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September 2023 Newsletter

Magazine Section

FRIENDSHIP, FELLOWSHIP AND FUN

1st September Wattle Day and First Day of Spring

Mark Oliphant (1901–2000) was considered a great leader in the sciences, one who inspired his students by his own show of zeal for his research and his positive view of life in general. He was a physicist who helped develop the atom bomb, although he later protested its use and became an ardent humanitarian. In Oliphant's obituary, the *New York Times* wrote, "He pressed for the peaceful use of atomic energy and spoke out against all weapons capable of mass destruction. Starting in 1945 he insisted that the world must 'get rid of war or die,' and that the use of nuclear arms would be a 'moral crime.' Using nuclear weapons, he said, was 'a dirty, rotten way to kill people' that could not be justified 'in any circumstances,' even in retaliation."

Mark Oliphant

Oliphant was born Markus Laurence Elwin Oliphant on October 8, 1901, in Adelaide. He was the oldest of five sons. Oliphant's father was a very religious man and he wanted his oldest son to be a priest, but Oliphant had always been more interested in gadgets and science than in religion. Oliphant was quoted on the Australia Biography website as saying, "I was always fooling about in the shed at the back of the garden with bits of wire and bits of wood, making what my brothers called my 'raggedy, baggedy engines.'"

He graduated from high school with good grades going on to attend the University of Adelaide. He was originally interested in dentistry or medicine, but a teacher of his, Dr. Roy Burdon, saw an aptitude for physics in the young man and persuaded him to switch his major. After a short while Oliphant agreed, and he graduated with a degree in physics. To pay for his education he took any odd job he could find, working his way through university.

After graduation he got a job cleaning floors for a jewellery manufacturer. He married Rosa Wilbraham, who was also from Adelaide, in 1925, and the two had one daughter.

It was while he was working at the jewellers in 1925 that Oliphant attended a lecture given by New Zealand physicist Ernest Rutherford. He was so impressed by what Rutherford had to say that he immediately decided that if he could possibly bring it about, he would work for Rutherford one day. Rutherford worked at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, England, one of the most advanced research facilities in nuclear power at that time.

In 1927 Oliphant won an exhibition prize at Adelaide University, and then was accepted to Cambridge University. He took a job as exhibition scholar at the Cavendish Laboratory, fulfilling his wish. He worked there under Rutherford with a team of scientists whose task was to find a way to split an atom.

First to Split the Atom

Oliphant and the team he worked with managed to split the first atom in 1932. It was an amazing accomplishment.

In 1937 Oliphant took a position with the University of Birmingham, where he became a professor of physics. While at the university, along with John Randall and Harry Boot, he continued his research, and in 1939 he received a grant to help develop a short wavelength radar. It was this radar that helped the fight against the German U-boats and bomber offensives during World War II.

World War II Brought About the Atom Bomb

In 1940 two men, Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls, who also worked at the University of Birmingham, theorized that uranium-235 could be used to create an atom bomb. Oliphant was charged with taking their ideas to a committee, which had the code name of Maud. Maud in turn sent the theory to the United States and its Uranium Committee in March of 1941, but the United States seemed to be uninterested. Britain, however, entrenched in war with Germany, thought the bomb was necessary and important to their efforts.

Oliphant was sent to America, where he arranged to meet with the Uranium Committee. He stressed the importance of the project and urged that the committee begin implementing a plan to develop an atomic weapon.

Because of his efforts, the United States established the Office of Scientific Research and Development. This office took on the Uranium Committee as one of its projects, and in December of 1941, after Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese, they set up the Manhattan Engineering District to house what would soon be called the Manhattan Project, to research the building of a uranium atom bomb.

Oliphant Appalled by Bomb's Power

Oliphant moved to America in November of 1943 to work on the Manhattan Project, sent as a British delegate. After the use of the bomb in 1945 on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, however, he was appalled by the devastation, and argued against its ever being used again.

Returned to Australia and Knighted

Oliphant returned to Australia in 1950. There he became the first director of the Research School of Physical Sciences at the new Australian National University in Canberra. He also set up the Australian Academy of Science in 1954 and became its first president in 1956. In 1959 Oliphant was knighted.

Became State Governor of South Australia

He retired from the Australian National University in 1967. He was then invited to become the state governor of South Australia. He accepted the honour and held office from 1971 to 1976. As governor he used his position to oppose France's nuclear testing in the Pacific

In 1977 he was made a Companion in the Order of Australia.

Oliphant's wife, Rosa, died in 1987. After witnessing her suffering prior to her death, he became a strong proponent for voluntary euthanasia for debilitating and incurable diseases.

Oliphant died in Canberra on July 14, 2000, at the age of 98. Oliphant will not soon be forgotten, however. Many locations have been named after the great scientist, including the Mark Oliphant Conservation Park, the Oliphant building at Australian National University, the Oliphant wing of the Physics Building at the University of Adelaide and the Mark Oliphant Building in Bedford Park, South Australia. A South Australian High School science competition was also named in his honour.

Stimulating Facts About Coffee

Coffee Beans Aren't Actually Beans

It turns out that the name you're familiar with for those tiny pods that are ground and brewed for a fresh cup of coffee is a misnomer. Coffee "beans" are actually the seeds found within coffee cherries, a reddish fruit harvested from coffee trees. Farmers remove the skin and flesh from the cherry, leaving only the seed inside to be washed and roasted.

Coffee farming is a major time investment: On average, a tree takes three or four years to produce its first crop of cherries. In most of the Coffee Belt — a band along the equator where most coffee is grown that includes the countries of Brazil, Ethiopia, and Indonesia — coffee cherries are harvested just once per year. In many countries, the cherries are picked by hand, a laborious process.

Decaf Coffee Is Still a Tiny Bit Caffeinated

Decaf coffee has helped coffee drinkers enjoy the taste of coffee without (much of) the jolting effects of caffeine, but its creation was entirely accidental.

According to legend, around 1905 German coffee merchant Ludwig Roselius received a crate of coffee beans that had been drenched with seawater. Trying to salvage the beans, the salesman roasted them anyway, discovering that cups brewed with the beans retained their taste (with a little added salt) but didn't have any jittery side effects.

Today, the process for making decaf blends remains relatively similar: Beans are soaked in water or other solvents to remove the caffeine, then washed and roasted. However, no coffee is entirely free of caffeine. It's estimated that 97% of caffeine is removed during preparation, but a cup of decaf has as little as 2 milligrams of caffeine — compared to regular coffee's 95 milligrams.

Bach Wrote an Opera About Coffee

Johann Bach is remembered as one of the world's greatest composers, known for orchestral compositions such as the *Brandenburg Concertos*. But one of Bach's lesser-known works is *Schweigt*

stille, plaudert nicht ("Be Still, Stop Chattering") — a humorous ode to coffee popularly known as the Coffee Cantata. Written sometime in the 1730s, Bach's opera makes light of fears at the time that coffee was an immoral beverage entirely unfit for consumption.

In the 18th century, coffee shops in Europe were known to be boisterous places of conversation, unchaperoned meeting places for young romantics, and the birthplaces of political plots. A reported lover of coffee, Bach wrote a 10-movement piece that pokes fun at the uproar over coffee. The opera tells the story of a father attempting to persuade his daughter to give up her coffee addiction so that she might get married, but in the end, she just becomes a coffee-imbibing bride.

The First Webcam Was Invented For a Coffee Pot

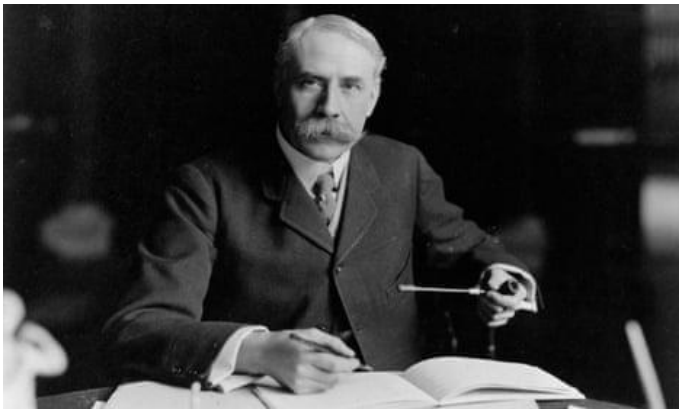
We can credit coffee-craving inventors for creating the first webcam. In the early 1990s, computer scientists working at the University of Cambridge grew tired of trekking to the office kitchen for a cup of coffee only to find the carafe in need of a refill. The solution? They devised a makeshift digital monitor — a camera that uploaded three pictures per minute of the coffee maker to a shared computer network — so they knew when a fresh pot of coffee was waiting.

By November 1993, the in-house camera footage made its internet debut, and viewers from around the globe tuned in to watch the grainy, real-time recording. The world's first webcam generated so much excitement that computer enthusiasts even travelled to the U.K. lab to see the setup in real life. In 2003, the coffee pot sold at auction for nearly $5,000.

Your Genes Might Determine How Much Coffee You Drink

If you can't get through the day without several cups of coffee, you may have your genes to blame. A 2018 study suggests inherited traits determine how sensitive humans are to bitter foods like caffeine and quinine (found in tonic water). Researchers found that people with genes that allow them to strongly taste bitter caffeine were more likely to be heavy coffee drinkers (defined as consuming four or more cups daily). It seems counterintuitive that people more perceptive to astringent tastes would drink more coffee than those with average sensitivity — after all, bitter-detecting taste buds likely developed as the body's response to prevent poisoning. But some scientists think that human brains have learned to bypass this warning system in favour of caffeine's energizing properties. The downside? Constant coffee consumers are at higher risk of developing caffeine addiction.

Edward William Elgar



If Britain has a national composer, it is Edward Elgar (1857-1934). His music is often seen as epitomising the smug Victorian world into which he was born, but though he wrote his quota of "patriotic" pieces, he was much more than a flag-waving imperialist; his influences and musical outlook were profoundly European rather than home-grown. Elgar was the most significant composer Britain has produced since Henry Purcell, and his finest music – the symphonies and concertos – easily stands comparison with that of his late-romantic contemporaries Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler.

The music you might recognise.

Two of Elgar's melodies are ingrained in the fabric of British culture. Land of Hope and Glory, which sets jingoistic words by AC Benson to the melody from the first of the Pomp and Circumstance Marches, has become an ersatz national anthem and an apparently obligatory part of the Last Night of the Proms, while the elegiac Nimrod, the ninth of the Enigma Variations, which Elgar intended as a musical portrait of his publisher August Jaeger, has become a go-to memorial piece.

Edward William Elgar was born in the village of Lower Broadheath, not far from Worcester, in June 1857. The family lived in a modest two-storey country cottage with a classically English garden, surrounded by rolling countryside which would later influence a lot of Elgar's music. His father, William, ran a music shop and piano-tuning business in the centre of Worcester. He was also the organist at the city's Roman Catholic Cathedral, St. George's, although it was Elgar's mother who was the practising Catholic, and she raised her children in this faith.

The music business was a thriving one which eventually necessitated the family moving into the flat above the shop. Edward now had access to a dazzling array of musical instruments and, like any young boy, he began experimenting with them. Unlike many young boys though his experimentation soon turned to education and by the time he was twelve Elgar had taught himself to play both the piano and the violin. He was good enough on the keyboard to deputise for his father at the Cathedral and regularly played the violin in the church's orchestral ensembles. While his talent was clearly evident, the family couldn't afford a formal education in music, but Elgar himself already knew where his future lay. He began to teach himself composition.

"The only thing to do was to teach myself" Elgar later wrote. "I read everything, played everything and heard everything I possibly could". Nevertheless he was nurtured in his music by his mother and assisted by his siblings who participated, willingly

or otherwise, in his musical productions. After leaving school at fifteen Elgar spent a fruitless and unhappy year in a lawyer' office – mainly to appease his father – before being finally allowed to pursue a career in music.

For the next fifteen or so years Elgar led the uncertain and unprofitable life of the freelance musician, teaching both the piano and violin, performing in local concerts and conducting whenever he got the opportunity. In 1879, aged twenty-two, he obtained a part-time position as the conductor at a nearby lunatic asylum, leading a loose "orchestra" of staff members who staged concerts and dances to entertain the patients. Elgar also wrote music for these concerts but, never quite sure what combination of instruments he would have to work with, he soon learned how to balance any ensemble, further honing his growing skills as an orchestrator. At the same time he was writing choral music for Worcester's Catholic cathedral, pieces for the violin and a number of songs, but he was making little headway in the music world beyond gaining useful experience.

All this changed in 1889 when he married one of his piano students, a confident and capable woman who, nearly nine years his senior, was already in her early forties. Caroline Alice Roberts was the daughter of a retired major-general and came from an aristocratic family. Initially there as some resistance to the union, especially as Edward hadn't demonstrated much potential for earning a sustained income Alice, however, recognised his talents and immediately set about using her connections and influence to promote her new husband. In Alice, Edward Elgar didn't just find a wife but also a staunch supporter, a true believer and a tireless ambassador.

While the entry she provided to the upper echelons of society was undoubtedly important to Elgar's career, far more valuable was the self-confidence she instilled in him, providing a much-needed foundation on which his creative genius could flourish. It's no coincidence that all Elgar's important music was written during his life with Alice, starting with the famous *Salut d'Amour,* composed just before the pair became engaged in 1888. After she died in 1920 Elgar's inspiration died too.

Worcester Cathedral

Have you ever thought of writing a book about your life?

My daughter gave me a subscription a year or so ago to a company that assists with the process of writing my life story and presenting it in book form. As I had spare time (covid lockdown) I found this was timely & it got me interested...

The result is this book.

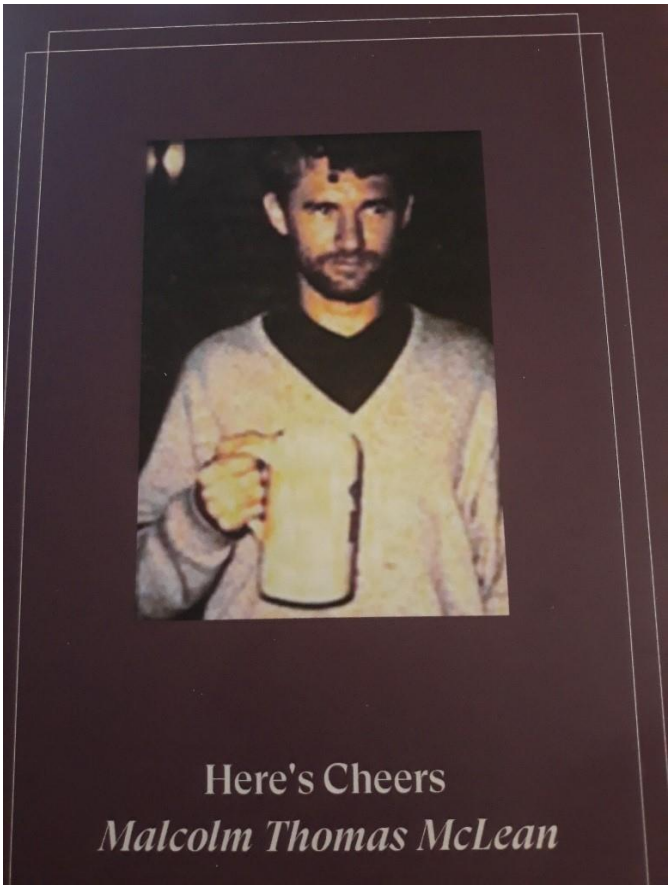


Photo taken 1966 Munich Beer Festival @ Octoberfest.
In those days I was travelling around in the back of a van hence the beard.

I would recommend to others this way of putting a story together.....Proof reading & setting out, front cover selection photos etc.. made easy.

I'm happy to discuss with others if interested.

If you are looking to write your life story to share with your family and future generations, there are many options available. This company that I used is a memoir service subscription you can buy for yourself, or a loved one, to make this dream come true.

With the membership, you and your nominated recipients receive a weekly email with a question to respond to. Throughout the year-long subscription, you will see their responses each week. At the end of the year, the company compiles everything the recipients have written into a hardback book that you can keep for generations.

Subscribers are encouraged to think of their answers as a conversation. The process consists of three steps:
1. Once a week, you choose a question to inspire them (your loved ones) to write.
2. Your loved one replies to the question in an email, which is also shared with you.
3. At the end of a year, your loved one's stories are bound into a beautiful keepsake book.

There are around 300 questions for you to choose from to be your loved one's weekly question.

You can also choose to write your own, or your loved one can simply write whatever they like. In addition to answering the question prompts, your loved one can upload photos to go along with their story.

Example questions
- What matters most to you in life?
- What's one of your favourite trips?
- What personal expectations do you hold yourself to?
- What things do you think you cannot live without?
- Do you have any regrets in life?

The hardcover book is a standard 6×9, and you also receive a pdf version to download.

If you want to know more I will be happy to give you the name of the company that I used and information to get you started.

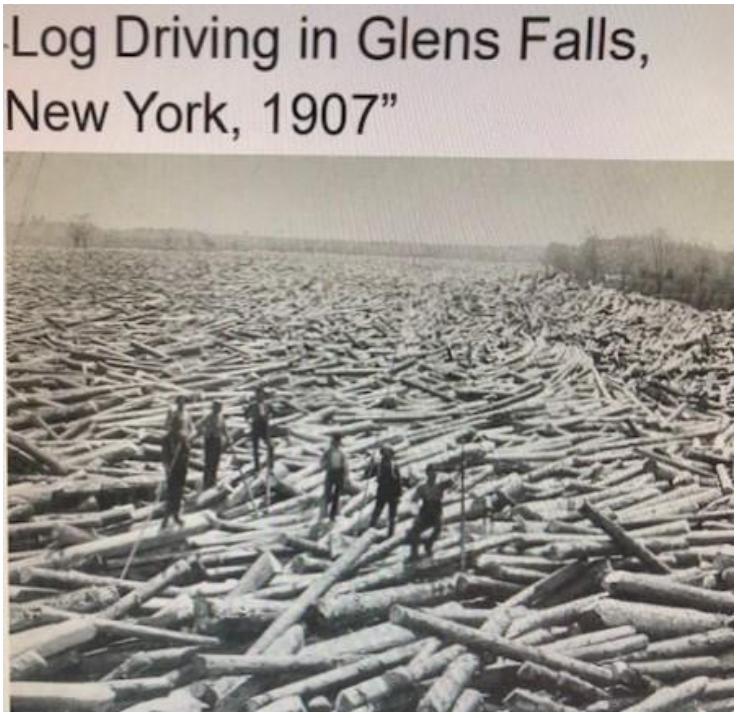
Malcolm McLean

Malcolm McLean and I have both recently completed our autobiographies. If you would like to borrow my book to read of my interesting life story, please call me on 0408 417 430.

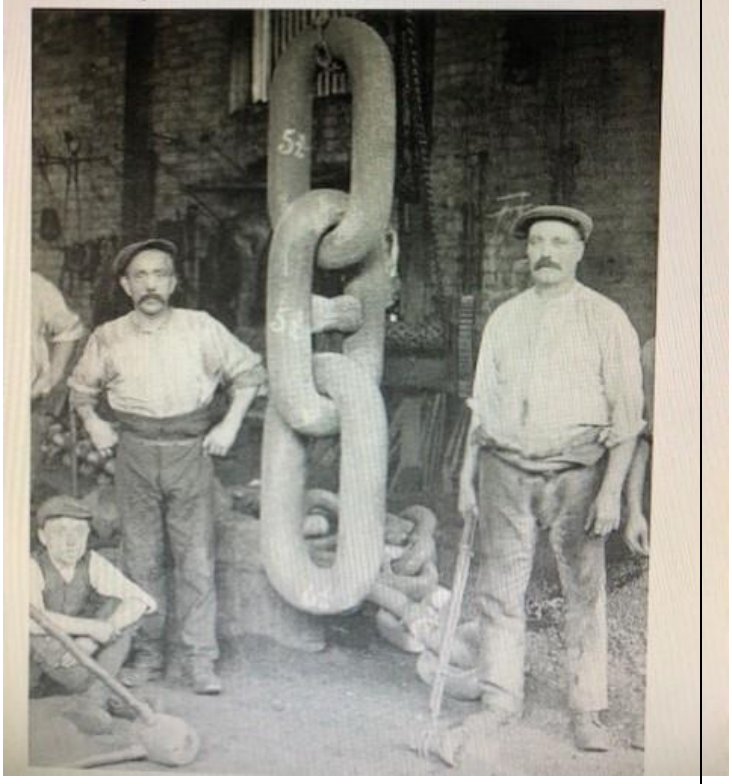
Malcolm's book has an interesting picture on the front cover and Phil's book is entitled, "800 Love Letters".

Phil Allan

Historical Photos



Making The Titanic's Anchor Chain At Hingley & Sons, 1909



A Fake Rooftop Suburb That Hid a Whole Wiwi Airplane Factory Underneath, 1944"

Two Women Working as Ice Deliverers Carry a Large Block of Ice. September 1918"

Remember That Photo of the Construction Workers Having Lunch On an Unfinished New York Skyscraper? Well, Here's The Photographer Charles Ebbets. 9/20/1932"