



The Newsletter that reaches across Australia

Country

August/Sept, 2013

Website: www.countrynetwork.com.au

Network

Secretary: PO Box 176, New Town, TASMANIA 7008



25th-28th

Adelaide AGM-2013

October

Adelaide Meridien Hotel & Apartments 21-39 Melbourne St., North Adelaide

Where the AGM will be held



*When
Visiting
South
Australia*

Adelaide—the City of Angels



Photo courtesy www.gaytravel.com

Adelaide Festival Centre



*Stay
Awhile
And
Take a
Short
Overseas
Trip to
Kangaroo
Island*



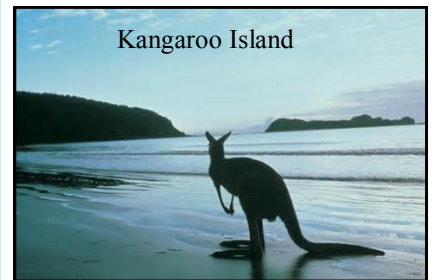
Photo courtesy www.gaytravel.com

Glenelg Beach



*And don't
Forget the
Beautiful
Barossa
Valley!*

Kangaroo Island



Barossa Valley Wines



Kangaroo Island



From the Editor:



(Extracted from Outinperth Gay News-WA)

How times are changing. Returning from his recent trip to World Youth Day in Brazil, Pope Francis took questions from reporters in an unusual 80 minute discussion with reporters on his plane. His predecessor Pope Benedict XVI only ever took a select handful of questions from the press which was always carefully vetted. As we all know, Benedict, had a very homophobic opinion about homosexuality.

However, Pope Francis said gay and lesbian people should be, "treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity, without discrimination,"

In June this Pope is reported to have admitted that there was a gay lobby inside the Roman Curia, the secretive administrative arm of the Vatican.

David T. sent me a news article from SA where an Adelaide man won a Supreme Court battle to be recognised as the spouse of his gay partner of 26 years. The deceased partner left his gay partner their house and \$100,000. A second house and shares totalling more than \$2 million was bequeathed to a College. In a generous ruling, the Justice increased the partner's inheritance from \$100,000 to \$1 million to allow him to live in comfort and also retain the house he was bequeathed. The college was allowed to have the second home and some of the financial portfolio. In coming to this decision, the Justice acknowledged that the younger surviving partner had cared for his partner whose health had declined. It's nice to hear there is some justice in the world at times! -----

Hang in there summer is coming so thought I'd cheer you up with a beach scene. Nothing nicer than going to the beach with a 6-pack and a yummy lunch—HMMM!!

Lots of love
Cliff M.

Photo courtesy of Men of Max website



Country Social Network Inc.
(Reg Y2063541)



Future Social Events Around Australia

- WA 23-26th August—Donnelly River Camp Up—(See page 8)
- WA Sunday, 1st September—Pot Luck Lunch with Prime Timers 12 noon (See page 8)
- VIC Monday, 2nd September, Monthly Get Together (See page 8)
- WA Sunday, 8th September, City Coffee Morning (See page 8)
- VIC Sunday, 13th October, Pot Luck Lunch—12 noon (See page 10)
- SA **Adelaide AGM—25th-28th October, 2013. BOOK NOW! Adelaide awaits you!**
- VIC 2014 Corroboree, Queenscliff—24th-28th April (See page 6)

(Please contact me [Cliff 0422 799 729 or e-mail: cliff11@inet.net.au] if you have any important events in your State).

Contributors to Magazine:

David T.	Neil W.	Michael S
Pete B.	Tony F.	Frank J.
Cliff M	Barry S.	John R.
Ric. S.	Richard McL	

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President's Message

Like most, I nurture within a painter, writer and poet
But fail at the first hurdle when nothing rhymes with poet
Should I try Limerick, Sonnet, Ballad or Prose?
And how many syllables per line so that it flows?
The subject shall be profoundness only I am aware
The meaning of life is the wisdom that I will share
This is the price for being the audience of a poet
(If you can think of a rhyme here please let me know it)
So now into the breach and darkness with trepidation
Aphorisms, riddles and perhaps a little masturbation...
Someone is standing in the rain like they have no place to go
Maybe that someone is you; someone you don't want to know
You stand there on the water casting your bread and fears
Yet you don't see what's behind an old man's lonely tears
And the meaning of life from this little tirade?
It's simple my good friend; get yourself to Adelaide
A little love and affection in everything you do will make the world a better place, with or without you.
Neil



Social events

It is with a little disappointment that we have yet to have any member put his hand up to offer just one hour per week to assist in this area. Country Network social events, along with those of other appropriate social groups, can now listed in the public section of our website. But it requires one member to maintain these listings so they are up-to-date. Anyone currently visiting this page of our website will see that we are far from up-to-date, which may even deter prospective applicants from joining. We cannot, and will not, ask anymore of those who already undertaking a role, so until someone else steps up to assist, this initiative to further engage the gay community will remain dormant. Any offers?

Country Network Website Message Board - Coming Soon



Great excitement and anticipation fills the air as we are only days away from having our very own Country Network Message Board. In fact, it should be up and running by the time you are reading this article. This will revolutionise our organisation by significantly enhancing our ability to network with fellow members.

So many of our members are always planning all sorts of activities and travels; with many often wondering, "who else would like to join me?" They are all-too-often left to only invite those members they know well. Occasionally an ad in the newsletter appears for such things, but this can be too little - too late. Members often find out after the event of activities they would have loved to have shared. Life is too short and precious to miss golden opportunities, so no longer will this be the case.

Our message board, accessed through the members section of our Country Network website, will allow all members to post any topic (as long as it complies with our current protocols and does not include sexually explicit material) and instantly network with all fellow members to seek those who share similar interests. The subject matter can be as diverse as our membership. Sharing a room or travelling to a CN national gathering, cruising overseas, visiting the theatre or a museum, special diets to improve arthritis or erections, or most importantly; recipes for scones. The choice is yours.

As is with all things computers, it may have its teething problems, but let's all embrace this new development and make it work for us so we all benefit. If you are unsure of your log-in details, please email our webmaster, "Daddy Long Legs" at webmaster@countrynetwork.com.au



1. **The Lone Ranger (with Johnny Depp)**

To the generation who remember the original TV series, don't expect the same from this movie. This is very different—for starters, Tonto is no longer the sidekick—he is the dominant personality in the partnership. There are great stunts, plenty of laughs and while it is low on plot, all the ingredients for a fast-moving western comedy are here. I enjoyed it—however, it has not been a great box-office success.



2. **Farewell My Queen (subtitled)**

The movie is set in the first few weeks of the French Revolution. The principal character is Sidonie Laborde who is devoted to Queen Marie Antoinette for whom she is a reader—she refuses to believe the rumours of unrest etc. and she is convinced that the Queen will protect her. The fear and confusion that prevails in the palace—amongst the nobles and servants is all too plain. There was more than a suggestion that the Queen had lesbian liaisons from time to time. This was a surprise to me as I had never heard of this—whether it is fact or fiction, I do not know. This is a period film and a sumptuous one.

3. **Man of Steel**

This is the latest movie offering of Superman. There are, of course, all the spectacular stunts and so on (as one would expect) but the film also deals in depth with Superman's various demons and how he comes to terms with the issues

raised by his supernatural powers, strength, etc. Superman is played by Henry Cavill—a British actor of whom I had not heard before. His father is played by Russell Crowe and his “earth” father by Kevin Costner. I liked the movie.

4. **The Audience**

This is a National Theatre of Great Britain production filmed live on the London stage.

Helen Mirren again plays the role of Queen Elizabeth. During her reign, when resident in London, the Queen has had a weekly audience

with each of her 12 Prime Ministers. These meetings have always been entirely private and no statements have ever been released as to the nature of the discussions. The play is a work of fiction and not all the 12 Prime Ministers are depicted. The conversations are set against the background events of the day, e.g. Sir Anthony Eden and the Suez Crisis of 1956.

Helen Mirren, I need hardly say, is magnificent. Here—unlike the movie “The Queen” she plays Her Majesty at different ages and has captured her superbly at each stage. I loved every moment of it.



5. **Behind the Candelabra**



This was made for TV and it is based on the autobiography of Scott Thorson who was Liberace's lover for 5 years. Liberace is played by Michael Douglas and Thorson by Matt Damon. The movie is flamboyant, beautifully costumed and outrageous. Michael Douglas plays the role wonderfully and Matt Damon—he of the macho “Bourne” movies is a revelation. I loved it all.

(Cont'd) At the Movies by Michael S

Some Trivia

I'm not a great sportsman, but I wouldn't necessarily agree with the following comment from Oscar Wilde:

"Rugby is a good occasion for keeping 30 bullies from the centre of the city"

Did you hear about the pissed Dung Beetle that fell off its stool?

Boyfriend, "Why do you never scream my name when you have an orgasm?"

Blond, "Because you are never there".

A girl walks into a hardware store as she needs a new hinge for a door at home. As she brings it to the counter, the clerk asks, "Wanna screw for that hinge?"

To which she replied, "No, but I'll suck you off for that toaster on the top shelf".

Tambar Springs NSW



Accommodation ♦ Great Beer
Home Style Meals ♦ Great Pub
All at the **Royal Hotel**
Contact Brett & Rod on
Ph: 02 6744 2936

Area Co-Ordinator's Report—NSW

On 13th July, a group of members and friends met for lunch at a Chinese restaurant in Sydney. There were about 20 altogether, and amongst them was our founder—David S.

The occasion was a happy one with plenty of camaraderie and laughter. (By Michael S.)

Member's Awards

Country Network has traditionally recognised outstanding service to the organisation through the awarding of Life Membership. The provisions for the conferring of this are included in our Constitution.

Last year it was agreed that there should be an annual award to acknowledge the contributions of individual members during the previous year. There are many members who make tremendous efforts within their local area to maintain the vitality and rele-

vance of Country Network. Often knowledge of this involvement does not extend beyond their immediate group, but it is felt that the wider membership would benefit from the opportunity to become aware of their activities.

I would like to call for nominations from all members who may wish to recognise the contributions of a particular "CNER". The nomination should include not only the name of the nominee but also a brief account of the nature of their contribution.

I would appreciate it if nomina-

tions could reach me by September 15th. So that they can be collated for the consideration by the Committee who will determine the number of recipients in preparation for an announcement at the AGM.

OK guys, get to it and put your thinking caps on!!

Regards to all,

Pete
(Peter B. Secretary)



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Postage members do you have a Red Dot on the front of this newsletter? If so, our records show you are yet to renew your membership. (if you disagree, please contact our treasurer John Lynch)

Country Network will always accept that some members' circumstances change and that membership may no longer be of interest. However, we ask that you please accept that we are a simple social network organisation run by volunteers. We are actually doing a good job despite this limitation and we continue to improve and extend our network. The growing numbers of good friendships being developed within our network is proof we are doing some things right. We recognise we still have much to do, but we can only do this with the on-going valued support of members; and so we ask all members to favourably consider their on-going support so we can reach our potential.

ADELAIDE AGM WEEKEND - OCT 25 - 28.

When making arrangements for these weekends, an attendance number is estimated based on past weekends and then bookings are secured for 20% above this number. Well, it seems we have underestimated the allure of David and/or Adelaide. We need more rooms! We have managed to secure 8 additional rooms but the hotel is yet to confirm the availability of any more. So the bottom line is, if you want to attend and have yet to book, you are advised to get your booking in darn quick in case we become fully booked. We apologise in advance to any member if they do actually miss out if we do become booked out.

To any members who have never attended one of these weekend; they are simple in format yet huge on enjoyment and well worth the interstate trip. You will meet men with whom you will form friendships for the rest of your life. So please consider this great opportunity on offer.

2014 CORROBOREE - QUEENSLIFF, VICTORIA

The venue and dates have been confirmed for the 2014 Corroboree weekend, which will actually be a long, long weekend; being held over 4 nights. Thursday April 24 - Monday April 28 at Whitehall Guesthouse. Those who know Queenscliff will be delighted to know we have been fortunate to secure such a location.

TUSCAN TRAVELS

Some members may be aware of the group of members (and others) who got together to share a villa in Tuscany for six weeks. A signed secrecy agreement signed by all members prevents details of our adventures being revealed publicly. I can't even reveal the name of the member who was over an hour late for dinner after claiming to be lost in the bushes at the beach.



All members had a wonderful time and must be congratulated for making such a trip not only an enjoyable adventure for themselves, but for all who attended. Special thanks to Mallacoota John who researched local restaurants and directed us over treacherous mountain passes to discover hidden delights, which was a personal highlight for myself.

Now Istanbul is something I am allowed to talk about. Needless to say our visit was once again culturally focused. They say a picture is worth a thousand words so I'll just include a Turkish painting from the 18th century that depicts one aspect of the Turkish culture. This painting is called The Round Dance. I'm now trying to find the music to go with the dance.

I'm a little unsure how this fits in with their Islam faith, but I was not there to ask questions. Although we now feel we have a right, having been tear-gassed after being caught up in some of the chaos. This did result in Mal being seen as their revolutionary Che Guevera and smothered him in hugs and kisses; as well as lemoncelo as they tried to steal him away into the darkness. Neil and Mal.



Area Co-ordinator's Report—SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

David M of Salisbury Heights - best wishes for this special event.



WELCOME

Members coming to SA for our AGM. perhaps stay a little longer and explore our Barossa Valley where all the good Aussie wines come from; or maybe an over seas trip to Kangaroo Island - see what it has to offer!

VOYAGER of the SEAS

If any member is intending to do a cruise on this ship in the next 12 months I would be interested to hear from you - davidcn-salisbury@yahoo.com.au

SMART ARSE ANSWER OF THE YEAR

A teacher at a south Australian school reminded her pupils of tomorrow's final exam, "Now listen to me, I won't tolerate any excuses for you not being here tomorrow. I might consider a nuclear attack, a serious ,personal injury, illness, or a death in your immediate family, but that's it, no other excuses whatsoever!"

A smart-arsed teenager at the back of the room raised his hand and asked, "What would happen if I came in tomorrow suffering from complete and utter sexual exhaustion?"

The entire class was reduced to laughter and sniggering. When silence was restored, the teacher smiled at the student, shook her head and sweetly said, "Well, I would expect you to write the exam with your other hand."

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

The person most often late for a doctor's appointment is the doctor.

Best wishes to all.

David T.

Kangaroo Island



Victor Harbour



News from the Apple Isle



Warming Up the Tassie Winter

On Saturday 29th June, twelve members and four guests gathered at Tony F's Bellevue pad to enjoy a shared meal. Some of the delights on offer would have had Matt, Gary and George from Master Chef well and truly drooling. And that's just with the food that was on offer! Only four members from the South were unable to attend. We may be small in numbers but once again we proved that quality beats quantity every time! It was great that Dave A was well enough to join us and in his usual good form.

A few members have travelled north to the 'Big Island' to enjoy some heat – Chris C to Perth and Grant S and his partner Glenn to Darwin. Looking forward to their return so the interrogation can begin.

Tony F





WA Coordinator's Report



The second month of winter is gone and spring is only a month away. Here in Bunbury we have had some good rains (finally) and a lot of this also fell in our wheat belt where things were very grim. We still are a long way behind all the wet in the east; however, we appreciate any drop received.

The fish and chip luncheon in Mandurah was very enjoyable although there were only five of us. On the day there were domestic interruptions in trains which may have had some effect. I had already received apologies from four people which were appreciated. Our next event is the weekend 23rd-26th August in Donnelly River, and at time of writing there are 14 going. Ric has done a great job with organising the weekend and is presently planning the meals. So, if you suddenly decide to go, you MUST contact him immediately. The **accommodation cost** has worked out at \$73 per person over three nights which is great value. The **food cost** per head is approx \$25 which is also great for a weekend. Total cost \$98 for the whole weekend.

As I have mentioned before, contact me if you have any ideas for events. I am still trying to think of one where twenty blokes or more will turn up.

Keep warm.

Pete B



BIRTHDAY BOYS

Best wishes for September to:

Ted St.	10/9
Michael G.	13/9
Rob O.	13/9
Brian D.	14/9
Col W.	15/9
Franz P.	17/9

NOTICE FOR DONNELLY RIVER CAMPERS—23RD-26TH AUGUST:

Please bring linen/dooner/blankets etc., a towel, warm clothes and good walking shoes. Also if you plan to do the Pemberton Tourist Train—\$24 per ticket.

Happy Campers are we!



NEXT COFFEE MORNING IN PERTH CITY WILL BE SUNDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER

Usually 1st Sunday in the month—NTA café. However, I have changed the date, moving it **for this month only to 8th September. See invitation below.**

[call cliff on 0422 799 729 if you have not been before and don't know where to go?]

The Prime Timers invite us to a:

Pot Luck Lunch ...

Sunday, 1st September...

12 noon. **BYO drinks & dish.**

Cliff & Richard's place—4A Corrigan Way, Greenwood.

(RSVP—0422 799 729)

CN—NOTICE BOARD



The 2013-14 CN Nomination Form for election to a position on the 2013-14 CN Committee is available. This form may be copied/reproduced as many times as required if any financial CN member wishes to nominate for more than one position, as is allowable under our constitution. Completed Nomination Forms to be returned to:-

The Returning Officer, C/- P.O. Box 6968, Coffs Harbour Plaza, NSW 2450
Or email: rnc88820@bigpond.net.au

All completed Nomination Forms MUST be received by email NO LATER than Tuesday 27th August 2013 and if delivered by Australia Post, last delivery Tuesday 27th August 2013.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these matters, please address them to The Returning Officer, Richard McLaughlin, NSW.

VICTORIA— THE STATE OF HANDSOME MEN'S MONTHLY GET-TOGETHER

On the first Monday of each month (unless Monday is a public holiday, then it moves to Tuesday), the guys get together for a fantastic evening meal. Prices at the restaurant are very reasonable—so for further information contact Brooce, Geelong on -5244-1265 or e-mail: adamsbd@optusnet.com.au. If you plan to attend please contact Brooce the Friday before .



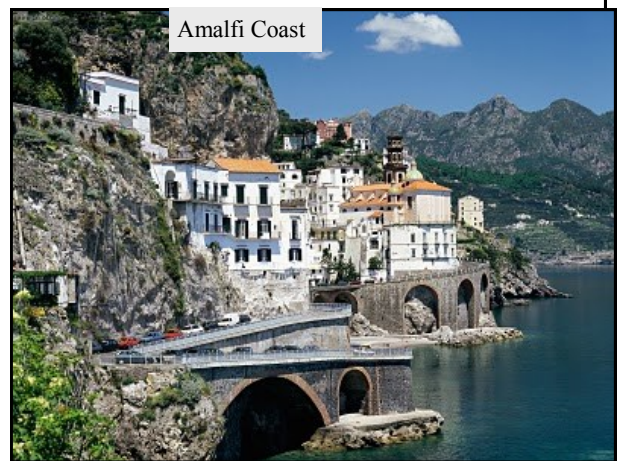
Area Co-ord's Report from the "State of Handsome Men"

The State of Handsome Men was depleted with many of us either interstate or overseas, especially Italy. Several Victorians stayed in a villa in Tuscany which I imagine was a house of depravity. A report from them may be elsewhere in this newsletter or the next. I travelled with my CN friends Peter N and Ted J. First we went to Thailand, a country of Handsome Men, then to London for 6 days. A lady friend took me to Cambridge for the day. She roughly knew the way, but used her GPS on the phone, which proved spasmodic. When we arrived at Cambridge she needed to go to the toilet. She went into a cubicle and sat down on the toilet seat. (as ladies usually do). Suddenly she heard a voice coming from her handbag "You have reached your destination".

After 6 days in London I was looking forward to meet Peter and Ted on the ship "Ruby Princess" for the beginning of our 12 day cruise. My 8.30am flight from Gatwick was due in Venice at about 11.30am. Peter and Ted had arrived in Venice the day before. We had arranged that they would wait for my arrival and we would lunch together. My London friend estimated that it would take 1 hour to Gatwick airport so we left at 5.45 am. At 6AM on the M25 free-way there was a neon sign "Incident. 3 out of 4 lanes closed". Don't know what the incident was. Maybe it was 3 gay couples having an orgy across the 3 lanes. Any way the result was that I arrived at Gatwick at 8.15 and missed my plane. The next flight to Venice was at 730PM. I subsequently arrived at the ship at 12.30 after midnight... and my so called friends did not wait for me and had eaten. They made up for it in other ways. We had a wonderful 12 day cruise.

After a day at sea we arrived at the pretty town of Dubrovnik in Croatia. The next day we went to Corfu where we found an outdoor cafe which

overlooked the end of the runway of the airport - about 20 metres away. 2 jet planes landed while we were there. Exciting. Next day we went to Katakolon in Greece, about 1 hour by bus from Olympia, the site of the ancient Olympic Games. They still light the Olympic torch there. The athletes in the Ancient Games competed nude, which I find disgusting. It is not natural. Luckily everyone there that day wore clothes, although had some handsome men been nude, I may not have been offended. Next day we went to Athens which I had heard can be chaotic. As it was Sunday it was relatively quiet. We went close to the Acropolis which was a ruin. There were many ruins on our trip. Next day was Mykonos, known as the party and gay island. The ship docked at midnight and apparently 150 did a conga off the boat into a nightclub and partied till 5AM. The 3 of us did not. We had heard about the lovely beaches. Elia beach, about 40 minutes from the township had been recommended to me. We hired a car to go there. Ted drove carefully, although sometimes veering to the wrong side of the road (they drive on the right) while Peter navigated. I supervised. Elia is a lovely beach where at one end nudity is permitted, much to my disgust. All were nude, mostly men. I quickly discarded my clothes only so as not to



Amalfi Coast

be conspicuous. I always like to fit it. The water was clear and I had a nice chat with a friendly couple of men from England. The following day we went to the island of Santorini named after Saint Irene who was famous forI don't know. In the morning we went up a dormant volcano and then down which was quite exhausting. We then went to the main town of Thera which is built on top of a mountain. You can get up and down by cable car, donkey or walk 560 steps. We went up on the cable car and had a delicious lunch with a view. When we decided to come down we noticed there was a 100 meter queue for the cable car, so decided to walk down the 560 wide steps down. What a mistake. The walking track is shared by about 300 donkeys. Donkey shit everywhere. It was a difficult walk to avoid the sewage. I was bugged. I had done the volcano in the morning. Not the first time I have been bugged. Next day was Kasadasi in Turkey not far from Ephesus, an ancient city built about 600 BC, but later destroyed by bad people.



Elia Nude Beach

A search for survivors has been going on for centuries, but it is feared that there are none. Kasadasi is good for shopping. One shop had a big sign "Genuine Fake Watches". The ship then went back to Italy. At Naples, I did a side trip to the Amalfi Coast.

(see over page...



“State of Handsome Men Report”

(Cont'd from page 9)

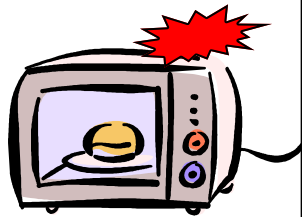
I was glad that I did. The most stunning scenery that I have ever seen. Villages and roads built out of the rock. Clearly the highlight of my trip. The cruise finished in Rome, which has 355 churches. We then did a bus tour to Tuscany. I shared a room with a handsome young Filipino - friendly, but very straight.

Meanwhile, back in Victoria the few handsome men left had a few events. Bruce A arranged 2 dinners in Geelong, Roger K arranged one in Gippsland while David R arranged his annual picnic on Queens Birthday at the delightful Bellbird Park on the banks of the Yarra river.

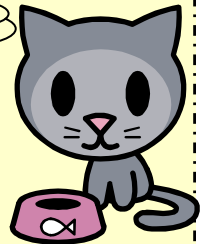
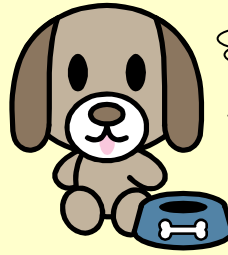
August and September birthday greetings to Eric C, Kevin M, Kevin L, Rob S, Kevin B, Peter R, and Reuben W."

Safety Tip: When heating food in the microwave, do not mistake 1 minute for 11. It can have disastrous results.

Frank Jackson



Pot Luck Lunch



**VICTORIA
SUNDAY 13TH
OCTOBER—
12 NOON**

No - we're not having dog or cat but whatever delicious dish you bring will be a delightful surprise.

Frank is kindly offering his home for this function.

**U4/9 Mackay Ave,
GLEN HUNTLEY**

**RSVP: Frank J.
9576 7326 or
0415 446 959**

PHILIPPINES ADVENTURE

There is a new slogan greeting tourists to the Philippines which says, “It’s more fun in the Philippines,” which in fact might be true given our recent holiday in this amazing country.

Guarding the entrance to Manila Bay is a beautiful island called **Corregidor Island**, a small tropical island which was strategically occupied by American and then Japanese troops during World War 2. US General Douglas MacArthur made a harrowing escape from Corregidor, and on arriving in Australia made his most famous statement “I came through and I shall return” Corregidor Island resembled San Francisco (with tram tracks crossing the island) before it was destroyed by bombs during World War 2 (see pic : Barrack ruins on the island).



Unfortunately now all that remains are sad memorials and plenty of evidence of the importance of the island. Historic Corregidor Island is an entertaining day trip from Manila.

Boracay is a small and very picturesque resort island in the Western Visayas region which is a two hour flight from Manila. It is one of the most popular resort destinations in the world, and quite rightly holds this honour. The pure white beach and crystal clear blue water surrounded by beautiful hills and palm trees make this a truly remarkable destination for water sports (see pic: Boracay beach).

During the day Boracay is a tranquil and peaceful resort with the tide coming and going while at night it comes alive with superb restaurants and entertainment along the foreshore. To swim in the waters and enjoy the nights relaxing and eating sumptuous food at incredibly cheap prices makes Boracay a remarkable destination indeed.

Barry S - SA



Eating and Drinking in Tuscany

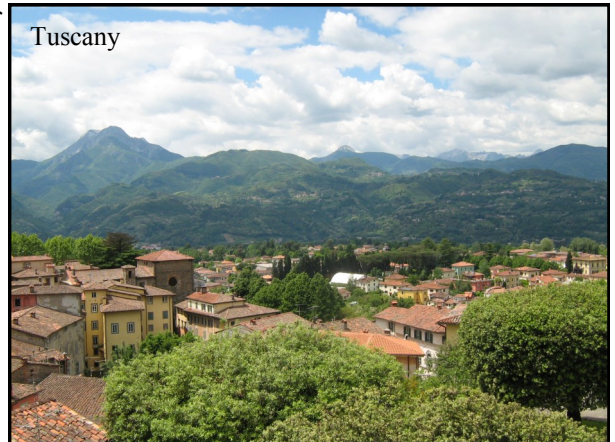
Many of you will already be aware of the trip to Tuscany in May/June of several CN members from Victoria. The concept and eventual villa and van rental were conceived and carried out superbly by Neil W and Frank di M. The villa was situated north of the ancient walled city of Lucca and it was wonderful travelling up the first time from the plains of Lucca towards the mysterious Garfagnana mountains and our village.

Ever since spending 9 months in Italy in the 60's (to study opera), I've always loved Italian food and wine and was looking forward to 4 weeks of indulgence. Thus, helped by a local guy via Silverdaddies, I did a lot of investigation on restaurants which were authentic as well as being well priced. At the same time, we also needed nearby restaurants for simpler meals or lunches.

Tony, the villa owner, told us of two restaurants in our small village. One was called Il Giardinetto and had a tourist menu for 10.50 Euros (about \$14). This included a choice of entrées (usually pasta), main courses (meat), ¼ litre wine, coffee and mineral water – amazing value. We ate there several times, but as the menu didn't change, it was rather repetitive towards the end. The other was a pizzeria/pasta restaurant, with crisp wafer-thin pizza bases and generous fillings. Limoncello or grappa were provided free at the end of the meal. We often stopped for dessert at the local gelateria.

Of course, we also wanted to try out restaurants further afield and I often ended up being the guide. On the second day of our trip, I convinced the guys to try to find a restaurant way up in the hills towards the mountains. We ended up getting lost on the narrow winding roads, just having a small portable GPS. We returned frustrated. However, Neil and I continued to sit in the van and he finally worked out how to operate the large GPS in our van and set it to the English language – the guy whose voice we chose was an Australian called Ken and he came in for some abuse at times!! Anyway Neil and I set off alone on a second attempt to find the restaurant and finally located it in a hill town after several kilometres of spectacular winding road. We returned with the others for dinner and had a traditional country meal with excellent local wine (we always chose the house wine) and large servings. Frank was not yet there so my Italian was stretched to the limit in understanding the menu. One memorable dish was wild boar flavoured pasta.

Bolstered by our success, we sought out another mountain restaurant, A'Palazzo, situated in a partially restored 13th century palace with breathtaking views. We had not booked in advance as we were returning the same evening from a trip to the Uffizi gallery in Florence. Neil made a heroic effort, firstly driving the van to Florence and back and then being confronted with the seemingly never-ending road winding up into the mountains. However, the warm welcome which we received and the ambience of the place soon had us feeling jolly and relaxed. The meal was amazing, including crab pasta, goose breast, wild boar and tantalising desserts. Neil asked for spinach, but was told that it would not be harvested for a couple of weeks. This reliance on fresh local ingredients and wines was an outstanding feature of these Tuscan country restaurants, which we could identify with the 'slow food' movement. The prices were surprisingly modest, averaging 8 Euros for entrees, 14 Euros for mains and 6 Euros for desserts. We were so taken with A'Palazzo and the two guys running the place that we returned two further times and I wrote it up on Trip Advisor.



After Neil and Co left temporarily after the first week, Ross B ably took over the driving and took us to two wineries as part of a local wine festival. We had a very relaxed time trying the fine range of red and white wines, having lunch in the sun outside and enjoying the fabulous views. Although Sangiovese is the main red wine grape, especially in the Chianti region, there was an excellent choice of other blended reds.

We had many other fine culinary experiences, some quite by chance. For example, when visiting the beautiful hill town of Barga (see photo) we chose a restaurant with great views just near our parking place. It turned out to have very good food. We also chose two restaurants in refurbished old mills. The one reachable by a winding road along a rushing stream had generous servings, but was less refined. But in the final week we found Molin de Volpe after a steep ascent and descent on winding roads. The food and wine were excellent and well priced and the mill had an interesting history. We would have returned if we had found it earlier in our trip. During our final trip to Florence, Neil and Frank di M discovered a great restaurant with stunning views over Florence in the hill town of Fiesole. It turned out that the handsome young waiter was interested in gaining restaurant experience abroad and we gave him plenty of encouragement to choose Australia!

John R



ALL JOKES ASIDE...

Where Did Maxine Come From? I never knew who the creator of Maxine was! After the Maxine jokes there is a summary on how she was created and a photo of her creator. More from the gal everyone loves and admires, and you finally get to meet her creator.

Crabby Road

6-4-07



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Maxine.com



John Wagner, Hallmark artist since 1970, says Maxine was inspired by his mother, his maiden aunts and his grandmother, the woman who bought him art lessons when 'fill in the pumpkins' was about the extent of his art classes at St. John's Catholic School in Leonia N.J.

John remembers doodling as a preschooler and says both his grandmother and his mother encouraged his artistic interests. He eventually attended the Vesper George School of Art in Boston and landed at Hallmark as part of a new artists group. But it was the birth of the humorous Shoebox Greetings (a tiny little division of Hallmark) in 1986 that added a new dimension to John's

professional life. The Shoebox way of seeing the world unleashed his talents and he created Maxine.

Why the name 'Maxine'? 'People at Shoebox started referring to the character as 'John Wagner's old lady,' and I knew that would get me into trouble with my wife,' John says. The Shoebox team had a contest among themselves to name the character and three of the approximately 30 entries suggested 'Maxine'. John says the name is perfect.

John, who says he's humbled by such acceptance of Maxine, admits he's proud of her.

[Editor's tip about photos and cartoons: If you find the print in the cartoons too small to read then enlarge the PDF format which the Newsletter is sent out in. This can be done by clicking on the "+" sign in the tool bar at the top of the PDF file. You have a few choices—" - "or "+" " or click on the drop down menu and select a percentage, e.g. 400% is probably the best.]



The Sex Debate

A Greek and Italian were sitting down one day debating who had the superior culture.

The Greek says, "We have the Parthenon"

The Italian says, "We have the Colosseum"

The Greek says "We had great Mathematicians"

The Italian says "We had the Roman Empire" and so on and so on,

and then, the Greek Says: "We invented sex"

The Italian says "That is true, but it was the Italians who introduced it to women "

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS



We hope you will enjoy meeting some of our members. Don't be shy, pick up the phone and contact another member from our Membership List: either in your area or anywhere in Australia. For those who are already members, check the list and see who has joined so you can contact them to make them feel WELCOME!

Denis M. - VIC

Robert L - NSW

Kevin H. - VIC

Peter H. - QLD

Garth L. - QLD

Mick - SA

Robert L. - VIC

