

## Letter From Australia

by Roger D. McGrath

### America Down Under



Vietnamese gangs shake down proprietors of small businesses for protection money. Blacks have enormously high rates of drug addiction, alcoholism, crime, and out-of-wedlock births. Pakistanis, Lebanese, and Nigerians drive cabs. Japanese buy up downtown high-rise and choice beachfront properties. Chinese and Koreans take control of sections of the intercity. East Indians and Arabs run small shops and gas stations. Immigrants quickly learn how to defraud the welfare system, working for cash while collecting government benefits for food, shelter, transportation, and health care. Whites flee to the suburbs, publicly professing their love for people of all colors but privately admitting that the demographic shift and accompanying problems are ominous.

Sounds like California, Los Angeles in particular. Except I am describing Sydney and, to a lesser degree, Melbourne. Australia has followed in American footsteps, even copying our dramatic 1965 reversal of immigration policy.

Through the end of World War II, Australia's population consisted almost entirely of whites of English, Irish, and Scottish extraction. There were also a small number of aborigines and a dash of Dutch, German, and Scandinavian settlers. Beginning in the late 1940's and continuing through the 1950's, Greek and Italian immigrants arrived from their war-torn native lands. Although most of them spoke little English, they were white, Christian, and European. Moreover, they came in numbers that made acculturation and assimilation practical. Some of them were instrumental in helping to develop Australia's booming wine industry.

Despite these new arrivals from southern Europe following World War II, in the 1960's Australia still looked very much like the British Isles. Ninety-five percent of Australians traced their ancestry to England, Ireland, or Scotland.

Most of the blokes were some version of Paul Hogan, who was working on the Sydney Harbour Bridge at the time, and the sheilas a variety of Olivia Newton John.

Strict control of immigration was relaxed in 1973 and nonwhites began pouring into Australia. At first their presence was hardly felt. By the 1990's, however, the effect was changing entire sections of Sydney and Melbourne, creating sharp racial antagonisms and straining the social welfare system. Afraid to be labeled racist, few dared to speak out. Recently, Pauline Hanson, a member of the Australian parliament, has addressed the immigration problem with forthrightness and candor. She has been viciously attacked. Not her arguments, mind you, but she herself. *Argumentum ad hominem*—the last refuge of the politician!

While visiting "down under" in March, I saw attacks on Hanson nearly every day on television news. I saw the astounding spectacle of Australia's two major political parties, Labor and Liberal, opening negotiations to run a candidate jointly against her. A popular figure in her native Queensland, she will be difficult to unseat. Whether she can withstand the assault by the combined might of both parties remains to be seen. Her home base of Ipswich makes her a sentimental favorite. Wasn't it from Ipswich (in New England) that John Wise challenged the Puritan oligarchy? Pauline Hanson is challenging the secular religion of political correctness.

Many politicians and Australian businessmen are terrified that Hanson's pronouncements will damage relations with Asian trading partners. Featured on a nightly newscast was a group of Australian politicians apologizing to and groveling, nearly genuflecting, before a delegation from Singapore. A government official told me privately that he agreed with everything she said but noted that Australia received more than eight billion dollars from trade with Singapore, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan. With a population only half that of California, these dollars are not insignificant to Australia. The attitude seems to be prosperity now and to hell with tomorrow. Some later generation will have to face a changed Australia.

The same government official told me that Australia could not afford to give the appearance of being racist by prohibiting nonwhite immigration. "After all," he said, "we are a part of the Orient and we must be full and equal trading partners." "What," I responded, "does that have to do with immigration? Could you move to Japan and become a Japanese citizen? There are thousands of Koreans who have been there for five generations now who are not allowed citizenship! Would Singapore allow boatloads of Aussies to take up residence and go on the dole? Could you buy and develop property in all those countries? Why is it that only white nations are not allowed to restrict immigration? Why is it that only white nations are not allowed to restrict noncitizen property rights?" The official looked down, shook his head, and said: "You're right."

A changed Australia is already a reality in some areas of Sydney and Melbourne where a popular pastime is a game called "Spot the Aussie." As I learned, sometimes it takes a while to spot one amid the East Indians, Malays, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other immigrants parading by. The change is also evident along parts of the Gold Coast and in Queensland. A real estate agent from Innisfail (just south of Cairns on a choice stretch of coastline inside the Great Barrier reef) told me that the Japanese were buying properties by the dozens and pushing prices well beyond the average Aussie's reach.

He also mentioned that the Japanese had bought his local golf course. He was still allowed to play on it but was forced to move aside when any Japanese arrived. They had absolute priority at all times. He was ordered about on a course that he had played on for 30 years by, as he described them, "arrogant little bastards." After we downed more Guinness stout, he got more expansive: "We fought a war to keep them from invading Australia. The bloody Japs. We fought them in the Coral Sea. We fought them in New Guinea. The bloody bastards."

Chinese from Singapore, Taiwan, and especially Hong Kong have also purchased Australian properties. Some beachfront casinos cater specifically to the Chinese, who have a well-deserved reputation for gambling. Along with the gambling has come prostitution.

The two always seem to go together. Nonetheless, the average Aussie does not seem as nearly upset by the presence of Chinese as by the Japanese. The Chinese, they say, have none of the arrogance that they claim is characteristic of the Japanese. Then, too, the Aussies have not forgotten World War II.

The original "people of color" in Australia, the Aborigines (or "blacks" as they are commonly called) have not fared well. There are probably not many more than 50,000 full-blooded Aborigines today, down from three to six times that number at the beginning of British settlement in 1788. Some years back the prohibition on aboriginal consumption of alcohol was lifted, and since then alcoholism has become pandemic among the Aborigines. Drug consumption and out-of-wedlock births have also soared. Violence and crime have increased apace. Some aboriginal public housing developments have become "no-go areas" for police. Aussie cops have learned that they are damned-if-they-do, damned-if-they-don't.

Many Aussies, like many Americans, seem to feel that the increase in crime and the changing demographics of the nation are part of some kind of inevitable evolutionary cycle. Not really. Both in Australia and in America, these changes have resulted from specific government policies, be they the massive welfare programs that have harmed the family or the de facto, if not de jure, open-borders policy that has balkanized the country.

Nevertheless, most of Australia, even most of Sydney and Melbourne, looks more like California in the 1950's than Los Angeles in the 1990's. The country is a great bastion of the white middle class and of the Anglo-Celt. In many ways, the people resemble those who conquered the American frontier during the 18th and 19th centuries. The physiognomies, complexions, and names of those who today live in the old mining town of Ballarat in Victoria would be indistinguishable from those who occupied the mining camp of Ballarat in California a century ago. The same applies to hundreds of other towns and villages throughout Australia, from sheep and cattle stations to mining camps, mountain hamlets, and seaside resorts.

The Aussies honor their outlaws and rogues in song and story. Such characters as Ned Kelly (the wild colonial lad), Jack Riley (the man from Snowy River), and Andrew George Scott (Captain

Moonlite) are celebrated figures. They honor their war heroes, too. Nearly every small town and village has a monument with the inscribed names of those local boys who died serving in one of Australia's wars. Some of the monuments have dozens of names, including multiple sets of brothers. Considering the size of the towns, the sacrifice was shocking. In one speck of a village, I gazed upon a monument which revealed that three families had lost three sons each and four others had lost two each.

The War Memorial in the capitol city of Canberra is a military museum second to none. Every battle the Australians engaged in during World War I and II has its own display which includes a detailed description of the battle and the units involved, including maps, photographs, artifacts, and dioramas. The display for Gallipoli alone nearly fills a room, and well it should. Some 8,000 Aussies died on that barren peninsula, a testament to Winston Churchill's ineptitude as a military strategist, tactical blunders by British commanders, and English disregard for the lives of the colonials.

Battle after battle is brilliantly, powerfully, poignantly presented at the War Memorial. The photographs of the men and the battlefield artifacts sear the soul: a private with a freckled face looking more like a 14-year-old Boy Scout, yet gripping his rifle with fixed bayonet and ready to go over the top with his mates; a Celtic cross fashioned out of boiler plate with the inscription "In Loving Memory of the Officers, NCOs, and Men of the . . . Who Died" followed by a list of the fallen; lean young men bearing a stretcher with a wounded comrade through a nightmarish field of fire. The photographs and crosses number in the hundreds. The courage, the sacrifice, the heroism, the fortitude, the suffering, the camaraderie, the death is overwhelming.

Photographs of World War II give mute testimony to the barbarity of the Japanese. A greatly enlarged photo captured from the Japanese shows Australian prisoners, handsome young blokes, about to be decapitated. Other photos show Australian prisoners starved to skin and bones on the verge of death. The display notes that well over a third of Australian prisoners died in Japanese captivity. How politically incorrect to mention it! In fact, about 37 percent of Allied prisoners held by the Japanese died, while fewer than *one percent* of those held by the Germans died. (Will

the Aussies remove this display when the number of Japanese tourists to Canberra and Japanese investment in Australia approaches Hawaiian rates? The last time I visited the Pearl Harbor memorial the film the Park Service showed made it appear that the United States had started the war in the Pacific!)

Australia lost some 30,000 men in the Great War and another 38,000 in World War II, per capita rates far higher than those suffered by the United States in the same wars. The Australians honor and remember those who gave their all.

One of those Aussies who nearly died in World War II is a buddy of mine, George Maslen. He was a tall, lanky hurdler from Melbourne who had a good shot at making the Australian Olympic team for the games in 1940. The outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 canceled the games and made George's service as a sergeant in a citizen's militia in Victoria all the more relevant. By 1942, he was a lieutenant in the Australian army and led a platoon of Diggers up the Kokoda Trail and over the mountain spine of New Guinea.

He told me that before the Battle of the Coral Sea he thought that Australia was on the verge of being overrun by "hordes of little yellow men." With a population of only five million spread over a land mass about the size of our 48 contiguous states, Australia was vulnerable indeed. Queensland, in particular, was wide open to a Japanese invasion. Ironically, 50 years later the Japanese have returned, not in Zeros and Betty bombers with bullet and shell but in airliners with bags of cash and lines of credit.

Seemingly unaffected by all the changes along the Queensland coast and in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne is the "High Country" or "Australian Alps." Stretching for about 100 miles and constituting the southern end of the Great Dividing Range, the High Country remains an unspoiled wilderness of mile-high peaks and ridges. If you have ever seen *The Man From Snowy River*, then you have seen the High Country. Generally inhabited only by small numbers of stockmen, miners, and outfitters, the High Country is Australian wilderness at its best.

The only way to see most of it is from horseback. For nearly a week that is just what my wife, daughter, and I did. We joined a group on a 70-mile ride. We were the only Americans. The others

were Australians—the outfitter and his two hired hands and six guests. The 12 of us drank billy tea, slept in swags under the stars and sometimes under clouds in the rain, wore oilskins, watched wild brumbies graze on remote bluffs, visited a gold mine, negotiated narrow mountain trails, rode through dense eucalyptus forests, crossed and recrossed rivers, and shook our eyeteeth loose galloping across alpine meadows. My wife and daughter ride regularly and were only sore and tired by the end of each day. I was paralyzed. Fortunately, the pack horses carried cans and bottles of strong drink that warmed our insides and numbed the pain while the campfire toasted our outsides. Aussies firmly believe in the medicinal value of strong drink.

The leader of our little expedition was Steve Baird. His grandfather was a miner—a real digger—who took his son and then his grandson into the mountains and taught them something about gold mining. Early on Steve learned the techniques of panning and how to follow “color” up a stream and into a mountain. Somewhere he also developed a love for prose and poetry. At night around our campfire he would discuss literature, tell us the stories of the Australian bush, and recite the poetry of Banjo Patterson. He also recited his own poetry, which could have been mistaken for that of Patterson himself. Steve Baird is a man of many parts.

We closed our last night on the trail by singing “Waltzing Matilda,” the unofficial national anthem of Australia. Hackneyed though it may seem to a few of the more cynical and jaded in Australia, it was sung with sincerity and feeling by our group before bedding down in our swags. I wonder if this piece of Western music, with a melody, both melancholy and rousing, and words, plaintive and poignant, will some day stir the same kind of emotions in the children of Oriental or Middle Eastern immigrants that are stirred in most Aussies (or Americans) today.

As in the United States, those in cities and on college campuses think they know how the wilderness should best be utilized. Some time back they decided that stockmen should no longer use the High Country for grazing and brought considerable pressure on the government to outlaw the practice. The stockmen were a wee bit upset at the arrogance of those who rarely venture beyond the end

of the pavement and called for a news conference to be held on a grassy plain in the High Country.

At the appointed time, a small number of government officials and politicians and a large number of journalists, cameramen, and news commentators assembled on the plain, but no stockmen. Then the ground began to shake, and a sound like rolling thunder began to sweep across the plain. Suddenly, over a small rise came 100 horsemen, on line, galloping toward the assembled group. Behind the first line of horsemen came a second and behind that a third. It was like the charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beersheba. Some of those waiting dove for cover, others fled in panic, while a few brave cameramen let the film roll. As Steve Baird, riding in the first line, said: “We scared the sh-- out of them.” The proposal to restrict grazing in the High Country was defeated.

If only all Aussies retained more of the bushranger spirit demonstrated by the High Country stockmen. During the last 25 years the country has succumbed to the metric system. Now I have no argument with the metric system in science, but why kilometers instead of miles out on the highway? Why the 1,500 meter run instead of the mile? What the heck is a 2.3 meter high jump? Does pumping gas in liters make more sense than in gallons? Also, why centigrade instead of Fahrenheit? These are all changes that did not need to be made and offer no real advantage. Again, use the metric system in science, as we have been doing for a few generations, and standardize foreign exports, but why mess with road signs and sports and weather reports?

No Aussie was able to offer an adequate explanation for the change and all expressed a nostalgia for the old system. I told them that when the Carter administration tried to foist the system on us, we rebelled. I described road signs going up in kilometers one day only to be shot full of holes by the next morning. By the end of the week every metric sign that I saw was thoroughly perforated and absolutely unreadable. God bless the American spirit.

The Aussies listened to my stories of American civil disobedience with a certain sense of awe and admiration, but seemed to feel that the change in their own country was somehow inevitable. In other ways, however, Aussies have stubbornly resisted change. Even in big

cities, small shops still dominate the marketplace. There is the bakery, the meat market, the fish market, the bottle shop (liquor store), the vegetable and fruit grocery, the dairy outlet, and dozens of others.

Moreover, most of their food is better than that we now get in America. Milk is really milk, not reconstituted from milk solids. Their whole milk tastes like melted ice cream. Their low-fat tastes richer and fresher than the best of our whole milk, and even their skim milk is good. Australian milk does not have a list of ingredients, as we now have on our cartons, because none is needed. It is made from only fresh milk. Their eggs have rock-hard shells and deep, rich-colored yokes that stand up. They taste like the eggs that I used to get from my own white leghorns and Rhode Island reds. Their tomatoes, like their milk and eggs, have a flavor that takes me back to childhood. Actually, the tomatoes that we now get in California have no flavor at all. They are all grown in Mexico, and like other fruit from south of the border, which look good enough, they are entirely flavorless. Apparently we can't even grow our own tomatoes anymore. NAFTA and GATT strike again!

One explanation for the quality of Australian food is the vitality of the family farm. Throughout the states of New South Wales and Victoria, thousands of family farms dot the landscape. The factory farm may be producing cotton or sugar up in Queensland, but most of the food that goes on the tables of households in the hundreds of small towns in New South Wales and Victoria comes from just down the road.

In this and other ways much of Australia resembles the American Midwest, except with an ocean and surf nearby or generally not too far distant. Outside Sydney and Melbourne, and I mean immediately outside, the country begins and the pace of life slows dramatically. Country towns are filled with dogs, children, parks, football fields, war memorials, and churches. Although church attendance has dropped significantly—even in country towns—since the 1950's, Australia remains a nation where Good Friday is a *national* holiday. Christianity as religion may not be as strong as it once was, but as tradition it is omnipresent. Families are still relatively intact, and the average bloke can buy a house, even in a beach town if the town is not immediately adjacent to one of the



major cities. Life is good. But it can change. Just look at Los Angeles.

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## Letter From Appalachia

by Loren Mitchell

### Home, Sweet Home



Coal miner. What's that bring to mind? Someone dumb and dirty? I used to think so, and I'm born, raised, and living smack in the middle of Virginia's Appalachian coalfields. Well, actually not the middle. More like the fringe.

Virginia has 95 counties but only seven are coal-producing, and all seven are in the Great Southwest (at least that's what they call it around here). The anonymity of my hometown of Richlands, Virginia, isn't surprising, considering our remote and mountainous location (we're closer to the capitals of four other states than we are to Richmond), lack of big-time attractions (ever heard of the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine, or the Historic Crab Orchard Museum?), and the fact that the 17 counties comprising the Southwest claim only four of Virginia's 41 cities and barely 10 percent of the commonwealth's population.

Say "Virginia" and everyone thinks of Northern Virginia, with its battlefields and Bobbitts, or of Charlottesville and Thomas Jefferson, of the capital's Monument Avenue, or maybe of Virginia Beach and the Tidewater area out east. They never think of us. Once, not wanting a source to think I worked at some big city daily, I identified myself over the phone as the editor at a weekly newspaper in Southwest Virginia, prompting the lady to ask, "What part of West Virginia are you from?"

God forbid.

Richlands (population 4,456) gets its

name from the "fertile river lands," as the historical pamphlet says, surrounding the nearby Clinch River, and from the fact that the little valley it inhabits contains about 5,000 semiflat acres, which is something of a commodity here in the Appalachians. If you think the name is corny, blame the Northern industrialists with the Clinch Valley Coal and Iron Company. They could have called the town whatever they wanted. They had the right to since the town was theirs, bought and paid for in 1888. They built most of it. Laid out every block and named every street. Saw it myself on a plat dated 1889. My wife, Lynna (and, yes, her middle name really is "Mae") and I got the plat from the courthouse when we moved out of our 11-year-old mobile home and finally got a house in town.

Those Yankee industrialists just came down here, bought the land (and the mineral rights, of course), and had their engineers design a town. The tree-lined streets are nice and straight and most are named after politicians and soldiers from the South. (My friend, John the Hardware Man, lives on Lee Street. I walk over there any time I want a beer.)

What with the coal and all, Richlands was going to be the Pittsburgh of the South. Really. That's what they were calling it back then. But the town never became anything like Pittsburgh, north or south. It did have its heyday, though; four rollicking, coal-inspired boom years. And so have the rest of the coalfields, to some degree or another, during the more than 100 years since the first tons were mined.

About five miles away, up on Jewell Ridge, a few rows of houses remain. But back in the boom days, the coal "camp," as it's still known, boasted 10,000 residents, a bowling alley, a movie house, and more. But for a real heyday look no further than Pocahontas, about 40 miles over Stoney Ridge and bordering West Virginia.

In the late 1800's, the immigrant miners of Pocahontas lived in the rows of identical coal company houses, and could take their pick of 23 saloons, almost as many churches, and an opera house; in later years, they even had an annual celebration called the Hungarian Grape Festival. It seems shortly after the War of Northern Aggression a Colonel Thomas Graham of Philadelphia saw a reference in an old journal to a blacksmith who had obtained fuel from coal

deposits literally jutting from the hillside. That outcropping was a visible tentacle of the mighty No. 3 vein, "averaging 10-foot thick, of clean coal, with a good solid top." In addition to providing the name for the local high school and its football team (the G-Men), Mr. Graham is recorded as "the promoter of the Southwest Virginia Improvement Company," which promptly bought up all the land for as little as a dollar an acre. (At the time, the locals were warned that their children would see "in their day and generation the rich coal lands pass to other owners and the mines developed by foreign capital." I guess no one listened.) The railroad, of course, came next. Thus began the bittersweet history of Pocahontas, today little more than a ghost town.

The coal in Pocahontas, all 44 million tons of it, ran out in 1955. The cobblestone streets are still there. The company store, now an IGA, closed in 1980 and was "believed to be the oldest company store in continuous operation, in the same building, in the nation," according to the history of Tazewell County by Louise Leslie. The buildings that were the opera house and coffinmaker's still stand, as do some of the saloons, but, alas, only one of those remains open. It's called The Cricket, and for \$1.25 you can buy a fruit jar of draft beer. Fond of black leather jackets and sporting rambunctious blonde locks, Anita Brown is the rotund proprietor and bartender, and she holds the distinction of being the first woman ever elected mayor of Pocahontas.

Aside from The Cricket, a few other establishments, and the Center for Christian Action, not much else is left, people included. The Census Bureau counted a mere 215 residents in 1990. Rebellious town officials conducted their own literal head count, petitioned the feds, and won. The official population of Pocahontas is now 513.

So the coal is gone in Pocahontas. But not in the rest of southwest Virginia. Then again, they say only 30 years' worth of the stuff is left. I am only 35, and I remember writing news when the analysts estimated mineable reserves would last hundreds of years. That's why the distinction about living on the fringe of the coalfields is necessary. The top coal-producing counties are really hurting. Buchanan and Dickenson counties lead the state in unemployment, every month. Seventeen percent and 14 per-