



David Goddard writes –

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE O-SHOP

..... well, it would have done if I'd stopped to talk with Kevin. He loves engaging people and has that happy humility and apt repartee that generates laughter from ordinary occurrences. The joy is fleeting, but its memory makes one glad to have been in the moment with him. And his understated manner and honesty generates respect, so we are simply glad to see him at events.

Kevin's background

Kevin Maloney was born in Mont Albert in July 1942. He was the second of five children – three boys, then two girls. Peter, his brother who also orienteers, is eight years younger. His mother, Vera, and father, Vin, were married in 1937 at St John's Roman Catholic Church in East Melbourne, although the ceremony was held in the sacristy because his mother was not

Catholic. Vin worked as a toolmaker/engineer during the Second World War but, after the war, he and Vera became small business owners – essentially in groceries.

The experiences of Kevin's childhood coloured much of his life. During his school years, the family moved among several areas on the outer fringes of Melbourne where he had the freedom to explore forests and to ride bikes fast on gravel roads. Most of Kevin's schooling was in Catholic schools where he gained the discipline and adherence to his faith that continues to this day. He loves the universality of the Roman church – the familiarity of proceedings whether one is in Melbourne, Rome or Castlemaine – and the beauty of some ceremonies, e.g. the Easter vigil.

Before starting with groceries, Kevin's mother, Vera, was a typist with a printing company. Then, despite becoming busy with her grocery businesses, she cared for her children, was brilliant at sewing and had a very 'young' voice. She died suddenly in 1984 from a rapid-onset cardiac condition while motoring on holiday in South Australia. Kevin's father, Vin, died ten years later but not before entering the M80 event at the World Masters' Games at St Helen's, Tasmania, in 1992. The year before that, at the Victorian Championships, Vin Maloney was named orienteer of the year.

Kevin is a bachelor. In his words, "I've never had girlfriends or boyfriends." He lives alone in his old family home in Mt Waverley. He is a member of the Mt Waverley history group.

From school to grocery

Kevin's parents' first business was a general store and post office at Morwell Bridge, where the original alignment of the Princes Highway crossed the Morwell River, 5km north-west of Morwell. Nowadays, the site of Morwell Bridge like neighbouring Yallourn has been swallowed by the brown coal open cut. Kevin remembers the big rubber stamp that put the postmark on the letters and the day that gypsies paused at the store – one read his parents' palms while another bled the till. Kevin was glad that none of *his* toys went missing.

The next move was to a farm with ducks and chooks and a single Jersey cow at Kinglake West. Vin, his father, drove a bulldozer and carted firewood. Kevin loved being in the forest with Vin although one morning, Vin came out to find his loaded truck down to its axles due to the subterranean energies of land crabs. Kevin started at the local two-roomed primary school. To get there required a small bicycle – a hand-me-down from elder brother Michael. Whilst introducing himself to the bike, Kevin started on a downhill road before finding out about his foot-brake. His trajectory was arrested as he ran off the road at a sharp bend and into a single loose strand of barbed wire at chest height. He quickly discovered a less painful way to stop.

After a year, the family moved to Ferntree Gully where Vin bought a grocery opposite the station. Kevin and Michael sat among the furniture on the back of the truck as they descended the narrow road from Mt Slide junction to Yarra Glen. It had many sharp bends so Vin used the horn – only it stuck on, adding continuous sound to the fresh-air ride, doubtless mimicked by lyrebirds in the fern gullies for days to come.

In the grocery, Vin collected orders from customers then made deliveries in his truck later in the week – the horn had been fixed by then. They sold bulk kerosene and chook food in hundredweight sacks (51 kg) – no manual handling regulations then! Kevin liked to observe the weighing out of groceries on the scales and how merchandise like salt had to be belted and bashed to make it flow. Kevin attended the local Catholic school. He said he was never really good at school but Sister Michael in Grade 3 had one activity that he recalled. Members of her class would find a place around the walls of the classroom and she would go round the children one at a time and ask them to spell a word. If they got it wrong, she'd ask them to sit down.

The winner was the last one standing. Kevin doesn't remember many successful completions but he enjoyed the activity.

Younger brother Peter was born during those years at William Angliss – the hospital (in Ferntree Gully) *not* the food school, Kevin hastened to add.

Then, as Kevin started Grade 6, the family moved to Mt Waverley while his parents organised for their Foodland grocery store to be built at Kilsyth. But, in school at St Anthony's in Oakleigh (now Chadstone) Kevin felt outclassed.

Once the Kilsyth store was constructed, the family moved there and Kevin attended St Edmonds in Croydon, reaching Form 2 (Year 8), then the highest level at the school. He transferred then to St Joseph's Catholic Technical School at Abbotsford which necessitated a train journey from Croydon to Flinders Street and a second train from Princes Bridge to Collingwood. He started there in 1955, just before the big year for Melbourne in 1956 with the Olympic Games (although he never attended), the start of television and ready availability of the Salk injectable vaccine for poliomyelitis. At school there was woodwork, metal work and other trade and standard subjects. Kevin showed me his school report. It had comments like, "Capable of a higher standard if more energetic", "Kevin's work has been marked by interest and sincerity", "Excellent student of excellent moral character and well-mannered".

Discipline was firm. Kevin had thick curly hair and one day was chastised by his teacher for having it cut too short. And the school had no heating so, on cold days, the children were warmed up by a brisk run around the quadrangle. The school had no playing fields so, for football and other games, children crossed the Yarra to playing fields at Yarra Bend. Kevin said he was no athlete, and was always one of the last to be picked for team games.

Kevin left school after three years, about the time that his parents sold their Foodland store in Kilsyth. They had built another Foodland store in Mt Waverley, almost opposite the home where he still lives. Kevin's mother was keen for Kevin to get qualifications and further skills, and, just then, Woolworths were about to open a variety store and supermarket at Mt Waverley. Kevin sat a written test and was employed there. The store manager required his staff to stand in 'their' aisles; they got into trouble if they took a lost customer to another aisle. At age 15, he was appointed assistant storeroom manager which, among other jobs involved sweeping. He found that the fans on the coolroom fridges would blow the dust back to where he had just swept. One day he turned off the fridges while he swept but forgot to turn them back on again. He wasn't fired but the clean-up proved smellier than sweeping.

Next door to Woolworths was a Malvern Star bike shop. He bought one – his first *new* bike, not a hand-me-down from Michael. He felt like king of the road (and of the log that, in those days, served as a bridge over Scotchman's Creek near his home).

He stayed at Woolworths for eleven months on a weekly wage of £5/2/6. But his father had fitted out another store in the 'Four Square' grocery chain at nearby Jordanville, so Kevin joined him there. After four years, a Mr P C Thomas who owned three Supa Valu supermarkets, offered Kevin a job at his store in Maling Road, Canterbury. Kevin remained there for 35 years until his retirement. He recalls that customers, one time in their teens, became grandparents over that span of time.

Kevin and cars

While working with his father at Jordanville, Kevin bought his first car – a Fiat Multipla 600 – and joined the Fiat car club where, through more than ten years, he joined others in sprints, hill

climbs (near Warrandyte) and other hoon activities (as he described it). In the club, he learnt advanced driving – recovering from skids, that sort of thing. The Fiat was a small beetle-like vehicle with a rear engine and doors that opened so that one stepped out in front of them. One day, as his car traversed a shallow cutting at low speed, a cow jumped on top of it, breaking the windscreen. Kevin was hardly over the moon.

His next car was a Volkswagen beetle until it crashed head-on on a flooded road. In those years before seatbelts, a doctor had to remove many fragments of windscreen from his face and scalp. He still bears scars. Another VW crashed four days after purchase when he misjudged a bend in the road at a level crossing and scraped along some concrete pipes. Indeed, one way to learn about the innards of cars is to have crashes, and Kevin did – several more of them. Kevin wondered whether the dark red colour of one vehicle was a factor. After the crash, the repairer bolted a new white-coloured cabin on to the existing chassis and Kevin persuaded him to paint the whole vehicle white. Ultimately, Kevin and his car insurer parted company.

In 1966, Kevin and brother Peter gained third place in the Castrol Safety Drive car rally in Victoria – the certificate saying that Kevin showed satisfactory driving ability, road courtesy and consideration for other road users and the public. They travelled to Sydney to compete in the Castrol national rally. He went by air – his first time in an aeroplane. He was sickened by the enclosed space full of cigarette smoke and spent much of the journey vomiting in the toilet from where the cabin crew had to drag him as the plane was about to land. The national rally organisers actually supplied cars to the competitors, and Kevin and Peter were travelling well until they lost many points for speeding across a one-lane bridge. Like much else in our lives, it's not what you *do* that counts but what you get *caught* doing.

The car club assisted Kevin's driving including some attendance at the police driving school in Brunswick. Each year at Christmas, Kevin entered the courtesy rally run by the Victorian Police Motor Sport Club. In 1974, he won this with his younger sister Joan as navigator.

Kevin regarded Peugeots as the ultimate in car design and, in 1970, he bought a new Peugeot 404. By then, his desires to hoon were waning. Later, he bought a second Peugeot – a 504 T1 – a great cruising car and very comfortable to sleep in (but not behind the wheel).

Orienteering

Early in the 1970s, Kevin saw a centre page spread in the Sun News Pictorial (predecessor of the Herald Sun) where Warren and Sue Key were shown orienteering at Yarra Bend park. This appealed so he started attending events at Gembrook, Strath Creek, Mt Egerton and other places. He joined St Leo's orienteering club which later amalgamated with Melbourne University Mountaineering Club, then Ex-Melbourne University (EMUs). A further amalgamation, led to Nillumbik Emus.

He started with D course and, as a regular winner, thought he was 'a bit good' until someone prompted him to move to C course. What he loved most about orienteering was, and still is, being out in the fresh air in the bush, nowadays enhanced by good courses on world-class maps. He regards the late Eric Andrews' map of The Cascades (in Queensland's southern granite country) as the most beautiful item of mapping art work ever made in Australia.

In 1978, he took long service leave from his job and joined a 'Peo Bengtsson' group tour of Europe led by Tom Andrews. Its prime purpose was to attend O-ringen in Axvall, Sweden – a military town. They also visited Switzerland and Yugoslavia (including one overnight at the 'Compass Hotel'). The group travelled by bus playing Abba music and staying at youth hostels. At the end of the actual tour, Kevin continued on in Europe with a 21-day Eurail pass travelling on a series of criss-crossing journeys through Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, France

(because of his love of Peugeots), Switzerland and Italy. He couldn't speak any European language but got by. On one journey, he intended to go to Nice and boarded a long train on a carriage that said "Nice" on the window. There were no seats in that carriage so he walked through the train till he found one. However, while he was sleeping, the train divided and his section of the train terminated far from Nice – not nice. Still, he loved his destinations in Italy – participating in mass in the church below the station in Rome, and seeing Lake Como and Venice. Observing different makes of stylish, sporty cars added to his pleasure.

An item that survived all this travel was a memento given to all those who entered O-ringen that year. He showed it to me. At a casual glance it looked like a fully-formed mushroom with its cap shrouding others nearly ready to sprout. In fact, it was a model of part of an ancient cemetery – the graves of the ancestors.

Kevin went again on a tour that included O-ringen in Anderstorp, Sweden in 1983. He recalled that at O-ringen the Australians wore T-shirts to advertise Australia as a venue for the World Orienteering Championships in 1985 and the local government even stopped trains on the railway that ran through the forest for the safety of runners. He was impressed by the smooth organisation of bus transport to the forests at O-ringen. The weather was very hot and their touring vehicle – a Toyota Hi-Ace – had no air-conditioning. They sweltered through Denmark, southern Germany, Lichtenstein, Czechoslovakia (as it was) and Yugoslavia (as it was).

Back in Australia, Kevin recalls a handful of proud wins:

Year	Type of event	Age class
1987	Australian Championships, Canberra	M45B, First
1987	Eureka Tri-O	Paired with Vin, First
1991	Australian three-day	M45B, Second
1994	World Cup Orienteering three-day challenge, Ballarat	First
2001	Victorian Championships, Whroo	M45+AS, Second
2007	Victorian Middle-distance Championships, Deadman's Flat (Irishtown)	First

Like all orienteers, he remembers significant blunders. One of the worst was at Mt Pearson near the Bay of Fires in Tasmania in 2005 where he was off the map for two hours.

Kevin started mountain bike orienteering in 1998. To his first event at Lal Lal (near Ballarat) he brought a Peugeot fold-up bike. He was told that was unsuitable so after that, for a while, he rode his father's bike.

He has competed in many mountain bike events in Victoria and interstate. He fondly remembers interstate competition in the company of Joyce Rowlands and the late Gordon Clarke.

Kevin is very observant. At Street-O, where the rest of us are just watching our maps and where we put our feet, Kathy Liley recalls Kevin's coming back and asking had we seen *that* garden, or some other feature that had taken his eye. And with his shop-keeper's eye, he would regale comments about the stock or retailing practices of various small grocery stores along the way.

Usually, Kevin comes to orienteering events alone. He usually attends church nearby on Saturday evenings then camps alone in the bush, on a back road, or at the event site. Sometimes others travel with him. Mary Enter recalled:

“One of my favourite memories is of an occasion when Kevin gave me a lift to an event in Canberra. We came home via Cann River and stopped for a break at a spot with a short nature walk. We set off and came to a little bridge with a sign saying that if we were very quiet and very lucky, we might see a bearded dragon. Kevin leaned over the bridge saying “Yo ho ho. Are there any dragons down there?” Needless to say, we didn't see any.

“He has given me many lifts to events and he likes to talk. Other orienteers often give us a toot as they overtake us. Kevin, however, toots at the birds on the road.

“He is an avid reader of histories and biographies and has lent me many books so that I can share in his enjoyment.”

Kathy recalls that he always has a story about some old railway he has followed or other historical feature he's seen along the way.

Kevin said that elder brother Michael came to orienteering long ago – but once was enough. His sister, Joan, once partnered Kevin in a Blodslitet – a tough way to start and, it seems, discouraging. His late sister, Margaret, attended one bike-O event at Kirth Kiln, near Gembrook. Kevin and Margaret brought just one bike to the event. Kevin went out first and gave the bike to Margaret, expecting her to do a course. But she just enjoyed riding around!

The O-shop

In 1987, Kevin heard that Liz Randall wanted to sell the O-shop. He said to himself “I'm no athlete, I can't make maps, I can't set courses, but I *can* do retail.” So he and his father bought and ran the O-shop in partnership. Sue Sturgess, who managed the OV office before Peta Whitford, dubbed them *The Dynamic Duo*. The dynamism was not conspicuous in the sales pitch – there was no spruiking nor display-towers of loss leaders – but it was certainly present in the attention to customers. Kathy recalls, “Kevin remembered my sizes and preferences. When I commented that maybe I am ready for a new pair of shoes, he would immediately say something like, “No, I don't have your size/style of shoe in stock at present”, or “Yes, I think I've got what you need here ...” But then, Kathy was always a welcome customer. Her presence encouraged him in orienteering almost from when he started.

And one occasional visitor to orienteering bought an item from Kevin at the O-shop and was impressed by his attentive, cheerful manner. She lived in Canterbury and, some weeks later, she happened to be in the supermarket where Kevin worked. She saw him and, remembering the good service she'd had at the O-shop, she bowed up and enthusiastically said “Hello Kevin”. Now retailers pride themselves on knowing their customers but this was only the second time they'd met. She recalled that he looked mildly embarrassed by what must have appeared to him to be an attractive and rather forward woman ‘coming on’ to him. After brief pleasantries, he quickly found he was required elsewhere.

Kevin always offers service. Christine Sinickas said: “I've always considered him to be one of the good guys. More than once if I didn't have money for a plastic card holder on the way to the start he would give me one anyway. He's a real service provider without any other motive than to please.” Indeed the O-shop has never been a cash cow. Its profits have covered the cost of Kevin's fuel but Vin never received a dividend.

At interstate events, Kevin is less conspicuously entrepreneurial than his NSW or South Australian counterparts. He says that his business has changed markedly over the years. His peak sales were at the World Masters' Championships in NSW/ACT in 2009 where many competitors wanted Southern Hemisphere compasses. And at the World Junior Championships in Dubbo in 2007, Kevin had in store many small-sized orienteering shoes – sizes 5, 6 and 7 – which no big-footed Australian wanted. However, like Cinderella's glass slipper, they fitted the women in the Chinese team and, in offering generous prices, he quickly sold out.

Orienteers are fondly familiar with his van and trailer, and his tent, chairs and strip of brown vinyl on the ground at events. He used to have a range of clothing, O-shoes, compasses, map bags, card holders, ankle tape and other accessories. This range has substantially narrowed in recent years either as supplies from companies like Silva have no longer been available to him, or as orienteering technology like SI sticks and waterproof paper have made some purchases redundant. He now specialises in O-shoes and some compasses.

Kevin is no longer physically able to lift his trailer. At the Bullengarook event in April this year, his fare for sale was displayed on a little table, with back-up supplies in the van.

Kevin's health

Kevin's first encounter with cancer was a testicular growth removed surgically in 1987 without the need for radiotherapy or chemotherapy.

In 2013, he was found to have advanced bowel cancer. Treatment at Dandenong hospital with surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy was prolonged. For a while, his medications caused hallucinations – he heard voices and saw moving images on the wall. He was encouraged in his recovery by his siblings and a handful of friends in orienteering. Kathy Liley would sometimes call in after an event and bring her map for discussion. Mary Enter visited quite often and was present on one occasion when a nurse performed a painful procedure on Kevin. When he complained, she said to Mary, "How do you put up with him at home". Mary very promptly retorted, "Oh! We're *not* related." Other visitors included Pam King and the Sheehans. Eventually Kevin regained enough strength to reappear in the bush.

Last year he was found to have cancer in the lung of a different histological type to the bowel form. Further surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy ensued, but the latter has scarred and constricted his oesophagus so that swallowing anything chunky has become impossible.

And now

Kevin attends events although breathlessness restricts his speed of movement to a bit over one kilometre per hour. His ability to source humour from everyday things remains undiminished. We love that quality and the enduring spirit that brings it out. Thank you, Kevin.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Kevin and to Kathy Liley, Mary Enter, Christine Sinickas, and Ian Cheyne (through Alan Thompson) for what they offered to this story.