

# How to survive fifty years in the Australian Arts 1967–2017

*Memories and career musings of a Savage Club thespian and menu decorator, adapted from a talk given at the club and assembled loosely into something resembling an old-fashioned family slide night*

Michael Salmon

**Fifty** years of drawing “a wage” from the Australian arts means 50 years of making probably every mistake in the handbook . . . Jack of all trades and master of none is possibly an understatement of my career.

I suppose an early epiphanic moment might have been the time that the “Mother Superior” of a Newcastle Catholic primary school walked down one side of the school’s multi-purpose room, gingerly holding a smoking piece of a very recently exploded puppetry set. It was 1970; the Marionette Theatre of Australia’s production of *Puss in Boots* would never be the same again.

The most dramatic moment of the show occurs when the boastful ogre magically changes into a mouse, Puss pounces, ravenously devours the ogre-mouse, and saves the day. The frenetic puppet interchange action at that point is mostly masked by flash (aka gun) powder smoke – an effect that was my responsibility as stage manager (as well as being the mini-bus driver and money collector on this NSW Arts Council tour). Amid all my responsibilities, I forgot at this performance that the small charge of flash powder I’d laid in the hidden grill beneath our stage set at the previous school we’d visited had failed to ignite because of the Novocastrian humidity. So I placed a further charge of fresh powder on top of my previous endeavour. When the detonator battery leads were touched, an epic explosion resulted . . . worthy of an Alec Guinness *Bridge Over The River Kwai* movie scene.

Puppeteers with blackened faces stared out vacantly from behind their destroyed set (to say nothing of the lifeless ex-marionettes . . . shredded costumes, stringless). A rather shocked, but wildly applauding (unharmful, thank goodness) audience of kinders to Year Sixes had never seen anything like it. These sometimes boring NSW Arts Council presentations had *really* come up a couple of notches in their estimation.

It was around then I realised that perhaps stage management and allied theatrical sapper munitions duties might not be my forte in life. As it happened, I continued to stage-manage for a few more years but it never would again involve gunpowder. Smoke machines were the closest I ever got to another *Nearer My God to Thee* moment.

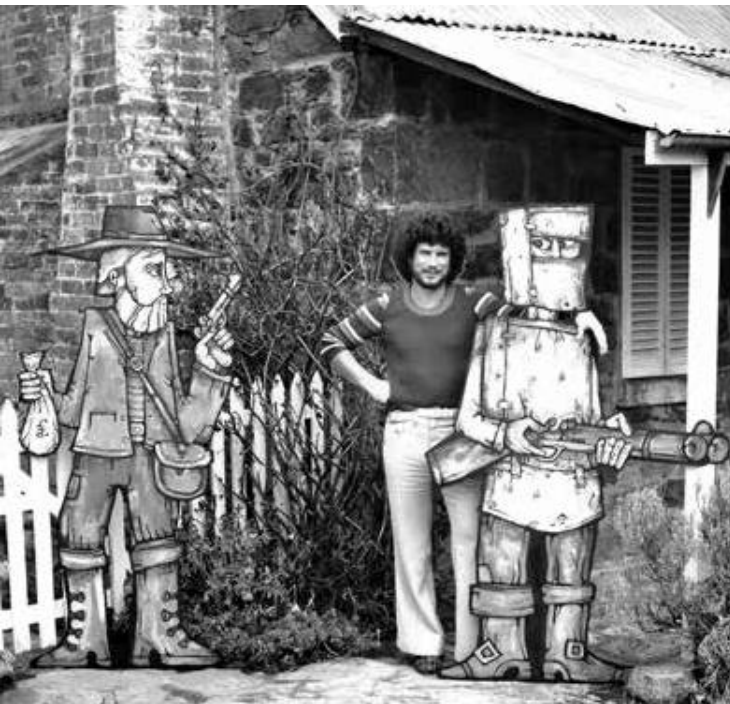
I had previously designed that *Puss* set and help make its puppets in the bowels of the Australian Elizabethan Trust building in Potts Point (really the lower part of Kings Cross) while our main company, the Tintookies, was away at World Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan, presenting its new-style





Above: 1967, preparing for first art exhibition, 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band hits Canberra'.

Below: 1970, artist and locals, Blundells Cottage, Canberra



puppetry show, *Tintookies 2000*. The scenic props of that show included several large colourful Charles Blackman-designed butterflies on poles. I replicated them for our show out of thin plywood sheets, painting very carefully *in his style* – this was NOT to be a Blackman-Salmon joint production.

Those early days of theatre had occurred by way of rather fortuitous timing. In September, 1967, at 18 years old, I staged my first one-man exhibition of cartoony, psychedelic themed paintings at the Canberra Theatre Centre Gallery. The exhibition sold out within a couple of hours. Dr Donald Brook, renowned sculptor and the then art critic of *The Canberra Times* (and later *The Sydney Morning Herald*) had given me a great advance review in the morning's paper. Curious Canberra art patrons flocked in numbers to see what this was all about. Dr Brook almost always gave quite damning, critical assessments of exhibitions he reviewed. This time he (reservedly) quite liked the work. I've always been very grateful to him; thank you eternally, Dr Brook.

Buoyed by this initial success, I immediately booked the gallery for a return bout in December of that year. Things were going swimmingly until the afternoon of 17 December. Canberra streets became deserted – I thought either the aliens had finally landed or the Cuban missile crisis (five years before) had been reactivated. But it was Prime Minister Harold Holt's final dip in the ocean that had jarred the capital to a halt.

As it happened, the famous Tintookies marionette troupe founded by Peter Scriven was presenting its large stage show, *Little Fella Bindi*, in the Canberra Theatre, across the walkway of the complex. With nothing better to do, the Tintookies' management strolled up to the gallery, viewed my work around the walls, and then and there offered me a job as a trainee set designer/stage manager. My art career took an immediate break and I entered the world of professional theatre.

The Tintookies (aka the Marionette Theatre of Australia) was one of the companies managed by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. We were based in the trust's hallowed digs with the Australian Opera, the Australian Ballet and the Trust Orchestra. Back in the late sixties (before the public service took over) the management had much theatrical experience, including Stefan Haag, a young man marooned in Perth with the Vienna Mozart Boys' Choir at the outbreak of WWII, who worked in the Garnet H. Carroll



1969, 'The Satanic Last Supper' created in a Paddington studio.  
A tribute to that dear lady Rosaleen Norton ('The Witch of Kings Cross')  
Ah, those fun-filled Sydney days ...

organisation, and Freddy Gibson, also from the Carroll Organisation and the MLC Theatre Royal Company in Sydney.

What an illuminating theatrical apprenticeship this was for a young man. It was not uncommon to brush past Dame Joan Sutherland, the lovely Suzanne Steele, Dame Peggy van Praagh or Sir Robert Helpmann on their way up the old, well worn wooden stairs to the rehearsal studios. (Many years later Dame Peggy most kindly opened a foyer exhibition of my medieval-themed paintings at the Elizabethan Theatre, Newtown, Sydney, in conjunction with her Australian Ballet's presentation of *Giselle*).

One morning at the trust, I received a most handsome polished wooden chest from the Norman Lindsay Gallery at Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains. Inside, delicately wrapped in tissue paper, were Lindsay's most magnificent watercolour puppet designs, originally produced for the Marionette Theatre of Australia's 1960 presentation of *The Magic Pudding*. They were to be used again for a new production of *The Pudding* to be directed by the mercurial Peter Batey. (Peter, apart from being an insightful adviser to both Dame Edna and Betty Blokk Buster, was a found-

ing member of the Melbourne Theatre Company, among many other credits.)

A moment of great drama occurred with this Pudding production the following year, in our season at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne. We were presenting two matinees a day. After final curtain our large, cumbersome, heavy steel set, had to make its way back upstage for the Victorian Opera Company's (as it was then known) nightly presentation of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Help, Help, the Globolinks!* (Popular actor Norman Yemn had a lead role. Norman had once been a principal baritone for the Australian Opera Company.) I was stage manager, aided by the Princess Theatre's experienced stage mechanist crew. The several metres tall, stepladder towers (either end of the puppeteer bridge) were tied off on to lowered stage battens. The whole set was then raised, sturdy trucks moved in quickly beneath and everyone pushed "tower bridge" towards the back wall. That particular afternoon one of the trucks skewed as the set was being lowered and the whole construction crashed forward on to the floor, pinning one of the mechanists beneath. He was a fortunate man; it was canvas and wood that hit him, not metal struts. Rushed to hospital, he survived.





1975, *The Tintookies* show, proscenium cloth and interior set, Princess Theatre, Melbourne

My fondest memory of those puppet days was to be back at the same theatre, when we opened the 1975 International Puppetry Festival with a new production of the original 1956 *Tintookies* show. Peter Scriven directed, James Cotter wrote the music and I designed the set, which included a huge proscenium cloth, smaller Gilbert and Sullivan-esque street and interior scenes and a delicately painted scrim cloth. It really was a magnificent show; the little ones (and not so little) loved it.

Peter Scriven was a pioneer of children's theatre in this country, a master craftsman and most able entrepreneur. Many years later (1996) Peter asked me to forward the manuscript of his memoirs to the publishing director of Penguin books, Ringwood. Penguin had recently celebrated the two millionth sale of my children's books with a board room lunch. I felt confident they would like Peter's colourful remembrances, which included many fond mentions of his fellow famous theatrical friends, including Brother Savage Barry Humphries. It was unfortunately rejected.

On 13 October 1998, Peter Scriven was found dead in a boarding house in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. The man

whose artistry had entertained countless thousands of Australian youngsters and had inspired a new generation of professional puppeteers had just \$1.50 in his pocket. He was survived by many of his *Tintookie* marionettes, which now reside in the archives of the National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney.

Leaving the *Tintookies* for a while, I joined a set construction company in Broadway, Sydney, run by Alan Wade, the former head stage mechanist of the Tibor Rudas Company. Tibor Rudas was an enigmatic soul, a Hungarian born entrepreneur who survived the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. He staged many family productions as large tent shows in paddocks around Australia (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* most notably). Tibor was later to become much better known as Luciano Pavarotti's manager, conceptualising the singer's performances in sports arena settings and later signing the "Three Tenors", José Carreras, Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti, to appear in a series of worldwide arena concerts.

Working with Alan was like being in a daily Keystone Kops movie shoot, Alan and I navigating through that always unforgiving Sydney traffic, lurching past double

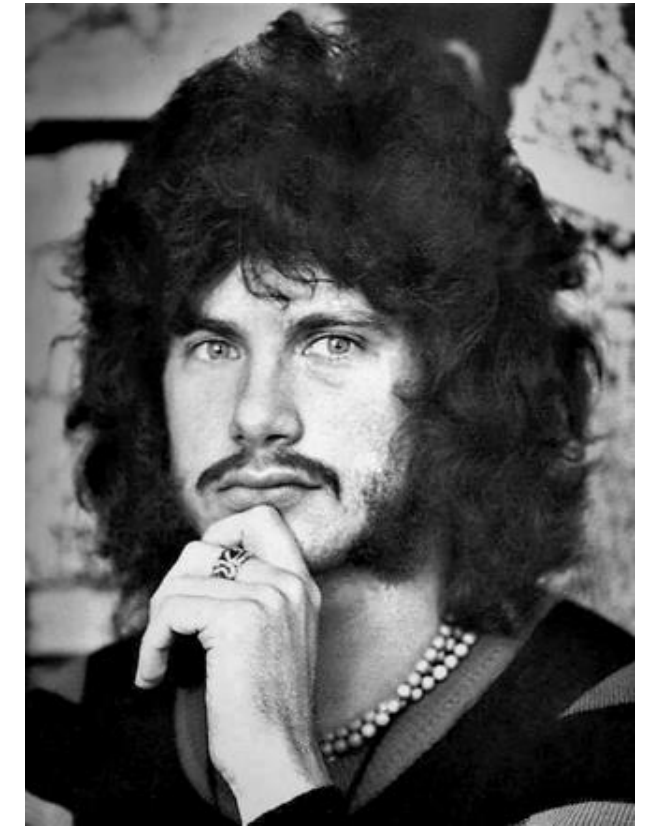


1975, *The Tintookie* puppeteers up on the bridge (with all strings attached), Princess Theatre, Melbourne

decker buses in two totally unroadworthy trucks, the Yellow Submarine and the Red Peril, delivering stage flats and extraneous scenery pieces that were often loosely strapped to the top racks.

Alan also took over the ancient J Clugston's Scenic Art studio, hidden in the back streets of Paddington. It was a long thin terrace house that had been converted decades before to accommodate a gigantic painting frame on which canvas "sails" were stretched and tacked. Everything from vaudeville backdrops to Oklahoma and South Pacific scenes had been painted there. You ratcheted the frame up bit by bit to continue painting.

One of the essential ingredients in scenery paint is the important addition of a foul smelling, glutinous, binding agent called "elephant's breath size". I didn't know that; no one ever told me. So when I designed, prepared and painted the scenery for the "cloudland theme" Shore Grammar School gala ball at the Trocadero Nightclub in George Street, Sydney (with Sir John Gorton, old boy and honoured guest), I didn't go near that horrible substance as I gaily painted the many scenic clouds, sprinkling them with copious amount of glass glitter. We then strung them



1976, art studio publicity pose, still awaiting the call from Led Zeppelin to join the group ...

up with fishing twine from the battens of ceiling lights high above the dance floor. The clouds looked superb as the rotating mirror balls illuminated them. I retired to my Paddo bedsit proud of the scene that I had created; Busby Berkeley could have easily staged one of his imaginative Hollywood dance sequences with that scenery.

The next day as I arrived at the office eager to hear of the ballroom success, I was greeted by a furious employer. Apparently halfway through proceedings, as the spotlights heated up the sparkling clouds, my paint had started to peel, falling like a confetti snowstorm over the crowded dance floor below. Hairdos, ball gowns and dinner suits were coated with ex-cloud flakes, the night had been an absolute disaster. (As a Scots College schoolboy rugby player I'd never liked that fellow GPS School much anyway.)

There was one other theatrical incident of equally dramatic proportions that occurred while I worked for that firm. Alan Wade not only provided scenery, but also stage management and mechanists to work the shows. It was the night that Balmain Teacher's College had been so much looking forward to for weeks.

They were to present Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* for





1984, "Alexander Bunyip's Billabong", ABC-TV, Gore Hill Studios Sydney. One very indulgent pink bunyip, Madge the bush-gossip galah, Kevin the MC koala, Bruce the very 'artistic' platypus ... Plus assorted humans. (Not pictured: Melba the wombat, Prima Ballerina of the Bush Ballet refused to come out of her dressing room for the publicity call ... Her loss indeed)

one performance only at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in Macquarie Street (a beautiful old, classic theatre). I was to be the stage manager and "Mick the ghost" would be my mechanist. Mick was a legendary backstage figure in theatres across Sydney ... a very frail looking man of senior years, who would disappear at times to top up on his favourite brew of methylated spirits and Fanta.

*Patience* is a rather cutting operatic satire on the aesthetic movement of the 1870s and '80s in England. The first act is staged in front of a castle; the second is in a forest setting. Everything was going swimmingly on stage as the two rival poets, Bunthorne and Grosvenor, competed for the hand and heart of *Patience*, a simple milkmaid. There was rapturous applause from the capacity audience, comprised mostly of proud grandparents, parents, relations and friends. As the house curtains closed for the interval, the director, a senior lecturer at the college, was all smiles.

Opposite: 1986, bunyip merchandise: twenty-two Australian companies produced 'bunyip-themed' items or promoted their products using Alexander and his friends (1978-1988) All starting before *The Wiggles* and *Bananas in Pyjamas* invasion.

Second act scenery was waiting to be set but Mick the ghost, my trusty helper, had disappeared. I could drop the forest scene backcloth myself – that was the easiest task at hand – but the two 20ft high flats either side of the stage required two people to move them into place. I searched high and low for my missing phantom of the opera (even in the carpark). He was nowhere to be found. There were only a few minutes left before the second act was due to start. I returned to the prompt corner in desperation to find a beaming, absolutely sozzled mechanist propped up against the lighting console. Summoning some spirit-fuelled superhuman strength, he had actually set the flats in place by himself in my absence. I could see the backs of the scenery as I flopped down in the stage manager's chair: it was all there, a miracle indeed.

The orchestra started up, I pressed the button for the curtains to open. Then there was a large cry of dismay from

the audience as lights came up and the scene was revealed; something was obviously not quite right. Then the laughter started. The hysterical director came rushing up, grabbed my arm, pulled me to the very edge of the proscenium and gesticulated wildly towards the opposite side of the stage. There, in all its glory, was a 20ft high, upside-down scenery flat featuring a very large oak tree, with roots dangling up in the air, reaching for the sky.

Mick the ghost really disappeared this time. Not surprisingly, he left the building in great haste. The second act continued but somehow the cast's enthusiasm had ebbed: G&S was just not the same in front of Monty Python scenery.

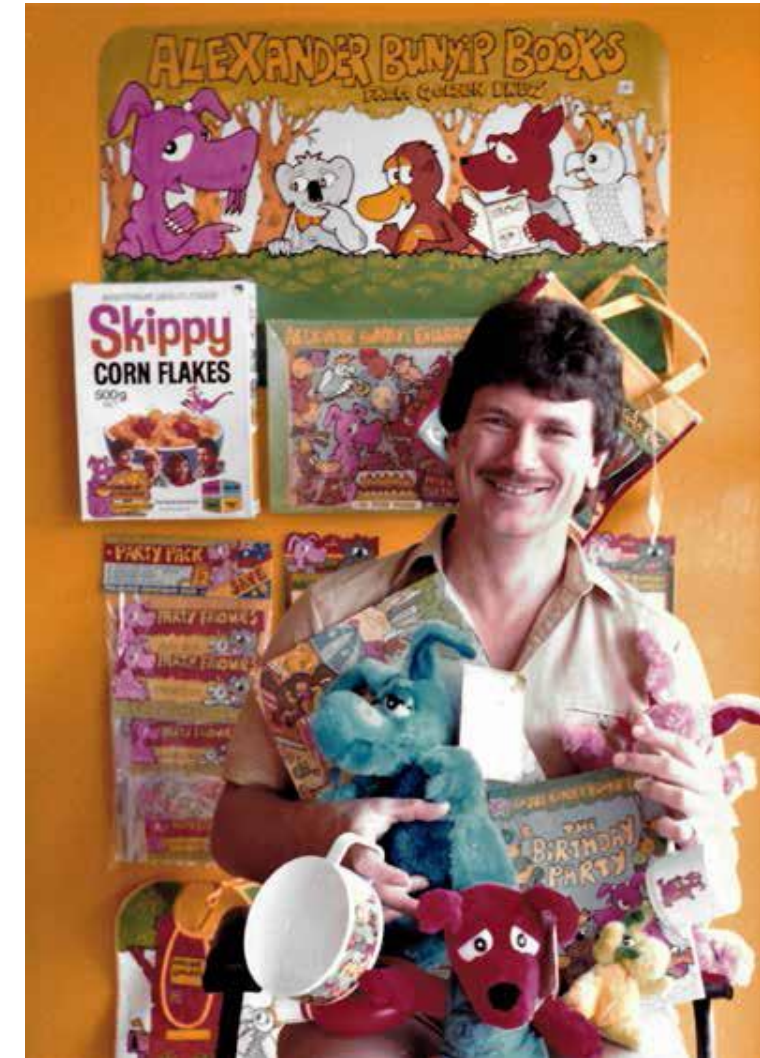


As I'm sure fellow Savage artists would have experienced at stages in their creative lives, signposts are sometimes unclear as to exactly which genre road is to be travelled. It was at another one-man exhibition staged at Gisella Scheinberg's Holdsworth Galleries in Woollahra, Sydney (1978) that I realised I had had another epiphanic moment. Wine and cheese openings, small talk and the constant pressure to sell works and pay studio rents and miscellaneous accumulating debts ... this was not the path for me. Apart from theatre set and costume design displays, I've not exhibited since.

From my theatre work, I had already discovered the continued prospect of entertaining young people was most appealing and I had changed career direction once again. I had moved back to Canberra in the early 1970s, at the same time as several large Government departments had been relocated to Canberra from Sydney and Melbourne. There were many disoriented out-of-towners, puzzled at their new circumstances and living much altered lifestyles in this rapidly growing country town. I had a concept in mind to create a veiled satire of this rather Orwellian Public Service life in the form of a picture storybook for the entertainment of Canberra kids (and their parents).

That was the initial idea. Having always been a great fan of B Grade movies, I had a vision of a Godzilla-like creature rearing on its scaly hind legs, creating havoc and destruction over the then principal shopping precinct in the Territory, the Canberra Civic Centre, and the Monaro Mall.

So in 1972, *The Monster That Ate Canberra* was born. Its main character, Alexander Bunyip, was a Nessie-like



prehistoric creature, displaced from its habitat by urban creep and a resulting rubbish-filled, polluted billabong. The bunyip searches Oz, ready to move into a new home (as the Public Service was doing). Illustrations included photo-collage pages. Lake Burley Griffin proved an ideal habitat, complete with handy built-in shower for morning ablutions (Captain Cook waterspout) and many tasty iconic buildings around the foreshores to nibble, gnaw and devour ... much to the anger of our then Prime Minister, William McMahon. (Subsequent editions pictured Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke.)

I published the book privately – printing locally (budget restraints only allowed black, halftones and a spot colour pink for the bunyip) – and distributed it myself to newsagents and the only two ACT bookshops. Reaction was instantaneous. The Canberra populace embraced it



fully, in complete agreement with its depiction of a half-eaten National Library, Academy of Science, a chewed Parliament House and several other half-digested edifices. The local commercial TV station, CTC-7, ran a competition, Canberra ABC Radio serialised it and I wrote and designed a pantomime that was presented at the Canberra Theatre Playhouse by the Canberra Children's Theatre. The book with its greedy, indulgent character became a much-loved local joke and a generation of capital city children grew up with the story. It became a reader in all primary school libraries (and still is, 45 years on, currently published by Halstead Press, Sydney).

We soon had a new Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and in his early months, apart from repealing conscription and several other game-changing acts, appointed Liz Reid as the world's first adviser on women's affairs to a head of government. *The Australian Women's Weekly* shortly after featured Mz (as she had been dubbed) Reid in a centrespread article complete with a large photo of this brave single mother holding her bub. The baby was clutching a clearly to be seen copy of my book! The telephone rang hot for several weeks with all kinds of inquiries and requests.

Initially I sculpted a bunyip suit in my Lyneham garage for the pantomime. It had a rather awkwardly constructed chicken-wire body covered with every horrible fluffy pink bathmat that I could purchase in Coles and Woolworths stores throughout Canberra and Queanbeyan. It was much used around town.

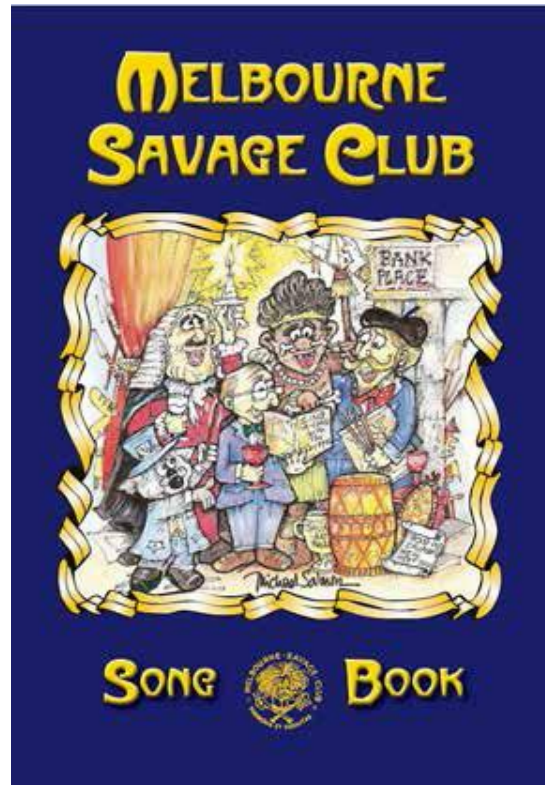
Alexander Bunyip was then drawn to the notice of ABC-TV Children's HQ in Sydney and in 1978 (in partnership with the clever, rubber-faced actor, Ron Blanchard) he debuted on national telly. The format of the show had various incarnations over the next few years, including *Alexander Bunyip's Billabong*, which featured a set design and puppets based on my Golden Press bunyip books and an allied *Women's Weekly* half-page activity section. We em-

ployed the talents of former Tintookie puppeteers in the Gore Hill studios. Bruce Rowland (fresh from his *Man from Snowy River* triumph) wrote the *Billabong* theme song. I can recall flying to Melbourne from Sydney for his recording of it in the recently vacated ABC Elsternwick Studios – it was the last time the ABC Showband assembled. With re-runs, the show lasted for almost a decade. It showcased Aussie talent, had a lot of merchandising produced and now has its place in Australian television history. It all was a fabulous experience.

In 2011, to celebrate the bunyip's Canberra origins, the ACT Government commissioned and erected a 500kg bronze statue of Alexander. He proudly now stands on his bunyip plinth in the Gungahlin town square in front of the public library, just over the road from the Canberra Raiders Rugby League Club and a stone's throw from McDonald's and KFC. He's a happy little bunyip.

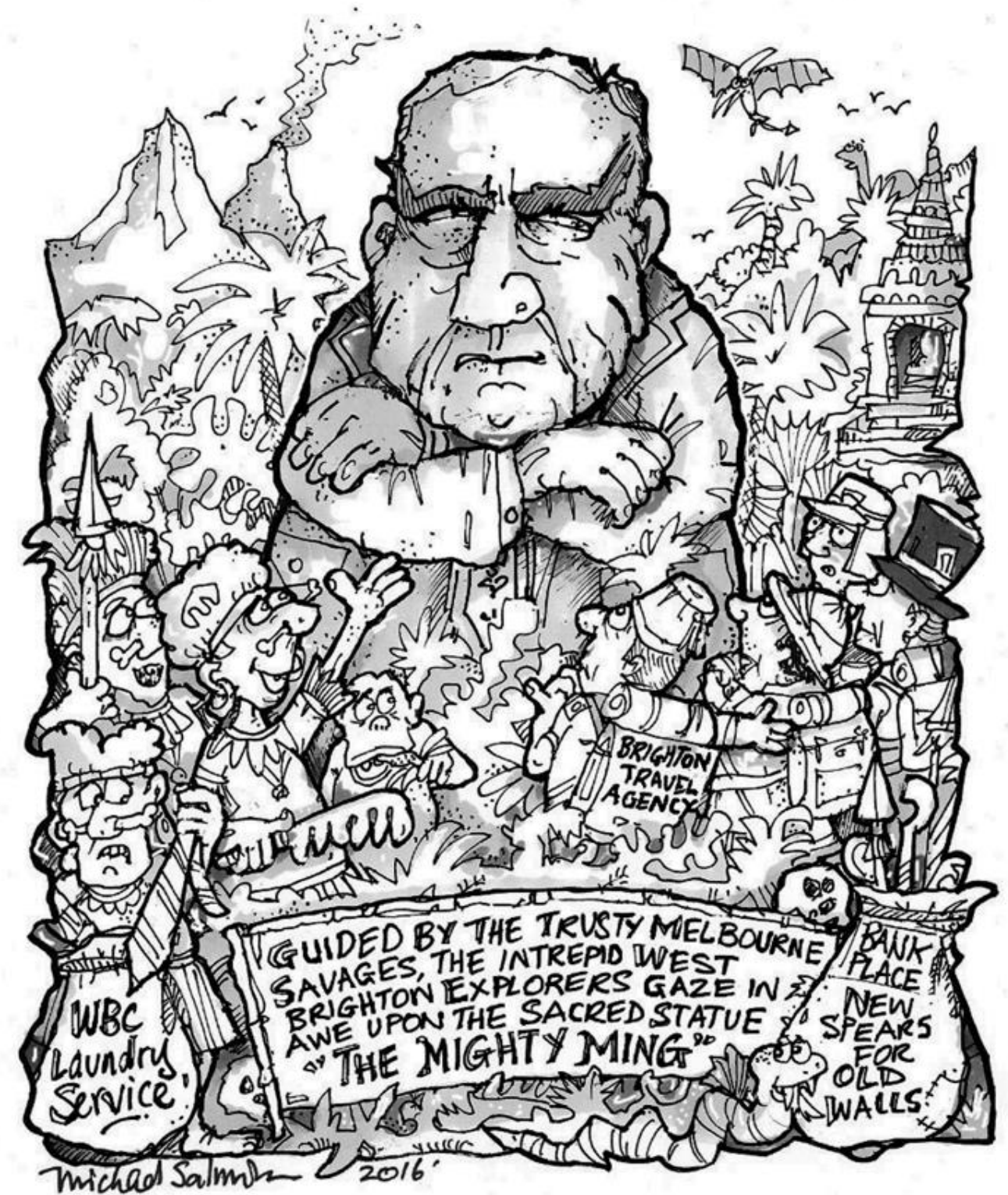
A bunyip postscript: several years ago a British TV bloopers show contacted me asking for the broadcast rights to one of the bunyip show's goof outtakes. I don't know how the tape got over there, but in it, one of my puppets, Bruce the Platypus (the Billabong Cultural Attaché), used some very vulgar colonial language as he mimed to that popular novelty instrumental piece, *The Typewriter* (written by Leroy Anderson in 1950, and first performed by the Boston Pops). ABC props had provided a substandard typewriter as it fell to pieces while the semiaquatic monotreme attempted to tap away. I received a couple of royalty cheques from the Brits which I used specifically for payment of the Third World Bar, dry martini component of my Savage Club account.

It was 20 years ago that I first experienced a gathering of the Savage hordes. They were under the eagle eye of their then tribal chief, Hartley Hansen, as they filed proudly into the West Brighton Club to enjoy yet another annual WBC-Savage Menzies Dinner. I was a new member down at the WBC with still much to learn about my quite



# ROBERT MENZIES DINNER

3rd JUNE 2016





extraordinary club, let alone experience the talents of our guests, this famed city based fraternity ... “Brother Club” to us, the WBC Choristers.

These Savages appeared quite well behaved and civilised to me (at the start) – clearly, missionary zeal and regular island church attendance had quashed their baser instincts. But when Allan Willingham got to his feet and bellowed out a Welsh hymn so loudly that mad dogs and Englishmen stopped what they were doing to block their ears, it was on for young and old. The singer’s stentorian tones momentarily hushed the congregation, then Big Chief Hansen quickly arose exhorting West Brightonians to “stuff that into their pipes and smoke it” ... ah, the beauty of club life.

Among the Savages present that night was an old fellow front-row forward mate of mine from Melbourne Rugby Club days, John Power (ex-Savage committeeman and club treasurer). Several months later as a lunch guest of JP, I walked through the Savage portal for the first time. I felt I was home. John was later to propose me for membership (a debt that I’ll never be able to repay).

I’ve always felt the Savoy Operas typify much of Savage Club life. As members we socialise, dine, drink, discuss, debate, criticise, don costumes, apply makeup, sing, act, portray, recite, strut, cajole as well as regularly sketch and paint naked ladies upstairs ... all safely inside our very own G&S “Fortress Theatre Savage”, far from the madding crowds. Not only would D’Oyly Carte, W.S. and Arthur have loved the club but also, I’m sure, in a parallel Dickensian universe somewhere, Mr Pickwick and friends would have also equally enjoyed a noisy Savage Club House Dinner.

What an honour it was when I was first asked to design a Savage menu graphic, following the tradition of the many esteemed artists that had gone before. That list is very long. This century we continue to have an enthusiastic stable of most able fellows to draw upon. Some of my contributions accompany this article. A couple of larger works hang upstairs in the dining room.

For several years I was the only joint member of both the Savage and West Brighton Clubs. That co-membership proved very useful in serving as a promotional conduit for mutual club events. As poster artwork was produced, Brother Graeme Williams would make good use of it in Bank Place. Events such as Sea Shanty night, Robbie Burns dinners, Songs of the Sea night, mutual Ladies Nights at both clubs and, most importantly of all, Menzies Night

were all well attended thanks to his relentless marketing.

It’s been my pleasure to propose several Savage friends for WBC membership and we now have our own little cocktail clique down there, which regularly gathers, sticking close to the native spears and weaponry on the wall (where Savages feel most at home).



New friendships at the Savage are to be treasured and when Keith Potger joined us in 2005 I found a new playmate, and yet another Seeker. I’d previously worked with our premier chanteuse of popular music, Judith Durham, on some mutual projects including a children’s book as well as producing a graphic for her sheet music piece, *Banana Rag*. Judith rang me after seeing my dragon puppet design in Garry Ginivan’s production of *Puff, the Magic Dragon* at the Athenaeum Theatre. She visited my Kooyong studio soon after with her management. In subsequent meetings she sang various original songs from her *Australian Cities Suite* ... absolutely captivating. (Her ensuing album was recorded later with the Lord Mayor’s Fund Orchestra.) Judith was later my guest at a Christmas dinner down at West Brighton. After singing *Morningtown Ride to Christmas*, she encored with a most emotive rendition of *The Carnival is Over* – there was not a dry eye in the club. I’m sure the ghost of Sir Robert was present that night, teary ectoplasm dripping on the floor.

Our 2017 Victorian of the Year, Mike Brady, has joined both Keith Potger and me for several memorable lunches, together with Jim Robinson and Anthony Drever Heywood (long may our little “Cinque Luncheon Club” continue).

One notable deed concerning Mike occurred on a night that Australians will never forget: It was Saturday, 7 February 2009 ... Black Saturday. Mike was on his regular night shift spot on Radio 3AW. I was sitting in Kooyong listening while trying to cool down from the intense heat outside. The bushfires had started earlier that day and their deadly destruction was well under way.

His normal fun rock and roll/interview format had been replaced by a jammed switchboard of worried and distressed callers. Melbourne ABC Radio in reporting its updated bulletin warnings was in a similar position. Recalling the immensity of Australia’s worst bushfires on record, the day was one of panic, mayhem, and tragedy.







2007, in the wilds of South Australia .... Remote Miltaburra Area School (east of Ceduna .... just up from the Smoky Bay oyster farms, close to the ever-present great whites)

Overburdened media centres dropped out, vital information websites crashed, outside the skies were black with smoke. As night fell, you could smell it all in the city air.

Mike then started to receive some frantic, desperate, calls from people actually in houses, directly in the path of the advancing inferno. He did a stalwart job handling the situation as best he could ... some of the callers did not ring back. I understand Mike has been instrumental in establishing a radio advice code and information talkback guidelines should, heaven forbid, there ever be another occasion. He recently had his own bushfire scare when many houses close to his home were destroyed in the Wye River fire on Victoria's Great Ocean Road on Christmas Day, 2015.



Having moved to Melbourne from Sydney 35 years ago, I live in a most pleasant retreat, hidden within the leafy glades of Kooyong. A house where serenity and family peace mostly abound (including cats, dogs and visiting grandchildren), it's an ideal place in which to create an occasional Savage Club menu, and to write and illustrate children's books ... the things I enjoy most of all in the arts. Books now number 176, and they've been fortunate to sell well both here and overseas. Further titles are planned.

After those very hectic, madcap, Clouseau-like early years when young, untrained creative minds are desperate to forge ahead and achieve, to communicate and leave their mark at all costs, a certain calm now descends and I'm very glad to have sailed the sea of diversity and explored the ever changing land of creativity, to see what it's all about.

These days I'm mostly out on the road, visiting primary schools around the country (and some overseas) and have been doing so for more than 30 years. It's an honour to be invited into the world of the little ones (and their brilliant, hardworking teachers). I've spoken to more than a quarter of a million young Australian minds in classrooms, school halls and stadia. I quickly cartoon, illustrate, talk and entertain the students, from the Preps to those big Year Sixes. My message is simple: for them to explore their own creative talents, to grow confidence in themselves and, above all, never give up.



Michael Salmon

2014, Kooyong: Bobo the Superdog and his trained human. NB. This woofers has his very own picture storybook out, which has been my best selling title over the last few years! (Seriously)

