

I first met Mike about 20 years ago when we worked together at Auckland Airport. He and Alison had just moved to New Zealand. We were unlikely mates but we had an immediate affinity with each other, mainly due to '60's music and a Goon Show sense of humour. Mike produced black armbands and organised a wake when Spike Milligan died.

We kept each other sane in those "warehouse years". We also stayed in touch with each other across several islands and countries over the years.

Mike, you were taken from us far too soon. If I'd been there at the end, doubtless you would have said to me "I told you I was sick!". My reply could only have been "You rotten swine you!"

Andy Hammond  
Cambridge  
New Zealand

SEAGOON: Stop folks; Hello folks, this is Neddie folks. Tinga-ling, ah the telephone folks.

F.X.: PHONE TAKEN OFF HOOK

ECCLES: Hello?

SEAGOON Hello?

ECCLES: Snap.

SEAGOON: Splendid, ring again tomorrow and we'll have another game.

(The Gold Plate Robbery) (S09E16)

Knowing where to start when it comes to Michael Albert Martin is almost impossible to work out, but where else could we begin but a little game from the Goons, dating back to 1958.

I am not going to pretend otherwise – this has been a difficult year in terms of putting together many homilies at funerals, yet, through the many large and community-based services I have had to face, there has been one person always cheerfully and enthusiastically there to help. Yes, it was Michael.

At the last funeral Michael at which Michael assisted me, I remember him walking from the rear of Saint Paul's in Gisborne as I started the service to inform me that the PA outside had stopped working. I sent him back to the Funeral Director hoping that he could procure a miracle of technology. Alas, it wasn't to be. Not only had Michael

kept me informed, he had also arranged for many chairs to come across from the Hall to enable the large spill over to be seated. Such was his care to attention, detail and hospitality.

The last few weeks have been particularly challenging for the family, and I was able to visit Michael both in hospital and at home during this time. Despite the pain and difficulties, his cheerful and humorous disposition shone through and kept focussed on his family, and what needed to be done.

For Alison, and Michael's daughters, Monique, Kira and Greer, and his brother Richard, the time spent with Michael in hospital was much appreciated, even if at times challenging. Alison's devotion and constant care of the man she has been with for 40 years shone through. And all through this time was the presence of knowing that if God is calling, then for Michael, he was in full faith. He fought to stay with us, but the reality of us being here today is to acknowledge that in the *midst of life there is death*, and this, for Michael, we pray is a new beginning.

Michael was a journeyman in many respects. He never let his disability define him, although it did require some inventiveness. For Michael, music was everything. He loved to drum, to teach, to sing. His involvement in the life of the Church, in South Africa, England, New Zealand and in Australia was massive. He adored his father and followed faithfully the teaching and good example set.

Michael Albert Martin was born on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1949 in Cape Town. From the age of 4 to 8, he lived in England. It was in South Hampton that his brother Richard was born. After returning to Cape Town, Michael began his long association in the Church. He was first a choirboy, then an altar boy, and then a server at St Paul's Rondebosch, a traditional Anglican community of over 180 years standing.

It was there he was privileged to serve Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and to meet the love of his life, his fellow server, Alison. They married in 1981, not long after Michael had graduated from the Technical College with a Diploma of Business Management. Monique, Kira, and Greer were born, interestingly, all in January. Over the next few years, Michael immersed himself in family life, music, band, and teaching at home.

All this suddenly changed in 2001 when Greer accidently \*allowing her the benefit of the doubt\* dropped the 'slang' word "kwaai" at school. It became a family point of discussion: having used the word, to save face, they would need to emigrate! Unexpectedly, this thought gained momentum, and before they knew it, the family

arrived in Auckland. How *kwaai* was that? *Kwaai*? Well, in NZ dialect, it would be translated as “choice, bro!” or simply, “cool”.

Michael continued to work in NZ until the call came to move again, this time to Heidelberg and then Templestowe in Australia. On their first night, they were burgled, but immediately, Michael found his place in the community and worshipped at St John’s, Heidelberg. They then moved to Riddells Creek, and about three years ago, to Gisborne. Michael immediately became part of the St Paul’s and Church of Resurrection community, a place in which he was very happy.

Michael’s sense of duty and devotion saw him involved as a drummer locally, the CFA, Kyneton Brass Band, Open House, Mainly Music, U3A, serving latterly as President. He was a member of the Parish Council, and a wonderful friend to many across the town. He continued to follow cricket, and despite his best efforts, his enthusiasm for Rugby didn’t quite have the same appeal to others in the house! He was happy to share his ‘vices’ from time to time: I thank him for pointing out to me *Mozart in the Jungle*, and *Friday Night Dinners*, and we shared a delight in *Black Books*, *Spike Milligan* and *Monty Python*.

Michael fought to the end, but it was too much of a fight. “They’ve come for me”, he said.

I had the privilege of not only sharing communion in hospital with Michael, but again with his brother Richard when he came home. I know to receive the sacrament with Richard meant much to him. I reminded Michael he was on reading duty at St Paul’s this coming Sunday, in which we celebrated *St Francis* and *creation*. Michael made the decision to read but was not well enough to be thanked at our volunteer’s high tea that afternoon at Dromkeen. You only have to look at the front cover to know that for Michael, this was a favourite place.

Michael read the same reading that Greer read to us: Micah 6, verse 6 to 8. If there was to be an epitaph for Michael, I would suggest a reworking of the eighth verse. Michael did justice, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God.

The Sermon on the Mount, which Alan read to us was also part of Michael’s passion. On Sunday last, Michael gave a notice at the end of the Church service drawing attention to the U3A program the next day in which climate change was a focus. On the day before his passing, he went to St Paul’s for the fortnightly Bible study with Audrey Williams. Today, in lieu of flowers, we are asked to make donations to *Macedon Ranges Rural Australians for Refugees*.

And at the end of the prayers, we will pray what Michael has selected for today, along with the three hymns. It sums up the teachings of both the prophet Micah, and the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. It is a passionate prayer about justice, mercy and journeying with God.

It is a prayer that encapsulates all that I came to know of Michael Albert Martin.

In this place today, we remember the good of this servant, and bringing the gift of comfort to his family, we know that for Michael the *beat goes on*, and in our hearts, Michael will be, as he sang at Greer's wedding earlier this year, *Forever Young*.