

YOUR SAY

Beat the odds

Graeme VINCENT



FOUR weeks ago today, Max's heart stopped.

There was no warning of cardiac arrest. Why should there be; Max, whippet-thin and fit as a fiddle, was rarely ill, if ever.

But as he stood on the second tee at his beloved Port Fairy Golf Club, another mate — the irrepressible Fish — knew something was wrong. "Are you feeling OK; are you tight in the chest or breathless?" he asked. "Both," Max replied, then slumped to the ground.

We first met Max Holmes after relocating to Port Fairy in 2001 ... and what better "sea change" than this quiet historic fishing village in western Victoria, with its beautiful stone cottages and stately Norfolk pines.

Max was one of the first locals to welcome us. Hardly surprising though; he is the archetypal person you find in the country — friendly, genuine and committed to their community. When Max left the family sheep property at Woolsthorpe, north of Warrnambool, to settle in Port Fairy, he was soon entrenched in local affairs.

He joined the golf club, was promoted to its committee and was elected a Warrnambool shire councillor. He became an integral member of the construction crew of the

famous folk festival, was often found mowing the local airstrip (until OHS cruelled that voluntary work) and is chairman of the Port Fairy Marine Rescue Service.

He also steps up when one of the district farmers needs a hand, helps wife Ann with Meals on Wheels and has a social calendar that's always overflowing. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Fast forward to the drama that unfolded on December 28. As Fish recounted later, Max was not breathing. "There was no sign of life, none whatsoever. I thought he was gone." Ironically, Fish, aka Peter Fisher, had often said to Max: "Don't you go before me; you have given me too many laughs over the years." No one was laughing now.

That morning, as was custom-

ary, Max and his Port Fairy cohorts (affectionately known as Max's Mongrels) led the competition field out. What happened over the next hour became an object lesson in responding to a life or death emergency.

Fish began CPR, another friend Straw (David Goldstraw) started mouth-to-mouth, another "Mongrel" dialled triple-0 and another raced to the clubhouse for a defibrillator.

A paramedic, responding to an app alert on his mobile, arrived from Port Fairy within minutes and an ambulance from town shortly after. Treatment continued at the course for half an hour before an air ambulance landed nearby, carefully placed Max aboard and flew direct to Geelong.

(Geelong is practically Max's second home. Educated at Geelong Grammar, he was in the first intake of students at Marcus Oldham College in 1962 and is a passionate Cats fan, regularly making the 440km round trip from Port Fairy to watch them play.)

Max spent nearly two weeks in the Intensive Care Unit at Geelong hospital before being moved to the cardiac ward. He was transferred to St John of God Warrnambool Hospital on

MATE ON THE MEND: Max Holmes continues his recovery after a cardiac arrest at Port Fairy Golf Club in December



January 16 where he is undergoing rehabilitation.

Max's story of survival is remarkable. He beat the odds. According to statistics, an estimated 30,000 Australians suffer a cardiac arrest (generally triggered by an electrical malfunction in the heart) outside a hospital every year. Only 10 per cent survive.

The experts say the first three to five minutes are critical to recovery. After 10 minutes, the victim usually dies. Max's Mongrels and the ambo gave Max his chance of survival. They were calm, focused, professional. It was textbook stuff.

Moreover, it reinforced what I wrote here more than two years ago after I found myself giving CPR to a man while holidaying in Queensland. I said then every adult, every parent, every young person should learn basic first aid, particularly CPR. You never know when you may be able to save someone's life.

Max has come a long, long way from the life support monitors, the tubes, the oxygen masks, the seemingly endless examinations and tests, the 24/7 care. The smile has returned, so too the twinkle in his eye. But he knows there is still a way to go.

Footnote: He and I are going to form our own Heart Club. Max qualifies with a cardiac arrest; I suffered a heart attack from a blocked artery. When Max fully recovers, we will celebrate with a round of golf and a glass of something, for medicinal purposes of course!

Graeme Vincent is a former Geelong Advertiser editor.

Geelong Advertiser EDITORIAL

Delay on extra seat for ward baffling

IT is the City of Greater Geelong's most challenging socio-economic ward and also geographically its largest. So why would the State Government reject an appeal by our local council to appoint a third councillor to Windermere Ward, fixing the current imbalance in the only local ward with only two elected representatives?

While Local Government Minister Adem Somyurek's response to the City's request doesn't put an end to the matter, him saying it would be up for discussion after the new local government legislation is passed effectively means there will be no change before this October's election and no change for the next four years.

Dismissing the issue for that length of time is baffling. The ward is home to the city's major growth precinct, which is expected to house more than 110,000 new Geelong residents when it is completed. It is also the ward that covers the Corio/Norlane area, which a report earlier this week highlighted for its disadvantage and shorter life expectancies.

Even more worrying is the fact that the new legislation Mr Somyurek refers to is considering a return to single-councillor wards for municipalities across the state — a model heavily criticised in the government's 2016 commission of inquiry that led to the council's sacking.

ADDY READERS HAVE THEIR SAY - LETTERS AND TEXTS

PASSING THE BUCK OVER CITY PRIVACY BUNGLER

WELL, I have never seen a more blatant excuse for buck-passing.

Ms Asher blames the citizenry for expecting our very well-remunerated councillors to be across detail. Detail such as selling personal health information to third parties in overseas jurisdictions not subject to the Privacy Act.

Will anyone anywhere be held accountable?

Unacceptable, Stephanie. You really need to do much more to restore some faith, if you really care.

Kevin V Russell, Geelong

TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE NORTH'S CHALLENGES

A STUDY released on Monday showing residents in Corio-Norlane are facing shorter lives and far bigger health issues than others is no big surprise. For those of us who live in the area, we know the challenges that we face more than anyone else.

Unsurprisingly, one of the first

public comments in reply to an article by the *Geelong Advertiser* immediately leaps to criticise, denigrate and reinforce our biggest challenge which constantly goes unnoticed, that of stereotyping and stigmatising — "the difference between 'advantaged', and 'disadvantaged' is people choosing to work vs people choosing not to work!" says the commentator.

Once again, not a surprise that someone would chose to say such a thing. I wonder when such comments and those of more horrific nature on social media platforms will be addressed as a form of bullying and violence.

Having lived in Norlane for eight years, I'm yet to meet anyone who has chosen not to work. In fact, the opposite is true — my neighbours work every day to face the challenges of their neighbourhood head-on.

I have seen some of the most courageous, generous and thoughtful people doing the best they can to care for themselves, their family and their community despite the lack of opportunities in the neighbourhood.

Health issues and unemployment are indeed areas of concern for Corio-Norlane requiring major attention, but they do not define those who live here, because we are all different with different stories.

I invite anyone to spend some time to listen to our stories and challenge you to not be moved by the adversity faced and the courage shown. Because these are not just our stories, they are your stories too. We are all in this together and every time the headlines point to a deficit in the North, the stigma and stereotyping is consciously and unconsciously reinforced and it creates more challenges to overcome. Every time someone from 3214 is passed over for a job, or comments made on public social media platforms go unchallenged, a housing application is rejected or infrastructure goes unfunded, it gets a little bit harder.

What can we do? We can begin by choosing to see people as people regardless of where they live and challenge the bullying and victim-blaming if you see or hear such

comments being made.

Those of us in Corio-Norlane must continue to hold our heads high and say with pride we are from the North.

Funding bodies and investors can choose to make a difference by injecting much needed capital into the area as directed by on the ground community organisations and residents.

We must start to listen to the individual stories of challenges and courage. And why not take a drive through Corio-Norlane, choose to utilise the services of a northern suburb business, visit our cafes and stores and learn who we are and what is your part in our shared story towards equality and a fair-go regardless of where you live.

Simon Reeves, joint-CEO with Kaylene Reeves Norlane Community Initiatives

TEXT TALK

GREAT job and well done by COGG and their contractors in resealing Roslyn Rd from Sth. Valley Rd to Thornhill Drive with PlastiPhalt.

David Jolly, Highton

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1907 - First Boy Scout troop is organised by Sir Robert Baden-Powell in England

1924 - Petrograd is renamed Leningrad in honour of the founder of the Soviet Union

1965 - Death of Sir Winston Churchill, Britain's World War II prime minister, aged 90 — 70 years to the day after the death of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill

1989 - Serial killer Theodore 'Ted' Bundy is put to death in Florida

2019 - Adelaide reaches 46.6C, the South Australian capital's hottest day in 130 years

ADDY ONLINE POLL

Yesterday's question: Are you disappointed giant German supermarket chain Kaufland is no longer coming to Geelong?

YES 48% NO 52%

Register your vote at geelongadvertiser.com.au

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