

The SUN

Sydney Unitarian News

The Unitarian Church in NSW
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MODERN UNITARIANISM IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE (Part 2)

The Religious Society of Czech Unitarians was established by Norbert Fabian Čapek (1870–1942) in 1922. Born a Catholic, Čapek became a Baptist minister, serving as a missionary as far east as Ukraine. In the process, he became aware to free Christian groups in Moravia, which influenced his thinking. Already an accomplished writer and editor of religious journals, he attended the conference of the IARF in Berlin in 1910, where Tomáš Masaryk, the future president of Czechoslovakia, introduced him to officers of the American Unitarian Association.

Čapek moved his family to the US in 1914 and led two Baptist churches before he left that faith in favour of Unitarianism. When Czechoslovakia became independent after World War I, he returned to Prague in 1921 and founded the Religious Liberal Fellowship a year later. In 1930, he formed the Czechoslovak Unitarian Association.

The Fellowship's numbers in Prague grew to 3200 over the next twenty years, making it the largest Unitarian congregation in the world at that time. The national membership was 8000, including six lay-led fellowships in other cities and towns, which Čapek visited regularly. He wrote many books and hymns, translating some of the latter from English to Czech, and developed the Flower Communion that Unitarians around the world now celebrate. He wrote courses in religious history and philosophy that were used in the public schools.

Tragically, Čapek was arrested after the Nazi invasion for listening to BBC radio and eventually sent to the Dachau internment camp. He wrote his most haunting hymn, 'Out of the Depths', there and it is reported that he was of great comfort to other inmates. In the October of 1942, he was taken to Hartheim Castle in Austria and killed by poison gas.

It is unclear whether the Prague Unitaria building was acquired or constructed and when; however, it is near the 14th Century Charles Bridge on the city side of the Vltava River. It serves as both the main Prague church and the headquarters of the RSCU.

Anyone with a desire to travel should certainly see that amazing city and visit the church there. They actually have services in English on the first and third Sundays of every month, after the normal Czech service. Here are scenes of its front door and the stained glass window inside.

Today, the Society's membership is not as large as before but it has churches in Prague (two), Brno, Teplice and Plzeň (Pilsen); also fellowships in Liberec and Ostrava, so it is represented in four of the six largest cities in the country. A recent addition is the National Wider Fellowship, which welcomes members from all over the country.

Despite producing one of the most famous Universalists, George de Benneville, France was very late in discovering Unitarianism. In 1986, the French Unitarian Association was formed by ten people from around the country. Its first president was Rev. Lucienne Kirk, who had studied at Manchester College in Oxford and was ordained in Kolozsvár.

In 1996, a majority of the membership moved for a less specific Christian identity and the group changed its name to the Fraternal Assembly of Christian Unitarians, merging with the Francophone Unitarian Association founded by the scientist, Théodore Monod (1902–2000), also in 1986. This brought in members who lived in Belgium and Switzerland, and the new organisation acquired a headquarters at Digne-les-Bains in the French Alps (possibly Monod's home). Since Monod's death, the FACU has been led by Secretary-General Dr. Jean-Claude Barbier, a retired sociologist.

Today, there are groups in Paris, Marseille, Bordeaux, Nantes, Nancy and Digne-les-Bains, as well as one in Brussels. The FACU is also in partnership with Christian Unitarian bodies in Italy, Quebec, Burundi and the two Congos. It has founded an umbrella organisation, the French Council of Unitarians and Universalists, for ICUU purposes but the other members are very minor players.

The FACU has also founded the on-line Francophone Unitarian Church, which ministers to French-speaking people in Europe (including Monaco and Andorra), North America (Quebec, Acadia, Louisiana and even Philadelphia) and former French and Belgian colonies in Africa. At Dr. Barbier's expense, the FUC sponsors annual seminars for ministerial training, alternately in Burundi and Rwanda.

This will be an appropriate time to mention the Italian Unitarian Community, as so little is known about it. Their president, Rev. Roberto Rosso, was ordained as Italy's first Unitarian minister in 2008 under the auspices of the Transylvanian, Norwegian and Danish Churches.

Another latecomer is the Dutch Remonstrant Church, despite its 17th Century origins. Followers of Jacobus Arminius, they famously rejected Calvinism with their Five Articles of Remonstrance in 1610. As a result, all of their pastors were exiled and, even when conditions were relaxed, the Remonstrants were not allowed to have their own churches until 1795.

(Continued on p. 5.)

SERVICE DIARY

Meetings every Sunday from 10.30 – 11.30 a.m.
(followed by coffee, tea and food)

Date	Presenter	Topic
6 th August	Ted Sadler	Enemies of Universalism
13 th August	Kaine Hayward	Franz Schubert: German Genius**
20 th August	Peter Crawford	Memories of Old Paddy's Market
27 th August	Mike McPhee	Unitarians of Central Canada (Part 2)*
3 rd September	Patrick Bernard	Mikhail Bulgakov: Russian Writer
10 th September	Peter Crawford	The English Reformation
17 th September	Michael Spicer	Pope Pius IX: Liberal or Reactionary?*
24 th September	Peter Crawford	Religion in America

* These will be video presentations.

** This will be a Music Service.

[Please check the church website (www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org) for updates. The program for October will be available from the beginning of September.]

*Glaube ohne Grenzen, brüderlich und frei,
Let's stand together meeting eye to eye,
different creeds and cultures praise diversity.
Étant différents, et ce pendant a mis!
What we have in common, we shall keep in mind.
Lasst uns ergründen, was uns alle eint!*

Faith without borders, brotherly and free,
Let's stand together meeting eye to eye,
different creeds and cultures praise diversity.
Being different, and yet!
What we have in common, we shall keep in mind.
Let us discover what unites us all!

Submitted by the organisers of the recent European Unitarians Together Spring Retreat; words written by Martha Hicks, Frank Kubitschek, Andrea Offner and Roland Weber.

In the shadow of Table Mountain, we, the assembled Unitarians, light this Chalice, marking this dedicated sacred time together. We do so with intent, recognising the Mystery and Wonder of Life, the wisdom of all religions, the dignity of All and our Earth Home, and our joint search for Justice. This flame unites us symbolically with Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists internationally; it honors our heritage, our future and the consciousness of this moment. So may it be.

Submitted by the Unitarian Church of South Africa; words written by Lizette Oliver, the wife of the Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Church of Cape Town, Rev. Gordon Oliver.

[These are the Chalice Lighting from the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists for the months of June and August. Strangely, nothing has been received for July.]

The European Unitarians Together Spring Retreat was a joint project of the European UUs and the German Unitarians, held over 02–05 June in Ulm. Its theme was ‘Faith without Borders – *Glaube ohne Grenzen*’, and Unitarians, UUs and kindred spirits from all over Europe and beyond were invited to attend. The venue was the Edwin-Scharff-Haus on the south bank of the Danube, near the Old Quarter of the city.

The keynote speakers were:

Prof. Manuela Kalsky, Professor of Theology and Society at the Free University of Amsterdam and head of the Dutch multimedia project, ‘New We’, which aims to strengthen social cohesion and the capacity to live with others from different cultures and religions. Her topic was ‘Flexible Believers and the Search for a New We’.

Rev. William Schulz, President Emeritus of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, former President of the UUA and Executive Director of Amnesty International USA. His topic was ‘The Limits of Dignity: Is Democracy Incompatible with Human Nature?’.

The Retreat also featured the choir of the First Unitarian Society of Newton, Massachusetts, and attendees were encouraged to bring instruments for self-styled singing and musical events in the evenings. The Chalice Lighting is the chorus of a theme song that was written for the occasion. Martha Hicks and Andrea Offner are officers of the European UUs (Martha is the editor of the *EUU Unifier* quarterly newsletter), while Frank Kubitschek and Roland Weber are with the German Unitarians.

Just on that note, the EUUs’ Fall Retreat is scheduled for 27–29 October in the Belgian town of Spa. The keynote speaker is Rev. Diane Rollert, minister of the Unitarian Church of Montreal, speaking on ‘Engaging the Heart, Ways of Spirit’.

The Unitarian Church of South Africa has five congregations in Cape Town (2), Durban, Johannesburg and West Somerset (close to Cape Town). While the other groups are fellowships and relatively recent in their formation, the Cape Town Unitarian Church is the oldest Unitarian church in Africa – formed in 1867 and celebrating its 150th anniversary in August.

Properly speaking, that is when the congregation was founded by Rev. Dawid Faure after he left the Dutch Reformed Church, as the church building was acquired in 1890. Originally known as the Free Protestant Church, it was brought into the Unitarian movement by Rev. Faure’s English successor, Rev. Ramsden Balmforth, in 1921.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

By Peter Crawford

My maternal grandmother, Pearl Robertson born in 1889, was exactly sixty years older than me. On several occasions she told me a very sad story. She repeated the story on more than one occasion and I remember she actually dropped a tear while telling it. She had grown up in the town of Quirindi, where her father owned the local produce store, a rather significant business in a town of only three thousand inhabitants. In her early teens, she knew and, I believe, attended school with a charming and very beautiful girl called Maud Fletcher.

I do not know how well she knew her, really – like all stories, things are prone to exaggeration. In 1906, Maud, aged seventeen, befriended a young part-Aboriginal boy named George Tofts, aged 20. Maud and George either fell in love or, at least, were sweethearts for a period of months. But something happened. Maud decided to call it off, probably under her family's influence. As is often the case in rejection and sexual jealousy, George burned with rage and depression. After pleading for Maud to marry him and clashing with Maud's father, who had tried to restrain him, George later returned with a rifle (he was a kangaroo shooter by occupation). Maud fled with George in pursuit. He first shot Maud in the buttocks and then fatally brought the rifle butt down on her head, turning his passion into a gruesome murder.

As my grandmother put it, George then "took off", heading out into the bush he knew so well. I think she told me that he was captured after a long pursuit involving Aboriginal trackers. He was, I believe, captured in Queensland and returned to Quirindi, then taken to Tamworth where he was questioned, charged, tried and convicted of murder.

"Did they hang him?", I asked "Yes, they hanged him," my grandmother replied, dropping a tear. "I was hopin' they wouldn't catch him", she would say in her Australian bush accent. But they did catch him and the case was a tragic one. The people of Quirindi were horrified and saddened, but there was some feeling that George should not have been hanged but sentenced to a term of imprisonment. A petition was presented to State Parliament but it failed. Being country people, most of course thought he should hang, but there was much residual sadness.

Now, there is a further aspect to this sad story. It was only six years earlier that Joe and Jimmy Governor and their cousin, Jackie Underwood, went on a killing spree after a dispute over payment for some farm work. The three Aboriginals murdered nine people in their madness in 1900. During their attempted escape, the Governors went on an Odyssey around the Australian bush, covering perhaps thousands of miles over a three-month period. Like Scarlet Pimpernels, the Governors seemed everywhere and nowhere. (Jackie had been captured early in the piece and was later hanged in Old Dubbo Gaol.)

Jimmy was wounded and captured near Wingham, on the mid-North Coast, and hanged at Darlinghurst Gaol in Sydney, while Joe was finally gunned down by a farmer. The murderous escapade of the Governors had utterly terrified the women and children of rural New South Wales. It was in this context that George Tofts was hunted down with great determination by the authorities. A remarkable film about the Governors, *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*, was produced in 1978, based on a novel by Tom Keneally.

My grandmother never told me names and dates. She told me only that she was a friend of the couple and was deeply saddened by their fate. For years as a state parliamentarian with contacts in Attorney-General's Department, I tried to find out details of the case but got nowhere. Later, I asked my dear friend, Attorney-General Jeff Shaw, if he could provide me with the details. I remember him asking me: "Can you tell me the names? Could you tell me the dates?" I had to answer 'no' to each question, so I let the matter drop.

Then, surfing the Internet, I discovered a list of all – that's right, all! – people legally executed in Australia. I came across the names, George Tofts and Maud Fletcher. I then visited the NSW Public Library, where they told me of a site called 'Trove' which provided a digital copy of every newspaper in NSW that was still extant, a truly remarkable resource. I consulted this site and – lo and behold! – there were full accounts of the sad, sad fate of the two young sweethearts, George Tofts and Maud Fletcher.

[Peter will resume his article on Japan in the next issue. Just for the benefit of our overseas readers, Quirindi and Tamworth are in the New England Tablelands of northeastern New South Wales. Dubbo is further west, near Gilgandra, where the first five murders were committed.]

(Modern Unitarianism in Continental Europe, *cont'd.*)

While their main church is in Rotterdam, dating from 1895, the Church has 46 congregations in the Netherlands and one just across the German border in Friedrichstadt – some 5680 members and ‘friends’, in all. In 1996, the Remonstrants were the first Christian church in the world to conduct same-sex marriages. They joined the ICUU in 2012 and – perhaps making up for lost time – hosted last year’s Council Meeting and Conference at their conference centre in Kerkade.

In Spain, at the end of the 19th Century, a group of liberal Spanish intellectuals and reformers called themselves Krausistas, after the German idealist philosopher, Karl Krause. They also admired the natural religion and religious rationalism of the American Unitarian leaders, William Ellery Channing and Theodore Parker, though they were not in a position to form a church.

After the death of Francisco Franco, the Constitution of 1978 finally established religious freedom in Spain (though there were still many restrictions in actual practice). In 2000, the UU Society of Spain was founded in Barcelona by Jaume de Marcos, an IT specialist and translator (pictured far right). However, they were unable to achieve legal recognition as a religious organisation, even after they changed their name to ‘UU Religious Society’ in 2005. However, the UUSS is affiliated with the ICUU and it now has members-at-large elsewhere in Spain; plus, there are reports of a fellowship being formed in the northern city of La Coruña.

The UU Society of Finland was formed some time after 2000 and has been a Full Member of the ICUU since 2003, despite having only a single lay-led Fellowship in Helsinki and smaller groups in the cities of Turku and Kuopio (if they still function). The group in Helsinki meets only monthly but it also has bi-monthly informative evenings with refreshments and active email discussions. Despite their small numbers, they have produced two books in Finnish, as well as translations of two other Unitarian and/or Universalist sources. Recently, some materials were discovered in North America that were written or translated by ministers of Finnish immigrant congregations in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, which they also mean to publish.

The Unitarian Universalist Forum in Austria was formed not later than 2011, though at that time its only group was in Vienna. Now they also have a branch in Linz where they all meet once a month and, presumably, those from that northern city attend services in Vienna at other times. Like their German confreres, it appears that their theology is largely secular.

Lastly, I must mention the European Unitarian Universalists, originally founded by American expatriates in 1982. Over time, they have formed chapters in Paris, Kaiserlautern and Wiesbaden in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Basel and Geneva in Switzerland. In the process, they attracted some locals and accommodated them by moving away from standard UUA practices. Their services are lay-led and about half of their numbers are members-at-large; i.e., not living near one of their chapters but still entitled to attend the bi-annual Retreats and vote in the annual conferences. These Retreats are family affairs, lasting three days and hosted by the various groups in turn at picturesque country centres.

Clearly, Unitarianism in Europe is as diverse as the continent is and it will be interesting to see the future developments, especially in those countries whose groups are small and/or relatively new.

[Part 1 appeared in the April/May issue and covered developments since 1700 in Transylvania, Hungary, Norway, Germany and Denmark. For those who just came in, three earlier instalments were printed last year: ‘The Underground Unitarians’ (Apr/May), ‘The Unitarian Spring’ (Aug/Sept) and ‘Modern Unitarianism in Britain and Ireland’ (Dec/Jan).

All of those issues are archived under ‘Journals’ on the church website (www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org). More importantly, the three PowerPoint presentations those articles were cloned from are also accessible on the site – go to ‘Library’ and then ‘Historical Writings’. These contain many pictures, maps, etc., that add a great deal to the printed text and they also provide some early history that was not covered in the articles.

‘Early Unitarianism in Europe’ deals with the Transylvanian and Polish origins of our denomination, also relating how ‘Socinianism’ made its way to England via the Netherlands. ‘Unitarianism in Britain and Ireland’ tells the story about how our movement struggled to obtain legal status and eventually flourished under the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. It is my ambition to integrate the three presentations into a single dissertation that can be used in our region as an educational resource.]

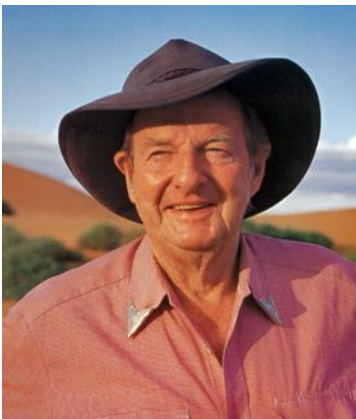
A PUB WITHOUT BEER



It is lonely away from your kindred and all
In the bushland at night when the warrigals [dingoes] call,
It is sad by the sea where the wild breakers boom,
Or to look on a grave and contemplate doom,
But there's nothing on earth half as lonely and drear
As to stand in the bar of a pub without beer

Madam with her needles sits still by the door,
The boss smokes in silence, he is joking no more,
There's a faraway look on the face of the bum,
While the barmaid looks down at the paint on her thumb,
The cook has gone cranky and the yardman is queer,
Oh, a terrible place is a pub without beer.

Once it stood by the wayside all stately and proud,
'Twas a home to the loafer, a joy to the crowd,
Now all silent the rooftop that often times rang
When the navvys were paid and the cane cutters sang,
Some are sleeping their last in a land far from here.
Oh, a terrible place is a pub without beer.



They can hang to their coupons for sugar and tea,
And the shortage of sandshoes does not worry me,
And though benzine and razors be both frozen stiff,
What is wrong with the horse and the old fashioned ziff, [beard]
'Mid the worries of war there's but one thing I fear,
'Tis to stand in the bar of a pub without beer.

Oh, you brew of brown barley, what charm is shine,
'Neath thy spell men grow happy and cease to repine,
The cowards become brave and the weak become strong
The dour and the grumpy burst forth into song,
If there's aught to resemble high heaven down here,
'Tis the place of joy where they ladle out beer.

Dan Sheahan (1943)

Since Peter Crawford has been telling us stories from the Bush (see p. 4), this seems an appropriate item – not least, for its historical significance. Most people know the famous song by Slim Dusty but this is the original poem it was based on. Daniel Sheahan (1882–1977) was an Irish-born farmer in North Queensland who rode 30 km to the Day Dawn Hotel in Ingham, only to find that a convoy of American servicemen from the 22nd Bomb Group, travelling north from Townsville, had consumed all the beer the night before. (Hence, the many references to wartime rationing in the fourth verse.)

The poem was published in the *North Queensland Register* in 1944 and it must have circulated widely, as it was discovered by the songwriter, Gordon Parsons, at a pub in Macksville, New South Wales, in 1956. He re-wrote the verses and put them to music before offering it to Slim Dusty, who recorded it in 1957. The song became Australia's first worldwide hit and it has since been translated into seven languages.

The Day Dawn Hotel was partly rebuilt in 1960 and renamed the Lees Hotel. In 1988, it was officially recognised by the Bicentennial Commemoration and a bronze plaque was awarded proclaiming it 'The Original Pub With No Beer'. The Lees is also the only pub on the Heritage List of the Queensland National Trust.

Readers can learn much more about these matters from: www.thepubwithnobeer.com.au, which also has an impressive photo gallery. Sheahan wrote many other poems, a collection of which, titled *Songs from the Cane-fields*, was published in 1980. Two of his other works were converted to songs by Slim Dusty but it has proven impossible to find out what they were. (More on p. 11.)

WOODS IN WINTER

When winter winds are piercing chill,
And through the hawthorn blows the gale,
With solemn feet I tread the hill,
That overbrows the lonely vale.

O'er the bare upland, and away
Through the long reach of desert woods,
The embracing sunbeams chastely play,
And gladden these deep solitudes.

Where, twisted round the barren oak,
The summer vine in beauty clung,
And summer winds the stillness broke,
The crystal icicle is hung.

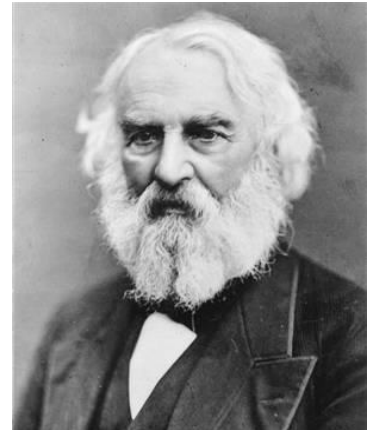
Where, from their frozen urns, mute springs
Pour out the river's gradual tide,
Shrilly the skater's iron rings,
And voices fill the woodland side.

Alas! how changed from the fair scene,
When birds sang out their mellow lay,
And winds were soft, and woods were green,
And the song ceased not with the day!

But still wild music is abroad,
Pale, desert woods! within your crowd;
And gathering winds, in hoarse accord,
Amid the vocal reeds pipe loud.

Chill airs and wintry winds! my ear
Has grown familiar with your song;
I hear it in the opening year,
I listen, and it cheers me long.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



This has been selected for lack of anything more topical – and, at least, the writer was a Unitarian. The date of writing is uncertain because it is listed under ‘Earlier Poems’ in *The Complete Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (1893) between his actual publications, *Voices of the Night* (1839) and *Ballads and Other Poems* (1841). However, Longfellow had been writing poems that were published in periodicals well before he graduated from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, in 1825. (Indeed, he was only 13 when his first work was printed in the local *Portland Gazette*.)

Longfellow was born in 1807 in what is now Portland, Maine, though that state was still part of Massachusetts at the time. His family were Congregationalists of the liberal tendency that eventually split off to form the Unitarian Church in the 1840s. He was a professor at Bowdoin and at Harvard University, during which time he published nine works of poetry and prose that included *Poems on Slavery* (1842) and *Evangeline: A Tale of Arcadie* (1847). It was after 1854 that he wrote such famous poems as ‘The Song of Hiawatha’, ‘Paul Revere’s Ride’ and ‘The Courtship of Miles Standish’.

Longfellow was the first of a group of writers known as the ‘Fireside Poets’, so named because families all over the country gathered by the fire in the evenings to read their works aloud. He lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for most of his life, attended the local Unitarian church and died there in 1882. It is unfortunate that more people don’t know that he taught Romance languages in his early years, as his last works were translations of Dante and Michelangelo. A feature article on Longfellow appeared in the April/May 2009 issue.

ALEXANDER (Part 2)

By Patrick Bernard

Once or twice a year, Alexander would turn up unannounced, usually in the evening at the most inconvenient times but, no matter how disruptive to Maurice's family's cosy middle-class routine these visits were, he was always welcomed with open arms. Everyone knew that, when Alexander appeared, it would turn into a memorable feast that would lift their spirits and a great joy would linger in their hearts long after he had vanished again in a cloud of mystery. Since he only paid these unexpected calls on his sister's family's Parisian apartment, but never bothered to show up in their country estate, Maurice concluded that Uncle Alexander was not interested in pastoral seclusion.

On every such visit, Uncle Alexander was graced with the company of 'a new aunty'. In a child's mind, this was a strange but fascinating arrangement, which led to occasional blunders that were swiftly and diplomatically corrected. The inappropriate question, "*What happened to Aunty So-and-So?*", would be quickly silenced with a discreet slap on the back of the head or a kick under the table. Maurice was still not sure what this was all about and, although these constant matrimonial changes were incomprehensible, there was also something very exciting about this endless parade of glamorous 'aunties' such as Aunty Nicole, Aunty Adèle, Aunty Hildegard, Aunty Séraphina, Aunty Liudmila and many other 'aunties' whose names Maurice has now forgotten. They all seemed to appear and disappear from the scene with similar ease, only to be replaced next time around by an equally beautiful 'new aunty'.

In spite of their individual differences, these successive 'aunties' all had similar features in common. Apart from being very intelligent, professionally successful women with substantial means of their own – one for example was a judge and another was a politician – they were all tall, extremely attractive, distinguished, articulate, witty and absolutely charming. More importantly, they were all very sweet with Maurice, maybe to display their maternal potential but, regardless of their motivations, in Maurice's eyes and mind they offered celestial standards of femininity that would be near impossible to match.

Among these exemplary women, Aunty Jacqueline became Maurice's favourite, probably because she paid even greater attention to him than any of her predecessors, never forgetting to buy him a judicious present on each subsequent visit. Surprisingly, Aunty Jacqueline kept coming back more often than any previous 'aunty' ever had before and, eventually, she became a permanent fixture in Alexander's life. It appeared that Uncle Alexander was finally settling down with Aunty Jacqueline, which greatly pleased his puritanical sister, Tatyana, who had never been comfortable with her brother's philandering. He gently protested, describing himself instead as a 'serial monogamist', which did not succeed in alleviating her displeasure but amused everyone else.

On several occasions, when Maurice was on school holidays, Aunty Jacqueline offered to look after him and take him with her for a promenade in the city to shop, eat and maybe watch a movie. Maurice, who was only twelve or thirteen at the time, would treasure these outings for the rest of his life. Although he did not quite know why, he was secretly proud to be seen in the company of such a beautiful young woman who was only in her late twenties. He burst with glee at the prospect of being spotted by a friend who would then undoubtedly report his sightings to their schoolmates. They would be devoured with jealousy if they found out that he had been chaperoned by a goddess, either in an upmarket restaurant or strolling with her hand-in-hand on a Parisian boulevard. In Maurice's feverish mind, Aunty Jacqueline did not just hold him by the hand – *she gave him her hand*, which made a very significant difference.

In response to this heavenly gift, he held her hand as one would hold a priceless treasure. It was the first time he felt in the company of a woman something so overwhelmingly wonderful, something that affected his entire nervous system and even his blood pressure. He wondered if he had caught the flu but it felt too good to be an illness of any sort. A new intoxicating emotion he had never experienced before took hold of him and grew in strength as time went by. Unknowingly, Aunty Jacqueline introduced him to something approaching love. For those few fleeting moments, which were as light as feathers, he would remain forever grateful. Following these blissful walks, he used all sorts of tricks to avoid washing his hands for several days afterwards to salvage Aunty Jacqueline's lingering fragrance on his hypersensitive skin. Thus he discovered what Italians poetically describe as '*Profumo di Donna*'.¹

¹ Perfume (or fragrance) of a Lady

People stared at them, wondering what kind of relationship existed between this young boy and this dazzling woman, blossoming like a summer fruit. Maurice enjoyed this ambiguity, which unsettled inquisitive observers. She was obviously too young to be his mother. Was she his sister or a relative of some sort? Maurice hoped they thought that she was his lover, although he did not quite know what that meant. This situation did not seem to embarrass Aunt Jacqueline, who may have also enjoyed the confusion they caused to the disapproving gaze of strangers – the truth, of course, being simply that she was a very affectionate woman who wished that curly-headed boy was her son.

For this and many other reasons, Maurice eagerly looked forward to Uncle Alexander turning up on many more of those enchanted evenings, full of fire, accompanied by one of those lovely new ‘aunties’, preferably Aunt Jacqueline, regardless of the fact that this usually happened when Tatyana and her family had finished dinner and were about to retire to their respective bedrooms. At first, Stéphane always felt obliged to put up some unconvincing protestations. He must have thought that it was his duty to at least pretend that he was complaining. He would mumble with a guilty smile that it was too late, or that the family had already had dinner, or that the children would have to get up early for school the next morning, or whatever other lame excuses he could come up with.

All these half-hearted objections were easily dismissed by Alexander with a joke or two. Stéphane happily conceded defeat – the matter was closed and the celebrations could begin in earnest without further ado. Alexander would then pop open a bottle of vintage champagne and the housemaid brought in crystal glasses, along with delicious nibbles. Meanwhile, Tatyana had swiftly and miraculously dressed up for the occasion. Alexander would bribe Stéphane with a large wooden box of Cuban cigars and he would then spoil his beloved sister with presents from her favourite fashion house, ‘Hermès’ on the Place de la Madeleine. She pretended to be embarrassed, repeating that it was “*too much*” and that he “*shouldn’t have*”, but young Maurice was both amused and perplexed to note that, in spite of all her objections, his mother never actually refused or re-turned any of those gifts.

The boys knew when Uncle Alexander was ringing the front doorbell, simply because no one else would have done so at such a godforsaken time. In a flash, they put their best clothes on and were ‘ready to hit the town’. The ‘new aunty’ was formally introduced and given a sincere warm welcome, as everyone hoped that this one would stick around a little bit longer than her predecessors. After many hugs and kisses, a few drinks, a few outlandish anecdotes and much laughter, the whole jubilant mob would stumble downstairs and out into the deserted street, no doubt waking up the respectable neighbourhood. Since there was never enough room to fit everyone in Alexander’s car, Stéphane and Nicholas would go separately by taxi. To catch up with gossip and other updates, Tatyana would be awarded the front passenger’s seat of her brother’s new sporty convertible and Maurice would manage every time to sit tightly in the back next to his ‘new aunty’, besotted by her fragrance, her perfect hands and her even more perfect knees, which seemed to be staring back at him with a mixture of defiance and half-hearted disapproval. He was prematurely fascinated by women, who would forever remain the great enigma and the even greater attraction, if not distraction, in his life.

Every so often, he glanced at the beautiful profile of this heavenly creature bumping against him as Alexander drove mercilessly over the cobblestones while conducting a joyous conversation with his sister, oblivious to what was happening in the back of the car. As the ‘new aunty’ became aware of Maurice’s persistent gaze, she would quietly turn around and look back at him with the cryptic smile of a ‘Mona Lisa’, which seemed to suggest that she was both amused and flattered at the same time by this young boy’s precocious attentions. Having been caught in the act of staring, unaware that his feverish curiosity could be construed as lust, he looked away confused and embarrassed, hoping that no one would see him blush in the dark. A strange new ailment afflicted him and he only knew that he was not supposed to feel that way, but he was not sure why, which made his disarray even steamier.

It was also on those libidinous leather seats, perilously close to such enticing company, that Maurice discovered jazz in the penumbra of Uncle Alexander’s car, while speeding along the illuminated Parisian boulevards. Alexander was always tuned to a jazz radio station at night. It was in such privileged conditions that Maurice heard for the first time the likes of Miles Davies, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker and many other musicians who would change and enrich his life beyond measure. For Maurice, this profane music became synonymous with rebellion, forbidden fruits, indulgence and misbehaviour. In other words, jazz became the musical expression of freedom. Inspired by this experience, the first three long-playing 33 rpm records he ever bought were by Earl Hines, Johnny Hodges and Thelonious Monk, which were unusual names that sounded so exotic to a young Frenchman.

Sixty years later, Maurice still cherishes those old jazz records as one would hold onto a lock of hair or the vestiges of a golden age. Years later, a high school friend would confirm these sentiments with the judicious comment that: “*With jazz, you want to smoke, you want to drink, you want to stay up all night, and you want to have sex with naughty girls! What else could you want?*” But back then in the early 1960s, Maurice was not quite there yet, although he already sensed the proximity of unknown pleasures that jazz promised and would eventually deliver. It was during those late night rides through ‘the City of Lights’ that Uncle Alexander introduced Maurice to an alien and irresistible world that only exists when the silent and compliant majority sleeps. He then concluded that interesting people sleep in daytime and live at night.

The final destination of these pagan expeditions was always one of the few remaining authentic Russian restaurants of Paris, which were reputed not so much for their excellent gastronomical fare but for the unique blend of Russian *Belle Époque* and louche ambiance they offered. It was a shadowy world of secrets, doomed conspiracies, impossible dreams and lost illusions, where fossilised survivors of the ‘Ancien Régime’ sat with polite indifference close to various types of unsavoury characters mass-produced by ‘the New Order’. In these often subterranean establishments, one could travel back in time and space to something approaching the atmosphere of old Russia in her last Tsarist days. In fact, the Russian restaurants of Paris were a far better proposition than the drab socialist canteens one had to endure in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile in the French capital in the 1950s and early ’60s, there were still quite a few aging White Russians frequenting these notorious restaurants, which often doubled as cabarets. On occasions, a Prince or a Grand-Duke could be seen holding court among small circles of deferential admirers. Sometimes even, a destitute aristocrat could happen to be the waiter, a fall from grace which always saddened Alexander and Tatyana, who made a point of praising the gentleman’s ancestry and raised a toast to his family’s glory. Mingling with this fine clientele were always a few gorgeous single ladies of negotiable virtue. Some sinister underworld types, marinated in cheap Cologne, made the odd appearance and obvious KGB operatives kept an eye on things or exchanged confidences of variable magnitude with sweaty bureaucrats, motivated more by greed than ideology. This *demi-monde* blended well with the more glamorous crowd, giving proceedings an exotic *frisson* much sought after at the big end of town.

Some of Alexander’s preferred late night diners were ‘*L’Étoile de Moscou*’ (The Star of Moscow), ‘*Chez Natasha*’ and ‘*À la Ville de Petrograd*’ – today only the latter still survives, albeit in a more sedate form, on Rue Daru. Not surprisingly, the décor was brazenly Russian with a preference for hues in the red spectrum, since red had been the favourite colour of Russian people for centuries before the Bolsheviks appropriated and subverted its traditional symbolism. The lighting was always warm and subdued to facilitate intimacy and secrecy. The walls were heavily decorated with Orthodox icons and ornate shelves displaying copies of Fabergé Eggs, Russian memorabilia and collections of folk art such as the exquisite boxes and kitchen utensils of *Palekh*². Maurice also found the Impressionistic landscape paintings depicting dachas, churches, decrepit manor houses, rivers, forests and meadows covered with wild flowers particularly appealing and spent much time dreamily contemplating these Romantic images, oblivious to what was going on around him.

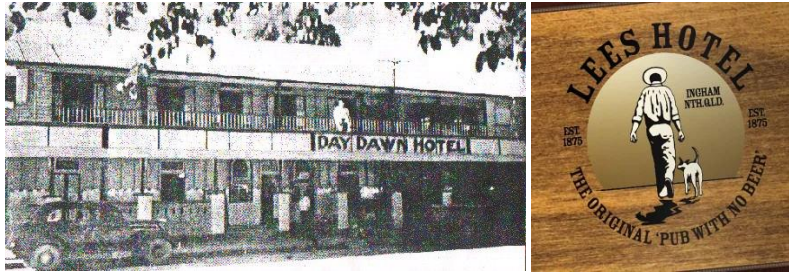
As in many Russian homes, Persian carpets hung on spare wall spaces, not on the ground as most Westerners would have expected. A portrait of Nicholas II and a large golden samovar welcomed customers in the lobby. There was always a band of classically trained musicians, moonlighting from the Paris Opera Symphonic Orchestra or refugee virtuosos from the Bolshoi, playing Russian Gypsy songs, old Russian romances and stirring melodies that everyone knew and loved. Sometimes, a professional singer, male or female, would join the performers, adding a much-appreciated dramatic flavour to these spectacles.

As one would expect in these Russian émigrés dens, the furniture was plush with more than a hint of Oriental excess, suggesting the uninhibited opulence of a bygone age. Complex draperies of luxurious material concealed hypothetical windows and luscious velvet lined the gilded chairs for maximum comfort, completing the sensuous visual effect. Too much was, indeed, never enough! Gold-plated candelabras and cutlery reminded diners of an Imperial splendour most of them had never really known, but that was somehow more real in their hearts and minds than the grey Parisian streets waiting for them outside.

[This is the second instalment of what will be Chapter 7 of Patrick’s *Perennity* work-in-progress. Part 1 was printed in the previous issue.]

² A Russian village reputed for its colourful folk-art, particularly its hand-painted black lacquer boxes representing artfully the fairy tales, myths and legends of Old Russia.

MORE DRY HUMOUR



Someone was bound to ask, so here are the lyrics of the Gordon Parsons/Slim Dusty song:

A PUB WITH NO BEER

(Chorus:)

Oh, it's lonesome away from your kindred and all
By the campfire at night where the wild dingoes call
But there's nothing so lonesome, so morbid or drear
Than to stand in the bar of a pub with no beer

Now the publican's anxious for the quota¹ to come
And there's a far away look on the face of the bum
The maid's gone all cranky and the cook's acting queer
Oh, what a terrible place is a pub with no beer

Then the stockman rides up, with his dry dusty throat,
He breasts up to the bar, and pulls a wad from his coat,
But the smile on his face quickly turns to a sneer,
As the barman says sadly, "The pub's got no beer."

There's a dog on the verandah, for his master he waits,
But the boss is inside, drinking wine with his mates,
He hurries for cover and he cringes in fear,
It's no place for a dog 'round a pub with no beer

Then the swaggie comes in, smothered in dust and flies,
He throws down his roll and rubs the sweat from his eyes,
But when he is told, he says, "What's this I hear?
I've trudged fifty flamin' miles, to a pub with no beer."

Old Billy, the Blacksmith, the first time in his life
Has gone home cold sober to his darling wife,
He walks in the kitchen, she says, "You're early, me dear"
Then he breaks down and tells her that the pub's got no beer

(Repeat chorus)

¹ Another reference to wartime rationing, this time of beer.

David Gordon Kirkpatrick (1927–2003), better known as 'Slim Dusty', was born near Kempsey, New South Wales, the son of a cattle farmer. He wrote his first song, 'The Way the Cowboy Dies', in 1937 and adopted his stage name the next year. His first recording was made in 1945 and his career took off after he married singer-songwriter Joy McKean in 1951. She became his manager and they formed a touring group in 1954.

Joy wrote several of Dusty's most popular songs and he also put poems by Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson to music. He won an unequalled 38 Golden Guitar awards at the Tamworth Country Music Festivals over the years, became a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1970 and was working on his 106th album at the time of his death. His children, Anne and David Kirkpatrick are also successful songwriters and musicians.

COMMITTEE NEWS

The church Committee met on Wednesday, 19 July to prepare for the Annual General Meeting on Sunday, 30 July. The Auditor's Report has been received and nominations for next year's Committee were called for. The Treasurer's Report will be presented at the AGM.

Maintenance issues have taken up a lot of the Committee's time, this year, but considerable progress has been made. Finally, after over 15 months of plumbing problems, the leaks have been fixed and a plasterer has restored the ceiling in the Chapel to its former state. The flat upstairs is undergoing its first upgrade/renovation since the 1970s, which will involve electrical updating, carpeting, painting and a complete makeover of the bathroom. The Secretary will provide a progress report on the works at the AGM.

ANZUUA NEWS

The biennial ANZUUA Conference will be held at the Adelaide Unitarian Church over 20–22 October 2017 with the theme of 'Unitarianism in our Region – Flourishing in the 21st Century'. The keynote speaker, writer and social activist Dr. Hugh Mackay, will deliver his Address on the Friday evening in the Norwood Town Hall and the other events, including the General Meeting and the Conference Dinner, will take place at the Unitarian Meeting House.

The program for the Saturday morning will feature presentations on Youth, Outreach, Social Justice and Worship, followed by international presentations and discussion groups. The General Meeting, including the election of a new ANZUUA Executive, will take place in the afternoon. After the Worship Service on the Sunday, a visit to the historic Shady Grove Chapel in the Adelaide Hills has been organised

More information and a registration form can be found under 'Conference 2017' on the ANZUUA website: james4hills.wixsite.com/anzuua.

Membership renewals for 2017 are due from 01 January and they must be received before the Annual General Meeting in May. Those wishing to join our church can use this form by way of application but should not send payment until their membership is accepted.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

I, (name) _____

of (address) _____

_____ Postcode _____

Phone(s): (home) _____ (other) _____

Email: _____

I apply to join/renew membership in (delete one) the Sydney Unitarian Church and agree to abide by the rules as set down by the Constitution and management of the church.

Signature: _____ Fee enclosed: \$_____*

Cheques should be made payable to: Treasurer, Sydney Unitarian Church. Membership will be valid for the calendar year 2017.

* Annual membership is \$20 and includes the SUN journal; subscription to the SUN only is \$15.