

Sid and Aggie were finding that ageing brings its own complications. For some time Sid had been suffering from painful knees. It had reached the point where he had been referred to an orthopaedic surgeon. After a series of tests and X-rays Mr Hammond the surgeon advised Sid that the right knee was very arthritic and really needed replacing.

Needless to say, this did not cheer Sid up. "Is it worth replacing at my age?"

"Sid, for your age your health is pretty good. Your heart is sound and your other organs are quite good. You will be inconvenienced for a few weeks but should have years to live without chronic pain."

"I'll talk it over with Aggie and the kids and then get back to you."

So, Sid called a family conference and told them what Mr Hammond had suggested to him. "My big concern is that it will throw a lot more responsibility onto Aggie while I am in rehabilitation."

"No problems Dad. We can all take it in turns to come over and help Aggie, but you should go to a Rehab. Hospital before you come home. They can be a big help in speeding up your recovery".

So, it was agreed that Sid would have his knee replaced. The family had agreed that each week one would stay with Sid and Aggie and help with whatever needed doing.

A couple of weeks later, Sid, accompanied by Aggie, Lucy and Janet fronted up at Epworth Eastern Hospital for his appointment with Mr Hammond.

The next to speak was Meg's boss Mr Wood. "You may have noticed that Daphne and I didn't bring a present. Well we have." With that he removed some paper from the inside pocket of his suit. "Meg will you come up here I would like you to read this"?

Meg climbed on to the stage and took the paper from Mr Wood. She read the contents to the guests. Basically, it said that she now was an equal partner in the firm and the owner of one-third of the shares. If that wasn't enough the next part nearly knocked her off her feet. From that moment she had become the General Manager of the firm. Mr Wood explained. "Meg from the moment you joined our little business we have really prospered. We now have three bigger stores all because of your innate business sense and your ability to engender customer loyalty. Thank you for coming to work for us. We love you very much". With this came a burst of clapping and cheering. However, Meg and those closest to her couldn't join in. They were too busy crying their eyes out

Then Gerry got up to speak. "Hi folks I am a Pom but I do own a farm. Over the last few years, starting with Sid and Jean I have got to know these families as they have all visited the Mother Country where we have been able to occasionally entertain them. We now regard them as lifelong friends. To say that we have been impressed by them would be a complete understatement. My name is Gerry, my wife is Val, our daughter, who sang at the

wedding, is Elspeth and our son, who initiated these friendships is Tim. Please introduce yourselves to us before you go”.

The party continued. The band played a mixture of old-time and modern music, Including Rock n, Roll. Not surprisingly a tribe of young males had gathered around Elspeth and Tim was not going to be short of attractive young female dance partners. Tim asked one starry-eyed female where she lived. She lived in a big country town. “How far away is that?” he asked speculatively. “About a hundred and fifty miles” was not the answer Tim hoped for.

Clearly word had got around that these were not “ordinary” visitors.

Another young man enjoying himself was Geoffrey Brown. He was living with the Williams while working on the dairy. He was very keen on Ruth, but Bert kept a close eye on his tennis partner. It didn’t help that Geoff was also a very keen tennis player and was keen to play whenever possible.

In the meantime, Gerry and Val circulated, speaking to as many people as possible. The lord and lady were great listeners and took a great interest in learning about life in outback Australia. They were also happy to answer questions about their life in England but made no reference to the titles they were entitled to use. Val talked about shopping in London and how they always took their antipodean friends to famous stores including Harrods and Selfridges. Gerry, on the other hand, talked about farming in the UK, cricket and things in general.

The inevitable happened. Someone asked, “are you really a Lord Gerry?” “Not here I’m not. Here I am just Gerry”. This answer drew some laughter, and the question wasn’t asked again.

The leader of the band asked Elspeth if she would play something with them. Naturally she obliged and played some dance music with the band, then she played some classical pieces and finished by singing some popular love ballads that perfectly suited her lovely mezzo—soprano voice. While she was singing you could have heard a pin drop.

Eventually people began to drift home, some had quite a distance to travel. The Bride and Groom had left earlier to honeymoon at Warburton, but the immediate families and the English visitors had adjourned to the Williams spacious lounge to “wind-down” and enjoy a “nightcap”.

Arthur Brown wanted to know how Geoff was acquitting himself on the dairy. Jim assured him that he, Geoff, had settled in very well. He was eager to learn, didn’t mind getting his hands dirty but above all he had a real feel for livestock. Jim thought that Veterinary Science may be a good option for Geoff to pursue.

Jim spoke of how he had hoped that Rex would come back to the farm but realised that Rex intended to use his academic gifts to help all farmers wherever they may be. It was clear that Rex had a broad interest in Agriculture and had become very interested in things horticultural.

Friendships that were in their infancies developed further that night and strong appreciation of each other's worth suggested that life-long bonds had been established between the various families.

Sid and Jean wandered home arm-in-arm. "You know we started all this Jean". "We certainly did Sid. Aren't you glad".

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