

⇒ JM ✓ replied 31/8/95

MCLAREN - BOX OVERLAND - DOC 1
1995

5/242 Marine Pde.,
KINGSCLIFF. 2487.

7.8.85

John McLaren,
Overland.
PO Box 14146 MMC,
MELBOURNE. 3000.

Dear John,

Got your advice per Ms. Alex Skutenko tonight after a very busy day organising a community arts first ever happening in the Tweed Shire. A hundred people meeting tomorrow night. Have not had time to find out exactly what you've done to my excerpt. Thanks for sending the copy to me. I note it was sent 'surface' mail. Took twelve days to reach me. I also note that the dyelines have already been approved. However...

As someone who has edited many and varied publications, may I suggest, even at this late stage, that you consider the fact that the title has no relation to the content of the story. 'A River to Cross' would, I venture to suggest, be more appropriate in the end notes which could describe the extract as coming from an unpublished novel; or in context as a sub heading. A synopsis is enclosed. Perhaps another title could be 'That December day in 1942'.

May I also add that the illustrations are not quite appropriate... the gallant officer out front leading his men into battle... IN THE DESERT?. In the Islands the officers tried to merge into the crowd and the scenery. Japanese snipers usually tried to identify officers and pick 'em off. The officers at Buna had by this time learnt not to wear their badges of rank and be as inconspicuous as possible.

For your information I've come back to creative writing since I dropped out of full-time work. Joan Clarke, with her rich professional editing experience has been very helpful. I've got three unpublished novels ('A River to Cross' has been revised with Joan's oversighting and two others are to be revised) and other work in the pipeline. I'm still an old campaigner and Pavlovian-like usually react when something needs to be done in the community. Hence the current involvement with community arts, which has been a full-time activity for about six weeks. The response to my initiative has escalated over the last couple of weeks, to the extent that all the local politicians have jumped on the band wagon. Maybe you could be interested in other material later on, when I get this present venture off the ground and passed it on to other willing hands.

Please don't think I'm trying to tell you how to suck eggs. Just trying to make a better presentation.

Cheers,


Arthur Pike.

News

Plan to exploit Tweed talent

Daily News

31-7-95

HOW to fully utilise the "wealth of artistic opportunities and activities" available in the Tweed will be the challenge of an upcoming meeting.

A public meeting to explore the possibility of forming a Tweed Community Arts Organisation is to be held in the Treetops Environment Centre on August 8.

The aim of this get-together of representatives from more than 40 Tweed Shire visual and performing arts organisations, venues and individuals will be to form an interim committee to assess the viability of an umbrella organisation.

The meeting, set to kick off at 7pm, has been organised by Kingscliff resident and former Australia Council Community Arts Development Officer, Arthur Pike.

"Five years ago I moved to Kingscliff from Sydney, where I had access to a rich variety of artistic and entertainment options," Mr Pike said.

"This area also has a rich variety of artistic options which could be built upon and made more accessible.

"There are plenty of opportunities. Tweed has several well-established art and craft groups and venues, and maybe what we need is some sort of structure whereby it can be built upon, developed and more outside activities introduced.

"All of the established organisations and individuals successfully do their thing, but are we fully realising untapped potential?

"What if people linked up with others to find a wider outlet of talents and products?"

Mr Pike said The Tweed Valley Arts Council in Murwillumbah "does a good job at promoting the visual arts", but he believes there is a need for a group "which is not



● Max Boyd

as much visual art-based and stretches across the shire".

Some of the points to be put to the meeting include promoting broader arts activities in the Shire, the expansion of local activities and the introduction of regular visual and performance arts from outside the area.

"I have no ambitions to be the chair of such a committee, or to force my ideas on others, I just want to be a catalyst to make it happen," Mr Pike said.

"I realise people wonder how ideas such as local film festivals, literature competitions, outdoor theatre, visual art exhibitions, music festivals and other activities can be funded.

"In the beginning, it is interest which generates activity, which generates money."

Anyone interested is invited to attend the meeting to be chaired by Max Boyd at the Treetops Environment Centre, Clothiers Creek Road, Condong.

Brief Synopsis of A RIVER TO CROSS -- a novel by Arthur Pike.

Set in present-day Sydney, this story of two old army mates -- former history teacher, Richie Lawson, and ex-film projectionist, Ron Beaton -- highlights important contrary aspects of Japanese-Australian relations.

Criticisms of Japanese activities, past and present, are provocatively aired by Ron Beaton when lunching with Richie Lawson in a park restaurant, within the hearing of two Australians and their Japanese guests. Richie is embarrassed by his mate's behaviour, to the extent that he feels guilty about his own attitudes.

Awaking from a distressing dream about Japanese tourists and the forthcoming premiere of the Japanese composer Kawabata's 'Salute to Peace', Richie wonders whether his recent experience of an 'old digger' attacking a young Japanese street artist and Ron's restaurant behaviour have prompted this dream. Unable to sleep, his musings take him back to World War II and a self-questioning as to whether he still harbours vestiges of race prejudice. His wartime experiences are recalled, ranging from actual battle incidents through happenings of every day army life to questionable roles of Australian and American generals, Blamey and MacArthur, and Emperor Hirohito. An exchange between two twenty-year-olds, an Australian and a Japanese, in the kunai grass on Buna airstrip in Papua is consistently recalled -- in a night lull in the fighting they discuss families, girlfriends, king, emperor, customs, traditions, generals, politicians, attitudes to war, who started the war.

As the story unfolds the action moves back and forth between past and present. Changes in attitudes are shown through confrontations and dialogue not only between the main characters and their meeting with the Japanese in the restaurant, but through unexpected developments, humorous and dramatic, involving other characters.

The main theme of the story points to the waste and futility of war, the need for an honest assessment by both sides of what happened during WWII, an understanding of present-day differences and the need for close relationships between people of like interests. More is needed than just package tours to break down barriers and create cooperation between peoples.

Throughout the story Richie is reminded of his encounter at Buna with Yoshi, the Japanese soldier. The visiting composer Kawabata also has a compelling presence throughout the narrative. In the final chapter Kawabata is identified as Yoshi.

The conclusion is reached that there is a gulf between the Japanese and Australian people, a river separating the two people... 'Rivers never separated people in the past. So, for us, it's just a river to cross, and then we're on the other side, meeting new experiences, new people.'

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COPY

31 Aug 95

Mr Arthur Pike
5/242 Marine Pde.,
Kingscliff 2487

Dear Arthur,

Your comments and suggestions about your chapter virtually crossed in the mail with the issue containing the work, so there was nothing we could do to act on them. I hope you are pleased with the outcome. As you will have seen, the graphic that accompanied the story was not an illustration of your subject matter, but a generic motif linking together all the war pieces.

I look forward to seeing the whole novel.

With thanks and best wishes,

John McLaren