

# STEP BY STEP COOKERY

## Cindy's story

**Q. What is your family heritage?**

A. I was born in Southern Vietnam.

**Q. What was your childhood and adolescence like?**

A. I grew up during the end of the Vietnamese Civil War. Life was quite unpredictable, but I believe I still had a beautiful childhood with my má, ba and six sisters. My parents won the lottery for having only girls!

When I was very young, we had a normal life in the city, Long Khanh. But around six years old life became very different. I remember vividly constantly waking up in middle of the night to hide in the tunnels to avoid the bombings.

To be quite honest, I wasn't scared, I just thought it was all just a game! But when things escalated, my family and I left everything behind and from that day on we started living our new lives in the countryside. Here we had little money, but it taught me to be grateful. I grew to love waking up every morning to the calls of roosters, the chirps of the birds and dew glimmering from the light of the sun. Working on the field opened my eyes to the natural beauty of the world.

**Q. Do you have a favourite story from this time in your life?**

A. When I was twelve, my sisters and I decided to buy a piglet with all of our savings. However, one day our piglet went missing, and my family and I all searched for her around the village but she was nowhere. After six weeks, we lost hope but then a villager told us she saw a farm not too far away also having a pig with the same description as our missing piglet.

So Mum took me to their house to investigate. First, they denied that the pig was my family's. But after an hour friendly discussion, they came to the realisation that she was in fact our pig! She wandered to their farm because she'd lost her way and didn't know how to return home.

So after that day, our family felt complete with the return of our adorable pig!

**Q. Has food always been a big part of your life?**

A. Food has always been a big part of my life, and my family's too. Food to me represents history, culture and personality. But mainly I see food as a thing that draws families together. I look forward to the weekends when I

have the afternoon free, as I enjoy cooking and having a sit-down lunch with my children and husband.

**Q. In your culture do you write down recipes or are they learned off by heart?**

A. To be honest we don't usually write down a recipe nor do we ever follow a recipe step by step! With a recipe, I see it more as a guide. Most of the time I taste as I go and I hope for the best! This is why my children always say: "it tastes different to last time"

**Q. You seem such a sunny person- did you find it a challenge to settle into Australian life?**

A. When I first started my life in Australia I found it very challenging as I didn't understand English and I had no family in Australia to support me and my husband. But soon enough I met the some of the funniest, kindest and wisest people that welcomed me with opened arms into their country. I'm so grateful to call Australia my home.

**Q. Out of all the careers available, how did you come to decide to open a restaurant?**

A. Me and my husband decided to open a restaurant because we both had a passion for cooking. Also couple of years ago, Vietnamese cuisine had not been as popular as it is now, so I also wanted to share our Vietnamese culture with our fellow Australians.

**Q. Your daughters both work part time in the family restaurant business, how do you think your strong work ethic has influenced and benefitted them?**

A. I hope that I have been a good role model to them, I have always taught them to try their hardest whether it's in their studies, work or hobbies. They have grown up to be persistent, passionate and confident, so I believe that I accomplished my job as a mother.

**Q. What are your favourite ingredients to work with?**

A. My favourite ingredients to use are all things fresh! In Vietnamese cuisine, we have plenty of fresh herbs and vegetables, and they are so easy to use.

**Q. How do you find your customers' manners?**

A. Our customers are one of the reasons why we are still here. We feel that we have built many friendships across the years and we feel like we are truly a part of our community. Many customers have known me when I just

arrived to Australia and continue to support our business to this day. One of my funniest and most grateful memories was when I was 9 month's pregnant, I had customers who would come in to eat, but they would end up helping me serve other customers when it got too busy. I still see them every week!

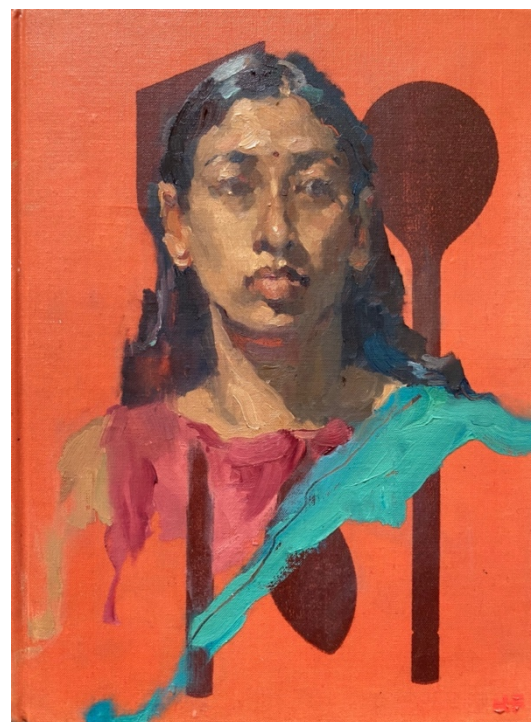
"Working on the field opened my eyes to the natural beauty of the world"

**Q. What is your favourite meal to eat when you don't have to cook for yourself?**

A. I love banh xeo! It's a very thin Vietnamese pancake that you eat with lettuce, herbs and fish sauce for dipping.

**Q. What are your plans for the future?**

A. With everything that has happened this year, I'm quite unsure about the future. I hope one day I can travel around the work, and possibly going back to school to relearn veterinary science and to go back into the veterinary field, but hopefully I'm not too old ...



# TALES OF LOVE AND HATE

## Frank's story

### Q. What is your family heritage?

A. My genealogical heritage is classic white Anglo with a trace of Irish, but my family heritage is disruption, dislocation and fragmentation. At the age of two, I was convicted with the offence of being a neglected child. I was declared a ward of the State and I lived in a succession of foster care and institutions for the next 4,379 days. The longest placement was in the Ballarat Orphanage from the age of 4 to 15. It was highly regimented—an exercise in mass survival. Some 200 children slept in draughty dormitories and ate in a large mess hall. The communal baths and latrines offered no privacy. An electric siren commanded us to line up for every routine moment. If you were late or put a foot out of line you expected a box over the ears or a kick in the pants. Scores of boys competed, often with their fists, for any personal possessions or favours. There were too many children for a goodnight hug—besides, it was safer to remain inconspicuous at night. The boys laboured on the farm, cultivated the massive vegetable garden and chopped wood; the girls darned and mended clothes, made beds, and toiled in the laundry and the kitchen. I lost all sense of being part of a family. My two older brothers were not my siblings in the normal sense. In time, they came to be just like any of the other children in that institution. I saw my biological parents perhaps four or five times when they were allowed to visit. I was caught in a bewildering web of unanswered questions: Why was I in an orphanage when I was not an orphan? Had someone made a dreadful mistake? When would it end?

### Q. 'Your' book tells of wild adventures in deep seas and savage jungles. Did literature provide escapism for you in State care?

A. No. In our school on the Orphanage site, we had no books. The teacher kept some books in her cupboard and, on a Friday afternoon, she let us read them silently after cleaning the inkwells. Apart from those rare moments, my reading sources were bland: the Grade Readers (one per year), the School Paper (once a month) and the freshly-minted Ballarat Courier (delivered free on a Tuesday). At the end of Grade 6, the teacher gave me a prize—Tom Sawyer,

the first book I ever owned. I read it, and lent it to other boys, until the binding fell apart. I found out that adults read for pleasure only after I left the Orphanage.

### Q. Your book's author, Adrian Conan Doyle, son of the famous Sherlock Holmes creator, sought to forge his own path. How did you break from a cycle of instability and forge a new path?

A. At the Orphanage I was about to be sent out to work at 15 when luck intervened - I won a trip to England. When I got back home, I was surprised to be told I was allowed to go back to live with my parents. I knew nothing about 'normal' family life, and it was an uneasy family reunification. My parents, however, knew the value of schooling and insisted I should go on as far as I could. With their strong support and the aid of various scholarships and part-time jobs (loading crates of beer on the railways, postal exchange shift work, playing professional football) I worked my way through teachers' college and university. I watched; I listened; I winged it.

'an exercise in mass survival'

### Q. Love and Hate are such extreme human emotions. Has the absence of love in institutions fostered its opposing force - hate?

A. Not for me, personally, but I know plenty of people whose lack of love in childhood has had a lasting adverse impact. Some say that, when they left Care, in addition to a suitcase of clothes, they carried the heavy emotional baggage of anger, shame, and stigma. And love is not easily understood. How do people who have never experienced love as a child learn to love? So not hate, but an enduring resentment of being abandoned which creates feelings of betrayal and distrust of people in authority. A friend of mine sleeps with a weapon under his bed. Just in case. Some Care leavers never marry or, if they do, they decide not to have children. They trust no one, including themselves.

### Q. The painting on your book was created in an artistic space with the support of like-minded people. What form of support services are there for those institutionalised and abused?

A. About twenty years ago, a group of people who grew up in orphanages, children's homes, foster care and

institutions saw the need for support and advocacy for this large group

(estimated at 500,000 in the period 1930-1980). They created the Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN), learned political skills, and agitated for formal inquiries. Testimony from older Care leavers has led to some government services such as access to personal records, family searches and reunions, counselling, remedying the years of neglect of medical and dental needs. Public apologies, memorials, financial redress, give some Care leavers a sense of vindication or validation. Others feel that being taken from their families can never be rectified and they grieve still for a lost childhood.

### Q. 'Your' book, published in 1960, uses the written word to explore unfamiliar worlds. How do Care leavers describe and express their lived experiences?

A. Well-chosen personal anecdotes are powerful because they strike at the emotions, stimulate empathy and often get media attention. Care leavers have brought their experiences before the public with silent, strategic demonstrations outside parliaments or electoral offices, handing out leaflets or postcards to the public asking them to forward them to their local Member. CLAN has also opened an Australian Orphanage Museum where these difficult chapters in Australian history can be displayed and re-interpreted.

### Q. What are your plans for the future?

A. I continue to work hard, and enjoy being busy. There are still so many things that need to be done.



# HOW TO MAKE IT ON THE LAND

## Simone's story

### *Q. What is your family heritage?*

A. My family's Scottish heritage is the most familiar to me. My great grandfather, JA McGregor started a stock and station agency in 1897 in Warialda, a small rural town in northwest NSW. The JA McGregor & Co business steadily grew as agriculture expanded through the years and particularly post WW2. My father was responsible for the grain training and real-estate side of the business. As 4<sup>th</sup> generation Warialda McGregor's, we learnt how to do Scottish dancing, marked our religion as Presbyterian and wore a bit of McGregor tartan now and then.

### *Q. What was your childhood and adolescence like?*

A. Growing up in a small town meant everybody knew everybody. I remember at 12 years old trying to make a reverse charge call to mum on the old manual telephone exchange and the lady working on that saying, "your mum has gone shopping and won't be home until after lunch"! I was well aware that people both knew and respected my family from a young age. Time was spent with my cousins racing about town, helping our parents at Saturday farm clearing sales, going with my father to weigh a grain truck or a long drive for a rural property valuation. Volunteering for the local agricultural show, the horse race meeting, hospital fundraising, schools P&C, meals on wheels - my parents did it all and we therefore were always involved to some degree. I was very aware that I had a very fortunate childhood and a loving supportive family that valued both an education and contribution back to community.

### *Q. Having grown up in a rural area, did married farm life come easily or was it more challenging?*

A. There is a lot more planning and problem-solving required living on a farm. Learning what to do in a blackout or when the phones go down. How to manage with a limited water supply, how to shop ahead so we always have enough milk... Life revolves around the weather and the time of year on a farm. Too much

wind blows trees over fences and phones and power might go down, too much rain and you can't drive on the dirt roads, dust storms mean "quick shut the windows", rising temperatures mean checking the cattle troughs and watering the garden constantly.

Planning holidays and trips away are done between harvest, sowing and calving times. I have had to adapt to the farming calendar and learn what to do when. I am still very dependent upon my husband Bill who I think is amazingly resilient and capable across any possible scenario.

'Our work would not be possible if it was not for a high-speed internet connection'

### *Q. Living on the land seems to be a blend of contrasts. Can you describe some of those difficult and wonderful times?*

A. Things that scare you the most are the farm accidents. Motorbike crashes at high-speed mustering cattle, utes rolling as they take a corner quickly on a dirt road, stock yard injuries with unpredictable cattle moving through gates, machinery shed injuries. We have had some close calls making the first aid kit in the pantry look pathetic, but on the whole, been very lucky.

There is nothing more enjoyable than driving around a bumper crop or a paddock full of fat cattle eating green feed in late spring. The long summer sunsets in the wide skies are incredible and something you pinch yourself you get to see.

There are different emotions experienced by devastatingly slow droughts in contrast to the shock of rapid flooding.

Both mean making decisions and a significant workload to prepare and secure crops, cattle and assets. In drought decisions are made continually to make the most of the crops and ensure enough feed for the cattle. Then in the last flood, Bill knew to the exact hour when we would have to evacuate before the road would be impassable. Whilst I took the children in to town so they could attend school, he stayed behind to try and protect the stock and crops and was isolated for a week. The climate is unpredictable and impacts

us in a way that even the best decision-maker is left questioning themselves sometimes.

### *Q. Can you describe the type of professional work do you do?*

A. In 2015, a speech pathology colleague and I started an allied health practice. Therapy Connect is unique in that it delivers a range of supports (speech pathology, occupational therapy, psychology, physiotherapy and dietetics) all 100% online via video conferencing technologies. The aim is to enable people with disability to access high quality therapy supports no matter where they live.

We now have a team of over 40 allied health practitioners from all over Australia working with people with disabilities also from all over Australia.

Our work would not be possible if it was not for a high-speed internet connection. In the early days I had to travel 36kms to town to rent an office to secure the internet connection. Since the roll out of the Sky Muster NBN satellite connection I have been able to run the business from my office at home on the farm. Access to high-speed connectivity on the farm has changed my life!

Reflecting upon my work achievements, I know that it is my experience both growing up and living in rural Australia all of my life that has both motivated and informed the development of Therapy Connect. I am astonished when I look back and realise that I have been able to develop a business serving people in need around Australia, all from my office on the family farm. I love my country life and the opportunities and experiences that I have been able to find because of it.

