

15-10-04

Dear Elton,

This has taken me a few days to write, as I am still trying to finalise my husband's estate + pathology reports. He had encouraged me to contact you, but of course his health was more important. I will be going to Melbourne about the 24-11-04 to attend the wedding of my brother's daughter + will also be visiting my mother. I expect to be away for about 1 week to 1 month or more, depending how I go. So far I have not had the chance to ^{do} much for myself, but feel I must try + build up some new memories. Maybe then, I might be able to think + plan a bit better. After my worthless childhood + a failed first marriage, at age 42, I finally found out what life was supposed to be about. Les was 52, recently widowed + we were introduced by a mutual friend, a local artist. I stopped long enough to say, Hello, and

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kept going + he certainly never noticed me. After that, I just seemed to keep tripping over him + as I got to know him more, I wondered what drove him as he was the direct opposite to me. He was a "type A" personality, had been a navy clearance diver in his youth, had done a number of jobs with the public service in Canberra was a retired cartographic draughtsman with J.I.O. (D.I.O.) + at that time had 33^{YRS.} active involvement in motor sport in the Canberra - Southern Tablelands and coastal areas, firstly as a competitor + then as an official. He always seemed to be an organiser of something he cared about + loved giving orders + mostly had some kind of title. He had helped get Surf-Air Speedway off the ground in Moruya + ran it from Canberra for the first few years. And he was the local fire captain + a member of quite a few special interest

clubs. To cut a short story shorter, despite my objections, it didn't take him long to convince me that he was right, so I made the best decision I ever made in my whole life. He was kind, passionate, multi-skilled, charming, literate, intelligent + found my independence + self-sufficiency a real challenge. I kept him clean, happy, healthy, fed + well rested + guarded the phone. He was then able to do a better job of being action-man, giving orders + saving the world. But his main interest was me + my happiness + I never doubted it. He was good-looking too, but I had sworn I wouldn't fall for that again. So even that worthless little girl did eventually find happiness, it's just that it was crammed into 22½ years, but much more intense. Like a candle burning bright. We were never bored + stimulated each other. He taught me so much + I told him of things that

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were unfamiliar to him. Now I live alone in the bush in the mud brick house ^{designed and} ~~we~~ built together, connected to solar power only, which I don't entirely understand, + knowing this is the down side of marrying a man older than yourself, but for awhile I had the best. The house is like the ses Gilbert Memorial Museum with all his awards, certificates, badges, medals, ^{ribbons, trophies} plaques, + letters of commendation. I feel like exhibit No. 1. There's all his presents to me, letters to me, things he drew for me, cards, + the everyday things he made for me. And he said to me, "Don't forget me." That's how I know I am special. Now I have to try and make a life for myself, alone. If you need to call me, as I said, I will be at my home No. until about 24-11-04. Calls mostly go to Messagebank as I prefer not to answer unknown Nos. If I'm here I return calls within

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5 mins. - 24 HOURS. There is no Mobile reception here. After 24-11-04 I have instructions from my husband's son-in-law that I must turn the Mobile Ph. on, so he can reach me. I'm not real good at answering in time, so mostly, I return calls on that too. In case I have messed up it's always a good idea to try again. The reason I'm so hopeless is it's my husband's Mobile & I never used it & of course, there is no reception here. No T.V. reception either although ~~we~~ I have AUSTAR satellite dish. This house mostly runs on gadgets, which I'm not very familiar with. (Boy's toys) although it seems to be that I know a lot more than most other people & I haven't had time to learn everything yet. Les would be very proud of me, but still be telling me of all the mistakes I was making. Sorry for the rambling note, but there's no one to talk to here & it's Les' birthday. Yours,
Varina Gilbert.