

most of the museum work.

A month later I had done my best with the European museum work, and the Alexanders had landed safely at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Lorrie's parents, Charlie and Virginia Kearnes, and Marjorie Townes, a close neighbor, met us there and carried us home, where the neighborhood kids were lined up on front of a huge sign saying, "Welcome Home, Alexanders." Within two days the dog, cat, house, and family were essentially back to normal. Even our 1962 Rambler, up on blocks for 14 months in a friend's unused barn, needed only the battery replaced, the pigeon manure scraped off the windshield, and the mouse nest removed from the air cleaner; eventually it limped off, unassisted, on half-inflated tires. At the neighborhood filling station, a few miles down the road from our house, the proprietor and his son, long-term good friends that we knew well, came out of the station to stare in astonishment at the old Rambler, rolling in 14 months later, with its liberal topping of pigeon manure and dust, and four almost flat tires. The proprietor at the filling station finally exclaimed that he felt as though he was seeing a ghost!

Our Australian year had come, and then, suddenly, it was gone.

The Old Bloke: 1998

This somewhat playful verse, a follow-up from the parallel verse, "The Old Bloke: 1968," came about when we returned to Australia, thirty years later, for the meeting of an international biological conference, that of the Orthopterist's Society. Orthoptera are the particular group of insects Dan Otte and I studied for more than a half century. They include crickets, katydids, grasshoppers, and cicadas, mostly their relatives, and probably more than 50,000 species, all together, but not by any means all discovered or described yet for science.

Dan Otte and Laurel and Lorrie and I also did a little outback traveling after the 1998 meeting, and Lorrie and I traveled to talk with my graduate students, John Pepper studying Black Cockatoos on Kangaroo Island, and Andrew Richards studying the social behavior of Bottle-Nosed Dolphins at Shark Bay. But these trips were brief and simple, compared to our 12 Australian months in 1968-69. Unlike 30 years earlier, there was now a blacktop road completely around the country. We had known for a while that Arthur Fielding had died, and his corrugated iron house on the north side of the Daintree River was entirely gone. In the U.S. it probably would have been referred to as a "tin shack," but it was definitely a sturdy one. The area around the river, where the ferry still operates, had been graded, and appears now to be covered with a lawn-like mowed grass.

It was understandably difficult to be positive about some of the changes mentioned in the following verse, but there is humor in it as well. I begin the verse with a second nod to the author of *Me and My Burro*, a melody already mentioned, from the 1935 Chicago WLS Barn Dance Song Book.

I found the Old Bloke thumbing down from Darwin and the sea,
Where he'd traveled that same highway forty years ago with me.
The sun had further lined his face, and that was plain to see.
I asked him how he'd been and this is what he said to me.

It's the tourist trade that's booming now in the Land of Kangaroo;
Sometimes it's bloody frightening just discovering what is new.
The bitumen has widened, mate, but the country's in a stew,
And they're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo.

They say the crocodiles are meaner and the snakes more deadly too,
But the opal's not as shiny as a brand new didgeridoo.
It's Namatjira through a mirror, mate, and a sorry thing to do;
But they're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo.

They're changing shops to boutiques and discount outlet stores;
They've scraped old Arthur Ewing's shack right off the Daintree's shore.
Umbulgarri would be churning in his grave if he but knew
That they're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo.

When you go out to your favorite pub to consume your favorite brew,
You'll see pink-skinned blokes in printed shirts all lined up in a queue.
There's a spanking new Akubra stuck on every shiny dome,
You might just turn about and call for Ralph and take your soul back home.

Everywhere I go, the tour guide's busy lining up some blokes;
It's Finns and Swedes and Yanks and Poms, and God knows what other folks.
This bloody tourist business has me bungin' on a blue.
Struth, mate! They're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo!

They say the crocodiles are meaner and the snakes more deadly too,
But the opal's not as shiny as a brand new didgeridoo.
It's Namatjira through a mirror, mate, and a sorry thing to do;
But they're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo.

You'll not see Bluey Morgan as he sheds his bitter tear,
For Bluey is not sitting in the Wyndham Pub this year.
The road trains still are rumbling, mate, but it's rare indeed to hear
Slim Dusty singing *Gidgee Coal* or *The Pub That's Got No Beer*.

You'll be crook to find a stockman's shirt anywhere the road is sealed;
If you ask for steak and eggs, some may think your brain's congealed.
The bitumen's spreadin' quickly, mate, but the country's in a stew,
And they're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo.

It's enough to make you chunder, mate, or think yourself deranged,
When you travel through Down Under and discover how it's changed.
You could say The Old Red Continent is bloody awful new,
Because they're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo.

They say the crocodiles are meaner and the snakes more deadly too,
But the opal's not as shiny as a brand new didgeridoo.
It's Namatjira through a mirror, mate, and a sorry thing to do,
But they're putting polyurethane on the old didgeridoo.

If I could have me way, mate, there is much that I might do,
But forget the duck-billed platypus and the old red kangaroo.
There's just one way to right things, mate, the test of all that's true:
They must bloody take the polyurethane off the old didgeridoo!

The Old Bloke: 1998

I found the old Bloke thumb-ing down from Dar-win and the
 sea, Where he'd trav-eled that same High-way thir-ty years a-go with me. The sun
 had fur-ther lined his face, and that was plain to see; I asked
 him how he'd been and this is what he said to me: It's the tour-ist trade that's boom-
 ing now in the land of Kang-a-roo some-times it's blood-y frighten-ing
 just dis-cover-ing what is new The bi-tu-men has wi-dened
 mate, but the coun-try's in a stew; and they're put-ting pol-y-ur-ethane
 on the old did-ger-i-doo.