



**VALE—NEIL HOWARD**

16/6/1934 to 115/9/2020 Aged 86 years.

By Jennie Harvie & Ruth Seferth

It is with much sadness members of U3A Ringwood Armchair Travel group learned of Neil Howard's passing.

For those of you who may not have had the good fortune to know him well, here is a little background.

Neil and his wife Josie joined the Armchair Travel group in the 1990s and soon became involved. They travelled far and wide – overseas and at home – and would let us in on their joy of discovery with their excellent presentations to the group.

For nigh on 20 years they generously opened up their house and beautiful garden for us to enjoy our "End of Year" functions.

Neil's love of life and willingness to help meant he made many friends wherever he went and that same love of life means he will be deeply missed by all those who knew him.

Condolences go to Josie, his loving

wife of 60 years and to his children and grandchildren.

**U3A RINGWOOD – AGM HELD ON 26 AUGUST 2020**

At our AGM for 2020, all members of the existing committee were duly re-elected.

**ENROLMENT TIMEFRAME FOR 2021**

The committee has decided that our enrolment date for next year's membership will be Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

For those members with email addresses, online enrolment information, including how to pay, will be emailed to them early in November.

For those without an email address will have this information posted to them in hard copy with alternative methods for payment of fees.

**IT'S FUNNY HOW HOLIDAYS AND TRAVEL WORKS OUT**

By Daryl James

In 1995 when our son had completed his apprenticeship and was working as a 'sparky', he decided to

head off overseas with one of his friends for a well-earned holiday.

His plan was to travel to Thailand spend some time in Chang Mai (see the elephants in the jungle) then travel to Delhi in India and then on to Kathmandu in Nepal.

As his trip neared, I asked him about his travel plans. Not unexpectedly they were rather vague.

They had booked their flights and accommodation in Chang Mai and then planned to fly to Delhi (arriving early in the morning) spend a day or 2 there, then take a bus to Kathmandu – simple – what could go wrong?

Well in reality, when they arrived in Delhi they hated it – beggars everywhere even at 2am hassling them for money – run down, grubby hotels and then they saw the buses in which they had intended to travel to Kathmandu.

They immediately decided to hire a car and driver to take them to Kathmandu. The driver drove at 'warp speed' virtually non-stop to Kathman-



**U3A Ringwood Incorporated,**  
Parkwood Community Hub,  
35-39 Tortice Drive, Ringwood North, Vic 3134.  
A.B.N. 14 419 221 576 Reg Nbr A0008300C  
Phone: 9876 2925  
Office: 9.00am – 12 Noon (Monday-Friday)  
Web: [www.u3aringwood.org.au](http://www.u3aringwood.org.au)  
Email: [info@u3aringwood.org.au](mailto:info@u3aringwood.org.au)

du taking pills to keep himself awake – my son described this as a ‘white knuckle’ ride, often seeing vehicles that didn’t make it, at the bottom of ravines.

It’s funny how things work out – particularly if you don’t do much planning. A few years later our youngest daughter when doing year 10 came home from school with a flyer about an information night with AFS (a student exchange program).

Well we went to the information night and our daughter was hooked on going on exchange. In August 1998 she travelled to Kvernaland, a small village near Stavanger in Norway, to live as a member of her ‘Norwegian family’ for 12 months. She returned home in July 1999 after a wonderful experience.

Our middle child, Chelsey, had watched her 2 siblings head off overseas for an adventure while she completed her university degree. While she was at ‘uni’, Chelsey worked part time as a croupier at Crown Casino and continued to do casual shifts at weekends after she commenced her full time job as a cadet with a large printing company in 1999.

Desperate for an overseas adventure of her own, she applied for and was appointed to a Human Resources position with ‘Casinos Austria’ that owns and operates many large casinos around the globe. Great, but when she told us that this role was located in Jericho in the Palestinian Territory - to say that we were alarmed, was an un-

derstatement.

Well irrespective of our advice, Chelsey travelled to Jericho and had a very interesting and sometimes challenging experience. As luck would have it, she returned to Australia 18 months later, just before hostilities between the Israelis and the PLO escalated and the casino was declared too dangerous to remain open.

Early in 2007, when working in Toyota’s Human Resources Department in Melbourne, Chelsey got a 2 year secondment to provide HR support to ex-pat technical staff at Toyota’s new plant in Bangkok, Thailand.

In July 2007, Chelsey headed off to Bangkok on her new adventure. She was very pleased when we decided to visit her for a holiday in October that year. As she worked during the day it was up to us to see the sites that she recommended and to become familiar with the area where she lived – this was our introduction to ‘parenting in reverse’ where one’s child believes that it is her responsibility to find things for her parents to do to keep them amused.

Chelsey showed us around and found places to eat in the evenings. One evening, Chelsey took us across the city via SkyRail to a night market and then to dinner in a small open-air restaurant that was elevated in the tree tops near to the market.

It was great to sit down, have a cold beer and feel the air from numerous fans pass over our sweaty faces and bodies.

Bangkok only has 3 types of weather – ‘hot’, ‘very hot’ and ‘bloody hot’, irrespective as to whether it is wet or dry – on this night the weather was ‘very hot’.

Chelsey had already been to this restaurant on a few occasions and ordered our food.

The first dish was raw fresh butterflied prawns marinated in lime juice, palm sugar and chili. We love seafood so we expected something special. I popped a prawn into my mouth with great expectations.

Well, I immediately thought that a red hot poker had been put in my mouth – my tongue and the roof of my mouth felt seared and as if the skin was peeling off, beads of perspiration appeared and formed tiny rivulets running down my flushed face and my mouth was wide open as I gasped for more air to reduce the scorching heat. I grabbed my beer, but it only seemed to fan the flames rather than reduce them.

Slowly the heat subsided (or it may be that my mouth was so numb that I could no longer feel anything) and finally my battered taste buds could detect some of the delicate Thai flavours. Welcome to real local Thai cuisine – beware the chili!

The second prawn was understandably dealt with much more caution.

It’s funny how small matters stick in one’s memory – this was a great learning experience and as our daughter still lives in Thailand and we travel there regularly to visit her and

her family, it is one that I have learnt well.

## **ANTARCTICA—WHAT CAN I SAY**

*By Margaret Osborn*

It is an incredible experience sailing past white towering mountains which protrude directly out of the sea on both sides.

The snow-covered mountains look like the cliffs are cut unevenly with a cake knife as they jut out of the freezing dark blue/grey sea. The most fascinating mountains have bare dark grey to black rock faces contrasting with the white of the snow, giving the mountain some definition. Glaciers abound. The rugged texture of the glaciers blend with the smooth slopes of the snow-covered mountains; yet they are noticeable by the pale iridescent blue colour.

We float past icebergs of many different sizes and shapes. Some of the icebergs have been shaped by nature into recognizable structures if you use your imagination. Some smaller ones have been identified by some passengers as a gondola, a house with two windows, as a face etc.

I keep seeing objects in some of the smaller icebergs. Some of the larger ones have been shaped by the wind and water with archways and port-holes. In some, the pale blue colour can be seen reflected underneath the section which extrudes from the water. Some of the icebergs have been longer and higher than the ship; others have been only a few metres wide.

The natural pale blue colour of the glaciers and icebergs can be seen as the layers of ice have been so compressed by numerous snowfalls. Some of the glaciers and icebergs are white as there are air bubbles within

the ice. The ice reflects all the colours of the light spectrum so are seen as white.

We have also seen a few small segments of black ice which float on the surface of the water. They are black due to the absence of any air within the ice, and therefore absorb all the light. On close inspection, these black icebergs look clear.

The icebergs which have broken off the glaciers are known by different names according to their size. The definition of an iceberg is ice over 5 metres above the sea level. We have seen many icebergs of this size floating around the sea.

It is intriguing when the ship passes these huge structures which often glisten in the light. They have interesting textures of hexagon shapes on some sides, or sharp edges which reveal the crystals in the ice. They may form rectangles, pyramids or towers which have been shaped by wind and water.

There are also many of the floating ice structures which would be called Bergy Bits as they are defined as 1-5 metres above the surface of the sea. They have been of all different shapes and sizes.

We have also seen many Growler chunks of ice which are less than one metre above the surface. It is these chunks of ice which my imagination saw as animals or other structures. They evidently earned this name of 'Growler' as they make this sound as they grind along the side of the ship. Brash ice is the name given to the small chunks of ice on the sea which make a cracking sound as it melts.

## **MOROCCO**

*By Bob Jackson & (Indispensable collaborator) Shirley Miles*

Shirley and I left Melbourne for Morocco on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 and arrived there 22 hours later. On the journey I was ill and felt the same upon arrival. In Customs we were put through Casablanca security twice, me because I have an artificial hip and S because she looked so suspicious! Of course, in my case everything but my clothes had to be removed and checked through x-ray and Shirley, who would normally watch my belongings was otherwise occupied. When leaving the airport we had to show our passport to exit.

A while later I found I did not have my wallet with all my credit cards etc now gone and in particular my last expired Private Investigator's Licence, an article I wanted to retain. We were in financial bother.

Our hotel had a young English speaking Moroccan Concierge, married to an Aussie and he allowed me access to the hotel phone so my bankcards could be cancelled. I was able to contact my daughter back home, who has access to my superannuation account and she had money sent to me through Shirley's card.

The next day we hired a van and toured Casablanca, spending some time at a huge mosque where I was told to "get out" by a seated local at its main door, as I was trying to understand just what he was saying. English is far from understood there.

We walked about a seaside fort and drove past "Rick's Café", an unimposing building, then back to our hotel where we met our guide Hassan, a fine looking fellow with good English who, over the next ten days often dressed in traditional clothing, had a great knowledge of Morocco, of which he proved very proud and often instructed us on the

Muslim faith. My, my could he talk.

Over the centuries Morocco has been ruled by the Berbers, Romans, French, British, Arabs, Spanish and more. We walked through the old Medina of Casablanca occupying some 49 sq kms. Then to the famous "Blue city" Chefchaouen where most of the houses had the bottom half of their exterior walls painted bright blue "to keep away the mozzies" and deter graffiti messaging.

We drove on to Meknes which is surrounded by 40 kms of protective wall then ancient Volubiles a Roman city where the front doors were seen to have two knockers, one high the other low. The upper knocker was used by horseback riders the lower by pedestrians.

On to the city of Fes and now the weather was cold and raining but that did not deter us and we toured the city's narrow lanes, crowded with people in and around so many small shops. Now and then we passed small, soaked donkeys stacked high with bags of rubbish, they being the "rubbish trucks". We were admitted by residents into their two small private homes for a sticky-beak and later in the evening into a restaurant where we were fed with traditional foods and were entertained by musicians and female belly dancers.

None looked like Hollywood stars. I was grabbed by a big, ugly fellow to perform/copy him on the dance floor as he energetically went through his act and by the end, I was beggared. Shirley said I was "really, really good". In the Medina is a huge car-

pet warehouse and here great pressure is placed on sucker tourists to buy. I folded and bought Shirley a carpet which was way too expensive and now hangs from a wall in her home, the last place I expected but she is happy. She says it is way too good to walk on.

Next to another huge factory, this one a leather goods outlet, very impressive and out the back we could see the hides being cured/coloured in mighty vats with the use of urine and other products. The smell could be overpowering. To spoil myself I bought a fine leather jacket after being measured and it was completed after we left and it was delivered to me at our hotel later that evening. I had dropped way too many dollars by the time we were back on the bus.

Before returning to our hotel we climbed a fairly steep hill in Balil to visit the "cave people, people of poor means who greeted us with happy faces and each of us with tea and cakes. We were followed up this hill by scores of kids all with the hands out for money. Our fellow traveller Dawne, a retired minister of religion in Canada, made the mistake at the hill top of opening her purse which sent the children into a frenzy of waving hands and loud calling. I care not to think what could have happened to our Dawne if I had not reached over the children into the melee and yanked Dawne free. She commented "I did a silly thing there didn't I Bob?"

Next morning we were off towards

the Atlas Mountains, all snow covered and as we drove it snowed from time to time which drove all of us a bit nuts as we tumbled from the bus to take pictures. Not much easy access snow in Australia! We drove through vast cedar forests and stopped at a toilet or two along the way. It was possible to see into these toilets from outside which had Shirley decide to "hang on". Along the way in open ground were camping nomads, they being permitted to home where they wished, with nearby water wells provided by the government.

Arrived at Zed Erfoud our base before heading into the Sahara Desert for camel rides. Five Toyota 4x4 vehicles drove flat out towards the desert and upon arrival there were out camels, all looking not at least interested in us, with each camel back piled high with blankets for a saddle. I think each of us intrepid riders were reluctant to climb aboard and I for one, was determined not to fall off which was very easy to do.

Getting on was easy enough but getting off from a kneeling camel was a real balancing act for the rider. We tramped off, one after the other, across the sand hills, the setting sun making large shadows of us on the sand. It was fun, certainly different but how Lawrence of Arabia mastered the camel ride is still a mystery for me. What great photos we have showing us on camel back dressed in traditional flowing, brightly coloured, loose fitting robes. Back on very un-

steady sand ridges we were handed glasses of wine whilst locals played their musical instruments. It was an unforgettable adventure and no one tumbled from their mount.

Next morning we found ourselves at another factory which was involved in digging fossils from the desert, some seven metres down, fossils of ancient sea creatures and these were mounted, polished and sold. Off again through wide, bare, treeless, empty areas and there, stuck all alone in this area, 100 mtrs from the highway was what could only be called a humpy about a metre high made of pieces of rug, carpet etc covering a stick support with a small always open door, was the home a nomad couple.

The woman about 25 years was present with a small boy about three and a child on one hip. She welcomed us with a big smile and open arms and we certainly spoilt her with money and whatever some of us had and which we hoped she could use.

There were some skinny chooks walking about, a goat and her washing thrown over low growing shrubs. Her husband had taken their donkey to town for some reason leaving her alone with the children. She was seemingly happy to allow us to inspect her primitive home and surroundings and we left with some great pictures of her, her home and surrounds and her children. She had a water supply about 100 metres away. She used some of this bucketed water to make mud bricks, stacked to make a wall and a wind

break from the very cold, biting wind which sweeps across the plain. My goodness such a primitive way of existence. As a bonus our tour company also financially recompensed her for our visit.

Next day into the home of an Imam and his wife. He sat and talked about Islam whilst his wife prepared traditional Moroccan tea served with cookies. On to Ouarzazate (go on, have a go....Was-a-zat) where Lawrence of Arabia and Star Wars were filmed). To Marrakech over arid, mountainous and often dangerous roads along which are settled Berbers occupying land gifted by their King.

We arrived at a huge square with men showing off their cobras and other loose snakes wriggling along the concrete. Had photos taken with these "harmless" creatures hanging from our necks and paid dearly for the pics, me anyway with Shirley charming a much lesser fee. Me a giant cobra and sooooo aggressive and Shirley a baby snake. My cost 200 dirhams and Shirley 10 dirhams. So many people mingling about, women dancing, walked through numerous stalls with everything for sale, one proprietor of which tempted us with some traditional very spicy drink. Knocked our socks off! Most of us had had it when we returned to our hotel and had a relaxing dinner with free time to follow.

Next morning we had our group photo taken and it being a public

holiday the shopping was easier. We drove through fruit growing areas until our bus stopped suddenly and right there was an argan tree and dotted amongst the branches were balanced more than a dozen goats standing at the end of branches, some from the low limbs others to the top, some fifteen metres high. Their diet is these trees and how they were coaxed to climb to such positions is a mystery. Many pics were taken and money given to the goat handler. A real highlight. We drove to the nearby argan factory where women, sitting in a row peeling the goat droppings and the enclosed kernels are crushed for their valuable oil used in hair shampoo etc. Onto Essouira on the coast where a particular sea mollusc is found and which the Romans used to extract a then rare purple dye. Another Medina still owned by departed Jews, now living in Israel and who collect their rent from shops. About there are Roman ruins. And back to our hotel.

We were on our way back to our Casablanca base and on the journey passed so many argan trees, poppy farms, wild flowers cattle and sheep in numbers no more than twenty, so many storks sitting on chimneys, a regular feature throughout the country and paddocks strewn with so many rocks, yet to be cleared. Our bus stopped and there was Ricks Café and in we went, enjoyed a meal and confirmed from the inside it was nothing like shown in the famous film. There was nothing to remind us of

Bogart or Bergman. Back at the hotel Hassan gave us a hurried, obviously his usual farewell speech and then he turned his back and was gone, which disappointed many as the tour finished the next morning. We felt we should not have given him such a high satisfaction rating in the earlier completed surveys.

Next morning we mingled in the foyer, had last minute pictures taken before the large picture of the Moroccan King which has him aged about twenty years younger than he really is. It seems true that the King is well loved by the people, certainly Hassan but he does not rate so highly on Google.

Food was good and our fellow tourists good company. We really enjoyed our stay in exotic Morocco, a land of contrasts with so much history, so much poverty, so much wealth, so little English. Shirley and I would go again.....we think.

P S. In my efforts to overcome the loss of my wallet etc I spent about two hours on the hotel phone ringing

home and then American Express in Miami, Florida, to stop my Travel Card. The woman in Miami was helpful and offered \$1500 cash on the replacement card and gave an exact date and time it would be at the Hotel for collection. Said I had three days from that arrival date to activate it and she was told by me that I would not be around to activate it during that time, we being on tour. She repeated three times I had three days to activate it. The American Express envelope was there when we returned to the hotel and surprise, surprise, the envelope had been opened by customs, poorly resealed by customs tape and the envelope was empty! My CBA Manager requested my report with the aim of contacting American Express.

### RITCHIES IGA

Our fundraising Partner Ritchies IGA, are launching their new Ritchies Card, incorporating the Community Benefit Program and this will not only benefit U3A Ringwood, but also all our members in the Benefit Program..

The old Ritchies card no longer works in the new Benefits Program.

The new Benefits program has an App for both IOS and Android smart devices. You install the APP (search for "Ritchies Card" in your phone's APP store) onto your phone and complete the setup process. You then use your phone to access the Ritchie Card's specials and discounts. If you want, you can ask the store for a physical card and scan its number into your smartphone' Ritchies Card APP.

If you do not want to use a smartphone and would like a physical card, ask the store for a card then register it online at:

<https://www.ritchies.com.au/loyalty>

Set up your Ritchies IGA account then log in to register your new Benefits card.

Remember to select **U3A Ringwood** as your favourite recipient.

### PRINTING OUR NEWSLETTERS

During this time when our office has been closed, the printing of our Newsletters, for posting to our members without emails, has been done courtesy of Maroondah Printing.

We wish to convey our grateful thanks to them for this service during the pandemic.

### TERM 4 DATES

Monday 5th October to Friday 4th December.