



Book review by William Leith, Evening Standard 27 February 2020

Daniel Levitin is a neuroscientist and this is a book about the human brain as it gets old. Levitin tells us what happens, why it happens and what you can do about it. Well, what can you do? The short answer: eat real food, get a proper night's sleep, walk in natural environments and make sure your brain is always working. He quotes Keynes "In the long run we are all dead." True, Still, we don't need to be so passive. We can put up a fight.

So, the book has an optimistic tone. Levitin tells us about age-defying people such as Mick Jagger and Jane Fonda – Jagger has a personal trainer and dances a lot. Fonda walks and lifts weights. Then there are the "blue zones", places that produce a lot of people who live beyond a hundred years – "Nicoya, Costa Rica; Sardinia, Italy; Ikaria, Greece and Okinawa Japan (some lists add Del Mar, California". What happens in these places? Elderly people do a lot of healthy things such as walking and gardening, they have many human connections, they eat real food and avoid stress. Of course,

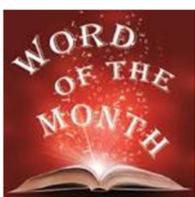
they die in the end. But something is keeping them alive and healthy for longer. Levitin thinks people in Okinawa, Japan live longer because they are always learning something new.

Levitin thinks about what the brain needs to do when we're young. It constructs our world for us. As we interact with our environment, our brains retain all the data that is useful to us. The world we see is not the world as it is – it's the world as our brains want it to be. The brain constructs the world for us. Of course, there comes a point when the brain goes wrong and our world starts to deconstruct.

There's a very good section on memory and how our memories are not fixed. They're a work in progress. In other words, they are flexible fiction rather than stable fact. We tweak and spin things to help us get through life. Also, "they are not stored in a particular place. Memory is a process not a thing". It is created by getting out there and interacting with the world, collecting data and trying to observe patterns in the data. That's what the elderly people in Okinawa are doing. They are still learning. We see why it's better to walk in the wilderness than in a park. In the wild, your brain learns something now with every step you take.

Levitin loves to tell stories. He is a good companion. He tells us about when he walked around wearing distorting lenses to see if his brain made compensations (it did). As we get old, we can't see or hear so clearly but the brain uses its experience to improvise. In the end things are not so great. Our brains start to go wrong, then our world falls apart, the we die.

But it's not all bad news, there are things we can do. He cites the sleep guru Matthew Walker – one reason we need to sleep properly is that, as we sleep, our brains are cleaned by cerebrospinal fluid. He also cites the food guru Michael Pollan who says: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." By "food", Pollan means whole, rather than processed. So, eat like a scientist. Exercise adventurously. Sleep like a baby. Make your brain work hard. Have lots of friends. "And allow yourself to have fun now and then," Levitin advises. "Eat a little ice cream. Have some chocolate."



FIONA DUGGAN - "GALLIMAUFRY"

Each month there will be an unusual word that is real and has been or is still being used. Without reference to Google or a dictionary, your challenge is to work out a possible meaning and then use it in a sentence. The meaning will be published in the next Jabber Journal. **Last month's word CHUNTER - to mutter, murmur, grumble, find fault with or complain. Was one of my mother's favourite words as in "Stop chuntering!"**

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Good morning everyone.



Here we are, almost at the end of this unforgettable year. I have no doubt we'll have no problems remembering 2020 in the years ahead.

At least we live in a rural area where I believe we have had very few local transmissions of the COVID virus. We have had plenty of freedom of movement, the ability to catch up with local friends and family (all carefully socially distanced), to go to the shops as required and, lately, to drive to distant parts of the state if we so choose. Many of us have relished the chance to step away from our usual regular commitments, to find time to catch up on a few jobs or read a book. But with so many COVID safety rules in place, there are many activities we can't undertake. After eight months of restrictions, we have all

been affected by the closure of state and international boundaries. The loss of income and customers for a wide range of individuals, businesses and industries could affect us well into the future.

So many festivals and concerts and much anticipated holidays and family gatherings have gone uncelebrated this year. I haven't been to a theatre or the movies for a year. Now the time draws near for no Jacaranda Festival and I really miss it. It's been such a lovely time of joy and beauty and fun all the years I've lived in Grafton, a great way to mark that spring is here and that the end of the year is fast approaching. However, nobody has told the Jacarandas, that are looking as stunning as ever, in spite of the lack of admirers.

The only thing left to celebrate after this non-event is the end of the year and the Christmas period. I'm really looking forward to our planned Christmas Picnic at Shannon Creek Dam and very pleased to hear of the enthusiastic response from many of our members. It may be hot and it may be boring that we have to supply our own food, drinks, plates, cups etc, but these are unprecedented times and is the best we can do under the circumstances. Masks are not mandatory, but you are welcome to bring one "just in case". The Committee can't control the weather, but we will be doing the best we can to provide sufficient shade, seating and good company (socially distanced, of course). No formal entertainment is planned at present, but there will be lucky gate prizes. Of course, it is still possible to add your name to the list of those interested in attending. Please contact Vanda Geremia, phone 6642 7880 or email vandageremia@bigpond.com to register. Also, please advise her if you will be needing transport to the dam. I do hope as many members as possible can come along.

Stay healthy. Hopefully I'll see you on 3rd December.

Alysan Pender

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR



This is what we, who are aged 70 or 80 years plus can look forward to....

This is something that happened at an assisted living centre. The people who lived there had small apartments but they all ate at a central cafeteria. One morning one of the residents didn't turn up for breakfast so my wife went upstairs and knocked on his door to see if everything was okay. She could hear him through the door and he said that he was running late and would be down shortly, so she returned to the dining area.

An hour later he still hadn't arrived so she went back up towards his room but found him on the stairs. He was coming down the stairs but was having a hard time. He had a death grip on the hand rail and seemed to be having trouble getting his legs to work right. She told him she was going to call an ambulance but he told her no as he wasn't in any pain and just wanted to have his breakfast. So, she helped him the rest of the way down the stairs and he had his breakfast. When he tried to return to his room, he was completely unable to get up even the first stair step, so they called an ambulance for him. A couple of hours later my wife called the hospital to see how he was doing. The receptionist there said he was fine, he just had both his legs in one side of his boxer shorts.

Send this to your children so that they don't sell the house before they know all the facts.



CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Christmas is fast approaching and we are definitely having a picnic. All the details are set out below:

WHEN: THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2020

TIME: FROM 11:00AM ONWARDS

VENUE: SHANNON CREEK DAM - SHANNONDALE NSW – See map below

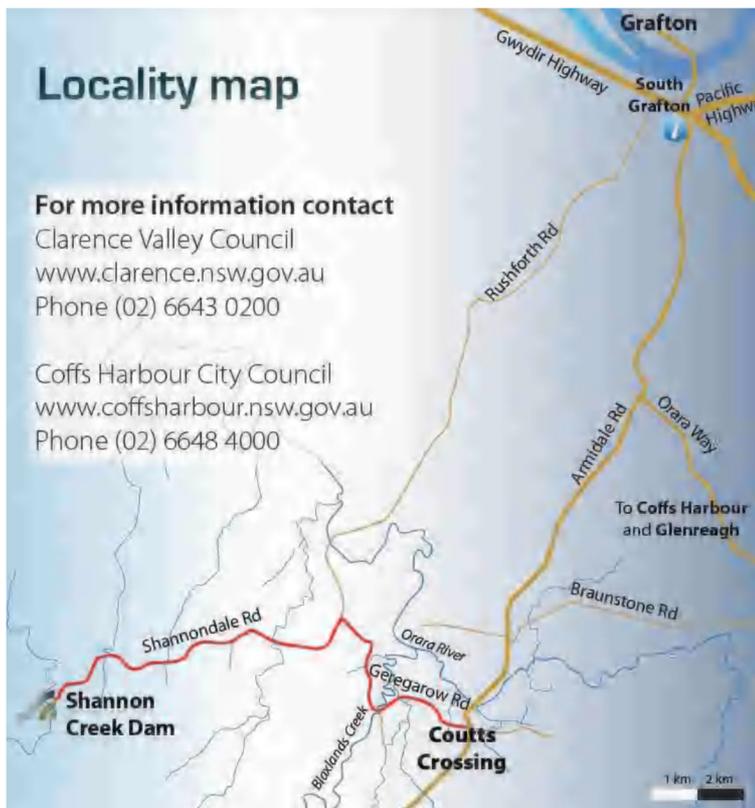
OTHER INFO: The Dam has 2 BBQ areas and plenty of space. I am endeavoring to borrow 2 or 3 gazebos for additional cover, so if you have one, we can use please contact me. If you have a beach umbrella, do bring it along together with table, chair and all the food and drink you will need. PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NO ELECTRICITY AVAILABLE AT THE SITE SO NO HOT WATER FOR TEA/COFFEE UNLESS YOU BOIL IT ON THE BBQ.

At the entrance there will be a table for registration and sanitizer will also be available.

There will be “gate” prizes. As you register you will be allocated a number from the list that will be yours for the prize draws.

For those who require transport to the venue, please note that it will be arranged.

If you have not yet expressed interest in attending and wish to come along please contact me. **Vanda Geremia** Contact – email: vandageremia@bigpond.com phone: 66427880.



Visiting Shannon Creek Dam

Shannon Creek Dam is open to the public Thursday to Sunday from 9am to 3pm. Signposted access to the Dam from Armidale Road at Coutts Crossing is via Geregarrow Road and Shannondale Road. Facilities available at the site include BBQ, picnic tables, toilets, car parking and a viewing area on the dam wall. Provision has been made for disabled car parking and with most facilities accommodating wheelchair access. Because you are visiting a water supply catchment where our precious drinking water is stored, surrounded by beautiful, protected bushlands and adjoining nature reserves it is required that you:

- ✓ Refrain from lighting fires, camping, fishing, swimming or boating.
- ✓ Leave your pets at home and don't interfere with the native plants and animals.
- ✓ Only use the formed roads and paths.

Walking Track

Next to the picnic area is a 1.4 km walking track that takes you along Shannon Creek, past bush regeneration works and to view one of the many spectacular escarpments that make up the landscape. Along the trail there are interpretive signs on the importance of this country to the Gumbaingirr Nation and information about some of the natural features.

HISTORY, WRITING AND LIFESTYLE EVENTS

NORFOLK ISLAND:

Your perfect "over-the-seas" domestic destination.

A safe and relaxing Pacific paradise with so much to explore.

We are excited that the Norfolk Island border is open to all States except Victoria for domestic airline passengers who identify as low-risk travellers. It has been a long few months since our borders closed in March but having had no active cases, Norfolk Island remains a safe, clean and relaxing domestic destination for travellers of all ages. With great challenges comes opportunity—we made the most of the downtime to refine tours and update products and now...**we look forward to welcoming yorlye back to auwas alien hoem** (we look forward to welcoming everyone back to our island home)



FIRST FLEETERS & MUTINEERS – BIG STORIES FROM A LITTLE ISLAND

DATE: 5 March 2021 -10 March 2021

PRICE: From \$1,639 pp twin share

DETAILS: Join Peter FitzSimons for a brilliant week on Norfolk Island! Delve into some of the biggest stories of the British Empire in the late 18th Century that occurred on, or directly impacted Norfolk Island. From the settlement of First Fleeters, to the mutiny on board HMAV Bounty and the loss of the Flagship HMS Sirius, this little island is home to some very big stories.

AUTUMN UKULELE FESTIVAL 2021

DATE: 24 April 2021 – 29 April 2021

PRICE: From \$1,219 pp twin share

DETAILS: A beautiful time on-island, the Autumn Ukulele Festival offers an incredible array of workshops, meals, tours and performance opportunities.

HISTORY IN PARADISE 2021 AFFHO CONGRESS

DATE: 1 August 2021 – 5 August 2021

PRICE: From \$1,149 pp twin share

DETAILS: Family history society members and genealogy enthusiasts across Australasia are warmly welcomed to the Australasian Federation of Family History Organisation's 2021 Congress, hosted by Norfolk Island Museum.

ANOTHER TOUCH OF HUMOUR

An Airbus 380 is on its way across the Atlantic. It flies consistently at 800 km/h at 30,000 feet when suddenly a Eurofighter with Tempo Mach 2 appears. The pilot of the fighter jet slows down, flies alongside the Airbus and greets the pilot of the passenger plane by radio: "Airbus flight, boring flight isn't it? Take care, and have a look here!" He rolls his jet on its back, accelerates, breaks through the sound barrier, rises rapidly to a dizzying height, only to swoop down almost to sea level in a breathtaking dive. He loops back next to the Airbus and asks, "Well, how was that?" The Airbus pilot answers: "Very impressive, but now have a look here!"

The jet pilot watches the Airbus, but nothing happens. It continues to fly stubbornly straight, at the same speed. After five minutes, the Airbus pilot radioed, "Well, what do you say now?" The jet pilot, confused, asks: "What did you do?" The other laughs and says, "I got up, stretched my legs, went to the back of the aircraft to the bathroom, got a cup of coffee and a cinnamon cake and made an appointment with a stewardess for the next three nights in a 5-Star hotel, which is paid for by my employer."

The moral of the story is when you are young, speed and adrenaline seem to be great. But as you get older and wiser, comfort and peace are not to be despised either.

This is called SOS: Slower, Older, Sarter. Dedicated to all my friends who, like me, are using the SOS approach. Contributed by Carole Cairns



EDITOR CONTACT

Contributions to the Jabber Journal are welcome, however, we reserve the right to edit or refuse material submitted for publication. Closing date for the December 2020 edition of the Journal is **Friday 27 November 2020**. Editor – Dennis Kelly thehifields@bigpond.com