

Introduction

Thank you for taking an interest in my recollections in rhyme.

A Sense of Place – A Septuagenarian’s Recollections in Rhyme is a memoir of prose, photographs and many of my multi-award-winning poems that transcend the poetic form to reveal a fortunate life being lived to the full.

With an eventful, fulfilling and at times turbulent 70+ years behind me, I have accumulated a vast and diverse range of knowledge, skills and experiences to call upon for poetic expression. I’m not sure what prompted me to start writing poetry so late in life, however, it has given me an enduring sense of place and purpose and a fulfilling outlet for artistic creativity. Australian rhyming verse has a rich and vibrant historical affinity with our national identity.

I’m not sure why I was predisposed to writing traditional Australian rhyming verse. It seemed to be the most natural way for me to tell stories about my rural upbringing that were informative, humorous, historical, confronting and emotional, and for me to be able to connect with the past in a way that is structured, logical and easy for most people to understand.

It also seemed the best way for me to express an appreciation for our natural and cultural heritage, acknowledge people from all walks of life and their contributions to Australia’s culturally diverse society, including Australia’s embattled Indigenous population. My work in Papua New Guinea and with Aboriginal communities in Central Australia, Far North Queensland and on the NSW South Coast had a profound impact on my understanding of the complexity of human relations in the broadest possible sense.

From stagehand at the London Palladium to the nudist beaches of the Greek Islands - from orchard foreman on an Israeli kibbutz to crossing Africa in an old truck - and from trekking leader in Nepal to taking school groups to PNG, Japan and China, the years I have spent travelling the world have provided me with rare insights into our amazing, yet troubled planet.

When it was suggested that I give my poems a public airing, I decided to enter a few poems in various Australian poetry competitions. Being presented with my first award in 2018 provided the impetus to continue writing. I gained an increasing awareness of Australian poetry through studying the iconic works of Henry Lawson, ‘Banjo’ Paterson, John O’Brien, and many others.

The importance of rural literary festivals and the various written and performance competitions which have become an integral part of them, cannot be overestimated. They provide essential opportunities for artists to showcase their considerable talents, without which their artistic endeavours may never see the light of day.

David Judge