

Contents

[Page 2](#)

Next meeting
Bert's Bit

[Page 4](#)

FYI/FYE

[Page 5](#)

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From the Chairman

Hello, members

I have to open with the sad news that we have lost two SeniorNet stalwarts - Tony Baker and Duncan Cameron.

Long time members will remember that Tony has been part of SeniorNet for many years. I am told that he was Chairman during the time when it operated as a Charitable Trust, and he was one of the original signatories to the 2011 application to change SeniorNet Rotorua from a Charitable Trust to an Incorporated Society. He was the Chairman for some years and maintained his interest until very recently.

While I am a comparatively recent member of SeniorNet, I knew Tony and Marlene very well when my wife and I lived in Rotorua from 1969 to 1971. Marlene and I both worked in the Lands and Survey Department Office in what was then the State Insurance building on Hinemoa Street, now the Quest hotel. Tony serviced my car. At that time, he was very involved in the speedway, and was one of the star stock car drivers. I understand he was instrumental in the shift of the speedway to its current site on Paradise Valley Road.

Since then, Tony has been involved in many organisations in Rotorua, among other things maintaining his interest in things mechanical as a member of the Ulysses Motorcycle Club. He will be missed. Of recent years, Tony devotedly cared for Marlene over her long illness.

Duncan Cameron was another person who contributed much to SeniorNet, having been a tutor and committee member.

We offer our sympathy to the families of these two valuable SeniorNet members.

Keith Garratt
Chair

Rotorua SeniorNet is just one of 75 local groups in the New Zealand Federation. If you would like to know more about what goes on elsewhere, OR what discounts or services are available to members, go to the Federation website.

www.rotoruasenior.net

Next members' forum

Monday 8 August 2021 2 pm

Our monthly members' forums are at Parksyde Centre, Tarewa Place, on the second Monday of each month at 2 pm, with interesting talks followed by afternoon tea. Visitors are welcome.

This Month: Roll up, roll up to see a dumb TV becoming smart, as we will be exposing you to the wonders of a Google TV Chromecast. See if you can work out the magic as the small screen of a smartphone or tablet is transferred to a big TV screen. Be exposed to some wondrous things lurking in the cloud, and afterwards share your amazement with others over a hot drink and muffin.

From Bert, Activities Co-ordinator

Times have changed it seems and so have we! Last month's newsletter showed a newspaper cutting and photo from 1996 which outlined how SeniorNet operated running computer classes for seniors some 26 years ago. In those days our members were mainly Seniors who were using a desktop computer, and internet usage for most people was still a long way in the future. We ran classes mainly to introduce people to the software available, using Microsoft Operating systems.

Fast forward to 2022 and our members are using laptops, tablets and mobile phones. The internet has become a universal means of communication. Our SeniorNet members are using Android and Apple phones with literally thousands of apps to choose from and download. New models of phones and tablets appear every year. A three year old phone is just about obsolete, so fast is the rate of change.

We can all talk to our children and grandchildren wherever they are in the world using social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and many more. We can organise meetings on Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. We can receive television broadcasts on our phones and, using Chromecast, watch the programme on our Smart television sets. So it goes on and new uses for our phones, tablets, laptops and TVs arrive on an almost daily basis.

Our Rotorua SeniorNet team were finding that our membership was reducing and the demand for the classes we had run in the past was almost zero. We were looking at, and experimenting with, many alternatives when along came Covid. The subsequent lockdowns and restrictions prompted a great many changes. Our committee set up weekly meetings on Zoom that are open to all of our members. These meetings are of a social nature and still take place on Tuesday evenings at 7.30 pm. To log in and have a look, open the Rotorua SeniorNet website and look for the calendar. The log in is displayed for every Tuesday evening. We began to make use of Google Calendar to advertise upcoming meetings and forums and talks so that our members can easily find out the where and when of club events.

Another major event was the change of ownership at Regency Park retirement village where we had held our classes meetings for many years. With the expansion of the Village our room which we had used for almost 20 years was then required by the Village. We very promptly hired a storage space and in one weekend moved out, cleared and cleaned the room and started a new chapter in our history.

It had become clear that we needed to extend our activities beyond our reducing membership and a new concept of "Outreach" was initiated. From this was born the "Drop In Sessions" at Rotorua Public Library. These sessions are open to the general public and it allows them to bring any portable device and have our team of roughly six mentors available to help them "one on one" with any problem or difficulty they may have using that device. We can and do help with Android and Apple phones and tablets and we also work with laptops. People come for advice when buying a new device and some problems have us really scratching our heads, so the learning goes both ways. We also needed a place to hold meetings and it was suggested that we approached Parksyde Community Centre for the use of one of their public rooms for our monthly social gathering. We made a booking for the room which has an excellent permanent TV screen which we can use to project from our various portable devices. The first session we ran with some trepidation as we had no idea how many people would attend. As things turned out we had a very good attendance. The monthly Forum as we now call it is non-technical and we try to show many of the interesting things you might find on the internet. "YouTube" classical comedy snippets have been very popular. Parksyde has a cafeteria and they provide for us tea and coffee and a snack and it is an excellent place for everyone to socialise after the meeting.

We held a couple of technical morning sessions which were open to the public and the Parksyde management became interested in making this a permanent arrangement. At the Talking Tech sessions as they are called, one or more of our members will speak on some useful things that can be done on either a phone or tablet or both. We hand out notes covering the subject matter and at a suitable point we break up into groups so that people can practise what they have been shown on their device. A mentor is with them to assist if they get stuck. This has proven to be immensely popular and we are seeing people attending these sessions on a regular basis. We have also gained a few members from these sessions.

Afterthoughts

After having read this, in order to do the usual checks for spelling and grammar, I have realised that this is not the article I started out to write. It took on a life of its own and became a brief history of what has turned out to be a survival story. It is also a recognition of the efforts that have taken place behind the scenes by our committee and others to make sure that our club could keep serving our members in a very changed environment. This is still a work in progress but I do believe we have become much stronger with a new purpose.

Bert Harris

FYI/FYE (For Your Information/From Your Editor)

Modern civilisation and the fall of the Roman Empire?

A conversation with a young relative recently made me think. (Yes, it does happen sometimes.) I remember our Latin teacher at Onehunga High School telling us about the reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire and one of those reasons was similar to what is happening in Western 'civilisation' today.

Vonnie (Adrien van Sambeek, a Dutchman and fluent speaker of over 12 European languages that he used to try out on us!) explained to us that the Romans didn't just lose wars against stronger powers, they actually brought about their own downfall. This was partly through stretching their resources too thinly throughout Europe and Britain and partly due to invaders like the Goths and the Huns. The rest was due to a substance that was commonly used in their advanced civilization.

My recent conversation was about criminal behaviour in our society and I said that, when I first started secondary teaching in 1982, it was rare to come across a student with severe social issues due to drug use or socially inadequate parenting. By the time I finished teaching, five years ago, disturbed and antisocial behaviour was almost the norm in the South Auckland school where I spent most of my career. The reasons for this nowadays include paternal and/or maternal drug use, family dysfunction, social media and the availability of hard drugs to even primary school children. And, probably, a few other issues that I'm not even aware of.

How does this relate to the Romans? Well, they were keen on their wine, which for centuries was a safer drink than water in many places, due to the lack of sanitation. The Romans, though, had sanitation systems and running water, so how does that work? There was one issue that we know about now, that they didn't know about then. Their pipes were often made from lead! As well as their decadent lifestyle, many Romans in the cities were suffering from lead poisoning, according to our old mentor. Lead poisoning can lead to brain damage, which can lead to behavioural changes. This could explain the increasing levels of debauchery and cruelty which eventually led to the breakdown of their empire.

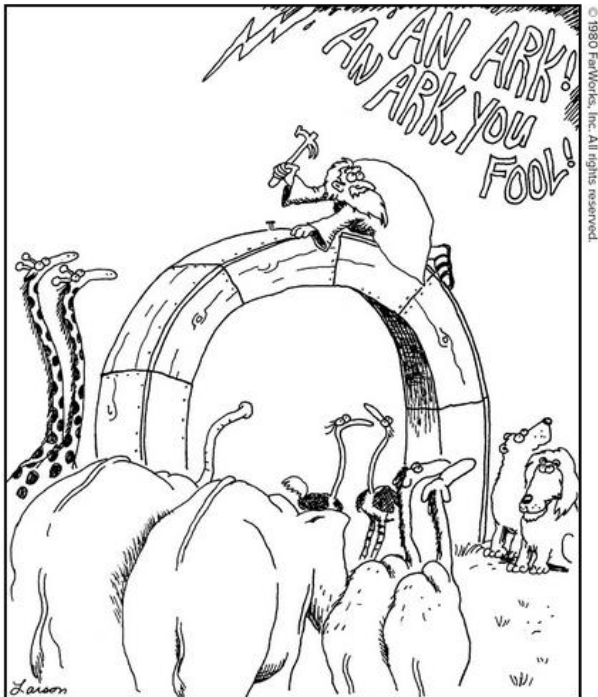


Of course, every civilisation has its problems with addictive and mood-changing substances, but I can't help thinking that, like the Romans, we are approaching a crisis point with ours. If I could do it, I would see to it that every child grows up in a family with good social values and a work ethic.

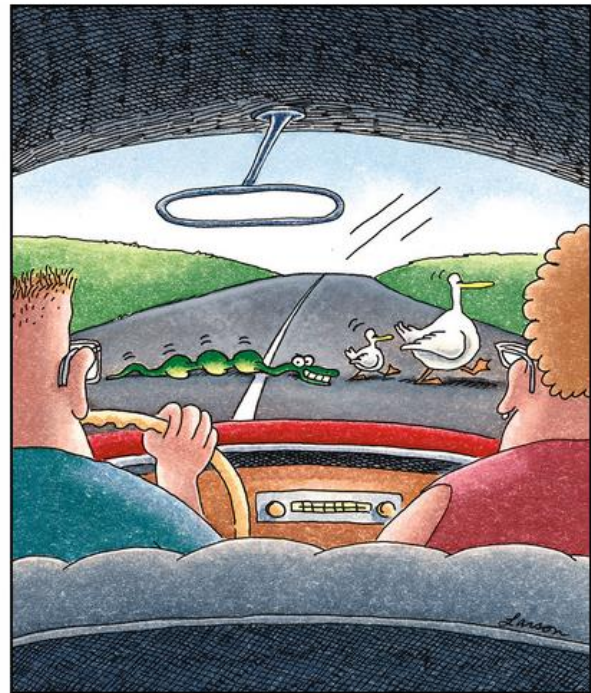
In the meantime, we can all make sure that our own kith and kin are safe online and at home.

Ngairé

The Importance of Spelling



A good leader checks on his followers



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