

Gayna Ryan, November 2023



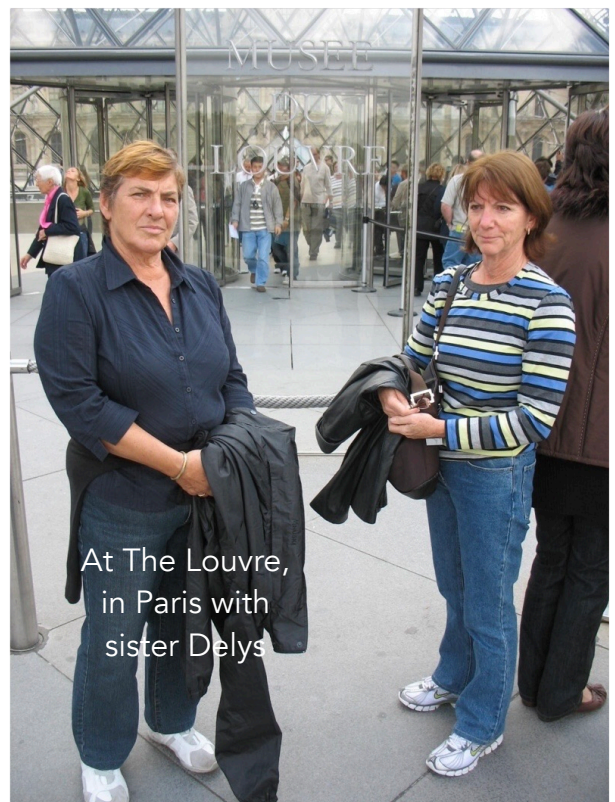
Raised in Melbourne's leafy outer suburb of Eltham, home of the famous Montsalvat artist colony, Gayna Ryan did not emerge a budding painter or potter, but with a brilliant mathematical brain and a passion for golf, fishing, and wine. The three don't really seem to mix all that easily, but on the basis of the exception proving the rule, that makes up the enigma of Gayna.

Her upbringing was pure 1950s Aussie with lots of tennis (Senior Pennant of course, at the age of 11 — don't do anything by halves) and if only she had conscientiously studied French, instead of boys, in her early teens, she would not have been relegated to the school's Commercial Class where she discovered a love of accounting.

Straight off our Gayna started managing the school canteen and as soon as she matriculated, went to work for a public accountant.

Awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship she rocketed into part-time study for 13 years, gaining a RMIT Diploma of Business Studies, Latrobe University Bachelor of Economics, and then a post-graduate Diploma in Cost and Management Accounting.

By the time of her final degree, Gayna had decided that part-time study was for weaklings. Blessed with an excellent secretary in her full-time job as Financial Controller for a company owned by Pacific Dunlop, she undertook full-time study as well, triumphing in both. (Do remember to keep that bit in mind if contemplating doubling Ms. Ryan when she's playing against you.)



At The Louvre,  
in Paris with  
sister Delys

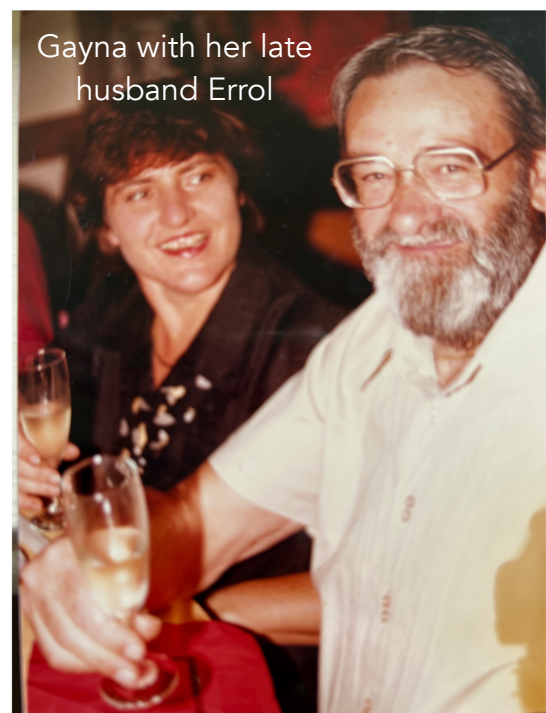
The Pacific Dunlop division had factories in the Philippines, where the indomitable Gayna would fly in to check the finances. This was during the Marcos regime, with armed guards in all directions — and the occasional entertainment of street shoot-ups between army and police. Sadly, the Catholic Church targeted the company to increase wages and benefits for the local workers, and as a result both factories were closed, and the company moved into China.

Back to her herculean ascent of the accounting ladder: it had taken off in Cape Canaveral style (without the mishaps) so that by the time she was looking forward to celebrating a 21st birthday she could not, because she had proclaimed her age as 23 when applying to become Chief Accountant of a heavy engineering company with only 11 staff under her. From there she moved on to a railway rolling stock manufacturer — Clyde Engineering even had a train line running through the middle of the factory.

Gayna had married her first husband David Johnston before he left for the Vietnam War. The marriage did not last, and she met her second husband, Errol Ryan, in the salubrious surrounds of a public house known colloquially as the S\*\*\*carters Arms. The good old pub (once frequented by nightsoil workers) was the favourite watering hole of Clyde staff, and also employees of Ford Motor Company ... and in walked Ford executive Errol.

By then the redoubtable Gayna had built a house at Greensborough. After marrying Errol in 1981, she briefly retired and the pair had a marvellous 10-month 25,000 km road trip around Australia, long before the era of grey nomads. They then decided to turn the large Greensborough property into a self-sufficiency project, with vegetables, etc., a bit like the 1970s TV series *'The Good Life'*, but presumably without the pig and the snooty next-door neighbour. The main problem, however, was that their project had two bosses, so the one who traditionally should have been wearing the skirts, decamped and went back to the executive ranks, but this time as a consultant.

Life was great. Manufacturing companies seemed to be falling by the wayside, so Gayna swapped into consultancies for local government, taking on the Cities of Doncaster & Templestowe, Northcote, Melton, Brunswick and Whittlesea. The years developed into a delightful pattern: a few months working on council budgets and then a few



Gayna with her late husband Errol



months of wine and fishing forays up north to Townsville or Bowen, down the New South Wales South Coast, and occasional side trips overseas.

Paradise ended when Errol developed cancer. For a few years Gayna became a carer, as well as working full-time for the City of Whittlesea. Errol died in 2002 and she decided to move up here, where her sister Delys Murray (wife of Jazz Club legend John Murray) was happily ensconced. Delys sweetened the pill, saying she had signed Gayna up for the Noosa Golf Club. (She already belonged to Heidelberg and Bowen.)

In those days Jazz Club supremo Richard Stevens was still dabbling in real estate and found her a great pad in Sunrise Beach - great but painted watermelon pink and needing heaps of renovation. Our Gayna, of course, became an owner-builder, hiring subcontractors, and finishing the whole job in just six months — and it's not watermelon pink anymore.



The Over 55  
Champ



post-match chats with  
Ian Baker-Finch

Gayna also generously keeps the medical fraternity in champagne and caviar. The late 1970s saw only three bouts of surgery, followed by a few reconstructions (both shoulders, neck, etc.) in the late 1990s. By the millennium, however, she had it down to a fine art: 14 major surgeries in just 23 years, mainly due to skeletal problems caused by psoriatic arthritis. It's one of those awful autoimmune things that would see most people collapse in a heap.

Gayna, of course, just fills the cellar up with a few more cases of wine. Unlike those of us who frequent local bottle shops, Ms. Ryan jumps onto the Grays Online auction site, lodges a few bids for this or that, forgets about it all and then is surprised to come home and find 16 (sixteen - SIXTEEN, yummy sixteen !!!)

cases of vino delivered to her previously well-behaved garage. Unfortunately, Delys is not a steadying influence, for the last 45 years the pair have jointly owned a 240-litre barrel of port. Under the Solera aging method they siphon off 20 litres a year, pop another 30 litres in and say “bottoms up” quite often.

As most of us know Gayna also has had a recent bout of cancer, and a huge grin now that she is emerging the victor. Her life is shared with partner Ray Pettigrove, a legendary Noosan who is also one of the few blokes around who can say they thumped Marlon Brando and lived to tell the tale. (There was this girl in Tahiti, and there was Ray and there was Marlon and the inimitable Darkie Pettigrove emerged the victor — two peas in a pod.)



Then there's golf. They even have a putting green at home, with three holes, three flags and matching green mats nearby from which they can chip onto the 'green'. Gayna started out at Melbourne's Heidelberg Golf Club with the customary maximum handicap. Six months later it had come down to 16, within another year she was playing off eight and by the time she moved here, still in single figures.

Starting at the Noosa Golf Club in August 2004, by November she was on the Women's Committee, by January she was the Women's Captain, a role she held for two and a half years and then spent a year as President of the Women's Committee. In 2007 she was pressured to take over the role of Treasurer, which she

did with her usual amazing flair and minimum fuss. Now Gayna is helping her successor take over, while she remains on the Executive Committee, honoured by a Life Membership *“for her services as Treasurer”*.

In 2006 our heroine started Bridge lessons here with David Henderson, did a stint as Congress Coordinator and then passed the Director's Exams in 2021. So, if we want a role model, there she is: no fuss, having a simply wonderful life, no matter what fate throws at her. Pass the port.