



Curious, adventurous, passionate

Dorian
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shares a life
shaped by
curiosity,
courage, travel,
reinvention and
the freedom of
finding joy on
her own terms.

“No-one
can do
YOU better
than you.”

A life of change, music and independence

I am 73 years young and was born in Perth WA. I came of age in the 'sixties, a time of great social change where the status quo and social order were greatly challenged, including the role of women in the home and in the workplace. The advent of the 'pill' gave women more choice and increasing opportunities for independence. I embraced many of these liberating ideas, along with the revolutionary music of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Leonard Cohen. I became a rebel, albeit without a clear or defined cause, impatient to get out there and find my way in the world.

From rebellion to purpose

My rebellious streak prompted me to leave school at 16, despite my family's desire for me to complete matriculation and study to become a teacher. I was not a good student, easily distracted and not very disciplined. It was a time of high employment so with no idea of what I wanted in my future, other than to not be a teacher, I worked a range of basic jobs until I decided nursing was for me. This decision was based purely on three of my best girlfriends entering nursing. I liked the idea of living in the nurse's quarters so I could escape the restrictive life at home. Predictably, I left nursing after six months. I was more interested in climbing out the bathroom window past curfew to go clubbing with friends. Not conducive to study!

Coupled with being a rebel, I developed a passion for travel. After a few more endless jobs in Perth, I set off across the Nullabor with a friend in an old EH Holden, finding work in various locations on the east coast. We decided New Zealand was the next adventure which proved a turning point in my career-less life. Gaining work in a dental surgery in Wellington, I undertook formal training and embarked on a career as a qualified dental nurse for the next ten years. This provided a useful skill in further travels, initially returning to Australia and working as a dental nurse in the mining port of Port Hedland WA. Once I had saved enough money, I donned the backpack to travel and work for two years in Europe and South Africa.

I returned from South Africa with a husband, which hadn't been part of the plan. Four years later I decided marriage wasn't for me, so I set off travelling in the USA and Canada for two years. When I returned home, I finally had an idea of what I wanted to do – work with young people and substance abuse. I enrolled in Uni and found that I thrived, now that I had a sense of purpose and a vision for my future. I became a rebel with a cause, completing a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Youth Studies and began working with homeless youth on the streets of Perth.

I moved to South Australia when I was 32 to undertake post-graduate studies and further my career in youth work. I had no intention of settling in SA but I loved it so much I am still here, over 40 years later. I have worked in many areas of youth health and wellbeing in the SA community sector, local and state government, and in roles that include direct service, advocacy, project development, youth policy and management. I retired in December 2018 with a sense of having done something useful with my working life, despite a tentative beginning.

Finding a new home at James Evan Court

After the demise of a long-term relationship, I found myself suddenly on my own in my sixties. A friend had moved into the newly-refurbished James Evan Court and despite not intending to move into a retirement village at such a relatively young age, I was impressed with the village and the Organisation, and it made financial sense. After ten happy years enjoying good neighbours, a sense of safety and security, and excellent service from ACH, living in the village has enabled me to continue my passion for travel and adventure.

The demise of the relationship not only changed my housing situation; it also upset my plans for retirement. Having planned to travel together in our motorhome, I now had to decide whether I wanted to embark on this adventure alone. I researched road travel options for solo travellers and settled on the Solos Network, a group dedicated to supporting those who travel alone in their motorhomes. Another amazing turning point in my life, finding a group of like-minded folk in similar life circumstances who love the freedom and adventure that road travel provides.

“Feel the fear, and do it anyway.”

But that was just the beginning of a new solo lifestyle. The Solos Network holds two week-long motorhome rallies in different parts of Australia each year with an amazing range of activities to try out. I got very involved in line dancing and rock and roll at my first rally in 2019, and now am equally passionate about dancing as well as motorhome travel. I hate exercise, but rock and roll in particular keeps me relatively fit while having fun travelling to music and dance festivals across Australia.

Three words that say it all

Curious, adventurous, passionate.







Passion on the road

Travelling in my motorhome to new places, having new experiences and meeting a diverse range of people. And of course, dancing.

What a good life means

Connecting with people from all walks of life and having a variety of experiences which keep me mentally and physically stimulated. As the saying goes, 'if you don't use it, you lose it' – and this goes for both brain and body. But most importantly, I find having fun is the key. If I have to force myself to do something I think is good for me, it is a short-lived endeavour. But if it's fun, I'm in!

Feeling the fear and doing it anyway

Setting off on my own in my motorhome, not knowing how I would cope. Another saying I like, 'Feel the fear, and do it anyway'. Although scary not having someone beside me to help sort out problems (and blame if things went wrong!), it was also rather exciting to know I had to learn to rely more on myself. I now know that mechanical help is only a phone call away (no, I don't change my own tyres – that's why I'm in the RAA!), and that people are mostly happy to help. I have learnt an immense amount about all things van life, which I would have otherwise left to my partner. It's rather liberating to know the buck stops with me so I better pay attention rather than tune out when someone is explaining something technical.

The challenge that changed everything

While travelling in America in my late twenties, I had to confront my lifestyle which involved a lot of drinking. Getting sober forty-four years ago was a major turning point in my life. I realised I wanted to make a difference in the world rather than meander through life, and to turn my personal challenges into something useful. This is what prompted me to enrol in Uni on my return to Australia and to dedicate my career to working with young people on the margins of mainstream society. As Albert Einstein famously said, 'In the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity'.

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Non-negotiables

My independence and being true to myself. Learning to embrace a solo life in my later years, which in many ways was a major fear, has led to greater self-acceptance.

Advice for someone younger

Be curious, ask questions, be a life-long learner. Investigate things for yourself rather than have others tell you what to think and believe. Be open to new ideas and be prepared to change your views and opinions if new information warrants it. Find your own style – don't try to be like everyone else. No-one can do YOU better than you. Do what you love, as long as it doesn't hurt you or others.

Advice for someone older

Push the boundaries of your comfort zone to experience more of yourself. You don't know what you are capable of inside your comfort zone, only what you've become comfortable with over the years. You are more capable than you think. It doesn't mean you need to jump out of a plane (I wouldn't!!) but there will be places in your life where you have settled for less than what you really want for yourself. Although change can be scary, don't fight it. It's a sign you are ready to experience something new.

A final thought

Laugh more, live longer!

