

We The People
Program 364 November 18, 2019
We the People 364 Men's Sheds



Good Day to you. Australia has a unique and valuable culture in a crowded and madding world. Our history is imaged from the FJ Holden and the dog on the tucker box to the chook shed down the back, the Victa Lawn mower, the Hills Hoist and rampant furphys. The joy of homemade ginger beer and CWA scones and jam and every one had a local church. I was a Presbyterian or 'Press Button' as we were fondly known. These images and words reflect our simple but profound history and underpin our way of life, bind us together and all written down with a thumb nail dipped in tar. These symbols are evidence of an honest way of life where community meant everything and a person's word was their bond and a hand shake was as good as a written contract. However for men there is a symbol which best represents all these things and that's.....a work **Shed**. The ubiquitous backyard shed holds a very special place in the hearts of Australian men. They go there to fix and build things, to escape from the household for a while, to be by themselves and sometimes with their friends. Traditionally, the shed is a refuge, a little haven of masculinity where female rules don't apply.

Recently I visited Men's Sheds at Mount Gravatt, Labrador and Elanora. All run as not for profit and all funded primarily by the shedders themselves. I met mostly mature men all working on projects in wood, metal and leather and at Mount Gravatt my old and infamous whistle blower mate Kevin Lindeberg teaching grumpy old men how to draw. What a delight to see as all these fellows enjoying a measure of fellowship unrivaled in the modern world. The Shed movement had humble beginnings and still is genuinely humble although there are a thousand of them across Australia. That unselfish modesty brings genuine support and happiness to so many and all accomplished without fuss. I was truly moved to see men being 'proper men' without the PC brigade and feminism trying to swamp and over power them. They come from all walks of life and carry most human conditions. They are men at their best, friends, fathers, grandfathers, husbands and brothers and thank God for them.

I quickly came to realize that Christian principles move silently among the Shedders and so there are many wonderful uplifting stories of older men having been rescued from loneliness and tragedy to find their feet again and enjoy the company of other men simply and authentically. When you visit these Sheds there is an indefinable optimistic spirit of mate-ship and compassion flowing in every one of them. It permeates the work space and all who reside there. It is a positive force where older and mostly wiser men prevail, some returning to a loving wife and others returning to an empty home but with a better outlook. Sure I heard some sad stories where some men lost the battle but every one of those fellows speaking to me had tears in their eyes in recognition that, **'but for the grace of God go I'**. This is a time in a man's life where all the lessons merge and wisdom flows like a quiet deep river. For so many this is not the end of the road but the beginning of a new journey in life. The Shed movement is sensible recognition that men and women have different needs and its perfectly summed up by their citation of**"Women speak face to face, while men speak shoulder to shoulder"**. What a marvelous claim full of wisdom and quiet grace.

So as I strode through these Shed workshops I saw the wood turning and the carving, I saw the leather work and metalwork and the lathes and grinding machines all there to serve man's needs. However and most importantly, I saw and felt the camaraderie and the Anzac spirit in full measure where no man is left behind. It was a revelation to witness and no amount of words can fully describe how fulfilled and challenged yet at peace these men were. In a way they were all boys again working with Dad's tools and making things that gave them satisfaction and exercised their imagination. In all this and at morning tea, amid quiet reflection, I was impressed that every man had all the problems of the world solved and who could argue with that..... **men speaking shoulder to shoulder**.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley