

Layers of accents reveal you are a man who's been around. In what countries have you lived?

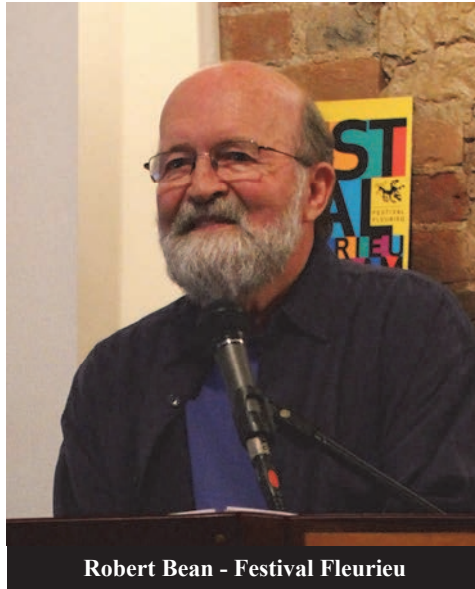
Even my applied linguistics lecturer had difficulty placing me! The fact that I have migrated 5 times could possibly account for what I call my 'mongrel accent'. Born in Manchester, I migrated with my family to Canada at 8 then to California at 13. After receiving a degree in English and history – signed by Governor Ronald Reagan – I migrated back to England at 22, then as a 10-pound Pom to New Zealand at 25 before migrating to Australia and settling in Adelaide aged 33.

Did you travel in addition to these migratory shifts?

When I was living in LA I went to Mexico and Canada and hitch-hiked across the States and back a couple of times. I backpacked around Western Europe, and more recently, have made family visits to the US and New Zealand. Professionally, I've travelled for conferences and other work assignments in Canada, the US, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand.

While you've always had an interest in music and writing, you've taken other routes to make a living. Where did your work life begin?

Starting from my mid-teens in California, I've counted at least 37 jobs in five countries – fruit picker, kitchen hand, house painter, factory worker, gardener and the like. In London I taught English to tourists and the children of a Saudi prince. In New Zealand I taught high school English, worked on farms and was a hospital theatre orderly for a year.



Robert Bean - Festival Fleurieu

In Adelaide I worked for 16 years in the TAFE English in the Workplace Program teaching immigrant and refugee workers in factories, becoming the manager after the first three. I could see that teaching English to workers from different cultures was only half the equation so I expanded the program to include training for their managers on working with cultural differences.

Over those years I specialised in the field of intercultural intelligence development and eventually decided to leave TAFE to start my own company. It's been a typical small business rollercoaster but never boring. That was 27 years ago and I'm still working in my late seventies – very part time.

Intercultural Intelligence sounds like an interesting concept. Can you describe this field?

Intercultural intelligence can be seen as an extension of our emotional intelligence. The culture we've been brought up in shapes the way we see the world – it's our cultural lens. "It's just the way we do things around here." We hardly think about it until we come into contact with other cultures who see the world through different lenses. Developing our cultural intelligence helps us to understand our own cultural mindset and learn about other ways of doing things so we can avoid or resolve communication problems and create respectful relationships.

Obviously, when the planet hosts thousands of cultures, it's complicated. It's a very wide field of study. There are thousands of people like me around the world who work to help people and organisations to work more effectively across cultures. We're called 'interculturalists'... which is a very fuzzy job title.

Where does your love of music and writing fit into this busy life?

Music has been a part of my life since childhood singalongs. I bought my first guitar at 15. My first paid gig was busking in Barcelona when I was 23. After that it was mostly jamming along the hippy trail until I migrated to New Zealand where every gathering was a musical event; so many 3-chord wonders!

When I first came to Adelaide in the '80s I had a few gigs in coffee shops, wineries and so on. Then music took a back seat to work but it took off again when I moved to the Yankalilla district in 2001.

The Yankalilla Acoustic Music open mic nights got me back into playing and soon led to paid gigs. I played regularly at Wirrina Cove Resort and the Smiling Samoyed Brewery for several years. I've played at cafes, wineries, fund raisers, clubs, birthday parties and other events. I have fond memories of sharing the shearing shed stage with the sheep at the Yank Show. I've also played at the Fleurieu Folk Festival, the Wirrina Bluegrass Festival and the Festival Fleurieu/Leafy Seadragon Festivals. It's been quiet lately, thanks to COVID, but playing at YAM keeps me going.

Writing fiction seems to be something one is born with. Australian author Amanda Lohrey calls it "a neurotic compulsion" which should be managed "in as civilized a fashion as possible."

I wrote my first story at 8 – *Dawn Patrol*, with illustrations. It won a blue ribbon and I've been scribbling ever since. A few highlights: A one-act play was produced when I was at uni. I published a sci-fi story in London. Over many years I wrote three novels, one of which was short listed for the New Zealand equivalent of the Australian Vogel award for young unpublished writers. It didn't make the cut and it remains in a suitcase with the other attempts.

After moving to Delamere, I kept scribbling while working full time. Work involved a lot of professional writing: training resources, surveys, research reports and conference papers. It was well paid and good training in writing succinctly for when I finally got back to fiction.

Thanks to the motivation of the Festival Fleurieu, I have published and launched three books of short fictions and poetry since 2012. I still write – compulsively – and am working on a fourth book, an endless novel and numerous other unfinished pieces.

I know it was a wrench to leave Delamere in early 2021 but you have made your mark on your Yankalilla home. It already has the stamp of readers and artists and people who live with creative flair. May joie de vivre and music, writing and painting flourish here.



Bean - muso and story teller

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