

Profile - Michael Huddart

Playing bridge against Michael Huddart can be a bit like trying to walk against a small hurricane. Our Club Treasurer's brain seems to hurtle along at a terrifying pace, while some of us are still pondering whether to go *No Trumps* or hide under the table.

Now 66, Michael was born in Halifax in Northern England. An only child, he excelled at Maths and as his father was an Air Force engineer, working on radar for the Early Bird Satellites, Michael was wondering whether to follow him into Engineering or to do Accountancy. The solution presented itself when an Actuary visited his school to spruik the career path of Actuarial Science. (For those of us unversed in the finer points of Actuarial Science, Dr Google gently explains it deals with evaluating risks and maintaining the economic stability of insurance or financial organisations using Mathematics, Statistics, and Probability principles to anticipate future events and take preventive measures : in Bridge-speak "count your losers".)

Off to London's City University whooshed Michael, emerging to work for a consulting firm which was lodged near the Tower of London in the famous Edwardian building *Ten Trinity Square* — now an ultra posh apartment complex, run by the Four Seasons group. His employers then moved to their own *Willis Building*, erected beside the quaintly named (and extremely quaintly shaped) *30 St Mary Axe*, more popularly known to Londoners as *The Gherkin*.

To his mother's horror, the ever adventurous young Huddart saw an advertisement about moving to Australia, packed up one suitcase and a box and landed in Melbourne, aged 25. He worked there for a consulting company and spent many evenings with his colleagues in the nearby pub. They imbibed in the Public Bar. To get to the loos, one had to navigate past the Saloon Bar. Working in the Saloon Bar was a young lady with an utterly beautiful Scottish accent.

Although he was born in Halifax, our Michael had been conceived in Aberdeen and that accent did very funny things to him. More and more times did he find he had to leave the Public Bar to walk by the Saloon Bar and in the end he asked her out.



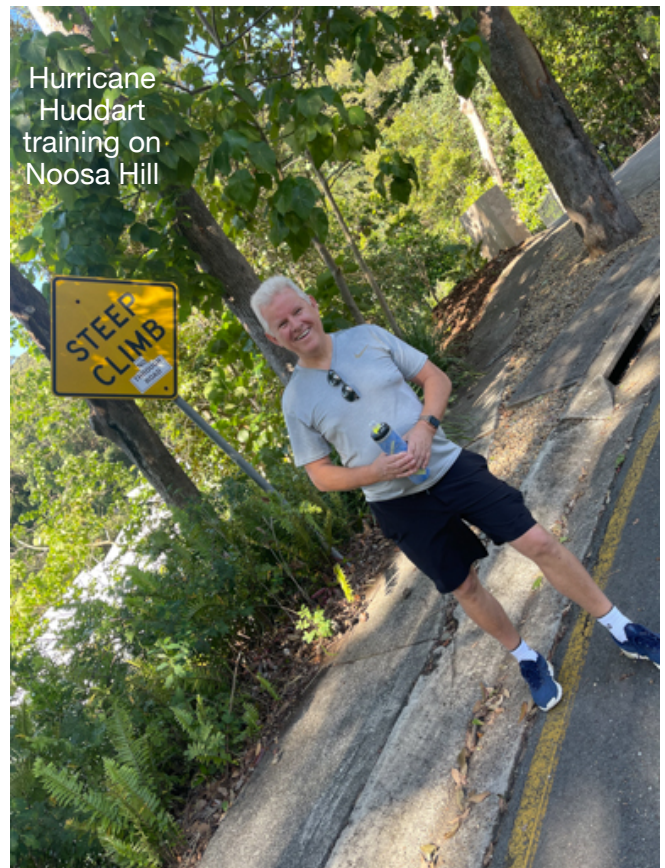
Michael had a bike and Liz had an apartment. Michael and his bike used to travel frequently to visit Liz and then very fortunately someone stole the bike and Michael was stranded — at Liz's place. As is the way of the world, in about 18 months they married.

First they lived at East St Kilda at a place called Wando Grove which found fame as the location of the first murder in TV's *Underbelly*. Moving somewhat up market they relocated first to Andrew Peacock's old stamping ground of Camberwell (definitely not in *Underbelly*) and then, after they had acquired a few horses, to Narre Warren.

Six years later, Michael jokingly showed Liz an ad for a job in Indonesia which came with a house, all utilities paid for, and nine staff. Liz thought it sounded rather interesting, and after an initial interview there they were being assessed over lunch in Jakarta. However, the restaurant served fish that did not come with an impeccable pedigree and Michael came down with food poisoning. Liz attended all the other scheduled functions on his behalf and by the time Michael had finished throwing up he found he had been hired — by Manulife, a multinational founded in Toronto, specialising in insurance and financial services.

Three drivers/night guards, three gardeners and three house staff sounds like a very comfortable lifestyle. The problem was that none of them were really trained for these roles. However the Huddarts settled happily into the new routine and the posting was a pivotal one when it came to family bliss, as Indonesia is where they adopted their son and daughter. Liz discovered two and a half-year-old Robert in an orphanage in Yogyakarta. He was unable to walk, and when Michael first visited he was being fed clear water flavoured by one chicken foot. Lots of love, a vastly improved diet and help with anger management transformed Robert into a very happy child and then he was joined by Sarinah, from a Jakarta orphanage. At 18 months old she was unable to talk, but again loads of Huddart love solved the problem.

After a few years the family returned to Melbourne, where Michael worked with a subsidiary of Colonial Mutual and then they were moved to New Zealand, to live in an apartment overlooking Wellington's Oriental Bay. To stop anyone from getting bored, they set sail again, this time for Thailand, where they stayed from 1995 to 1998. Then Michael



rejoined Manulife in Hong Kong, working on business development and new markets, which involved heaps of travel, especially to India. They moved again, to Taiwan, Michael's favourite Asian posting, where he learned about dragon boat racing and how to survive an earthquake when rocks are flying all over the place.

Finally it was back to Hong Kong, to become General Manager of Manulife, with a staff of 50,000 covering so many neighbouring countries that when he finally retired Michael had to keep smiling through TEN retirement parties. He was in charge of their operations in China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Macau, Thailand and of course Hong Kong. He is still

Chairman of Manulife's joint venture with Chinese corporation Sinochem, but due to dear old Covid they handle most meetings now via China's version of Zoom.



Just one of the ten retirement parties

Michael and Liz had each amassed over two million Frequent Flyer miles and after

retirement they used up some of them with extensive travel in Europe before winding down into Noosa. They had discovered our little slice of paradise years earlier when Liz's brother settled at Mooloolaba and originally bought an apartment in Edgar Bennet Avenue.



Santorini

Then they found land in Noosa Dunes at Castaways and built a house there, where the grandchildren take over Michael's man cave and love the ginormous map of the world, covered with pins to show where he and Liz have travelled so far.

Our Treasurer's business career has been of the stellar variety, running huge corporations with brilliant results. However, to some of us his most outstanding achievement is in maintaining a very loving and fairly fun-filled marriage with Liz, despite her having suffered from a form of dementia for over eight years now.



The family at
Byron Bay



The Beijing Bird's Nest

A marvellous person called Mildred worked and lived with the family in Asia for many years before marrying a Sunshine Coast policeman. She and her small daughter now stay with them during the week, helping to care for Liz. The Huddart still keep travelling, flying to Europe together earlier this year, to stay in Prague and then take a river cruise from Budapest to Amsterdam.



The whole
family at
Edinburgh
Castle

Ever smiling, sweet-tempered Liz quickly became the star passenger, loved by one and all. Come New Year they will be taking the whole family, including Mildred, her husband and daughter, to celebrate in Bali. And then there are happy trips to friends in Australia and to many of our local munch palaces.

And inevitably we come to Bridge : Michael first played at University and again in Indonesia but then life got in the way. Settling in Noosa in 2018 he discovered the Bridge Club and is currently hoping to triumph in this year's McCutcheon ABF ratings for his grade. Although technically just out of the ranks of Novices, he has enormous fun playing with people like Jean Pearce and Maureen Jakes (which is why we want to hide under the table). But that hurtling hurricane slows right down and is replaced by a huge tender smile, when it comes to the love of his life, his Liz.



by Susie Osmaston