



## THE WATSONIA VIC GARDEN JUNGLE

Peter Adamis 15 January 2017

As a young man, patrolling the jungles of the Atherton Tablelands, the High Plains, the jungles of Papua New Guinea, Malaya, Townsville, Tully, Rainbow Beach, Mareeba and Shoal Water Bay in Far North Queensland, one could not but fall in love with the jungle.

I for one became infatuated with the jungle and its environment and vowed that whenever I could afford to buy a home, that I would recreate a tiny part of my dream as a perpetual reminder of my youth, mates and of a lifelong past. I realised that dream when I separated from the regular army and joined the ranks of the Reserves.

Mind you it was not easy at the time. The year was 1998 and the Defence Force was giving out redundancies. I applied and failed to receive one which in one way is supposed to be a compliment that your skills and experience was required, while on the other hand, the responsibilities of being a single father raising four sons and a warrant officer to boot was too much to bear. I desperately was seeking a respite from my responsibilities and my Regular Army Deputy Director Ron Hill could see that I was tired. Ron came to see me one day and advised me that Pete, you did not get the redundancy. Ron saw my shoulders slump and the pain of disappointment could not be hidden as it was written all over my face. Ron then said to me, Pete I will do whatever I can to ensure that you are on the list in the event someone who was selected decides to remain in. True to his word, Ron was able to put on the list and one of my good mates who was in 6 RAR at the time decided to remain and I took his spot. Ron has and always will remain a lifelong friend like his brother Greg whom I met when posted to Central Army records Office.



Therefore in June of 1998 I was able to separate from the Regular Army and seek employment in the wide world of the civilian population. Although I was elated that the burden of military responsibilities had been lifted, I was faced with other challenges. Looking after my youngest son who had come down with a fever and subsequently problems with his kidneys.

At one stage we thought it was touch and go and nearly lost him.

But because of the skills of the medical team at the Austin hospital, the positive attitude of my son, he was able to pull through. At the same time as my young bloke was in hospital, I had also come down with a severe flue and seeking to find a temporary home to complete the boys education and move closer to my parents who lived on the other side of town.





The responsibilities of the military seemed like nothing compared to what I was facing and at times I wanted to go and hide in a corner and break down. My faith, belief in myself and my military training assisted me through these dark and uncertain times.

In those days, a bloke did what he had to do in order to survive, one did not bitch and moan about his problems but just got on with the job.

On reflection, I wonder what my sons would think of their old man years after the fact and realise why he was so tough on them and protected them fully from the iniquities of the world. Who knows what they think of me now, history will be my judge I am sure. At the time I was going out with a "bird"- "sheila" and for those who dont understand Aussie I mean a woman. She found a dilapidated and run down home opposite the Watsonia RSL some two kilometres from our current Army quarters. I had applied to purchase the Army quarters as they were being sold at the time. But for some strange and inexplicable reason I was not given the opportunity to purchase it despite promises that I would get first bite of the apple so to speak. With regards to the house in Watsonia, I looked it over and found it suitable for a temporary abode for the boys and me and sufficient to meet our needs. It needed a lot of work but I relished in the fact that it would be ours once purchased.



For three months before returning to my first employment outside the umbrella of the Defence Force the boys and I worked on the house, renovating it as best as we could.

I was always handy with my hands, a former electrician, had completed a pioneer course in the Army, and had worked on construction industry as a young man. These skills came in very handy during this period.

Once the innards of the home were finished to my satisfaction, we then began to work on the garden. This was a monumental task as there was debris all over the place, with sheds in one corner trees in another, half rotten pagodas, overgrown pathways and fallen fern trees and numerous sorts of grass and weeds growing all over the place. Yes it was a jungle, but not the jungle that I had envisaged in my mind.

It would take us a number of years to lay the foundations down for the jungle setting that I had in mind, but bit by bit somehow we managed to do it. I look back on it from time to time with some degree of satisfaction and only lose my cool when one of my sons decides to go on a slashing exercise and cut down my beloved jungle. I would never be a happy chappie when that occurred and many huge arguments ensued to this day.

Now, I enjoy stepping outside into the garden and wander about my personal little jungle, resplendent with a tiny lagoon or pond that has two tiny waterfalls cascading into the pool below. Watching the goldfish swim about reminds me of my time in Malaya where in the jungle streams we often come across tiny goldfish like fish swimming in the shallots of the streams and rivers.



The waterfalls would be a small reminder of Papua New Guinea and the Atherton Table lands, while "Blue" the crocodile floating under the overhanging foliage is a reminder of the Daintree Forest. "Blue" the crocodile was a gift from Peter Hardless, the son of Mick Hardless, a mate from our days in 6 RAR. Young Peter is currently serving in the Navy and it is believed he will be separating sometime this year after having served his time. Mick Hardless and I have been cobbers since we first met in 1973 and both families keep in touch with one another.

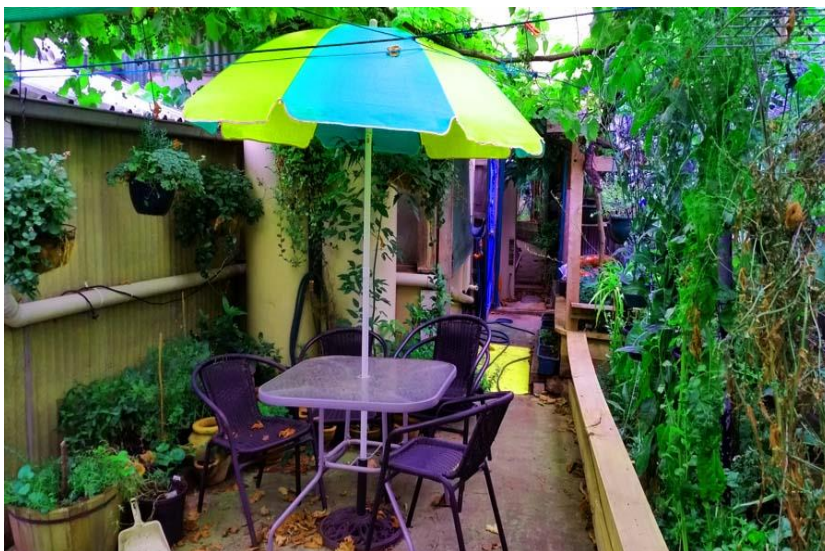
As for the name "Blue" it is named after one my mates whom I first met when posted to West Australia. "Blue" (Peter Roberts) was the CSM and I was the Chief Clerk. Blue and Mary his wife and I have remained friends ever since 1982 and still chide each other using social media. At the base of one of the waterfalls is the remains of our beloved cat named "Kara" a gift from my one of my sons God father, Norm "Ned" Kelly ex 6 RAR and since gone to the jungle upstairs in 1983. We had buried "Kara" in the married quarters and I had promised the boys that we would take her with us and rebury her in the first home we purchased. A promise that I kept.



The Watsonia garden has had trees removed because of their overhanging branches to our neighbours and new trees, bushes, plants, ferns and all manner of exotic plants installed to give it a jungle setting.

Every tree, bush and plant and tree has a name. They are all named after family, mates and other relatives.

I obtained ten idea from the Israelis who had planted trees in memory of those who died in their struggle for independence. I thought that it was such a wonderful idea that I gave a human name to everything I planted. The reason was that I would feel somewhat surrounded by friends and that each time I would pass by a certain tree, bush or plant, I would be reminded of that person. Mind you there are many trees, bushes and plants that have been planted, giving it the jungle setting that I craved for. Those who have been to our home when we had dinner parties, BBQ and the odd visitor could always find peace and tranquillity amongst the jingle setting. My lovely wife Yovanna being a great host would cater for up to 120 people at one time to our closest friends and relatives.



Friends who came from interstate were always welcome and our home would be a haven it would appear for numerous birds and all the fowls of the heavens including the bloody possums that have invaded our roof tops. Despite my pleasure in the jungle, I have had one misgiving to date and that is that I have been unable to grow large tomatoes to my satisfaction. Some say because of the numerous trees and the lack of sun.

Other critics and garden experts would prefer to say it was because I planted them in the wrong place and as for me I just think I am a hopeless gardener unlike my four sons who have somehow perfected planting and able to grow a decent crop. Still knowing my character, I just don't give up and will continue to seek to grow that once in a life time perfect crop of tomatoes. It's a matter of honour as I compete with my old man and brother in law John who year after year have enormous tomatoes crops. If I appear jealous, well that may be true and I prefer envy as it is a stronger emotion that Dad, brother in law John and I always laugh and joke about.

Today as I near 67, I have few regrets and I find solace, peace and a quiet tranquillity whenever I sit in the shade of the trees or under the umbrella and reflect on life. I have one little favourite spot that faces the East and I can remember coming out of hospital sitting in my favourite spot, wondering whether the pain of recovery from cancer will ever go away. Even though I was to shun the sun's rays, I could not but help wanting to allow the rays to strike my body occasionally as a reminder that life was still good no matter what the current circumstances were. I guess we all have a little place somewhere in our lives that we can all retreat to. Mine is the Watsonia Garden jungle. You could also add that I am blessed to be surround by family Cobber Digger Mates.

As always, apologies to purists for my poor grammar and savagery of the English language. I wish you all well and hope that this article does not cause ambiguity in the minds of those who read it.



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