



Acts of Kindness

The Ability to Connect Deeply

We have been working on how to promote our book and during this process, Justin and I wrote a testimonial about each other, to bring to you further insights into who we are. I am sure it will be no surprise to you to know that Justin's words about me brought me to grateful tears.

In particular, Justin wrote about my ability to 'deeply connect with people'. I reflected on this and about what may have helped me develop this important human ability. One of the factors, I believe, is my early years in Broken Hill. When I was around 10 years of age, my parents bought their first hotel in Broken Hill west, or Railway town as it was known. This hotel, the Gasworks Hotel – as we had the railway yards and the gasworks abutting our hotel - was a working man's pub which boasted regulars who were of this demographic.

For my sister and I, these regular drinkers became our extended family. We are able to describe them and tell stories about them in minute detail to this day as I write in my 'encore' years. With them and because of them, I was able to see lives which challenged my very narrow emerging view of the world of 'grownups'. I still wonder what their lives might have been beyond the hotel. I still marvel how the hotel became a community hub where friendships formed, and a glass of beer was the currency.

The kindness that we received as young girls in that working man's pub led me to understand that human beings are diverse, and that hearts and minds must be understood and not pre-judged according to circumstance, appearance or occupation. Learning to look beyond such superficialities, to withhold judgement and not to equate a person's worth with their possessions, were valuable lessons gained in this unlikely 'classroom'.

Another factor to which I attribute my ability to connect deeply, is my passion for books. My mother, a teacher also, serialised books for her four children, bringing them to life and forever associating them for me with love, warmth and connection. Beyond connecting with Mum and my siblings, the books themselves, within their pages, introduced me to many and various people and situations. I remember saying to my own classes in later years as a teacher, that books were my way of escaping my egocentric perspective of people and the world. They were a window into other ways of seeing, other lenses through which to view the world. By reading avidly throughout my life, I have been able to learn to empathise with other ways of seeing, other points of view. I have been able to extend my understanding of human nature and perspectives, to stretch myself and to challenge myself with the perceptions of others 'not like me'.

These two factors have significantly contributed to forming me into the adult I have become. Accepting and embracing Justin's tribute, I now see how the imperative to connect, a survival skill present in all human beings as social animals with a herd instinct, has been grown and deepened



in my life. To be able to use this developed skill in my current wellbeing service and to be recognised for it, is truly fulfilling.