

fractured flowers presents

a Gavin Mears production

“The Newsletter 8”

versione non-originale

Written by someone who looks incredibly like me.

Already I have had calls and emails asking if they had missed the newsletter and chasing me up for some humorous light reading.

These are the customers who did not read last years obviously.

But I promise this year will return to the style and **f luffiness** of the original.

Previously: the following recaps do not take place in real time. (full versions appear on the website)

The following takes place between 1998 and 2007.

Customers laughed at my near death experience with **“pneumonia”**, (yes I got better), chuckled at the **“hiccups”** of importing, sighed at the private life disasters and sympathised with recognition at the trauma of singledom in **“another one-off newsletter”**.

Many were puzzled by the **☉♦♋♦♦♦✠♦♏☉** syntax required to enjoy the news of our move, and lauded and bowed with respect when their **“lord of Potpourri”** honoured them with more tales, witticisms and light holiday reading, movie reviews and generally made fun of the fantasy genre.

Romance and intrigue caused gasps and amused the ever growing readership, and over 1 thousand customers, (okay only those that read it) laughed at the perils we all endure in small business as I mocked myself and the troubles that almost **“kill”** me with annually coming up with a new approach in the scribblings.

Then came the most shocking of all. A newsletter than generated over 130 responses from those concerned for my mental well-being and from those for whom this was their first newsletter from me. The former looked forward to being amused, the latter were newbies not sure what this was about. That was the **“Desperation”** that was last years prose. Many wondered had this industry got to me and a new darker side overtaken my mind. Had the computer virus that struck 4 newsletters before been uploaded into my consciousness, was it the steroids, (*look at me, do I look like I take steroids*) or was it simply that sometimes humour needs to be tempered with drama and seriousness to be fully appreciated.

Whatever the reason, which will not be revealed here, the 2006 newsletter was not the best received but generated more replies than ever. (*same can be said about certain tv shows, all cliffhangers but nothing happens*).

Roll credits:

Written and directed by Gavin Mears

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“proudly scaring my customers with the title on their statements”.

And now Part 2....

So onto 2007, but not til I recap 2006, after all I couldn't recap 2006 in that last seriously heavy monologue. Hmmm maybe that was where the error lay. It was not my fault but that of Mary Alice. It was not a monologue, but a duologue, a struggle between the casual and the serious person inside struggling to get out. That constant reminder that that which we are seen to be is not always a true reflection of who we are, that facades created can be as thin as veneers, or like brick walls that our inner being struggle to break through. Or in this case that the outer shell is restraining an alternate psyche that is itself not the reality but a construct of the societal changes we are all affected by.

Thankfully the keys to that vault have been hidden and we shall not venture into those realms of my mind again.

2006 started well. (Okay, after everyone had forgotten the newsletter and stopped worrying about my sanity). I found that many of the new designs were being well received and finding new markets and customers with new larger pieces such as room dividers, screen, giant vases. In fact some of the décor pieces were too big for the trade fair stand as my business name became increasingly unrepresentative.

The search for a more appropriate corporate identity has been long and fruitless. The main hindrance, a pejorative decision to maintain the "ff" alliteration. So few words begin with "f" that will fully infer and conjure up what I do, and whilst "flowers" covers only a small portion at least it has a lineage and its' origins have meaning. The search for a new identifying call sign continues....

Also I am reluctant to give up the "fractured" part because of the homage it comes from, yes a sort of childish regression to "fractured fairytales" from Rocky and Bullwinkle, and as it so aptly describes the condition of my mind as evidenced by the free flowing (a complimentary way to say jumbled) structure of this prose.

Interest rate rises hurt a little, some stores did not make it, others found that by finding their niche and concentrating on that area they bounded ahead, (I do believe this was subtly referred to "Desperate Storelives") while others found they had to widen their customer appeal.

I continued to design and make home décor and fragrant products that could be incorporated into all the modern and most of the older decorative styles and colour themes. Simply put I tried to avoid short lived fads and concentrated on more classic (not *classical* as journalist now say) and enduring styles. (why do sporting journalists insist on adding an "al" on the end of words. A good match maybe "historic" but not "historical". Ok they are not journalists but sporting personalities who make themselves seem more stupid by trying to come across as not being so.) Sticking with natural materials, and good quality finish, I maintain that products of high quality will always have greater long-term appeal than those sold simply on price.

And as good as we like to ensure our quality is, it is an unavoidable truth that when working with natural products as opposed to mass injected, moulded and extruded plastics, there will always be variations. Stalks are not always exactly the same thickness so colours, whilst predominantly close, will never be exactly a match. Shells cannot all be exactly the same size, and hand woven balls, or other natural materials may not be perfectly spherical. These are not flaws, they simply are. It's part of what helps make my products different. They are unique in their own way. But they still look good, still complement each other, and still make decorating a simpler joy. These variations are a positive in the appeal, and that I will maintain until I have the power to ensure that every creature in the farm makes its' shell identical to its neighbours. Hmmm cloning sea-life to ensure shells are all the same. I wonder

As I have just inserted the above paragraph during the third - re-write, we will re-visit the last line of the paragraph that originally preceded the interlude to assist in the continuity of thought. How very Victor Hugo these are becoming.

"I maintain that products of high quality will always have greater long term appeal than those sold simply on price."

Hence the decrease in market share of the cheap \$ dollar shops, and none too soon. (Apologies to those customers who run 'discount' stores. (Oh I don't sell to them, do I.)

That was a paid advertisement interrupting this editorial. Customers should read the prospectus not accompanying this letter to ascertain if the information given is relevant or even accurate. The above does not constitute a cash for comments advertorial as no cash was received. Ever. Please note ATO.

In Brisbane we returned to the **RYDGES** Hotel instead of the trade fair venue. Had another wonderfully relaxed time showing off, (products not me personally, and those who say otherwise please remember that footage has an injunction on it). Makes you wish all trade fairs could be like that but alas then we went to Melbourne, the



were playing at home so I missed out on that game, I wore my scarf to try to at least elicit some dirty looks in Melbourne, but found that I was surrounded by Bloods supporters all happy to see the colours.

To those who don't follow AFL I apologise for this short interlude, but since my team bombed out in the League, the Waratahs chances "sailed" away, and we lost the State of Origin, (yes that is for all my customers up north), I must linger longer on the fastest of all codes where my Swans, the Premiers (well they were at the point in time I am writing about) were heading toward yet another great finale. And what a final it was.

Only this time it was my turn to shed tears and my brother to enjoy the moment. With no fingernails or time on the clock left my football year ended in sadness.

Though at least they made the Grand Final which is much better than my soccer team where we only won 2 games all season and came dead last. I'd blame the goalkeeper but he pulled out before the season even started. I won't blame the fill-in keeper because although he did a sterling job for someone who had not played soccer for 23 years or been in goals for 30 years he simply was not quite tall enough to prevent high shots from going over my head, I mean his head. I did however receive the Coaches Medal though didn't score a single goal, but hit the bar 5 times; when not in goals. We don't mention how many he let in though.

Yes after 23 years I returned to soccer and so can keep my extra narrow aisles at work for another couple of years much to the chagrin of my staff who have to keep smoking to also fit down them.

But I digress again.

“What's new?” I can almost hear those sigh who've read several of these before and understand that any semblance of structure is disassembled even before the reader can ascertain if there was one. In fact I've digressed so much I can't even remember what I saying, alluding to, or what point I was heading toward.

Please wait a moment, make a cup of tea, pour another scotch, rub on some suntan lotion, (I will gladly help some of my customers in that regard, you know who you are) whilst I re-read where I was. I shall return in a few minutes.

Welcome back. Sorry for that delay it took longer to re-cap than I thought plus I got sidetracked into looking for some **fun fonts** with which to decorate this newsletter and some backgrounds for the web version. So, once again we will take a short break and return after these messages.

In 2007 fractured flowers will be launching over **250** new products. New potpourris as we must do every year, retiring some but launching more than we retire, (apologies to Julie who insists on range reduction. I will stick to waist and wrinkle, not range reduction), new shells balls, and new versions of current favourites, like coloured bubble balls, and new bubble eggs. New larger wall hangings with shells, vine garlands, wall décor, large vases, and Buddhist style marble gongs and room dividers. So don't miss out on seeing what's new at each of the trade fairs.

Ah yes, **Melbourne**. Formal trade fair setting, 3 days of setting up, 5 days of busy sales, and then long night pulling stand down followed by 11 hours of truck driving. But what a show. Our biggest ever but then we released dozens of new items which all sold well. And while some of the new large pieces are not best sellers, they do grab your attention and pull you into the stand and many customers realised that if they have that effect on you then the same result is possible in store displays. And that has been shown true with many of our larger pieces being ordered not just with the intent of selling but to generate interest in other products that they are helping to sell by their impact. If these dramatic pieces achieve sales of other items then they have done their job, and if they themselves find new homes, even better.

The exception of course was the large Shell Rope Nets. I was apprehensive since they were to retail at over \$200 but that proved unfounded and now they are our 5th biggest selling item. And yes there will be variations of this item coming in **February**.

In September we did the Homebush show again, and this time for the last time, really. I know I've said it before but this year I will be away at that time so yes it was our last September show.

Then came **the end of year madness**. I had 3 additional containers arrive plus added packing staff. But since my stock is designed by me for me and not off the shelf, ordering extra stock is not simply a matter of placing an order. Items need to be made before shipping. And yes I could've ordered more in the first place but consider this. We can only gauge what to order by what orders we get and if customers have trouble deciding on how many to order for their 1 store, imagine our dilemma trying to guesstimate how many to order for 1200 such retailers who individually are guessing. We got close this year and in 2007 we have increased our stock levels by a further 40% with containers now booked to arrive every 3 weeks.

Add to that that we still manufacture all potpourris and Decorator and Ball packs by hand, 1 at a time. We do this to maintain my standing as the supplier of the best potpourri made in Australia and in 2007 you will see that I have revised over half of the designs and added several new colour themes, that will co-ordinate nicely with the new balls and vases and candleholders I have designed.

All in all I am trying to bring together colour themes for the whole country in products that will be long lasting and enduringly fashionable.

And now for the conclusion....

As with all good yarns, stories need a beginning (in this case a re-cap), a story (a blend of re-cap and adverts), and an ending (what's ahead).

So to 2007. I think that's covered in "what's ahead"

In **February** we have our biggest stand ever. And if all goes according to plan, and we know that won't happen, I will have over 100 new products on display in a free flowing free standing space, that will have individual themed spaces and displays. That is if the stand constructors can work out how to make my floor plan work. Stand number at Homebush is **HG25**

There will be new shells balls, new colours, new fragrances and potpourris, variations on a theme of our biggest selling items. And we hope to make your visit an interesting one. I won't be wearing a suit, or playing used car salesman. I will be relaxed and make fun of as many of you as I can, though I do know that 1 customer reading this will not be back having taken exception to being referred to as a "pack-horse". Personally I thought it was a compliment but then they obviously didn't know me and couldn't appreciate that not all businesses need slick performers but rather real people to help not sell.

Talk about getting on a soap box. I can tell when I do because the sentences get very long indeed. Anyways I suggest you begin preparing your quips and retorts and see if anyone can leave me speechless this show.

It was nice to have so many customers last show comment that mine is 1 of only a few where they can relax and enjoy themselves. Stress is for when you are in your store. On my stand the emphasis is on being yourself. Ok, maybe within limits, but as some neighbouring stands made mention last time, mine was the only stand where laughter could be heard most of the time. Possibly because laughing at me is easy.

We shall return to **RYDGES** in July, after I take my first holiday in 10 years. 3 weeks in Europe to be at a friend's wedding, and hopefully a day at Wimbledon. By the time you read this it will have been 10 years since I returned from my last holiday and that includes long weekends. Something many of you can relate to.

August, back to the compact space allotted to us that cannot be increased, in Jeff's sheds and many new products.

Also this year we will be beginning our email programme and adding a shopping cart to the website to make ordering online easier. There will be no credit card facility with the order to avoid the complications of requiring security, but you will be able to order online and know exactly what is in stock and not, updated weekly. We hope to also have available an ETA for goods out of stock so you know what is coming when.

These are goals we have set and will be rolled out as we overcome the various technical difficulties such a service can face. The website will also undergo a face-lift in mid- February.

The soothing hues of chocolate and cream will be replaced by vibrance and less fattening temptations.

Now for my choices of 2006:

Best Tv Show: No idea as I only watched 35 minutes in the whole year.

Favourite Movies: The Queen, Casino Royale, V for Vendetta, The Prestige,

Favourite Quote: I know I ordered it but that doesn't mean I want it.

Favourite sporting moment: World Cup win over Japan.

Worst sporting moment: That dive..... (well we did see them practicing that in that emailed clip.)

2007 has much promise. In so many ways so much looks a little easier than this time last year. I trust we all are able to enjoy the fruits and spoils of a year that lives up to that promise, that hope, that we can rise above the challenges, enjoy the triumphs and find time to share that joy with those around.

I wish all of us a year where small joys are remembered and cherished, fights are forgotten and forgiven, promises are made and kept, (oh it's an election year hey), and we see that difference is not a burden but a requisite for growth and wisdom. A year where the word "respect" may start to mean something and being thoughtful is not the exception but the way we choose to live.

Gavin