

***Carindale Writers' Group Meeting***

**24 June 2010**

Start 9:30

**Present:** Beverley, Rolando, Lydia, Len, Chip, Dorothy, Judy, Nick, Marjory, Brian, Wendy, Dawn, Pam, Naomi, Jeff, Debby, Rebekah, Shirley, Sandy, Marilyn, Amy.

**Apologies:** Gary, Leslee-Anne, Karen, Rebekah, Richard, Wendy

**News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:**

1. After further discussion led by Lydia followed by a vote, it's been decided that our short story book project "All Shorts" will go ahead. It's been agreed it will be a collection of short work aimed at adults. Submissions can include stories, poetry or articles. Over the coming weeks Lydia and Rebekah will be looking into costing options for editing, typesetting, printing and publishing. As Lydia has mentioned in emails that have been circulating over the last week, if you would like to be included in the book, please have an idea of the story you'll submit and the word count at the next meeting. Remember, this doesn't mean you have to bring along your submission, it's more to get a firm idea of the word count of the entire work.

2. We then moved onto our annual AGM... and it was probably the quickest I've seen. Good to see we're such an efficient bunch. All position holders were re-elected unopposed. A big thank you to everyone who held positions over the last year, and especially to Bev who does so much to keep meetings running smoothly, not to mention all her hard work behind the scenes. I don't know what we would do without her. So, as a reminder, here are all our position holders for the year ahead: Co-ordinator (Bev), Treasurer (Jeff), Meeting Reporter (Naomi), Librarian (Leslee-Anne) and not to forget Morning Tea (Dorothy). The position of Deputy Co-ordinator has also been added to support Bev. Thank you to Lydia for agreeing to support Bev in this role.

3. Debby brought up a valid point regarding first aid reminding us that in case of emergency two defibrillators are available in the Carindale Shopping Centre at the Concierge Desks located on Level 2 (near Myer) and Level 3 (near David Jones).

## **Feature Reader:**

**Rolando: From his Novel “The Switch; how I used it to get off my ass and make a living.”**

### **Overview:**

Rolando read from the first few chapters of his fiction novel. Based on real life, the story tells of a man who has taken early retirement. Relishing in the comfort his successful entrepreneurial career has brought him, he is now reflecting on his life and adjusting to this new phase finding things may not be entirely as he expected.

### **Critique:**

Rolando’s question to the group was ‘Does the forward which has now been incorporated into the book (after comments from a previous critiquing session) flow with the rest?’

An initial comment was that people loved the metaphor of the switch. It was suggested that the description of the switch could even be replaced with the word ‘click’ keep it succinct. Rolando also has the knack of using real life examples that people can really relate to, drawing them further into the book...for example, ‘this highly successful man has been downgraded from entrepreneur to cook and cleaner in less than a year’. His expressions are also very clever and original.

There was some feeling that the reminiscent section towards the beginning, where we follow the main character back to childhood, was important, but could be dispersed throughout the rest of the ‘here and now’ part of the story at relevant points rather than doing it in one big chunk. There was also the suggestion that some more description of the setting could be used, for example, what does his kitchen look like? What about the children, what do they look like?

Finally, it was also noted how well Rolando has made use of 1<sup>st</sup> person style of writing, which as we know can be a struggle. In the days following his critique, Rolando wrote a note which Bev sent out to the entire group letting us know that he has taken some suggestions on board and that the novel is now completed and ready to go through the publication process. Well done Rolando. We look forward to seeing the finished product.

### **This meeting’s exercise:**

This week’s exercise was taken from one of Beverley’s books. The challenge was to write a short story in which the setting helps to define a particular character.

Sandy started with her “Willing Witness” story describing a low income earner with high aspirations using the setting of the aftermath of a crime scene. Very vivid and original imagery Sandy. That turban unwinding like a question mark soaking up the blood is still stuck in my head. Lydia followed with a very loving piece evoking feelings of family gatherings, food and good times as a Grandmother describes her home. Finally Chip finished with a beautiful mood piece, of an elderly woman and her relationship with her garden which was

the focus of her daily activities and had been there through her whole life. Showed how life can be so in tune with nature.

### **Additional Readers:**

#### **Marjory: “Thinking of you Benny”**

Another 1<sup>st</sup> person piece. We seem to be getting more and more from people which is good to see. A story of unrequited love as the main character describes her love for a young man named Benny; a tennis player and a gentleman. She loved him because he took it slow, he had integrity and handsomeness. But it seems he took it too slow as she soon discovers he is in love with another. I’m sure it’s happened to all of us at some point in our lives, and Marjory put it into words so well.

#### **Dorothy: “The Byrds, Chapter 29: The Good Samaritan”**

More treats from the Byrds as Mother decides to become the good Samaritan of Blood Street. A light hearted morning as the children wake up one morning to find Mother cooking up a storm in the kitchen. She then loads up the girls with treats for poor Mrs Miller next door as well as the Nuns. A stand out image I think from everyone’s reaction was Big Kev’s head which was the size of a pumpkin with his eyes resting on two stalks. Always a pleasure to hear more from these cheeky school girls. We all like to see how things were in the past, to remember a section of life that’s now gone.

#### **Shirley:**

Another love story, maybe it’s the chill of winter inspiring us all to be a little romantic? Even if this week they do seem to have less than happy endings! This one is about Damon and Yolette, friends since school who keep in touch, until Damon finally proposes and they build a seemingly perfect life together with their child, Jake. But things soon change as Damon spends more and more time at work and Yolette feels unneeded and becomes possessive until one day she simply disappears... but what happens next? Perhaps this could be a piece for our All Shorts book? Thanks Shirley.

#### **Feature Reader/s for next meeting: Naomi**

**Exercise to work on if you have time:** Create a short story (500 words max) with the ending: “He turned and walked away through the rain”.

**Happy Writing Everyone!**

## Chip's Computer Tips

### Website Watch

Legally, whatever information you put on a website no longer belongs to you. It belongs to the company that owns that website. This means that any social networking site owns the information you put on it. It has the right to make it public or pass it on to authorities. Thus, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Skype, and your own Internet Service Provider's website own the personal information you provided when you joined these website organisations. If you quit Facebook, it keeps your personal information on file. If you use G-Mail, Hotmail or Yahoo Mail, although they may not release any of the data you put on it, the information you upload to them belongs to them.

Here's a case in point: When Disa Powell's husband and brother were badly burned in an electrical explosion while conducting maintenance at a Wal-Mart store, a US discount chain similar to K-Mart, and the family sued, the defense went after something she never expected: her online life.

Through a subpoena seeking information about the men's injuries, Wal-Mart was able to gain full access to her Facebook and MySpace social-networking accounts -- every public and private message, contact and photo for the previous 2 1/2 years.

There were the pictures of Powell's newborn baby lying in a hospital bed after heart surgery (Label: "The hardest day of Mommy and Daddy's life"). The messages detailing problems with her pregnancy ("I got a bladder infection, which has moved to my kidneys"). And the messages dissing on friends ("Brad is a big fat BABY, and can't do anything by himself. The whole issue is that he's lazy").

The case, which was settled out of court in January 2010, offers a window into an issue that in recent weeks has riled members of the US Congress, consumer advocacy groups and tens of thousands of account holders: what your social-networking sites know about you and whom they share it with.

### Open Sites and Service Providers

Many online service providers over the past few years have been building huge dossiers with minute details of each user's online activities -- a practice that isn't usually mentioned in privacy policies. Some companies anonymise the data, while others do not. Some store detailed data for a month, while others keep it for years.

Companies are loath to talk about what information they track, but internal compliance manuals for law enforcement for Facebook, Yahoo and [Microsoft](#) reviewed by The Washington Post show that their data collection is much more extensive than users might believe based on what they themselves can access.

For example: Microsoft tracks the Xbox LIVE start and end dates and times for game-playing and notes the game played, such as "SW: Jedi Academy." Yahoo keeps chat and instant messenger logs for 45 to 60 days and notes the time/date and IP address for when content is added or deleted to someone's profile or to its Flickr photo service.

Facebook's data collection is among the most detailed.

For every user ID, Facebook keeps a log of the IP address that accessed the account, the date and time, and what exactly the user did -- clicking on an advertisement, looking at someone else's profile, posting a photo or sending a message to a friend, etc.

Facebook spokesman Andrew Noyes declined to comment on specific data-gathering and retention policies but said the privacy policy makes clear that the company may disclose information pursuant to subpoenas, court orders or other requests.

However, Noyes said, "We scrutinize every single information request; require a detailed description of why the request is being made; and, if it is deemed appropriate, share only the minimum amount of information."

Facebook says in its compliance manual that it generally retains information about activity by IP address for 90 days, but in the Ledbetter-Powell case it's clear that other information, such as her private messages to and from friends, had been kept since her account was opened in 2007.

Eben Moglen, a Columbia University law professor and director of Software Freedom Law Center, calls Facebook "one big database of hundreds of millions of people containing the kind of information far beyond what the secret police in 20th-century totalitarian regimes had."

The company knows which social contacts are closest to you and can guess your moods, he said. And if you're obsessively checking another person's profile at the same time he or she is doing the same with yours, Moglen claims, "Facebook can even tell you're going to have an affair before you do."

As for myself, I won't use Facebook. However, if you do, make sure you do not leave yourself open to 'all' contacts. Keep all the privacy settings. If you already have a Facebook account, go back and recheck your privacy settings. These will not only deter hackers, but also malware purveyors.

Happy surfing!