

True life stories from the Australian bush in and around the 1950s. Author Geoff Parton has managed to link his spiritual journey with both humour and sadness to delight the reader. At some time we all ask "What's it all about." This book is eye-opening and will be spiritually helpful.

Life's Choices

by Geoff Parton

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LIFE'S CHOICES



GEOFF PARTON

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Chapter 7. Pig Tails.

On the farm one Saturday, my sister went to Chatswood on the bus, which was about 14 miles away. The trip took almost an hour, and for a young girl of 11 years old, it was a big deal to be allowed out on her own. Mum asked me to get on my bike and meet her at the bus stop about a mile and a half away. I was about eight years old.

I arrived at the bus stop in time to meet the bus. We both started walking back home down the country road and I was wheeling my bike. She was telling me all about her morning adventure in Chatswood and about the movie she had just been to see. I was listening with great enthusiasm and looking forward to the same opportunity that would come my way one day. About half way home, a car came past us and then turned around

and came back towards us. Neither of us were really surprised, as people would sometimes stop to get directions. As the car passed us the second time, it stopped and a man got out of the car and walked quickly towards us. My sister asked him if he was lost but he ignored her and in a flash produced a big knife from behind his back. went for my sister's head – I was speechless, as he started to cut one of my sister's long plaits off!

The sight of the big knife was more than enough for me. I dropped my bike and ran down the road as fast as I could. I was at least 200 yards away before I regained some sense of composure. I then turned around and ran back as fast as I could to where my sister was still standing by my bike, which lay in a heap on the road where I had dropped it. The man had gone and my sister was just standing there crying. She had one plait

hanging down her back; the other had been cut off right at the top of her neck. I was shocked and had no idea why this had happened. She was shaking and crying. After some time I picked up my bike and we started to walk again. I suppose the most incredible thing was that Margie had managed to memorise the number plate of the car. All the way home, we both repeated the number over and over again until we finally arrived at the house. My sister told Mum what had happened. Shocked, she rushed into the house to call the police on the phone that had been recently connected. They arrived about an hour later.

After their questions a newspaper reporter arrived wanting to take photographs and asking loads more questions. My sister ended up on the front page and I remember seeing the newspaper article with her photo. On the next page there was

a small cartoon of two little pigs with curly tails. The caption read... "We better watch out, I hear someone's going around cutting off pigtails."

The next day the police phoned my father and said Margie must have got the number plate wrong as the one she'd given them belonged to a truck. My father insisted she was correct, and about two weeks later they caught the man red-handed with the plait still stuffed under the front seat! The number plate on the car was correct; it had been stolen from someone's truck. The culprit apparently was employed in a cinema in the Sydney suburb of Collaroy, where three weeks earlier, another little girl had had her hair cut off in the same manner in the cinema where he worked.

Life's Choices

This short story just shows how fear can control you. In my case, I had been so scared at the time, I ran away.

“FIGHT OR FLIGHT.”

Chapter 8. The Baker.

One day a neighbour came to the farm to use the phone. While turning his vehicle around he accidentally ran over and squashed one of the chicken's water troughs. Knowing my father's reputation, he slung it into the bush in order not to be found out. Some days later, my father found the water trough in the bush squashed and damaged beyond repair. After some thought, he assumed that the only person who had come to the farm recently had been the baker.

In those days bread, milk and groceries were all delivered to the house. When the baker came the following week, my father was waiting for him. I was probably about five at the time, but I can remember the whole scene. When the baker pulled up in his little van, I was playing in the dirt

nearby. The baker got out and went to the back of his van and opened the two small doors, where a large basket of bread was. He was preparing the bread that was in the bread basket for the delivery, when my father went for him like a madman. The baker ran around the van and tried desperately to climb back into the driver's seat, at the same time trying to lock the doors. By that time my father had the baker's crank handle in his hand and was waving it about wildly accusing him of running over the water trough that he had found squashed in the bush, and shouting at him to get out and fight.

The poor baker had no idea what was going on and just wanted to get the hell out of there. He managed to lock both front doors and was trying to start the van. My father was still trying to rip the side door open. Not having any success he

decided to go to the back doors that were still open. He started to pull out all the baker's bread from the big basket and also grabbed his money bag. He tipped the basket of bread out into the dirt and then went through the money bag, taking out the approximate cost of the water trough. He then slung the bag and the balance of the money out onto the dirt and kicked all the bread around until it was ruined. By that time the baker had got his van going. He was not about to get out of the van and retrieve his basket or his money bag. The last thing I saw was the baker speeding down the old farm track in his van with both back doors swinging uncontrollably with my father still running behind him! The baker needless to say, never returned! Later, we found out that a neighbour had run over the water trough not the

baker. It just goes to show how anger can get in the way of rational thinking.

“LEFT BRAIN THINKING!”

Chapter 11. In The Poo.

Back on the chicken farm my father had employed about 8 or 10 live-in farmworkers. Most were aged 18 to 22 and I was just 13, so you can imagine how much I was teased and taunted. It was never possible to get them back for their constant teasing.

Most of the chickens we had were in cages and so their manure had to be removed constantly.

We would scrape and shovel it all into a trailer which was pulled along by a motorised tractor. On the back of the trailer was a small platform where one person could sit while the trailer was taken to another part of the farm to be offloaded.

One day a farmworker, a 19-year-old named Billy Gosling, was working with me. We had just finished loading the trailer full of sloppy manure and were proceeding to the next paddock to offload it. Instead of sitting on the back, he stood on the small platform with hands on his hips, showing off.

I was driving the tractor, which had a hand clutch and two positions for going forward or back for parking.

I was driving quite slowly when I looked back at him standing there, I thought I would have some fun here as he had been ribbing me for a long time.

I released the clutch and he momentarily leaned forward but regained his balance. I then put the clutch in and the tractor lurched forward. He momentarily went back but again regained his

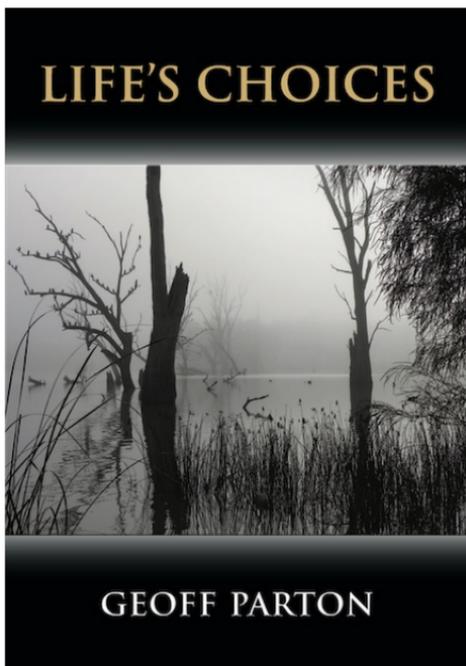
balance but at that moment he still had a certain amount of forward momentum up. I released the clutch once more to see Billy plunge headfirst with arms spread out straight into the sloppy manure. I quickly put the tractor into gear again and jumped off, leaving it driverless and still heading up the paddock.

As I sprinted from the scene I heard shocking expletives coming from Billy who was busy wiping himself off and trying to regain control of the tractor. I knew he would have to do this so I was safe for the moment.

It felt good to finally get a bit of my own back, but all too soon I realised that he would beat me up when he saw me next.

Geoff Parton

“EVERBODY GETS THEIR OPPORTUNITIES AT
SOME STAGE EVEN IF IT’S A LITTLE
REVENGE.”



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