

DAILY REFLECTION: 26th May, 2020 – *The Constant Gardner*

Geoff Pearson (& Steve)

Way back in 1993 I bought my first proper racing bike. I had watched Wayne Gardner racing at Phillip Island Grand Prix in 1989 and 1990, and I wanted to be just like him. There was something raw and simple about Grand Prix bikes that really engaged me at a profound level – just you, a motor, two tyres and the elements. Speed, power, limits and absolute truth.



I messed around racing modified road bikes for a few years, which was fun but it wasn't the real thing. My dream was to race a proper grand prix racing bike, just like Wayne Gardner, and I wouldn't be happy on anything less. The day I rolled up at Phillip Island with a Yamaha TZ250 Grand Orix bike in the back of my ute was one of the happiest days of my life. I felt like I had arrived.

As with many dreams coming true, reality steps up and puts a few hurdles in front of you to test your resolve. The bike ran terribly. I had checked it out mechanically, and it was fine. The engine was getting fuel, the spark plugs were sparking, the ignition timing was at the recommended setting - but it coughed and spluttered and was horrible to ride. As I turned onto Gardner Straight to take the chequered flag for my final race, the donut van overtook me as it was leaving the track for the day.

I turned myself inside out trying to fix that bike. I replaced every bit of the ignition system, but to no avail. Then one day I was telling a racing friend and he said without a moment's hesitation "*Oh that will be your earth connection – that model Yamaha was renowned for that. You just need to connect up an extra earth strap*".

Now, I don't think the congregation particularly wants a lesson in Yamaha ignition electronics. But the message was simple. To run properly, the ignition needed to "anchor" to its earth. All those individual parts could be working fine, and the relationships between them set perfectly. But if you don't know where your ground is – and if you are not firmly connected to it – then you are never going to operate to your full potential. I likened it to the electrical parallel of having oil on your tyres. All the bits above the ground could be working and in perfect tune. But until the connection between you and the earth is sorted out, you are just going to be spinning your wheels.



Just over 14 years ago, I noticed I was spinning my wheels in a personal sense. Career wise. Relationship wise. Emotionally. Medically. Mentally. Physically. Everything above the ground seemed fine. I was intelligent, successful in my career, seemingly happy, physically fit, driven, well mannered, well raised. Loving and loved. But I was just kind of... *disconnected*. I felt it, and I know a lot of people thought it too. I had all this power and potential – but I was just making a whole lot of noise and just spinning my wheels. I became the intellectual equivalent of a hoon's burnout comp.

Roll up, roll up everybody. Come and see Geoff the amazing human Summernats. Now with more power. More spinning tyres! More noise! More smoke! More mindless circle work. And still, he continues – round, and round, and round, and round...!!

In 2009, I was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. My neurological system went out of sync with myself, followed by my career, followed by my finances, followed by my partner, followed by my independence. I hit rock bottom when I was put into a psych ward in 2015. That was like death of the soul. I wasn't diagnosed as mad, or psychotic, or paranoid – but, quite simply, no one knew what to do with me. I am not here to bemoan Parkinson's. It is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I have learnt more about myself and my life through getting Parkinson's than any other experience this side of racing a grand prix motorbike. I have learnt about the need for balance and truth, and knowing myself and my boundaries. And the absolute necessity for truth over comfort when I am pushing up against my own mortal limits.

When I was in the psych ward, there was this one woman there who quite intrigued me. Her name was Monica. She was surprisingly composed, wise, sure of herself. In harmony with her world. I actually doubted she really belonged there, she seemed quite sane. She was a Christian.

One day four or five of us were playing catch with a tennis ball in the ward foyer. When she got the ball, she would look me square in the eye with this cheeky knowing look – and then pelt the ball as hard as she could at my head. No words. Just actions. Strangely I wasn't offended, I knew that it wasn't malicious. But it was definitely a message. I just had to figure out what it was. It took quite some time for Monica's message to fully seep in; a couple of years in fact. But over time it became clear. I needed to wake up to myself. I needed to find my balance. I needed to find my God.

Truth is timeless, human brains are fallible and linear. Sometimes a truth will present itself when your brain isn't ready for it. But you get this sense that it is important, and you will just have to wait for your mind to mature to get it. Once I actually felt this need, and knew I had to act on it, it was off to Roger and Deborah Gregory's place. They have been good family friends for years, are well respected in the community, and people I could trust. I tentatively asked about their church, and to cut a long story still pretty long, that is how I ended up here.

Getting baptized last March was my commitment to centring myself and finding my own connection to this earth. God has given me this brilliant vehicle to travel around in – a human body – and just like a Grand Prix bike it has two contact points with the earth and a tendency to fall over when not operated as per the owner's manual. With my baptism he rewarded me with a brand new set of super sticky tyres, for better grip on the earth. And this cheerful, witty bloke I have met called Paul has told me that my sponsor, Jesus Christ, promises to keep servicing and improving and refining this vehicle until it gets to the end of its service life:



"He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts to grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love". - Ephesians 4:16

I've been testing this new setup and it seems to work really well for me. Occasionally I will overstep my limits, or enter the track the wrong way – but I am getting a feel for picking up on the warning signs a lot quicker these days when I do. And I am not too proud or ashamed to turn things around when I get it wrong. My sponsor is big on forgiveness – both of others, and of self. That is a tool in my new tool kit that really works for me.

Sure, I have my fair share of hecklers – some because of my sponsor, some just because of me. I will respect anyone's opinion if they have had a red hot go themselves – I might even take on their advice if it seems it will work for me. But I note most hecklers are just noisy spectators on the safe side of the fence...



As far as Gardners go, I will never be a Wayne. We both have our connections to the earth, but he was a lot more willing to eat dirt to succeed. I was satisfied just living the dream and planting a few seeds that might be reaped later in life. I'm happy to wait a few years for the fruit of my labours to be harvested.

PRAYER:

Thank you God for the lessons in life – in all their beauty, richness and cryptic glory.

Thank you God for the WWMC fellowship, and for the bit of grounding I needed.

Thank you God for Alan, Ange and Kane's mentorship

Thank you God for Mum and Dad and Sharyn for just... everything

Thank you God for Julie for her incredible coaching, patience and insight. Working with her has been an absolute pleasure, and rewarding beyond words.

And thank you God & Yamaha for the ignition upgrade for the '92 model. It worked a treat. ☺

SONG: *It's What the Lord Has Done in Me* – David Wesley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0lhRPQnwM4>

