

December 2016 | January 2017

50 SOMETHING

Australia's over-50s magazine

Bryan Brown

Working with animals

Best of British

Royal Ballet Down Under

Rick Stein

Europe on a plate

Mongolia

Off the beaten track

MAGGIE BEER

Food, wine and music



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FIRST UP



Letters



News



Dagmar's Desk



Campaigns

EPICUREAN



Food



Travel



Perfect Presents

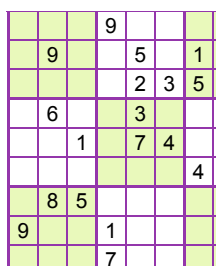


Books and Movies

TIME OUT



Tech Spec



Puzzles



Crossword



A Remarkable Life

Guest Editor

There's nothing quite like Christmas to separate the 'planners' from the rest of us.

They made their Christmas cakes and puddings months ago; they've sent all their cards; they've chosen perfect gifts for everyone; and they have 25 December planned down to the last Christmas cracker. The rest of us, on the other hand, tend to muddle through.

I was greatly relieved to discover that Maggie Beer, the focus of our cover story, is a source of inspiration for us muddlers.

When National Seniors journalist and media adviser, Rosemary Desmond, asked Maggie for her secret to happy and relaxed Christmas

entertaining, her answer was immediate – keep it simple with good food, perhaps some special wines, plenty of laughter... and an afternoon nap. Sounds perfect to me.

Enjoy this final edition of *50 something* for 2016 (perhaps while sipping one of the champagnes recommended by Bernadette O'Shea on page 14) and let's all hope our world can be a fairer, kinder, better place in 2017.

Judith Anderson OAM



CONTRIBUTORS



Margaret Arthur

Margaret Arthur is a senior associate at Brisbane law firm Carne Reidy Herd. Margaret's expertise extends to wills, estates, enduring powers of attorney, guardianship, Centrelink, superannuation and family succession and disputes. See more at www.crhlaw.com.au



Lyn Drummond

Lyn Drummond is a journalist, editor and former public affairs manager in Australian foreign service posts in Brussels and Budapest. She has recently returned to Australia after three years in The Netherlands, helping to give women a stronger political voice in Middle Eastern and African countries and as a media specialist for Greenpeace International. Her writing focuses on her particular interests in the protection of human rights.



Alf Wilson

Alf Wilson has been a journalist for 32 years. Based in Townsville, he has worked freelance for the past 20 years and has also travelled to Tasmania, NSW and Victoria. Many of the people he wrote stories about decades ago are now seniors with adult children, and in some cases, grandchildren.



Casey-Ann Seaniger

Casey-Ann Seaniger is a former National Seniors' staff member and *50 something* journalist, now working in a women's NGO in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Casey describes herself as a newshound, political junkie, storyteller and bibliophile who is not fond of the status quo.



Kristie Forrest

Kristie Forrest comes from a background in marketing, events and communications and now works in community engagement with National Seniors. She is a mum and a creative writing student, toying with screenplays and fiction that finds comedy in the grit of everyday drama.



Rosemary Desmond

Rosemary Desmond is a *50 something* staff writer and National Seniors media adviser. Originally from New Zealand, Rosemary has worked in Australia for 38 years, most of that time as a journalist for Australian Associated Press (AAP) in Sydney and in Brisbane.

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NEWS

Auguste Rodin *The Kiss* 1901–04 Tate: Purchased with assistance from the Art Fund and public contributions 1953



Image © Tate, London 2016

The art of the nude

One of the oldest and most universal subjects in art is the nude. It has also been one of its most controversial.

The Art Gallery of NSW is showing more than 100 major representations of the nude, including paintings, photographs, sculptures and prints from famed London art museum, The Tate.

Artists represented include Pablo Picasso, Lucian Freud and Henry Matisse.

Central to the exhibition is sculptor Auguste Rodin's 1901-1904 masterpiece *The Kiss*.

Despite being widely recognised as one of the great images of erotic love, Rodin considered it overly traditional, labelling *The Kiss* 'a large sculpted knick-knack following the usual formula'.

The kissing couple are the adulterous lovers Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini, who were slain by Francesca's outraged husband.

They appear in Dante's *Inferno*, which describes how their passion grew as they read the story of Lancelot and Guinevere together. The book can just be seen in Paolo's hand.

Other renowned works in the Art Gallery of NSW's *Nude: art from the Tate collection* include Picasso's *Nude woman in a red armchair* (1932) and Bonnard's *The Bath* (1925).

The exhibition is open at the Domain, Sydney, until 5 February. (Closed Christmas Day.)

Bulgari on show

Actor Richard Burton famously quipped that in the nine months Elizabeth Taylor spent in Rome filming *Cleopatra*, she learned just one word of Italian — 'Bulgari'.

This summer, feast your eyes on more than 80 pieces at National Gallery of Victoria's exhibition *Italian Jewels: Bulgari Style*, which focuses on the *La Dolce Vita* period of the 1950s and '60s when Rome was a favourite location for Hollywood films.

There are items from the personal collections of Elizabeth Taylor and Gina Lollobrigida and from prestigious patrons such as Anita Ekberg and Grace Kelly.

Exhibits also include film clips and photographs, as well as spectacular jewels from the Bulgari Heritage Collection worn on the red carpet by leading Hollywood starlets such as Keira Knightley.

Organised by the National Gallery of Victoria in collaboration with Bulgari Heritage.

Open until 29 January. Free entry.



Bulgari, Rome (manufacturer)
Italy 1884–
Necklace with pendant/brooch 1962 and 1958
platinum, emerald, diamond
37.0 × 2.7 cm (necklace)
4.8 × 4.0 cm (pendant/brooch)
Bulgari Heritage Collection, Rome
(MUS0429 and MUS0572)

Photo © Antonio Barrella Studio Orizzonte

50 YEARS AGO



In 1966, the first banknotes of Australia's new decimal currency came into circulation. Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies wanted to call the unit the 'royal' but due to general unpopularity, the name of the currency was changed to the dollar.

Other suggested names included the austral, the oz, the boomer, the roo, the kanga, the emu, the digger, the quid, the dinkum and the ming (Menzies' nickname).

National Seniors Australia tennis fans are making their annual pilgrimage to the Australian Open Tennis in Melbourne. They will be courtside on 23, 24 and 25 January, watching all the live action in Rod Laver Arena.

The Best of British

During her 13 years as general manager of Queensland Ballet, Judith Anderson experienced the exciting beginnings of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's International Series and has since seen the benefits that have flowed to the performing arts and the broader community in Queensland.

Balletomanes around the nation will once again be winging their way to Brisbane in 2017 when The Royal Ballet visits Australia for the first time in 15 years – exclusive to Brisbane.

Tickets are now on sale for the 12 performances to be presented at the Lyric Theatre, Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) from 29 June to 9 July 2017 as part of the Centre's continuing International Series.

The Royal Ballet's Director, Kevin O'Hare, has programmed two exciting original works for the Brisbane season – Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* and Wayne McGregor's *Wolf Works*.

Wheeldon's adaptation of Shakespeare's story of regret and reconciliation was a great critical and popular success when it premiered at Covent Garden in 2014, and its return season in June 2016 was met with equal enthusiasm.

Wolf Works is an even newer creation, based on the life and work of English writer, Virginia Woolf. Added to the company's repertoire only in 2015, this three-act ballet has won both the Critics' Circle Award for Best Classical Choreography and the Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production.

Such bold programming is an indication of the increasing adventurousness of Australian ballet and dance audiences and their willingness to extend their experience beyond familiar works and the grand classical tradition.

QPAC first put a toe into the water in an audacious venture which brought the Paris Opera Ballet to Brisbane in 2009, performing Rudolf Nureyev's three-act 'blockbuster', *La Bayadère*.

Seven years on, the centre has hosted five more of the world's most celebrated performing arts companies, often presenting repertoire never previously seen in Australia.

In addition to Paris Opera Ballet, the honour board of exclusive seasons in Brisbane now lists the Ballet Nacional de Cuba (2010), The Hamburg Ballet, State Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra (2012), the Bolshoi Ballet (2013), New York's American Ballet Theatre (2014) and, in 2016, the contemporary French company, Ballet Preljocaj, with their Jean Paul Gaultier-designed *Snow White*.

Presented in partnership with Tourism and Events Queensland, the QPAC International Series also has a vital focus on creating a legacy, fostering genuine cultural exchange with the community through such activities as companion exhibitions, direct broadcasts to regional centres, and collaborations with local orchestras, dance companies and festivals.

For further details, go to: qpac.com.au



ROH Johan Persson, 2014

The tree which features in the set of *The Winter's Tale* (pictured) holds the record for the biggest item ever built by the prop making department at Covent Garden. Nine metres high and 11 metres wide, this colossus had to be created in two pieces and put together for the first time backstage at the theatre. The trinkets that hang from the branches were also handcrafted by the department.



Australian Elvis Tribute Artist Mark Andrew © Parkes Elvis Festival

Elvis lives on

Dust off the rhinestone jumpsuits for the 25th Parkes Elvis Festival in regional NSW, 11-15 January 2017.

There will be more than 120 events, including the Feature Concert Series, Elvis Gospel Service, a street parade and the Miss Priscilla Dinner.

The theme for the 2017 event is the 1964 Elvis film, *Viva Las Vegas*.



Maggie in the kitchen at the Farm Shop, where *The Cook and the Chef* was filmed

Appetite for Life

One of the most recognisable faces on Australian TV belongs to one of its best loved cooks and food personalities.



At home in the Barossa Valley

With a passion for fresh produce and for her Barossa Valley home, Maggie Beer has prepared, presented and inspired audiences on programs including *The Cook and the Chef*, *The Great Australian Bake Off*, and next year, *Maggie in Japan*.

She has been the subject of *Who do you think you are?*, has authored best-selling cookbooks, was 2010 Senior Australian of the Year, and was recognised as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2012.

At 71, she could let someone else do the cooking and take a well-earned rest. Instead, she wants to improve the lives of people no longer able to cook for themselves – those living in aged care homes.

Rosemary Desmond asked Maggie to share her thoughts on food, life – and her ideal dinner party guests.

Where does your passion for food come from?

Being born into a family where food was always important, my eyes and ears were wide open when I first arrived in the Barossa. I learnt quickly about the rhythm of the seasons, how to delight in fruit and vegetables picked ripe and at their best, and how to maximise the potential of what can be grown here and what is available in the wild. As a city person, sharing in a community was particularly special, but to find myself in a place so devoted to my own passions – food, music and wine – made it seem that it was meant to be.

What is the Maggie Beer Foundation and what prompted you to set it up?

In 2010, I realised just how many passionate people working in aged care are trying to bring about change with very limited resources. It is complex to manage but I hoped to bring together specialist aspects of science, research, nutrition and management under one umbrella to help this industry

provide nutrient-rich, flavoursome food to everyone, regardless of age or dietary requirements. The vision of the Foundation is to educate and facilitate – I truly believe everyone deserves to enjoy good food.

How would you improve the lives of people in aged care and nursing homes?

The Foundation focuses directly on the lives of residents – things like making meal times more social, growing fresh

vegetables and herbs on site, allowing more autonomy of meal choice. With staff, we do hands-on cooking demonstrations to share recipe ideas and ways of incorporating simple things like fresh stock, real butter and fresh, rather than frozen, veggies. These may seem small things, but from experience we know that changing someone's food choices can take only a slight shift in perspective.

Do governments have a role to play in this?

Most definitely. Governments can play an active part in legislation but essentially I believe the greatest impact will come from those who are making the day-to-day choices about the food offered to residents – those cooks and chefs are the people we most want to inspire.

What do you say to the operators of homes whose first priority may be keeping to a budget, with food taste and nutrition given a lower priority?

First, I would say 'I understand'! Having worked with food for most of my career, I absolutely appreciate having to work to budgets, but my intention with the Foundation is to bring new thinking to such stumbling blocks. It takes considerable skill to plan and execute menus that are varied, culturally diverse, familiar, flavoursome yet within budget, and those skills are sometimes lacking in aged care facilities.

just keep adding in the good stuff

This is exactly why we have established *Creating an Appetite for Life*, a workshop especially for cooks and chefs working in aged care to provide a hands-on approach to nutritious ingredients, budgeting, supplier relationships, aged care-specific recipes, menus and dining room management.

Many older people live alone. How would you advise them to maintain a healthy diet?

It is absolutely important to stay active and eat well as we age, all the more so because we face extra health challenges when the body doesn't bounce back as it once did. Fresh fruit and salads are an easy add-in to anyone's diet and that's what I think is the best 'secret': just keep adding in the good stuff rather than get too worried about being overly restrictive.

If you could have any three people, living or dead, at a dinner party, who would they be?

Colin (my husband), Ella Fitzgerald and Dame Joan Sutherland. What a sing-along that would be after dinner!

What would you serve them?

My family's favourite, roast chook. I could cook it with my eyes closed – all the more time to talk! ■

For more information on the Maggie Beer Foundation, visit maggiebeerfoundation.org.au





Life on the Steppe

Former *50 something* journalist Casey-Ann Seaniger is now living and working in Mongolia. She took time out to travel to the country's wild west for a glimpse of life on the steppe with the eagle hunters.



It is mesmerising. Against a background of towering mountains, a group of Kazakh eagle hunters gallops across the Mongolian steppe, each holding a giant golden eagle on his outstretched arm.

Kazakh eagle hunting is a centuries-old tradition dating back at least a thousand years where hunters ride with eagles to catch foxes, marmots and wolves.

On horseback, the hunters take turns, each calling his eagle down from the mountaintop and whistling until it swoops and catches a fur-covered skin being dragged on a rope.

The men ride up a steep bank to take part in one of the two festivals staged for tourists every September and October in Mongolia's most distant western province, Bayan-Ulgii, near the Altai Mountains.

My Kazakh guide, Tsunka, tells me the calf-length fox fur coats they are wearing are skins from their previous hunting trips. Their horses are part of the spectacle, yellow and blue tassels dangling around their manes.

The tradition remains a key part of Kazakh culture. The prestige that comes with being the best eagle hunter means that your son or daughter will attract a good wife or husband.

Tsunka explains that most Kazakhs are nomadic herders, and that hunting for food and clothing is essential for their survival in the Altai Mountains bordering Mongolia, Russia and China and almost reaching Kazakhstan.

And survival out here is tough. This region suffers some of the harshest conditions on the planet with winters lasting up to six months and temperatures dropping to a bitterly cold minus 40 degrees Celsius.

In this cold northern latitude, nomads' lives depend on meat and milk from their horses, goats and sheep. They relocate their felt 'gers' (the word 'yurt' is Turkish) up to four times a year to reach fresh grazing land for their animals.

In summer, Kazakh women boil milk to make a hard cheese that stays fresh without refrigeration for many months.

The gers don't have running water or bathrooms and drinking water is sparse so people drink salty milk tea called 'suutei tsai', instead of water.

Culturally, western Mongolia is different from the rest of the country. The majority of those living in Bayan-Ulgii identify as Kazakhs.

My guide Tsunka was born in Mongolia and has never been to Kazakhstan, but says: "I call myself a Kazakh first of all... then a Mongolian Kazakh. This is where our culture comes from".

the calf-length fox fur coats they are wearing are skins from their previous hunting trips

Their language is Kazakh, not Mongolian. In their religion, most Kazakhs loosely follow Sunni Islam, unlike the majority of Mongolians who are influenced by Buddhism and Shamanism.

The next part of our trip is a drive to Tavan Bogd National Park. Meaning 'Five Saints', Tavan Bogd is named after the five mountains in the area.

Before leaving, my friends and I walk up a nearby hill and take turns flicking vodka from the bottle cap into the air as an offering to the sky, a common Mongolian ritual to ensure a safe journey.

We bundle into our sturdy Russian van. Our driver, Bolat, expertly handles the steering wheel and tunes in some Kazakh pop music for the ride.

Our journey takes more than seven hours along a bone-jarring off-road track and I feel every bump of the way as our heads hit the padded roof of the vehicle.

The remoteness of Bolat's homeland cannot be understated. There are no hotels or restaurants, only a few sparsely-stocked shops, and there's no public transport.

The small towns on the way have simple mud-walled homes or just a scattering of gers and mosques.

We drive through rivers and over land still green from the summer rains. Children dash from their gers, waving at us enthusiastically. Their rosy cheeks and spirited smiles are captivating.

We see all kinds of wildlife: a burrowing marmot, ground squirrels scurrying across the hills, wild eagles and a flock of wild two-humped Bactrian camels.

I am struck by the sheer vastness of the landscape, the steppe that rolls on, horses that traverse the countryside and the rich nomadic life that flourishes in unexpected places.

Nearing the snow-capped mountains, our van descends into a valley between lofty brown hills, with a mineral-blue river cascading below. Nearby, the 14 km-long Pontanin Glacier spills out of the mountain range.

My hiking buddy Jane and I trudge through marsh and bog over high hills, stopping to admire fluorescent green and yellow lichen on rocks in a river bed of fairy pools.

We reach the glacier and stop for lunch. The glacier is covered in swirls of pillowy snow. "This is marvellous!" Jane shouts.

At dinner, we huddle outside our ger on camp chairs, the cold air on our faces. Our new Kazakh friends eat white chunks of mutton fat in soup and drink suutei tsai.

We take turns to stoke the fire with dried dung, pass around a bottle of Chinggis Gold vodka and tell our friends how happy we are to be in Mongolia.

Sleeping on the floor of the ger, I hear a yak snorting and listen to the roar of the river just metres from me.

As we travel back to Ulgii on my last day, a young boy runs from a wooden hut offering a tree branch with orange sea buckthorn berries and a bowl of aaruul (dried milk curd). He places it in my hands and I accept the gift with thanks. It's this warmth that strikes me most about the people who live a life bounded only by far horizons. ■

Perfect presents for little people

50 something contributor Kristie Forrest is a young mother who well knows how hard it can be to buy gifts for children.

Their rooms are overflowing with toys already and Santa is bound to bring more. You know they like Lego but have no idea what they already have. And teenagers! What on earth do you buy them when it's all about brands and expensive gadgets? You've probably felt the drain on your festive cheer while preparing the faithful 'cash in a card' combo which, despite almost always being appreciated, still feels impersonal and lacklustre. We've come up with some ideas to help.

Cinema voucher

Try wrapping the voucher with a packet of their favourite treats or movie snacks.

Camping or fishing gear

Rods, tackle boxes, camping chairs, binoculars, torches, sleeping bags, two-way radios and other gear of this nature is an excellent way to encourage youngsters to get outside!

Puzzles, books and games

Visit a specialty games store or craft market to get something out of the ordinary. Consider outdoor all-ages family games like *Finska* (a unique European maths game involving the strategic throwing of wooden logs), Giant Connect 4 or bocce. Buy one game as a joint gift for the whole family.

Theme park, zoo or attraction

Purchase a season pass or entry ticket for an attraction or experience like Sea World, Wet'n'Wild, Luna Park, zoos, bowling alleys or miniature golf. There are many options for this type of fun. Print the ticket and attraction map or brochure so they can visualise the gift and consider going with them to give their parents a break.

Show tickets

There are suitable stage shows happening around Australia in the New Year. Check out your local theatre or ticketing website to see what's on and be sure to check the recommended age group if purchasing for younger children. Some 2017 productions include:

Young children

Mister Maker, *Roald Dahl's George's Marvellous Medicine*, *Room on the Broom*, *Operation Ouch*, *Paw Patrol Live! Race to the Rescue*, and *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*.

Family

Aladdin the Musical, *Cirque du Soleil Kooza*, *Nitro Circus*, *Disney on Ice*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Matilda the Musical*, and *Cinderella*.

Print the ticket confirmation with a copy of the show flyer and wrap with a treat.

Household items

Quilt cover, beach towel, lamp, clock, corkboard/message board or something else special for their bedroom or study space.

Homemade treats

Homemade fudge, coconut ice, toffee or other treats packed in a jar or brown paper, tied with a ribbon.

Dress ups

Available in department stores, toy shops and online specialist costume stores. Choose generic costumes like police officer, fairy or pirate; or their favourite licensed character.

Art supplies

Colouring books, coloured paper, crayons, markers, glitter, sequins, stickers, pipe cleaners, stick-on eyes, pom-poms, ribbon or activity sets.



Gardening supplies

Seeds, a watering can, pot, gloves and trowel could be bundled into a nice package.

Voucher for one-on-one time

Hand-make a special voucher entitling them to a one-on-one picnic in the park or movie night with you. You could wrap this with an inexpensive colouring book and pencils.

Mani/Pedi

For a teenage girl, a voucher for a manicure or pedicure is a treat you could share for a special day out.

Sporty stuff

A new basketball or footy is always useful, or consider purchasing a membership to their favourite sporting club or tickets to a game.

Remember to make use of your National Seniors membership this festive season and access discounts to theme parks, attractions, theatre shows, books, wine, flowers and gift vouchers using the *Where to Enjoy* app or link on the National Seniors website.

To win a *Finska* set valued at \$69.95, post your details with your membership number on an envelope to: 50 something *Finska* competition, GPO Box 1450, Brisbane QLD 4001 or enter online at nationalseniors.com.au/competitions. Entries close 16 December.

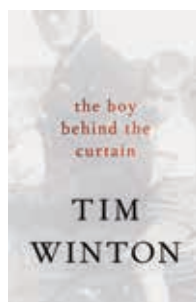


BOOKS | A Good Read



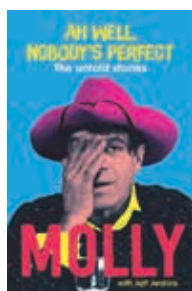
Pocket Iris Wisdom Iris Apfel

At 94, Iris Apfel is having the time of her life. Having made her name as an interior designer (working on the White House with the wives of nine presidents) and fashion icon, she's in demand as a model and fans love her unsugared truths. Iris's best quotes and life wisdom have been compiled in *Pocket Iris Wisdom* (Hardie Grant Books) for your delectation and inspiration. Voted one of the Best Dressed over 50s by The Guardian, she's Manhattan's oldest and coolest 'It girl' and star of documentary *Iris* by filmmaker Albert Maysles.



The Boy Behind The Curtain Tim Winton

In Tim Winton's fiction, chaos waits in the wings and ordinary people are ambushed by events and emotions beyond their control. The true stories that make up *The Boy Behind the Curtain* (Penguin Random House) take us behind the scenes, revealing the accidents, both serendipitous and traumatic, that have influenced his view of life and fuelled his artistic vision. They show the unexpected links between car crashes and religious faith, between surfing and writing, and how going to the wrong movie at the age of eight opened him up to a life of the imagination.



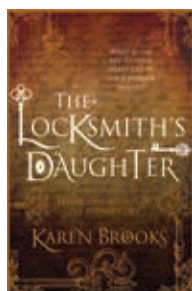
Ah Well, Nobody's Perfect Molly Meldrum and Jeff Jenkins

Molly Meldrum, one of Australia's best-loved personalities, reveals his funny, eye-opening and larger-than-life untold stories: the parties, the fights, the celebrity interviews, the madness and the music in his new book with Jeff Jenkins, *Ah Well, Nobody's Perfect* (Allen & Unwin). He gives us unforgettable encounters with The Beatles, Elton John, David Bowie, The Rolling Stones, Madonna, John Farnham, Bruce Springsteen, the Bee Gees, Rod Stewart, Russell Crowe, Oasis, Beyonce and Prince, as well as the tales that surround his other loves: the Australian cricket team, the St Kilda footy club and the Melbourne Storm.



The Last Crocodile Hunter Bob Irwin and Amanda French

Bob Irwin is an Australian legend and a passionate conservationist. *The Last Crocodile Hunter* (Allen & Unwin), co-authored with his trusted friend Amanda French, uncovers the man behind the legend and explains how a plumber from Melbourne became a conservation pioneer, started Australia Zoo and raised his wildlife warrior son, Steve Irwin. The book opens with an extraordinary letter from a 32-year old Steve to his parents which Bob found only in 2016. The book is packed with previously unseen photographs from the Irwin family albums.



The Locksmith's Daughter Karen Brooks

In *The Locksmith's Daughter* (Harlequin Books), Mallory Bright is the daughter of London's master locksmith. For her there is no lock too elaborate, no secret too well kept. The spymaster and protector of Queen Elizabeth – the last of the Tudor monarchs – is quick to realise Mallory's talent and draws her into his world of intrigue, danger and deception. With her by his side, no plot is secure. But Mallory's loyalty wavers when she witnesses the execution of three Jesuit priests, and she has to make a choice between her country and her heart. This gripping novel features real historic figures and events.

WIN

To win a book pack of each of the five books featured above, write your name and address on the back of an envelope and send to: **Five book pack competition, GPO Box 1450, Brisbane 4001 or enter online at nationalseniors.com.au/competitions. Entries close 20 January.**



Pounce Seth Casteel

Photographer Seth Casteel's underwater photographs of dogs and babies have captivated an international audience. Now, he's found the perfect way to capture our other best friends: cats! *Pounce* (Hachette Australia) is a beautiful, funny gift book with more than 80 photographs of adorable cats and kittens as they pounce and jump through the air.



Incredible Dog Journeys Laura Greaves

Incredible Dog Journeys (Penguin) shares the true stories of how 16 remarkable dogs found their way home, from heart-warming tales of canine loyalty to mysterious cases of dogs turning up thousands of miles away.

WIN

To win a book pack containing *Pounce* and *Incredible Dog Journeys*, write your name and address on the back of an envelope and send to: **Cat and Dog book pack competition, GPO Box 1450, Brisbane 4001 or enter online at nationalseniors.com.au/competitions. Entries close 20 January.**

December 2016 | January 2017

A REMARKABLE LIFE

Each issue, *50 something* will feature the life story of a member of National Seniors. John Falconer is our first profile.

National Seniors' member and former police officer, John Falconer, has rubbed shoulders with British royalty in many exotic locations.

But his long career was nearly nipped in the bud by a sniper's bullet.

Shortly after WWII, John had a choice of doing his National Service with the British Armed Forces or with the Palestine Police.

He chose the latter because, at £20 a month, the pay was better.

John was shot at three times by Jewish separatists keen to drive the British out of Palestine, and on one occasion a bullet missed his head by only an inch.

"When they (the separatists) sentenced us to death on the radio in 1947, I cut a niche in my pistol's holster so I could fire it from the hip," John said.

After Israel's creation in 1948, John returned to the United Kingdom and entered the London Metropolitan Police, rising to the rank of inspector.

"You had to be an inspector (to get a job as a royal bodyguard) and I was asked if I would like a job with royalty, so I said 'yes'."

"First, I was the number two bodyguard to Prince Philip for 10 months and during that time I went on the Royal Yacht (Britannia) and on a royal tour of the West Indies with the Queen and the Duke."

John also had a bedroom at Windsor Castle if his police 'boss' wanted the weekend off.

"I spent quite a few weekends there and saw a lot of the Queen."

An 18-year-old Prince Charles was also under John's watch and care – on the ski slopes of Europe.

"I couldn't ski so we used to go up in the chair lift. He would ski down and I used to come down in the chair lift."

"I was his bodyguard for a short time. He was a nice chap."

From 1966 to 1973, John served as bodyguard to Princess Margaret.

"She was marvellous. All the criticism in the papers I couldn't understand, but we got on very well", he said.

He had many trips with her to Italy and Sardinia, often as guests of the Aga Khan.

Shortly before emigrating to Australia in 1973, John was granted an audience with the Queen who asked him what he would do here.

"I said I wanted a house with a swimming pool and three and a half acres."

"Four years later when she came to Australia, I had a phone call from the Royal Yacht saying the Queen would like to see me if I could go down to Freemantle, which I did."

"She laughed when I said I had the house with the swimming pool but I didn't want the three and a half acres because you have to 'burn off'."

John came with Princess Margaret to Western Australia on the royal visit in 1972 and emigrated the following year.

He joined National Seniors in 1995 and, at age 88, is still an active member of the Floreat and Districts Branch.

"I read the magazine, go to the meetings, and I gave a talk on my life story to them. They seemed to be quite impressed with that", he said. ■

National Seniors has a network of 130 community branches across Australia. To find a branch near you, call 1300 76 50 50 or visit nationalseniors.com.au



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