

## The Slow Journey From Hope to Joy

I've been writing about hope for several weeks. My fellow writer and muse John Harms has suggested I read Victor Frankel's "Man's search for Meaning" and then the wonderful yarn by Brian Matthews: "A Fine and Private Place". Victor's book is about a man's search for understanding the suffering at the hands of the Nazi's and what meaning he could take from it. Brian's book is a personal memory and journey from his migrating parents and growing up in neighbouring St.Kilda. It was a family history of life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a family's struggle with their bond with the St.Kilda Football Club throughout the years. He ends up continuing and ending his story remembering the 1966 Grand Final, and his father's illness, family illness and death. It is a reflection on time and place and circumstance and people, as was Victor's.

I feel blessed to be part of a footy writer's coven who love the game and love the written word, and that this love affair with the Almanac and those in it continue. It is a blessing to write every week regardless of the outcome, and even in the darker days, to comically change words of songs or add cartoons as my heart desires. It is my new therapy and a gateway to a different world of words.

As Zamir and I took the train to Ethiad last night, I sat next to other Sainters and began my ritual of asking about hope. They were three older members of the Social Club, within minutes we had established that they'd "been there" for the last few years of St.Kilda suffering and I'd told them about the Almanac and gave them details. I'd talk to anyone, especially in the train bound for the footy. Of course they had hope, they said, otherwise, who would bother.

Then when we changed trains from Flinders to Southern Cross, amid some confusion as supporters boarded two separate trains, I sat across from two Doggies supporters. The Doggies have a special place as it is my brother in law and his family's team, and now my sisters. I read last week's article on the web about how the two teams are linked by struggle. They had some hope but only in small measure. We wished each other luck and continued our march to the ground.

I love crossing the bridge, buying my Footy Record, donating to the Salvation Army but only if they are in uniform (there were two guys collecting and I didn't give to civilians, I seem to trust only the uniform.) We were there nice and early and review the past game and tonight's game with my Uncle and Cousin. Then we are all ready for the game and who knew, St.Kilda being favourites really didn't mean much until the final siren.

It was a scrappy game, so many mistakes by players and umpires, but the Saints beat the Bulldogs by 24 points. The Saints started better and finished better, the Doggies played catch up until second half when St.Kilda got in front and stayed that way. So St.Kilda and their fans are relieved to gain the four points, but more importantly, not be in the guns of media frenzy and "analysis" to the point of death of all hope for ever more.

(And how can I not mention the re-emergence as if on cue of the St.Kilda school girl and Ricky Nixon on the "7pm Report" and "The Footy Show" on Thursday night, and as far as I'm concerned, they both can't be taken very seriously and I wish that they both find some peace somewhere where we are not inflicted or afflicted with either one of them.)

I love (and it hasn't happened very much this year in comparison to the last two years) the wonderful feeling of celebration in good goals towards the end that seal the victory and have the crowd and players roaring as one. The song was played three times, we sang heartily and watched as the players were happy too at a better performance, not the top performance, but a better performance which is always something.

I loved watching the new players for both the Saints and the Dogs. I think Stevens for us is a great gun, no Siposs today but Dawson played better, McEvoy was great, Jason Gram took a fantastic one handed mark that even surprised him and looked in better form. Jones has become such an active and good player, he has always been consistent but seems to have stepped up a few notches as we have needed him to this year. Raph Clarke was a little better, Baker is Baker and puts in good effort, Riewoldt kicked two straight and is so active especially towards the centre and I like him playing there, Gamble got a goal and his confidence, Goddard felt back, Gilbert a way off, Armitage is great, Ray is getting better, Dempster consistent, Fischer is a marvel both in defence and attack, Dal Santo showed some of his old spirit, Peake was a bit better than last week, Simpkin was new and interesting to watch, Gwilt, one of my new loves, is consistently dependable, and Ledger got his first goal in his first game. Milne, he kicked two truly good goals and that's what we need.

For the Doggies, Murphy is everywhere and seemed to be trying his hardest (it's harder when I don't know them all the way I know my boys) but the standouts were Boyd who kept coming, Giansiracusa who got two for the Dogs and seems consistently putting in effort, Liam Jones who got two good goals but caused the controversy of the game when he went on to take the "advantage" but changed his mind when he saw he was blocked by Saints and lost the possession and had a goal scored by the turn over. Liberatore seemed everywhere and Djerrkura and Dahlhaus in there with effort. Picken goalled one and their big man Hudson seemed everywhere and had a stronger body than McEvoy for the Saints.

So we left with the crowd and Zamir and I were separated and I thought we'd lost sight of each other in a moment of distraction but I hadn't noticed that he had been tripped and lost him in the surging crowd. I waited and looked and then thought I'd catch him at the station and wait there, not sure if he'd passed me or fallen behind. He'd actually fallen, bruising his nose and a few minutes later I got a call on my mobile to say he was with the St. John Ambulance and the security in front of Gate 3. So I headed back and collected my slightly dazed man and we taxi'd home in case there was concussion. I thanked them all for the care they took. We've now made a meeting place in case we are ever separated again. We went home and watched some replay so I could make sure he was OK before we hit the sack.

When we win, I buy the papers and enjoy the photos and articles and keep them, both to paint in the future and to record. There is joy in winning, especially on the back of the last six months as a St. Kilda supporter. Joy, like hope, has its increments and I'll take a little at a time, thanks very much, because next week we take on the mighty Cats but that's another story.

Yvette Wroby

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2011