



# Probus Club of Sydney

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## Newsletter

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OCTOBER 2023

Issue 458

### MEETING DATES

OCTOBER 3

WES RAFFEL

Silicon Valley

NOVEMBER 14

BRETT MASON

Wizards of Oz

### ACTIVITIES

6 October & 9 November

TRANSURBAN TOURS

12 December

CHRISTMAS LUNCH at Orso

### CONTENTS

Future Guest Speakers

September Meeting Report

Guest Speaker Report

Social Activities Program

Book Review

Travel Report

A touch of Humour

A touch of Nostalgia

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Gentlemen,*

Many thanks to vice-president Peter James for chairing last month's meeting. At the time I was enjoying the sights of Alaska, "the Last Frontier", from a 33-person cruise ship in the Inside Passage followed by a 12-person bus trip out of Anchorage. Apart from the magnificent mountainous scenery featuring snowy peaks and glaciers, highlights included watching humpback whales "bubble net fishing" for herring prior to heading south to Maui, along with getting close and friendly to pre-hibernation black bears gorging on unfortunate salmon on their way to spawn. My repeated questions about what representation the Alaskan Natives and the Canadian First Nations Peoples had to their Governments was uniformly met with "I've got no idea, why do you ask?" .....

John Doherty keeps coming up with inspired choices for our speakers' programme and Wes Raffel, our speaker for the October meeting, will continue the tradition with a talk entitled "Silicon Valley - My Experiences and Tips for the Future". Please register ASAP - and stay for lunch! We'll also be entertained by Life Before Probus speaker Geoff Hudspeth and Raconteur Bill Butterell.

Looking forward to seeing you on October 3.

**John Carter**

President

### **Note**

**To Register to attend the October meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club - [click here](#)**

OCTOBER 3

### WES RAFFEL

#### **Silicon Valley Venture Capital Investing - My Experiences and Tips for the Future**



Wes Raffel graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Harvard University and an MBA from the University of Chicago. His early career was with IBM and 3Com and then he progressed into Venture Capital with ATV Ventures. He has experience in all areas of ICT and a deep knowledge of Venture Capital. He worked the majority of his career in Silicon Valley and still mentors Chief Executives of start up technology companies. He is currently enjoying a 6 month break in Australia.

Wes's talk will explain why Silicon Valley is the epicentre for venture investing and the different types of venture firms involved. He will also describe who investors are in those firms and what the economics are.

Other topics covered will be:

- The different company stages for investing
- The four elements to look for in a venture investment
- How a venture firm makes an investment
- What are the characteristics of successful venture investors
- What a Board of Directors does for venture investments and
- How to create liquidity for the companies

### **IMPORTANT REMINDER - NOVEMBER MEETING DATE**

Due to the running of the Melbourne Cup on the first Tuesday in November our meeting will be held on the **SECOND TUESDAY, 14<sup>th</sup> November**. Door open at 9.30am.

**NOVEMBER 14**

**BRETT MASON**

Clinical/Allergy immunologist and medical educator

**Wizards of Oz**



Brett Mason is Chair of the Council of the National Library of Australia, a member of the Council of Griffith University, and Adjunct Professor in the School of Justice at the Queensland University of Technology. He was formerly a Senator for Queensland, serving in the ministry, before being appointed Australia's Ambassador to The Hague and Permanent Representative to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

More than just a story of scientific discovery, 'Wizards of Oz' is a remarkable tale of secret missions, international intrigue, and triumph against all odds. Mason tells how Oliphant and Florey were also

instrumental in convincing a reluctant United States to develop and deploy the three breakthrough inventions in time to change the course of the war. (Sure, Robert Oppenheimer was important in making the atomic bomb, but it was Oliphant and British science that proved that the bomb could be built.) These two Australians not only helped win the war but shaped the peace, with their war-time contributions continuing to influence international politics and the health and wealth of nations.

Oliphant and Florey emerge in 'Wizards of Oz' as the two most consequential Australians of the Second World War – perhaps of all time.

His next book 'Saving Lieutenant Kennedy: the Heroic Story of the Australian who helped rescue JFK', will be published by NewSouth in November 2023.

Brett's two books will be available for purchase on 14th November.

***John Doherty***

## SEPTEMBER MEETING REPORT

The meeting was opened by Vice President Peter James standing in for the President who was overseas. Neil Martin introduced his guest, Wes Raffel and John Doherty introduced his guests, Mark Johnson and Peter Schell.

John Doherty reported on his speakers programme for the next few months and Ted Brogan described the recent event at the Royal Sydney Golf Club which was very successful. The visit to Victoria Barracks in Paddington in September is fully booked although there is a waiting list. There will be two tours to Transurban on 6 October and 9 November, both fully booked but again with waiting lists. Ted encouraged members to book for the Christmas lunch. The Treasurer, Wayne Jones, reported that our finances are in a healthy position.

Peter also reported that two of his acquaintances had recently developed DVTs after long haul flights and ended up with pulmonary embolisms although fortunately they have recovered well. He encouraged members to wear compression stockings when flying long haul.

### Life before Probus

#### Bill Thomas



Bill gave us an entertaining talk about the highlights of his life. He was born in a small town near Horsham in Victoria. He was sent to Ballarat Grammar School and then boarded at Trinity Grammar School in Melbourne in his senior years before doing a commerce degree at Melbourne University. He became a chartered accountant and worked at some of the major firms before ending up as a consultant in Arthur Andersons (now Accenture) in their Administration Services Division.

During that time he was sent to Japan to set up the consulting division of the firm in Tokyo. Japan was then very different to what it is today – the country was still recovering from the war but was making great steps in developing industries such as car manufacturing. They needed American audit firms in order to raise money in the USA. The difficulty was the language, mainly in the written form. Nothing was written in Roman characters. He then told us a hilarious story of a train journey to the ski slopes where someone was left behind when part of the train was disconnected and the way in which the problem was solved (no mobile phones in those days!). At 400 yen to the dollar it was very pleasant living in Tokyo. He had a large house with a garden big enough to play cricket!

When he returned to Sydney he was asked to give a talk to the partners describing what it was like to live in Japan and he was expected to give part of the talk in Japanese – which he didn't speak so he presented a talk which, apart from a few

common phrases, mainly consisted of the names of Japanese department stores, then the railway stations! He thought that nobody in the room would know what he was saying, but he had forgotten a Japanese man who was at the back of the room who spoilt the story somewhat by explaining to the audience what he had done!

Back in Sydney he decided to try another direction for his career and ended up in Japan again with the Sharp Group. But what changed his life was (after some hesitancy) joining a company called Nucleus which owned an electronics company called Telectronics which had just obtained the contract to develop Cochlear. Telectronics had the skills necessary to miniaturise the componentry of the implant which of course was highly successful.

He has now retired and enjoys playing golf and recommends that we should all maintain our strength.

## Ralph Higgins



Ralph, who was an ophthalmologist, started his talk by stating that there are two important days in a man's life – the day he was born and the day he finds out why he was born. He was born just at the time that the Second World War started. His father was firstly a manufacturer and then a farmer. He went to boarding school where he was a high jumper, a hurdler and a rugby winger. He won the CAS U16 hurdles in 1954. He continued his athletics after he left school competing for the Eastern Suburbs Athletic Club in most events until he went to a competition at the Hawkesbury Agricultural College where, unfortunately he broke his ankle in the high jump (there being no soft landing pits as there are today). This ended his athletics career so he took up boxing and became the middleweight champion of Sydney University.

He first studied engineering at university and took up a coal board scholarship. After his first year he was sent to work at a colliery in Wollongong. Unfortunately a bike accident sent him to hospital and he had to stay out of the mine for a while so he was placed in the electrical department where he had another disaster – he put his hand across two high voltage terminals! When he had recovered he was sent back to the coal face where he narrowly avoided being killed by a roof collapse. These experiences encouraged him to apply to medical school! After early experience as a GP and in paediatrics he became interested in Ophthalmology. He has been on the staff of the Sydney Eye Hospital since the end of 1969 as well as running a private practice. He was responsible for bringing laser surgery to the eye hospital. He has sat on many committees over the years, many with connections to the Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. For this work he received the College of Ophthalmology Medal.

Ralph then described his family history which was fascinating (but too complicated to describe here!). Suffice it to say his 14th great grandfather was Edward IV!

### Speaker

## CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON

### The Auteur Theory, or What Exactly Does a Film Director Do?



Christopher presented us with a wonderfully entertaining explanation of the Auteur Theory, which describes the film director as involved closely in every key aspect of making a feature length film.

The theory found its heart in the dominating role of Orson Wells in the creation of the epic “Citizen Kane”, whose credits include “A film by Orson Wells”, instead of just using the label “Director”. This is despite film making being a hugely collaborative effort involving hundreds of people. Some prominent French films adopted this nomenclature, saying “Un film de ...”.

This indicates the director is the author (=auteur in French) of the whole process, and hence the concept of the Auteur Theory (a term coined in 1962 by a legendary American critic Andrew Sarris).

To give a concrete example, in an inspired choice we could easily identify with, Christopher described the process of making a fictitious film which he titled “Utzon” about the creation and building of the Sydney Opera House. The whole process may take about 7 years from the outset to the release to cinemas.

First step may involve a draft script being delivered to the director, who would consider the practicalities of making a film on that topic, within cost and other constraints. Alternatively, the original idea may be given to a screenwriter who would produce the draft script.

Then the screenwriter and the director get together, perhaps initially to make some major changes, and then to fine tune the script into a core document, which the director is satisfied is a workable base for the film. Thus, the director is deeply involved from the outset.

The director then delivers this idea and script to the Producer (or production company). The director is only answerable to the Producer. The producer is like a CEO, who can fire the director but it is the director who can hire and/or fire everyone else. (For a major Hollywood film, the studio is deeply involved, eg perhaps commissioning the screenwriter, appointing the director, who becomes answerable to the studio). The producer will then engage with financiers to back the production, giving guarantees to underwrite the funding of the production of the film, including providing initial money to get the process started. Funding of an Australian film such as "Utzon" may need \$5 million. In Australia, typically half of this would be provided by the federal and/or state governments, with the balance to be raised by the producer from private investors and from pre-sale arrangements to Netflix, Stan, SBS or other streaming services.

With much of the \$5 million secured, the Director would then be given the go-ahead to start hiring - initially heads of production, including cinematographer, custom designer, production/set designer, sound designer, composer, etc. The director will work especially closely with the cinematographer, on what will go onto the screen (incl choice of colour/B&W, film/digital, widescreen/academy ratio, locations/sets, etc) with the director having the final say. Similarly, for set design, costume design, location scouts and later music, etc, the director will be closely involved with each, as well as the detailed pre-production plans for each shot of filming. (By contrast in a Hollywood blockbuster, the studio makes many of the final calls, and thus in this sense the director is not the "auteur" as in a smaller scale art-house film like "Utzon".)

Simultaneously the director goes out to get actors for the key roles. A desired actor may reject the role after reading the script, so another has to be canvassed. If a particular actor is willing and the fee is right, there could be long delays to wait until that actor is available. It may take a year or two to get the lead cast settled and all the numerous other pre-production elements (including about 80% of finance available) in place to be able to start production, ie filming.

Filming for a feature length movie will typically be 10 hours a day, 6 days per week for about 40 working days, involving a massive crew. Along with so many other things, the director will decide how many takes are needed for a particular scene until he is satisfied (normally 5-7 takes, initially getting it right, then making a couple of extras for assurance in the subsequent editing phase).

Now at least 6 weeks at least is spent between the director and the editor. That will finalise the "lock" version of the picture. Then the director will work with the sound editor for the next few weeks.

At this point the composer gets involved together with the director, working with the lock picture, until satisfied, after which a score is written for the required instruments, and an orchestra is engaged to record the music matched to the film. More editing follows to get the balance right, prior to assembly into the final "locked out" film. So, the director's deep involvement in every stage of the film's artistic development makes him or her the "auteur" of the film.

Christopher then gave more fascinating insights about film making in response to several questions (about length, famous directors, intimacy, AI and the current Hollywood strike by writers and actors).

David Castle then summed up our appreciation perfectly in applauding the splendid entertaining masterclass performance that we had all so much enjoyed.

**Peter James**

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

### Outstanding Winter Luncheon at Royal Sydney Golf Club



One hundred and one members and their guests enjoyed a wonderful event at the Club last month. Kate McClymont was the guest speaker and she did not disappoint. Her inroads into Sydney's underworld are amazing, we need more investigative reporters prepared to take the significant risks associated with

the job.

The Golf Club also did us proud with plentiful pre-luncheon drinks and a delicious luncheon of prime fillet steaks accompanied by mouth-watering wines, followed by berry crème brûlée.

There are numerous pictures on the website - [here](#)

*Editor's note: Activities Coordinator Ted Brogan is to be congratulated for organising this outstanding event. A grand time was had by all! (Rumour has it that he is exploring the possibility of the Club hosting our Christmas Luncheon for 2024.)*

#### **Future Activities**

Friday 6 October:	Transurban (fully booked but waitlist available)
Thursday 9 November:	Transurban (fully booked but waitlist available)
Tuesday 12 December:	Christmas lunch at Orso. Bookings now open.

**Ted Brogan**



## Cliff Dodds OAM

Cliff Dodds has resigned after 30 years of club and committee membership.



Cliff grew up in Strathfield and attended Sydney Grammar School where he topped the state in Accounting in the NSW Leaving Certificate examination. Despite numerous offers to take up a career in accounting, he decided to join the Australian Army as a Staff Cadet at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. One reason; even in a period of economic recession and a threat of war, Staff Cadets were paid and accommodated while they were trained, training that subsequently stood him in great stead in his post service career.

He entered Duntroon at the age of 17 in 1953 and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Australian Artillery. He saw active service in Vietnam from 1968-1969 and left military service in 1979 after 26 years.

He took up the role of Director NSW and National Special Projects of the Australian Society of Accountants during its highly successful transition to the CPA. During his 13 years with the Society its membership grew by 50%. In 1992 Cliff moved to Arthur Andersen as Director Administration, finally retiring in 1997 to spend time with his 'Army widow' Patsy and their family.

After many enjoyable years with Sydney Rotary, Cliff was pleased to be invited to join Sydney Probus in 1993. Later he took over the Activities portfolio from Rob Robson and served in that role for 3 years particularly enjoying time with Patsy exploring potential social activity events. In 2003 he was elected Vice President and then President the following year. He claims 2004 was 'The *best year* for the Club in years", as nobody died!

Cliff has enjoyed a wide range of interests including cricket, squash, sailing and his great love, Rugby Union. He played the game as a hooker in senior Rugby for twelve years before turning to refereeing up to including representative level. Currently he is a Patron of the NSW Rugby Union Referees Association. His OAM was awarded for his contribution to sport and support of professional organizations. He played a significant role during the Sydney Olympics as a Volunteer in the administration of the Family Host Program for overseas competitors.

Cliff and Patsy have three children, nine grandchildren and one great grandchild. He is saddened by his decision to resign his membership, but as he is the full-time carer for Patsy who has a progressive illness, he is unable to attend our meetings and activities that he so enjoyed. The Club wishes to thank Cliff for years of contribution and wishes him happiness and fulfillment for the rest of his life.

**Tony Andrew**

## TRAVEL REPORT

### Fun in the Sun at Fiji



Ian and I enjoyed seven beautiful days with our friends from Probus at the Shangri-la resort on the Coral Coast in Fiji, an hour from Nadi Airport. The setting was divine, and the lovely Fijian people were attentive with nothing being too much trouble, the food was delicious and very generous and available from a variety of outlets. We were

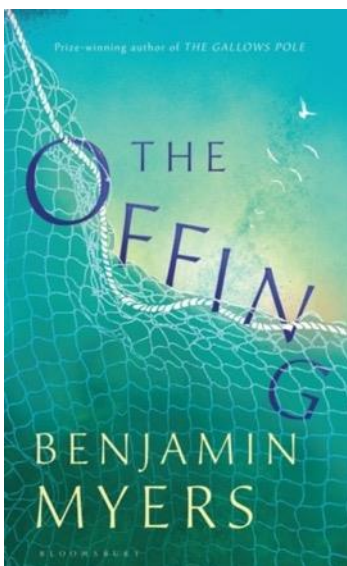
lucky with the weather - 26C and low humidity.

Tony Andrew was our Leader Extraordinaire and arranged a couple of visits to evening fire dancing exhibitions at Maran, the local Fijian village. Fire dancing is steeped in history and tradition and involves lighting up the evening! The fire knife dance for example has its roots in an ancient exhibition of a warrior's battle prowess through artful twirling, throwing and catching with a war club while on fire. Good fun!

**Tricia Bell**

## BOOK REVIEW

### The Offing by Benjamin Myers (2019) – 258 pages – Fiction



A coming-of-age saga in the English country summer of 1946, told through the eyes of a 16-year-old boy. The end of his age of ignorance and the English age of innocence (despite the war). Brilliantly narrated and described.

An unsophisticated coalminer's son from Durham meets an elderly, sophisticated lady, who has been everywhere and done everything, at her hideaway on the remote coast. A mentor to die for. Although he helped her recover from a tragedy that changed her life, she helped him avoid following in his father's footsteps.

However, it is written with a light touch and nature is the real star. There are so many contrasts: wartime England versus self-sufficiency in the countryside; a boy who has not experienced

lobster, wine, books, poetry or travel versus a highly sophisticated lady; class, Germany, bees and so many more.

Read it for the descriptions of nature, for the writing and the memorable character of Dulcie – the ultra-sophisticated but no-nonsense lady. One of many passages where she pulls no punches to avoid the boy falling into the hands of “*the janitors of mediocrity, the custodians of drab and peddlers of dreck*”.

Finally, it is commendably short and another example of subtlety and simplicity over verbosity. An experienced author at the top of his form.

**David Castle**

## A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!



### **SOME THOUGHTS ON AGEING** (with thanks to Frank Barr-David)

"The Years between 60 and 80 are the hardest. You are always being asked to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down." *T.S. Elliot*

"At age 20, we worry about what others think of us; at age 40, we don't care what they think of us; ...at age 60, we discover they haven't been thinking of us at all." *Ann Landers*

"The important thing to remember is that I'm probably going to forget." *Unknown*

"It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone." *Andy Rooney*

"The older I get, the better I used to be." *Lee Trevino*

"I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a lot more as they get older, and then it dawned on me — they're cramming for their final exam." *George Carlin*

"Grandchildren don't make a man feel old, it's the knowledge that he's married to a grandmother that does." *J. Norman Collie*

"To get back to my youth I would do anything in the world, except exercise, get up early, or be respectable." *Oscar Wilde*

"The older we get, the fewer things seem worth waiting in line for." *Will Rogers*

"We must recognize that, as we grow older, we become like old cars – more and more repairs and replacements are necessary." *C.S. Lewis*

"Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what happened." *Jennifer Yane*

"I'm so old that my blood type is discontinued." *Bill Dana*

"The older I get, the more clearly I remember things that never happened." *Mark Twain*

"Old people shouldn't eat healthy foods. They need all the preservatives they can get." *Robert Orben*

## A TOUCH OF NOSTALGIA!

The 50's era continued into the early 60's but everything fell to bits in the 70's. That's when things like respect, good manners, dress codes and parental discipline disappeared and have never returned.... but thanks for the memories.

You might think you've seen this before, at least for the first couple of minutes. But then...wow, for the next eight minutes we're treated to a whole new compilation, done by a genius. In these insane times, this is so fabulous.... turn up the volume, put up your feet, and enjoy. If you have a big screen, you will enjoy this more.

**Now click the link below!**

[TmsahIXby7c](#)

**Tony Andrew**

## HOW TO CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER

To contact any committee member [Click here](#)

**Please use email where possible or telephone if you require urgent contact.**