – let’s go”* Justin quickly added staying on his bike.

Having no where to go or do they ended up staying for about twenty minutes, talking more than weeding. Justin told me he heard that the students at the High School were really upset when I left and complained about the two women gardeners always together talking like married magpies and that the ovals and gardens took a back step.

Sure, for all the qualifications and experience means nothing unless one has their heart in the job at hand.

*“See ya later Nanga”* as they both skidded up the drive.

I was in the studio on their return visit a few days later. Marcus' younger brother also rode in as if they lived here. By this stage my Peace sign patch was complete with manure and mulch ready for planting.

*"Fuck man what a wicked peace sign,"* the new member yelled out as he rode his bike straight through the grassed middle of the sign. I was just coming out of the studio to see Marcus dig up and become bogged in my freshly raked patch. To remind them whose place it was and in their language, I sharply let Marcus know where he stood or just stalled.

*"Get the fukk out of there, you little shit. You've disturbed my Peace"* as I calmly approached him.

*"Oh shit I'm sorry N'Gang, I didn't mean it"*

*"That's O.K."* I replied in a pleasant friendly voice, *"You won't do it again, let's fix it, I've got all these marigolds and garlic to plant"*

The three happily dropped their bikes to assist.

*"And who are you?"*

*"Todd"*

*"He's my younger brother, N'Gang"* Marcus added.

After I finely raked the surface, I spread alternately the garlic seedlings and the mini marigolds around the circumference.

*"Well there you are, a section each, only plant them up to two centimetres deep and about ten apart"*

Everyone was enthusiastic in the planting.

*"Well done guys, we've completed the circle of Life, now shall we meet up in the centre along the four arms, one garlic, one marigold"*

I was playing my John Lennon CD, so I fast forwarded to the song *“Give Peace a Chance”* Just when we finished with the seedlings another lad rode in. The music gave them an extra buzz.

*“It looks great NGang, it’s fun”* Todd spoke for all of them.

*“So what’s your name? Mine’s NGang”*

*“Shannon, part of the gang”*

I went to the studio and replayed the song as we all started dancing in and around the peace patch. With them all on a little high I spoke out.

*“Great, come into the centre and place your hands on top of mine”*. As we piled up I continued with the other hand to have ten hands united in Peace. To complete the made up ritual, I called out.

*“Welcome to Peace!”* then we spontaneously raised our arms and hands out singing *“Peace”*.

After watering the seedlings I took them inside and gave them cool drinks and finished of what little ice cream I had.

*“Luv ya fuckin’ rainbow colours NGang”* exclaimed Justin as a compliment.

*“They’re not fuked, they’re beautiful, grab your bowl and drink and lets sit around the rainbow table under the grapevine, it’s much cooler out there”*.

Like so many teenagers these days, they were not familiar with the ‘please’ and ‘thankyou’, their ‘ands’ and ‘buts’ substituted with the ‘fucking’ word. We enjoyed a good chat with new music to their ears, which was well appreciated. It was becoming dark so I told them it was time to be moving on home. They all pleaded to stay overnight.

*“We can stay, can we sleep in the studio?”*

*“No one stays unless your parents O.K. it and I have personally met them”*

*“Mum won’t mind, it’s O.K. She never knows where we are”* Todd quickly replied.

Then Justin added, *“My Dad doesn’t care where I sleep, I hardly ever go home, we sleep anywhere we can find”*

*“Sure, even so I will talk to your folks first so for now I guess you better move on”*

*“Oh! NGang! Come on, that’s not fair”*

*“Come on Nanga”*

It took close to a half an hour for them to get back on their bikes. Then I cooked a bite to eat for tea before settling into a letter. That was interrupted with a lengthy conversation with Olivia whom I introduced to my four new founded friends. It was about 11pm when they returned tapping at my back door, hoping to come in and smoke some marijuana they had stashed in their pockets. They took it for granted that I smoked and were surprised to learn I had never and did not accept it or need it.

After a few lollies from the table and some water from my purifier, I had them move on. Only to be back the next day mid morning bored without things to do. They said that they slept in the park.

The following week school recommenced but that was of no interest to the boys, who spent more time out of school than in. For Tara, she was moving from the Head Girl of primary school to take on the High School. I confidently told her that she’ll also be the Queen of the High School and sure enough in later years she was voted in as School Captain. Tara knew Justin to be a wild cheeky larrikin upsetting everything and everyone, always in fights and often been suspended. Marcus was also in her class and was not much better. Tara explained, both were extremely rebellious, anti-school, against the system in their protest. Everything was a joke.

As for Simon, he was moving into Grade 6 and as it was Shannon was in his class. He was the class bully so big solidly fat and tough always pushing his weight around, got on well with Simon and liked him as a classmate. And for young Todd, he was the most rebellious and

intelligent of them all, too much for any conservative school teacher to handle. With an elder brother and friends he took no nonsense from anyone.

All four boys had ATTITUDE problems and were rejected by the town folk. They felt at ease, comfortable in my space, no threat, somewhere they could escape their immediate world of chaos. I found them to be a challenge to help and to bring out that beautiful Loving side which I could clearly see yet most were unaware it existed. My compassion was with the, finally they found someone on their side. The smoking drug problem needed addressing.

To me it was Tara and Simon with their friends whom I really wanted to visit me daily or weekly but after a few months that didn't and would not happen for Sue preferred I visit them in her environment, no time restrictions but more on weekends after sport. It hurt me that I couldn't be there in their lives daily, only able to watch from the outside. Simon and Tara were at that teenage age that parents were an embarrassment anyway. So I accepted the four boys in the interim, hoping Shannon would arrive with Simon after school one day, there was talk of it as Shannon told of the fun times we shared.

I made it a point to visit the three single parents of the boys, although poor, from hard battled lives and somewhat rough on the edges, they all displayed good hearts. They had heard so much about me from the boys they were keen and pleased for me to assist their children and allow them to sleep over. With that cleared I permitted Friday and Saturday sleepovers, but I first laid down some HOME rules or should I/WE say Guidelines:

- 1 – Leave it as you find
- 2 – Use it but Abuse it then you'll Lose it and me
- 3 – Close the bloody door

It nearly all ended where it began when the following day I came home from food shopping only to find the four of them out of school and in the kitchen smoking bong. The house stunk of marijuana. My blood nearly boiled but I kept calm.

*‘What are you doing in here? You know I don’t accept this shit and you’re not to come in unless I’m home. Find somewhere else if you’re gonna run a muk’*

Justin all glassy eyed *“NGang you ought a try some, I’ll fill one up for ya”*

*“I’m not having drugs in this place, before long the whole town would get wind of it for a start, including the police – NO thanks. Now clean up and piss off”*

They were all off their faces giggling, unfit to comprehend anything. They had one of their handmade plastic drink containers loaded wanting another blast. I was completely naïve to drugs and their implements. So I allowed them to teach me their behaviour, since they were watched. Marcus demonstrated with only one inhale as Justin gave me a running commentary then I had them clean up the mess as I opened all the windows then I escorted them off the property.

Excluding Shannon the others came back early that night. To enforce my stance, I immediately moved them on, as they were still high.

The next afternoon, while I was repairing the chook house and extending the yard, you guess it, they apologised and offered to help me with the fencing. Without lecturing I conducted a lengthy discussion on drugs and their effects and dangers addictions, crime to feed it as you build up to heroin to destruction – no future – every up has a far greater downer. They promised not to bring drugs in again as Todd bummed a cigarette off Shannon. I preached more so by example as I worked to free them from self abuse.

Two days later I received six white chickens I had ordered, I was unaware they were battery chickens until arrival and loudly placed my protest to the truck driver. One of the cruelest ways to treat an animal, for a bird to never touch the ground, flap their wings in a cage,

unable to turn around, becoming cannibals, pecking each others bums and committees and politicians allowing it, no excuse – SHAME.

At least I offered these six love and freedom. It was most interesting watching them adapt for when I let them loose in their new 7x5m home, it took two days before they moved away from the close huddle against the wire fence, even were not tempted at first to move away for food. It took a good week for them to slowly move around the yard, then they were reluctant, even after all my affection, to explore outside their confinement the third week when I placed food scraps outside the gate to lush green grass. I gave them all names and at night they stayed huddled close together on the straw in the corner of their hen house never learning to naturally perch on the rails I made. They lived like queens after the hell hole they came from. I gave them a free run of the yard outside the peace veggie patch; my voice, missile or water kept them clear of it until they eventually knew better to invade it. The boys had fun chasing them away from the patch.

Over the forthcoming weeks much progress was achieved in all areas. A healthy brotherly rapport was established as they respected me as an elder brother in a father figure, I allowed for some flex with give and take.

Although rebellious, fighting for their independence against the mainstream society with a disadvantaged upbringing, under their skin was four good hearts; they were calling out to be heard and reaching out to be loved like most teenagers out on the streets. I needed to start from the basics, manners were a complete stranger to them, I introduced them to the ‘please’ and ‘thankyou’ saying:

*“I don’t take orders from you or anyone and don’t expect you to either. If you want something simply ask by saying PLEASE and show some appreciation with a THANKYOU. Never ever take anything or anyone for granted or you’ll lose it”*

This teaching was frequently put into practice, as old habits and behaviours kept resurfacing. I welcomed their stuff ups to use as examples to offer and demonstrate a more appropriate and loving alternative.

To have everyone participate with responsibilities and to share things I painted a medium size terracotta pot Gold to illustrate the pot of Gold at the end of the Rainbow. I placed \$100 in it and the rest managed to scratch up about \$20 collectively. The amount was immaterial as long as we gave as we could afford and shared out wisely. Not surprising, within days they were accusing one another for stealing a couple of dollars. The brothers had to learn how to TRUST one another as they would steal from their own mothers, trusting themselves was the first hurdle. The shortfall of cash only happened once. We started off with a treat of two family pizzas and two large bottles of cool drink. We shared it in the studio while listening to music, two of their friends must have smelt it or it was by chance as they joined in the party, they were reasonable lads who popped in on odd occasions later but I never encouraged them to join the group, four was plenty to keep tabs on, they were best one on one, in numbers it only took one to upset the apple cart.

There was one day I recall, to remind them to leave things as they found for anyone on drugs with this selfish attitudes they become extremely – lazy, insensitive and inconsiderate – qualities I do not like in people being the opposite. They tested my patience and tolerance, this day Justin did nothing but scoff all the jelly lollies and fruit and nuts we all purchased on the table, making a mess and not sharing. This lesson seemed to sink in as I turned from making fruit scones with Todd and Shannon and threw an egg at Justin who was annoying us all. It splattered against the wall just above his head as he ducked.

*“Fuuck!! Watcha do that for, Ngang?”*

I followed up with a bowl of flour and a small handful of sugar.

*“Stop it NGang, ya mak’n a mess”*

They were all surprised by my reaction.

*“Good you’ve noticed, that’s O.K. I’ve made the mess so I’ll clean it up, if it’s an accident we should all help to clean up. I don’t care what mess you guys make; you can piss on the floor as long as you mop up, clean your mess once you’ve finished making it. Look at this sink and bench, we’ll clean up while the scones are cooking, won’t we Todd?”*

*“Yeah, I guess”*

*“Just if I break something, it’s up to me to fix it if I can’t I’ll ask for help – fair enough!”*

*“Sure NGang!!!”*

Then to reinforce my point I chucked another egg just missing Marcus sitting in the corner.

*“Understand fellas?”*

We all burst into laughter as I grabbed a bowl of water and a cloth and went about cleaning up. From this day the house was kept immaculate with my reminders of who made the mess, we all started keeping pride in the upkeep, I did all the main house cleaning of course, with fresh flowers from my gardens setting the rooms off. Their initial squabbling and fighting also faded away so I defined this property as an Abuse Free Zone, making a sign for both the front and back entrances of the property.

*“Abuse Free Zone*

*Welcome ALL children*

*Young and Old”*

Adult Minded people have made our society dangerously abusive from the Prime Minister downwards. The boys soon loved this Peace Haven that became their Heavenly State to escape to. As soon as anyone started to behave like a negative adult, including inappropriate

swearing, I would order or insist they leave the property unless they apologised and changed their attitude immediately. Justin, the ringleader, was forced off the most.

There was nothing boring here, the seventy year plus country cottage was built in the centre of the quarter of an acre block, a fifty metre drive and garden from the front door and the same distance from the back door leaving plenty of lawns to mow, a near two hour job every two or three weeks. Todd loved mowing, on my tight budget I paid them accordingly on what they did, which more often than not would finish up in the pot of Gold.

The boys liked the heart shaped garden beds I had created around the bases of a few trees out the front, so I allocated each of them a shrub to dig and develop their own hearts, a project all took pride and enthusiasm in. I supervised their progress but did not interfere in the maintenance. Once prepared with my homemade mulch, I took them to the nursery and bought any annual flowers they chose.

Being the end of summer, it was still hot and dry requiring daily care so I kept an eye on the watering when they missed. Todd and Shannon kept prize beds not allowing any weeds to pop up. Marcus started well, before his weeds over shadowed his petunias and Justin, what a laugh, encouraged by the younger two and having something of his own, he nurtured his heart very well coming to me all excited one day.

*“Ah, Nanga, cum quick, have a look at me garden”*

His first pansy flower popped into bloom, a vibrant electric blue against a brilliant yellow with a speck of white, with two others close to opening. I reached down and picked it, congratulating Justin.

*“Good on ya Just”* as I placed it behind his ear. *“My rough and tough Justin has become a pansy and lookin’ good!”*

He took my two sided compliment on the chin, moving on to complain about my picking, I mean the flower.

*“Oh NGang, did ya have to pick it?”*

*“Let’s put it in a glass inside, your heart will be a blaze of colours in days. You see, Just’ you guys have taken the garden to represent your own hearts as I suggested, so how are you feelin’, like your garden?”*

*“Yep, pretty good – Hey Shannon, come and have a look at this”*

Before Christmas, I asked the landlady, Anne (real estate agent and town councilor), if I could build an open picket fence in a cottage style, with fancy tops, you know the one I mean. She approved it along with my other improvements, chook pen, rose garden and so forth, paying for the materials. I had painted the fence the typical white, which really set the little cottage off with its white cross railed verandah and colourful hanging baskets.

Every one who visited always remarked on its quaint peacefulness. With my garden looking great, I thought of painting about a dozen or so pickets on each side of the entrance drive to welcome people with the rainbow colours as they drove through. I invited Anne over for a cuppa around my rainbow painted outdoor setting to land this proposal on her, in theory accepted but only allowed ME/US to paint the inside side of the fence before a full commitment.

Todd was keen to help. From the drive the key post was white, then gold and silver followed by the eight rainbow colours from red to magenta in single pickets expanding to two for purple and three for magenta. Anne got a buzz on her return inspection to give the go ahead for the street side. Because a few of the neighbours in the street took interest when walking by, Todd and I made it slowly unfold by only painting one colour per day, since we could all see it complete from the inside. By using my quality artist acrylic on the final coat, it became mighty brilliant standing out as soon as one turned into the street. It became a talking point for many in the neighbourhood.

From here I decided to re-coat the outdoor setting to teach the boys how to paint without dropping a drop and making a mess, that was an exercise in itself. I had this idea to get the boys

involved in a town's project to raise their self worth and obtain respect from the people of Harvey, who despised them. I was fed up with adults for misjudging situations when I got wind of the rumours spreading across the townsite. People's misperceptions are always being presented to me. So often things are not as they seem or appear. It's good being observant, but if only all of humanity would release this judgement with in days we would be in that Godly Christ Consciousness.

A few weeks back, Justin's two elder sisters with a girlfriend, drove up to see US. His eldest sister, Rebecca, was back in town for a few days for she was a very supportive Year 9 student when I was a revolutionary gardener at the High School. We all shared a late afternoon tea with plenty of giggles. From that, the blown out rumours spread that I had a mob of juvenile delinquents around shooting up on drugs and having sex with young teenagers. Adult's minds disgust me, hence the sign at the entrance. We don't behave to the sick adults.

Anyhow, extending our clean fun into the next day, I borrowed a trailer to collect a load of cow manure from a footballer friends dairy farm for a new garden strip for tomatoes, caulis and broccoli. While I was loading up from the dump area, the four were bouncing around in the car yelling out, being a nuisance, giving me the shits so I chucked a shovel full of the mushy cow shit across the back window, they, in fits of laughter, loved it as I distracted their behaviour. The car needed a wash, so I hurled heaps more over the side windows.

It was a smelly mess as I drove back along the highway and down the main street of Harvey, back to the house. The four were having a great time as we unloaded, hosed and washed the car clean. Some of the clean dirty fun we enjoyed while playing and working at the same time.

Being young teenagers, the boys were keen on driving cars, they said they could drive and constantly begged me to drive the Kingswood. I eventually gave in as a form of reward to good behaviour and for achievements, I allowed them to reverse the car (without touching the

accelerator) up the fifty metre drive and back staying on the property; initially I would walk alongside the drivers window and pull the keys out if they messed up.

This little treat meant more than anything to them, it became frequent until the day I went to Bunbury returning earlier than they anticipated where I discovered Todd – at only eight years of age – blotto from sniffing petrol in my lounge. Him and Marcus had the mower fuel inside; the house stunk of it as I went off my face, roaring out aloud,

*“You FUKIN idiots, GET OUT!!”*

I grabbed the can, burst outside with them following, grabbed a shovel and dug a hole.

*“Next I’ll be burying you. Todd it’s bad enough when you stuff your brain and won’t know who I am or Marcus but you won’t even know your own name, you’ll be a zonked veggie. Is that what you want..”*. I carried on scaring the shit out of them. Both promised never ever to do it again. To show my disappointment and disgust, I banned them from the Peace Zone for a few days. They daily begged for forgiveness to return as Shannon and Justin were still allowed to play. These things uneducated youth do to themselves from drugs, glue and petrol sniffing, it’s sickly bizarre. Another failure from governments and parents.

Thankfully, this was the last of the self abuse; they even felt no need to light up cigarettes. I never allowed smoking in the house for anyone. They all became health conscious with the fresh foods I provided, from the fruit trees, eggs, pure water, with the veggie patch starting to bear fruits.

I aimed to make it as self sufficient as possible. I was able to swap my products with fellow members at the “Lets” market days, a bartering co-operative community group.

Whilst in Bunbury, I purchased a football, on special, for the main purpose to kick with Simon on visits and also to get the boys involved in sporting activities and of course I wanted to play about with it.

I was still very fit and healthy from the lamb marking on the farm, so from enjoying a boot in the back yard clearing the cobwebs and a new footy season only weeks away, I decided to mix in with the towns boys in the Harvey Bulls training. It had been ten years since I played the game, giving it up to Kelsue. Age was no bearing for me, as it was, two senior players were rookies who looked up to me back in the 80's, after my first training session, I regained their respect once I displayed my old skills I was known for, I was able to run as fast as my juniors half my age and when I landed a bullet like stab pass kick hard on the coaches chest while running in full sprint made the team step back and take notice, bit of a fluke. I surprised myself more than anyone; my four apprentices gave out a loud cheer from the sideline.

It was better I introduced my name as NAng or Nanga, after all in sports and the arts, we are driven by Spirit. The players liked the ring of it, calling out Nan....Nan....Nang....Nanga!! Sounding like a motor bike engine taking off or revving up. The name Kelvin sounds soft in its tongue twisting two syllables. Just the name of NAng alone inspired the team. I was here to give it my best in a playful manner to lift team Spirit along with teamwork, self discipline and commitment. My humorous antics with my tough disposition was well accepted by half but the other slack ones tried to tease and took me as a joke, I soon outwitted them as they became the joke on bounce down. The lighting was poor at training with my eyesight not the best, so to the amusement of Todd and Shannon, I painted my footy in black, white, gold and silver quarters. When I offered it to the team they all laughed at me, but I insisted by using it at training and once it became darker my footy shone out in its spin, making the red/brown balls in contrast even less visible, the laugh soon fell on my face for the following week the coach had several of the balls painted white. I also painted a white target on my black St. Kilda guernsey with a red bull's eye.

*“Ah Nanga, what's the dickens with the guernsey?”* cackling.

*“Well, I'm fed up with you guys, Bulls, miss-kicking when I lead to you. So here's a target five points for the bulls-eye then three, two and one. It's not a moving target for I always*

*lead straight towards you, let's see if you're capable of scoring. I think you're full of bullshit, so prove me wrong smart alics"*

There is always wisdom in my madness. Without pre-season, like the others, I soon caught up to them. The coach appreciated my training support, lifting his team morale but initially didn't take me seriously to actually play. Sport is a very good thing for our being, if approached and applied in the right manner, we need to be fit as well as healthy.

Back at the house all was progressing along reasonably well, they boys attitude had changed as we worked and played as a productive team, their incentive was to drive the Kingswood up the drive and back. They were starting to master that so after a good days work in the gardens and mowing, I treated them to a treat, with my tyres worn down, needing replacement, I decided to take them up in the hills to the old gravel pit and gave them turns having a free run, doing doughnuts with proper driving lessons, from the passengers seat I ensured they never went overboard to drive dangerously or at any risk. A great time they'll never forget.

*"Wicked! When can we do that again?"* They bragged about their dusty doughnuts for days. We returned and gave the car a good wash and polish.

That week I had two rolls of film developed from shots around the town centre, depicting the run down and distasteful sights in the main street, the graffiti, benches, tatty rubbish bins, neglected concrete cow trough planters with weeds, signwriting, Snells Park and so forth. From the second copy, I painted proposals of new ideas and improvements in coloured texture. Made two displays, before and after the boys were excited on the finished result. So I put it to them.

*"Justin, you guys are spat on by the towns folk from your past offensive behaviours and abuse language, can you recognise any of your handy work here?"*

*"Steve and I sprayed that bench",* Marcus quickly admitted, with Justin laughing.

*“Exactly”, I added. “It looks shithouse, we can do much better, have a look at our proposal”*

They agreed with the white and silver bench with purple, blue and green horizontal braiding and the others in the warmer red, orange and gold battens on white and gold and the other in full rainbow colours, like we’ve done here.

*“I guess a lot of your past handy work has been replaced with new glass. Is that right Just’?”*

*“Yep”*

*“Well! What do ya say, we as a team clean and brighten up the town with a bit of paint and polish with colourful garden beds, just like this we’ve shown here we can do it, and earn the love and respect we deserve”*

*“Yeah, for how much?” both Justin and Marcus blurted out.*

*“You need to do it for the Love of it, for pride, for the people, that’s priceless, then your rewards will be endless. The town folk will praise you and respect you for doing something on your own back that they should have done themselves. It’ll be something everyone in Harvey could be proud and honoured with. It could be a great tourist attraction for all to benefit from”*

*“But I’m not working for nothing” Shannon remarked.*

*“Like I just said, you won’t be, tell ya, I’ll insist the Shire put on a party for you on completion, they provide all the material for the project, we’ll produce free labour, it will be more fun than what we’ve done here. We can stretch it over three or four weekends and from after school under the noses of the people. We’ll have to be professionally efficient, making it enjoyable fun with music, no spilling a drop of paint on the paving.*

*See we can transfer this into this within weeks, just like five of US, actually Just’ a couple of girls would be good too. We’ll have to train them too, will ask Tara and Simon. Practice here first and have a plan of attack. INTERESTED?”*

*“Shit yeah, Fuck the cunts, we’ll show em”* Justin as usual spoke on behalf of the rest.

*“We’ll make them kiss our arses”* with Todd overlapping Shannon. *“Let’s take over the Town, fuck the lot of them, we’ll make them..”*

*“Right! O.K., you sound keen to do it, they might kiss your feet, they’ll definitely bow to you once you pull it off properly. I’ll phone and make an appointment with the Shire Clerk”*

They had to want to do it; I was pleased with their enthusiasm.

*“We still need to do practice painting, not to spill or splatter paint, even finishing strokes so what do you say we re-coat these stools and paint these poles?”*

From these mistakes, I taught them an easier and better way to avoid having paint run back on the brush and dripping off the end. They were very excited to have a real purpose and goal, to prove themselves; it became their main focus. A meeting was arranged the following week with Keith Leece. Meanwhile I thought to include a supporting partition so with the well presented photos, I personally visited all fifty-three business houses and added twelve residence shopping. It took a solid four days to ask for a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to my four questions.

Do you accept:

- 1) Rainbow colours used with white, black, gold, silver and bronze trimmings?
- 2) Shire/Rate payers to provide materials?
- 3) The youth to provide free professional labour?
- 4) Shop owners responsible for watering flowerpots when needed and maintained by youth and Shire?

Apart from the CBA bank manager giving a NO to question 4 and two conservative shop owners leaving a ? on the first question wanting to think more about it, I had a 98% ‘yes’ recommendation to back the proposal.

The meeting was most successful, Keith gave the project his 100% approval and support, with such a low budget he suggested extra funding to allow for extras if we needed it. He told me it had to go to council in a fortnight with his recommendations and ask if I could attend to present it; he'd make it the first matter on the agenda. After seeing the photos, Keith admitted his maintenance staff were not pulling their weight and saw it as an ideal exercise to have public involvement and having the vandals beautify the town, other youth's would be less likely to abuse it. I asked that the council workers should be involved under my supervision as co-ordinator, so their noses weren't put out, and perhaps a street party on completion to open it.

A great comfortable meeting, the four now seeing its reality even more so as we developed strategies and a fluent system and a time factor to work on. I encouraged their input on the proposal. Creative Todd suggested one of the concrete two metre cow water troughs be painted white and black like the dairy cows of Harvey.

*“Bloody good idea Todd, you and I can work on that, the coloured petunias will be stunning in that one. We can paint some of the bins with local artwork any suggestions, think about it”*

Every second shop in the mainstreet had the character flower beds in front, currently a disgrace.

With all this going on I had received a phone call from Olivia saying she was going into hospital for a few days to have a women's operation (later I found out to have her tubes reversed) and her daughters were afraid of her coming out of theatre, she put me onto Eva, her eldest daughter.

*“Mum goes berserk ranting and raging as she comes out, needs holding down, I don't wanta go through that again”*

*“Why is that, what causes it?”* I asked.

*“Apparently some people coming from the peaceful tranquility or the weird other side under anaesthetic don’t adjust to coming back to reality in the ward”, Eva explained.*

Immediately I thought *“What do you expect – wakening to a new unusual cold stark surround, not knowing where you are, I’ve found it to be puzzling at first”*

*“How can we change it? I don’t want to be there when she wakes this time”*

*“Well, Eva, ask the nurses if you can dress Olivia’s room up with her familiar home comforts that mean so much to her so she thinks she’s waking up in her own house with you”*

I received a call back the next night and Olivia said it was O.K. to dress her room up as long as she didn’t mark it in any way and it is brought back to how it was on leaving. She also begged that I came over to help the girls and her with it and see her through the OP. I told her of our important project but her persistent pleads finally had me give in to coming across for two days prior to the council meeting.

So the following Tuesday I left, the boys wanted to come for the ride. I told them to go to school and I’ll see them on Thursday. They stayed waiting eagerly for my return and the meeting as they spread the words of their forthcoming event.

Little did we all know the surprise to come on Wednesday.