

## **The Grapevine**

By Harry Dunn

Received 10/4/19

**An ageing Invy bowler -  
Call him Harry if you must -  
Drove off with three old bowling mates  
Chanting 'Bendigo or Bust'  
First-time Country-weekers,  
Not fame and glory-seekers,  
Just a harmless little foursome  
Who enjoyed each others' trust.**

**Now, like all the other bowlers  
Who'd been up there before,  
They were very much aware  
Of that well-known bowling mantra:  
'What happens up at Bendigo remains up there'  
So what had we to lose; we're not addicted to the booze,  
We say our prayers at night, before we go to bed,  
We'll bring five pairs of socks, a change of underwear  
And half a dozen bottles of Dan Murphy's quaffing red.**

**If we're pressured to indulge, we'll cut and run for cover,  
In the nicest way, of course,  
Damaged reputations can take ages to recover  
For when the grapevine gets a sniff of something in the wind  
The story always goes from bad to worse;  
And if some things get back to darling wife or lover -  
That well-intentioned Grapevine can be a flaming curse.**

**During last month's Country Week  
Came a colourful account, of a bowler up there bowling  
Who went down for the count:  
It travelled down the Grapevine, in words or was it Morse  
Some of it verbatim, but most of it ad lib,  
That Harry'd had a heart attack - when it was really just AF  
That's atrial-bloody-fib;  
It could have been much worse.**

'Yeah, it's atrial fibrillation' - the Ambos always know,  
'We'll tote him off to our new hospital,  
The pride of Bendigo.'  
So Harry asked a favour of his room-mates,  
'Don't mention this to anyone, until I give the word:  
You know well the way these stories can take wing,  
Get out of hand, and grow and grow and grow.'  
'No worries, mate,' they all averred,  
But later that same day,  
The Grapevine had poor Harry in a wooden box,  
Ready to be interred -  
Because he'd passed away.

One account, from sources 'usually reliable'  
Said that Harry'd bowled his four by fourteen lots  
In temperatures excessive,  
Then cooled down by drinking many pots  
Intemperate, to be sure, but absolutely un-deniable ,  
Followed later on by half a dozen reds,  
To wash down his egg-foo-yong and black-bean kai-see-ming  
Then found himself at loggerheads  
With the Chinese cook at the Bendigo Peking,  
Before he went to bed.

Another lurid story from the busy rumour-mill  
Had Harry struck down in his prime, perfect line and length  
By an Indian no less, when he refused to pay the bill,  
At the Maharaja's Punjab Palace,  
After his third bowl of Chicken Vindaloo - curry double-strength  
The rumour-mill maintained that Harry's wounds  
Were both numerous and immense  
But he bore old Mahindra no real malice,  
Because he was a trifle over-spiced at the time of the offence.

Back in home-town Inverloch  
Good folks were moved with real concern  
When the grapevine broke the news - a load of poppycock,  
But they collected for a wreath -

A little wreath to send him off,  
Or perhaps an inexpensive urn  
In case his final wish was to be toasted up above,  
Not planted down beneath.

The collection raised nine and sixpence promised, firm, secure  
Plus several un-signed cheques'  
And a set of hardly-used false teeth -  
Not a fortune, to be sure,  
But enough to buy a smallish paper wreath.  
However, as we all now know -  
All this was somewhat premature!

One good lady called at Harry's house,  
To ask his better half - 'What's Harry's fav'rite flower?'  
And she began to laugh, which wasn't very nice,  
'Self-raising, without the slightest doubt,  
In my home-made apple slice,  
I know the Grape-vine's had its way -  
And there's a raft of tales about,  
But in fact, he's coming home from Bendigo today.'

The moral of this tale -  
If you haven't cottoned yet,  
Is listen to the Grape-vine by all and every means,  
But don't forget  
That what you've heard may have started as a rumour  
One afternoon when real news was in demand,  
And no-one was leaning forward .....  
Until the flames were fanned.

Fanned and blown by folks with good intentions  
Who, short on facts, to keep the story going  
Resorted to inventions,  
Each one adding speculation to the things they'd heard,  
And that little conflagration  
Soon becomes a bushfire, uncontrolled  
And threatening half the nation!

**So, when the Grapevine's hard at work -  
Believe less than half of what you hear  
And a tenth of what you read,  
Especially now in Oz, with an election in the air  
Our pollies will be giving old Joe's 'chooks' another feed  
Fake election 'news' is the Grapevine's favourite fare,  
And we're all somewhat inclined to add our little bit  
As the story gathers speed -  
Just ask old AF Harry - or Melbourne's last Lord Mayor,  
An unlikely pair indeed.**