

Honorable Committee,

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I'm gazza, a knickname, one of many given on the job in the backyard of Aus' where a bloke could get a fair days return if he put in. Some came for the suntan and to escape the bedium of the factory, to live on the river be up at the crack of dawn six days a week and more, to get the crop off to meet the requirements of the MARKET. The vigour created can be enormous, the game of catch me if you can gives you a glow at having a go, we all know; but out in paddock its different, with flies that seek the sweat and jump into the mouth which must remain shut as a consequence, although it does get loud on occasions I love the quiet of sublime concentration at speed.

Nobody warns of the other dangers that lie in wait, such as the blade, in the grapes, it takes a long time to develop the skill, saw a bloke at Robinvale near cut his index finger off; why did he use a heavy hino cutting knife, on the same job another of the Queensland mixed crew was a hockey athlete and fast who used scissors type thing to good effect. I felt a knee pop once, when backing out boom under the vines, making sure to stay low not to cut the back on the steel cross member support, yeah that got me once, you grimace and bear it until it comes good; and bye the bye a grape leaf makes a band aiding the stopping of bleeding and the cut heals in a couple-three days mostly.

The picking ladder became my particular problem,

Pears are still productive beyond fifty years and the fruit mostly grows on high, so monotonously in quick motion. The ladder is landed with an eye on the best placing the front leg is thrust forward and landed on the spot and in the same instant your there peeling them in. Picked green hard to bruise, not impossible, a fellow using a mobile hoist was portrayed to me as a rough picker; so for eleven hours plus I ran up and down the ladder heavily laden, flat ground so not a problem with falling ladders. Apples in the mountains is where placement is crucial, especially the free front leg which moves on an arc to facilitate perfect danger, no I won't wear that one again!! and another thing is when you get to a property, first in best dressed when the choice of ladder is concerned, Rust has an effect on legs and rungs, I've had legs collapse and starting the run up, a rung collapse is a surreal experience.

Orange trees are pruned in such a way as to create dangers to the unsuspecting, the ladder is very tall bowed and awkward when falling through branches with prickled surprises bashing until the half landing, then move to the ground when the thing decides when the ride is finished. Here again applies the principle get yourself a good ladder if you can, of course property owners or managers are embarrassed; another picker might tell you, its an unwritten love the seeking of wisdom on the job, we mad fruit pickers though love to rave on how exciting it all is and the glory of the chase, intense concentration not to waste a moment, every move crucial.

A bloke down GIPPSLAND cutting asparagus, who also did the spuds he was one of the marks in a fast team that I aspired and overtook in the two seasons of doing that; well he was carrying a back injury the professional advice assured his imminent retirement, the thing is his slip of a partner was richer than him, I suppose she had time off rearing children. Another fellow in Lindenow couldn't move without pain relief, an injury incurred in his own garden; not from a lifetime of fishing and horticulture, he could still lead the pack in the broccoli paddock which by the way was inundated with water from a minor flood, a bog for a fortnight or more. The boss, a wealthy cattle man lacked morals but had a good sense of humour which I suppose counts; I was not in seeing his cattle living along the banks of the Mitchell ^{hunted} so that he had more space for disease ravaged (club foot) brassica and beans. This was indeed another example of the carrot turned into a thumping stick to get the very best out of his lowly paid workers, he put me and German tourists in a patch of beans and doubled the price saying we wouldn't make money there, well I did, but when the pay packet arrived he reverted back to the original price. The straw which broke the camels back.

I left there and went to Warrnambool to do the citrus for third consecutive season thinking a mobile hoist would be offered me on the slightly more prosperous property but alas I was bypassed, nice safe Indian fellow was offered it, he declined, was happy with big income he and partner established; on return to his home country they lived very very very well please.

It was noticed by a regular professional picker who frequented this area, as part of his run through to Queensland citrus; that I was carrying a discernable limp, I suppose it concerned this fellow who himself had been ~~the~~ subjected to four mini-strokes, but I didn't see much of him after initial warm greeting. So here I was trapped, not dissimilar to the year before when a pair of juvenile ^{semi} pet foxes haunted my tent site sneaking in the delightful smell of my cooking and running circles, literally around me, an extraordinary experience captured partially on film, around the camp fire nightly. My reputation was embedded in the crew as being scared of this most outrageous cunning smelly form of the dog family, the sense of awe was totally overwhelmed by horror when on top of jokular vibbing, this big raving rat bag, with fourteen years service to himself and the property and area; lost it and hung.

Him and his missus, a huge woman; metabolism or murray cod, and their two ^{young} boys worked in close proximity and subsequently the boys wandered over my way frequently, a bit much sometimes, the five year old being totally outrageous like father, it took a while but his antics got to me after a while and I endeavoured to discourage the babysitting duty expected. Simultaneously the big fella showed signs of losing grip on everything, the last time I saw him, he nearly asked, then retreated saying I don't want to burden you; my reply was to ^{throw} my hands in the air gesticulating yep that's life. Its hard to realise!!

On an occasion in Queensland people took their baby out to the paddock, lack of baby sitting facility

The system let me down, my debate (internally) is that (5)
Responsibility radiates from what source.

That day evidently, as the story was being portrayed to me at the petrol station where I was filling to leave on the trek back south; on returning with empty bins behind tractor the father run over, and he suffers still the agony of momentary madness. It is a small world in small towns running from place to place in a big country, and you hear countless accidents, the scars, accidents ^{and attitudes} waiting to happen. People tend to cast aspersions and blame readily, and at this point I wonder to myself what came first the chicken or the egg. I vowed never to go back to places - Mildura where I witnessed an attempted murder

Shepparton the stench of death below the main street in the seriously degraded Goulburn River

Gayndah - baby being run over; pointing of the bone at fellow who crashed his motorbike into brick wall boss who stuck his finger in bolt hole to line it up, and lost that digit; crashed his helicopter, something to do with line running up the mountain, cable that disappeared then reemerged.

Well I did go back to Gayndah a couple of years ago where because of drought and severe toothache fell destitute; there used to be a time when you just rooked up to a property and asked; now I feel like a dinosaur, as screening takes place. A run down property at Monak on the Murray used employment agency to secure workers, accumulating land was the owners goal, not good book sence, he didn't send me statements of earnings which caused us all upset, Taxation Dept included with Centrelink and Doctors now lead me to believe that the real world is not what I once thought.

Yours Sincerely, Gary M Reid
Permanently injured worker