

A REFLECTION FROM MICHAEL MURRAY



As we have all spent so many hours recently staying at home I have been thinking a lot about what “home” has meant to me in my life. Maybe you have been thinking along the same lines? I thought I would share my thoughts and experiences of my “home” with you in the form of a letter which I have written in gratitude to this special place which I still call “home”.

Dear “Home”

At long last I am now able to return to visit you and to find out how you have been whilst I’ve been away. I have received many reports about you and so it is good to be back with you once more now that I can travel once again.

You know...I have never really left you. I have carried you with me each day deep within my memory. Although I can’t physically visit you as often as I would wish, I can “visit” you in an instant!! You have always been a refuge, a womb, a secure shelter. For eighteen years you nurtured and cared for me, your gates never closed, your doorways always open,

unlocked and welcoming whenever I "came home". You were always there when I walked around the corner into the lane or propped my bike up against your wall. Now I want to tell you just how important and special you are to me in this letter.

I have always loved your rooms which housed three generations of us along with our pieces of furniture, our stories shared, the many visitors, our laughs and our tears. Tall ceilings, weatherboards covered in peeling, mustard coloured paint from the turn of the century and blue lino on the floor, cracked and chipped by the feet of so children and adults. Your frayed carpet with its burn marks from the sparks leaping from the open fires and on which I played with my toys and books. You never complained about the dust caused by removing ashes next morning or the smoke which filled your rooms from burning wet fire wood in the winter because I had forgotten to fill the wood box the previous day.

How I would love the smell of freshly baked biscuits and cakes which lingered in your kitchen. You must have smiled as you watched the twice daily ritual of laying the table with firstly the folded table cloth, then the place mats, followed by the cutlery...with the knife and fork around the wrong way until I learnt how to do this correctly. The bread board and knife, sugar bowl and salt and pepper shakers all set out in their proper order and all the time you watched silently as young pairs of hands learnt these new skills and filled notebooks after tea at night with homework and paintings undertaken on the dining room table.

Your pantry room off the kitchen was always full, your wash house a constant source of surprise and exploration as I foraged in the darkly lit space amongst heavy stone jars resting on shelves. The giant meat safe which stood in the meat house with its windows made of fly wire and the tall meat block on which the cuts of meat were prepared and then placed in the safe. Somehow you made sure we were never without food of some kind. I'm sure you enjoyed watching the daily visits of the hens which scratched around your walls and garden searching for worms and then bathed in your dust before returning to the chook house in the late afternoon.

You never said how you felt about the wayward sheep which occasionally broke through your fence and nibbled at your garden until it was discovered and chased back into the paddock. How you struggled with the poor soil on which you sat and in which we tried so hard but without much success, to encourage a garden to grow amongst the limestone which littered the countryside.

Remember those dark, stormy winter's nights when you lost contact with the rest of the world as tree branches fell across your power and phone lines? You kept us safe, sound

and mostly dry whilst we waited to be reconnected by the SEC workers waiting in the light of the lamp fed with methylated spirits. You must have laughed as we rushed to the kitchen to grab saucepans to catch the drips of rain that somehow found their way through your iron roof and into the dining room and kitchen. Your rooms looked beautiful lit with glowing candles as we made our way to bed clutching our hot water bottle.

You gave me so many wonderful memories and reasons to come back and see you again. Yes, you have changed on the outside but I don't want to come inside anymore. I want to remember you as you were and I don't want you to destroy these memories by revealing to me new rooms and different furnishings. They are not a part of you that I know nor do I want to see your new persona. I loved you just as you were and just as you remain in my mind. Protective, filled with love and with both happy and sad times, accessible, possibly somewhat sentimental but still alive and still present in my life.

Pleasedon't fade away in days to come! Don't leave my mind to wonder where you have gone and why I cant see you or find you anymore. I don't want to ever lose you or to stop thinking about you. You are too special and too important to me. Please stay close by.

I wish you many more years sheltering new residents. I only hope that they will grow to love and appreciate you as much as I have. Thank you so much for everything you are, all you have done for me and all you mean to me!!

Yours for ever grateful,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large 'M' and 'A'.

Michael Murray
Pastoral Care Coordinator