

## **We The People**

Program 107

Imagination



Allow me to reminisce for just a moment about my early years growing up on Tuggerah Lake at the Entrance in NSW but it could easily have been Surfers, Coolangatta or Currumbin. It was similarly a great little holiday town of about 6000 people and our summers were spent on the lake fooling around as boys do with rafts made from kerosene tins and wooden palings we pinched from peoples fences. Our raft was powered by sails made from of old bed sheets held together with raffia affixed to a mast made from tomato stakes. We didn't think of danger we just had a ball and the outdoors were our playground. We lived by our whits and imagination and that's what I would like to speak about today..... Imagination.

Now a very bright group of people in the United States have started an organisation called Operation Hieroglyph. The genesis for this comes from the thinking at the Arizona State University Center for Science and the Imagination which seems incongruous when academia meets the fantasy imagination of a creative boundless mind. These forward thinkers believe the 60's and 70's saw the end of real science fiction writing when unbridled imagination was ultimately stifled in favour of so called professional logical thinking. That logical thought is the antithesis of imagination and a curious phenomenon has occurred. Instead of reaching for Utopia we have descended into the opposite called Dystopia and our world is the darker for it. Imagination sheds light on science and logic and breaks up that light into the colours of the rainbow.

Just think about where some great scientific achievements have come from and they include the light gun now known as the LASER, the cochlea ear, bionic human parts, the wrist watch radio, the computer, the TASER, the orbiting satellite, SCUBA, sonar and radar and of course mobile phones have all been foreshadowed by science fiction writers. Consider 20,000 Leagues under the Sea or the film 1984 made in the 40's or Journey to the center of the Earth and Star Wars and space travel. Science fiction writers drove the imagination like Jules Verne, Isaac Asimov, Edgar Rice Burrows, Roald Dahl, Stephen King, George Orwell and Gene Roddenberry and thousands more came from an era where kids used their imagination as part of play.

This link between scientific inventions and achievements and the science fiction writer is a real and important one where mankind imagines and science is stimulated into action. Take away either component and we are the less for it. Now take a look at the kids and young adults of today and measure their imagination by the habits they have. People text mindlessly to each other. Kids play electronic games for hours or days on end never seeing the light of day and eating meals in their rooms. They are growing up in a world of political correctness which corrals their thinking and constrains the mind, beating down imagination and creativity. These are people of social engineering and we are the poorer for it. They neither sow nor reap mentally or physically yet the academics revel in their ability to control the world of cyberspace and to conform. A whole generation called the dot com generation is nearly devoid of imagination and so science is devoid of the stimulus of great imaginative thinking and the genesis of greater things to come.

Operation Hieroglyph is the epicentre for Science and the Imagination which brings writers, artists and other creative thinkers into collaboration with scientists, engineers and technologists to reignite humanity's grand ambitions for innovation and discovery. The centre serves as a network hub for audacious moonshot ideas and a cultural engine for thoughtful optimism. Children being raised in match box homes on match box blocks on the Gold Coast are already starved of the forces of imagination and creativity and yet the local Council has no idea how to build an enlightened community when the bureaucrats are in control and they are. The whole of Gold Coast Council should get in touch with Operation Hieroglyph and integrate their ideals into their planning and thinking if they are to claim anything under the banner of creativity or to stamp the Gold Coast as a forward thinking centre for inspiration. Encourage your children and grandchildren to play widely, to think creatively and to become science fiction writers and thinkers in all they do. After all they are our future and we want the best for them and the best for all mankind.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**