

John Fields

In the north of England a small village called Horden has suffered enormous economic hardship since its coal mine was closed in 1987. Back in the Fifties it was booming, but a farsighted accountant and his teacher wife decided a better lifestyle could be found for their children. They bravely took the plunge towards the Antipodes, sailing from Tilbury through the Suez to the delight of a five-year old John Fields and his sister Margaret.

New Zealand became their home, and finally Auckland University was lucky enough to score a new student in John. Our exuberant hero had for some strange reason chosen Chemistry, Physics and Biology. It was not a happy match and after two years he took another extraordinary career move, joining the Government's Land Survey Department. Predictably, that match was also not made in heaven.



Serendipitously he discovered New Zealand firms were hiring people from the UK to promote cosmetic lines in department stores and asked if they would consider a local appointee. Of course he was a natural for the job, and took off to a flying start, traversing all of New Zealand for Max Factor. And of course he was so perfect in that role he was head-hunted by Revlon for a similar gig.

Inevitably the travel bug surfaced and he set off for England and a working holiday. Naturally our John did it with considerable flair, flying first to Bali, then Bangkok, then Kathmandu, where he joined a group bussing itself to India. Somewhere in the foothills of the Himalayas it all became just a bit too hairy. The bus in front had "gone over the side", his own bus was bogged, and in an attempt to stop the fuel from freezing up, the driver was holding a naked flame to the bottom of the petrol tank.



Partying in
Auckland

He managed to get back to Kathmandu and fly the next leg to Varanasi on the Ganges. Back on the bus they journeyed through India and Pakistan, through the Khyber Pass and into Afghanistan, Turkey, Greece, Croatia. Finally they came down to earth a bit, unloading at London's Green Park tube station. Our ever discerning young traveller had learned en route that the **only** place to stay was and is Belgravia and after a few days he ambled elegantly into Revlon's London office where they fell over themselves offering him a 'start tomorrow' job, flying to the Channel Islands to run a promotion in Jersey.

So spectacular was his performance that shortly after he was managing all Revlon's consultants first in the West End and then the entire United Kingdom and even flying back to New

Zealand to launch their latest prestige line.

The headhunters were out again, this time American-owned Charles of the Ritz, whose corporate stable included French fashion house Yves St Laurent. So the little boy from the little coal mining village was now International Training Director, working with the top names in European fashion. Yves St Laurent, he tells us, was a wee bit difficult to deal

with, while Gianni Versace was a dream. John launched Versace's first fragrance for him at where else but the Versace villa on Lake Como.

Evidently the reason why we silly women can't keep buying our favourite lipstick forevermore is because all these great designers decide what their fabric shades will be next spring or autumn, and immediately all the cosmetic laboratories work with people like John to develop new lines complementary to the new fashion colours. Well done, guys.



Bathing, south of Barcelona



The Pianist and the Cook

Never a name-dropper, the delightfully modest Mr Fields worked with the Princess Borghese and the house of Balmain, witnessed the love/hate relationship between Charles Revson and Helena Rubenstein and had Estée Lauder as a close neighbour. (And in the same breath he starts praising the ladies of the Noosa Bridge Club for dress sense, picking out in particular our ever soignée nonagenarian Beth Tolley.)

Way back in his 20s in London he met young financial whiz and sometime pianist David Atkinson and they have been together ever since.

One year a friend invited them to the Christmas service at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle, where the rear section is available to those of non-royal blood. Serendipity was in great form that day : a functionary approached and asked them to come and fill empty seats around the choir stalls in the royal section of the Chapel, as "the Queen does not like to see empty seats". And then there was the evening John went to see *Phantom of the Opera*. The Queen Mother had decided she wanted to see it too. So John's party was asked to wait on the sidelines while the QM settled herself in their row of the stalls. At departure time they were again asked to wait at the side until the QM exited, showering them with suitably regal thanks.

So how did this jet-setting fashion guru leave the bright lights of Europe for dear little Noosa? Travel was (and still is if Covid would kindly go away) high on their agenda and one southern winter John's New Zealand based sister Margaret suggested he and David rendezvous with her in Port Douglas. Thinking vaguely of retiring somewhere sometime, the pair discussed it as a possible permanent home, until friends explained what a North Queensland summer is all about — and someone suggested Noosa.

Before packing up and setting off with their two miniature dachshunds in tow, they thought it might be fairly wise to check the place out. Of course they adored our little paradise, and moved out here in 2005, settling into the Noosa Waters area, complete with the grand piano in 2007. Firm friends have been made all over the place, including a widow whose life they enrich with frequent chatty visits to keep the dementia wolf off her doormat.

Enthusiastic cook John also richly enlivened some of the Wine and Food Festivals by adroitly choreographing the volunteers and is a prized performer in a local Mahjong group.

To the delight of the mainly female membership, he has a starring role in Zumba classes at Noosa Springs, where he also does a gym pump (weights to music) class and what he calls a 'booty bar' (booty is evidently another term for one's buttocks) which results in improved balance, so important to those of us slightly over the age of 50.

Back to our beautiful Bridge Club, where John marvels at the contribution of organisers over the years. David was an old hand at Bridge, but even after taking lessons here, from David Henderson, John did not really enjoy the game. One fortuitous day, however, he met an equally sunny face : the ever ebullient Jenny Mawson.

The lady suggested they try a Bridge partnership, and they are still playing very happily together. And as a lot of us are now over 50, sunny dispositions go a long way to light up one's day. Poor little Horden, lucky old us.

by Susie Osmaston



With dear friend
Margot Minchin



NOT the Noosa Springs
Zumba class