

Oh Brother, the Saints are gone-eth and soon-est will be thou

It's a good thing I've had such an awesome 3 ½ weeks with my brother Andre. The positives about this week's article will have to be NOT around the footy. So here is the match report. Adelaide kicked the Saints tushie and very badly. Yet another ex-Saints player Lynch, kicked our tushie too but he didn't cry. It is a long long year when your team is failing to fly.

Uncle Bob and I talked after the game and he's going away with Aunty Betty to Canada in July/August. This is my Uncle Bob who would normally plan holidays around the season. But this boat tour is best in the Canadian summer and they have now booked. This is the life of St.Kilda supporters. Find other things to sustain you.

So now the game report is entering the recesses of my mind and the memories of this week come to mind. The stories that just have to be told.

Andre and I headed into Victoria Market on Friday. He wanted to get gifts for his grand daughters and I wanted to keep him company. I just hadn't been to the market for years, so it was worth a journey in. We drove to Mum's in Elsternwick and grabbed a tram 67 into the city. As we approached the street where our grandparents used to live, I pointed it out to Andre and said "That's Charles Street {St.Kilda} where Bubba and Zeida used to live". That's our Mum's parents. They lived there with Bubba's sister, Tante Muriel. In this house, I used a potty at night to avoid the outside toilet. I gardened with my Zeida who grew strawberries and baby carrots. I loved eating food from the garden and have since had my own food supplies in gardens, especially in my current house.

Anyway, as I said this, about Charles Street, an attractive, youngish 30 something woman sitting opposite Andre piped up with "I lived in Charles Street too" and thus began an unbelievable journey of story-telling. She used to live in 18 Charles Street with friends, several of whom came to her recent wedding in Daylesford. She said what an amazing street it was. Lots of the residents knew each other well. She has fond memories and told us many of them. Lano and Woodley were previous Charles Street dwellers. I rung my cousin to speak to my aunt who was sleeping but my cousin thought Bubba and Zeida used to live in 34. I rung Mum, she thought 37. Then I noticed the man sitting exactly opposite me, listening to this conversation, was a dead ringer for an older Frank Woodley. I mean, he really looked like his father. So I asked him. He wasn't, the Russian accent was a give-away, unless he was a comic genius like his "son". He said he recognised me though, which was an interesting twist to the conversation, because I would have remembered meeting him. Maybe it was on another tram ride or walking down Glen Huntley Road. Who knows. More bizarrely, when my daughter Rachel and I saw Woodleys latest show, (which I have to say is the saddest comedy show I have EVER seen) Woodley played one of two imprisoned Russian brothers. It was brilliant but I hated it. I was sad for days.

Anyway, again, this conversation about Charles Street lasted from St.Kilda to Flinders Street. She had lots of Charles Street stories. Andre and I got off at Burke Street, and as we alighted, another woman passenger who had been sitting behind us, says "I loved the conversation in the tram. I was laughing the whole way. I used to live in Charles Street too." At this we were well and truly floored, and we laughed all the way to our next destination.

Which was Victoria Market. We walked through the seafood, through the meats and chickens, and then methodically walked up and down every aisle in the general area. We both had a history of markets. Andre shared a stall with a friend a long ways back, and I worked for the same friend at Dandenong Market for a very short time. It's hard work at the market, it's a wonder anyone ever makes a living. It was very quiet.

Andre had mocked me bringing my trolley, thought I was being a granny. I love my trolley, I was able to put my heavy coat or hat or cup in there and not carry it by hand. Mock me he did, like a good older brother, but that didn't stop him piling in the purchases as the afternoon went on. We met my sister Denise and Cousin Helen and had lunch at noodle shop in the middle of the market. It was very yummy and much needed after an hours walk. Then they went on to the rest of their day and Andre and I continued the journey. Slowly, the gifts were gotten and every aisle was seen. There is so much rubbish at the market, but every now and again there is a little gem, like the salad servers from Bethlehem or the cutest ever Aussie hand puppets of koalas, echidnas, possums and so forth, all ethically made. We couldn't go past the koala and echidna for Andre's newish grandchildren, it was a gift from Mum, Denise and I. He bought a belt and a wallet and just loved being with me and being in Australia so much. Just as we'd done every stall and he went to the loo, I said I'd go look at a handbag stall while I waited. I'd joked earlier that it was very rare that I went on relaxing shopping adventures and not find something red, black and white to tempt me.

I spoke too soon. In the hand bag stall, the last stall, after 4 hours at the market, my eyes went straight to a red, white and black, beautifully made, hand bag and so it was done. I had fulfilled the prophecy and continued the tradition and the Saints were represented in my shopping though ignored in this article.

Andre was no longer mocking the trolley after it was filled to the brim, and he then dragged it back to Swanston Street where we caught the tram home. Andre has loved being back in Melbourne, and the market was one of the last things he wanted to make sure he visited. We have bonded for the first time in our lives and he has had the trip of a lifetime that will sustain him and us for a while.

Postscript: Andre is now safely ensconced in Cape Cod where he now lives and works with his one day off before his work week begins. He left here full of food, memories and time with an ailing Mum, aging family, and an equally mad Sainter Sister. He has been with family and friends, engaged in Melbourne life up until the last moments when his journey back to the USA began. From our two sides of the planet, we look forward to seeing what the Dogs and Saints game will produce this weekend. Denise will join us in the Saints wing and I tip the Saints but wouldn't be surprised if the Doggies took some revenge and bite us on the bum.

Postscript 2: Andre, Mum and I went to Charles Street. My grandparents lived in Number 29, and it now has a high fence so we couldn't see in. So much to my brother's amazement, I rang the doorbell, and a young man and his baby son came and opened the fence and we explained our connection to the house and just looked at the front. The house is now extended all the way to the back with courtyards and no outside loos or veggie garden. This kind chap told us it was a very good community in that street and it was great living there. None of us found the house familiar, it's just been too long, but it was a good end to the Charles Street adventures and we paid our respects to a moment in our pasts.

Yvette Wroby

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