

A Peace Fool's Journey at the Millgrove Market

17th October 2026

Why I became a Fool for Peace?

I was inspired to become a clown by educators Patricia Cameron-Hill and Shayne Yates. They spoke about clowns and I thought *'I can do that'*. Yes I admit, I am an *'idiot and proud of it'*. Within 24 hours I was in hospitals starting clown rounds and visiting patients and staff. We brought smiles to the faces of those sick and bed ridden. We wheeled around *'Wally the Jolly Trolley'*. We met so many people of all walks of life. I remember smiling and laughing with an older lady, who said *'you made my whole day dear'*, another lady sat up with her table in front and we bounced a balloon between us. A nurse sick in the bed opposite said *'you don't know what you just did do you?'* I said *'no'*. She said *'she hasn't laughed in 6 months or moved that arm in 6 years'*. We met a man with cerebral palsy who we joked with and I read out his poem to the ward, he was a brilliant bush poet. I remember him awkwardly trying to catch up with us to give his phone number. Two new clowns asked to join us to hand out a book *'Doctor I feel Funny'* written by Patricia and Shayne. They knew Dr Patch Adams the famous clown doctor played by Robin Williams in the Hollywood movie. Around this time, I remember sitting in front of a computer thinking what do I truly want? The only word that came to me was *'peace'* so searched the internet and somehow Patch popped up. He was a peace clown. I wrote to him in Virginia, USA and to my surprise his brother Wildman rang me and invited me to go to Russia on their annual clown tour called *'Healing with Humour'*. This phone call changed my life. I had no money but felt I was going, I had 7 weeks to raise the money. I rang one of the clowns who said she would ask her mother-in-law. Within 24 hours they offered to give \$7,500 to go to Russia as it the trip of a lifetime. They didn't want me to pay them back but instead organised my trip. It was a gift.

I flew into Moscow, Russia at the time of Perestroika and during the Chechen Siege. There were 40 clowns from all over the world. We visited orphanages, nursing homes, baby houses, clowned on the streets and trains to bring cheer to the public and the most vulnerable in Russia. At the time there were 600,000 orphans.

We clowned in Saint Petersburg (Leningrad). We toured this ancient city, saw footage of great poverty during WWII, were shown ancient Russian architecture, Peter the Great statues of horses, museums and people pulling sleds in the snow. They call this city the Paris of Russia. The Russian people were quick to laugh.



Patch was a striking character, very tall, very funny and compassionate.

He wore a bean bag which he used to bump people playfully, a duck on his head and a dummy whilst carrying his floppy fish. They were his props. This helped him to connect with people. Patch grew up in a military family. He said clowning in Russia was to thaw the cold war and build relationships. He has done this since 1985. This was what he called a *'Love Revolution'*.

Patch understood the unhappiness many felt as he too was depressed as a young man. He checked into a psychiatric institution and met the famous scientist Arthur Mendelson. This scientist pretended he was crazy. When Patch visited him he got Patch to hold up 4 fingers and him 'how many fingers'? He said 4. He said look (for the solution) *beyond* the fingers. How many do you see? Patch then saw 8. This changed his perception of problems.



He realised the solution was not a mental health problem but that he had to commit his life to love and happiness. He became a doctor and started the first clown doctors in hospitals. This was the way he could share happiness with everyone.

So standing tall in Russia he shared with us rules of clowning, we don't give things out as we can get mobbed, we spread love and joy. It was during this trip that I was given a peace symbol and I too became a peace clown. I named myself '*Peacefull or Peace Fool*'.

When I came back, I found a sparkling jesters hat at Victoria markets in Melbourne. This was my symbol of a *Peace Fool* as I learned when Fools step out something wonderful comes. I clown on the streets of Melbourne for many years with my clown buddy Jon 'hairy' Potter a retired builder. His life was changed by the magic of Dr Patch Adams.

I felt inspired to teach children as a peace clown. I wrote my REAL HOPES peace, nonviolence and anti-bullying program for primary kids. This program was successful in participating schools. Kids love clowns and clowns love kids. Kids are our teachers reminding us it is okay to play and joke and imagine a happy world. The Hollywood version of clowns is not real clowns, they made them look scary which created an opposite archetype. Real clowns are from antiquity and are found in every culture. The clown provides comic relief from unhappiness, loneliness and *joyfooly* leads by example.



Everyone is a clown in disguise, and in unguarded moments, they let their mask down and a buffoon, fool, jester or joker jumps out, making others laugh at life as they suddenly get the joke that nothing is serious. We all do it naturally when we relax and find the humour in the difficult, absurd or different to reconcile the opposites.

To be a clown is an experience that few understand unless they *step out of their comfort zone* and risk being seen to be happy and become the butt of the joke. Clowns love people and liberate the *inner child* within those they meet. This gives them the real experience of freedom and community harmony.

After many years of being a clown on the streets, in hospitals, schools, universities, teacher workshops, presentations to audiences, orphans, kids with HIV-Aids, deaf, blind, disabled, poor and clowning in 20 countries - I stand on the stage of my life and see only *beauty* in every face. The privilege of seeing the *real humanity* cannot be put into words as real life is beyond words (beyond the 4 fingers). It is the real world in which I have lived.

Happiness is what keeps us strong, supported and laughing together in community during difficult and fun times.

That is why I am a Fool for peace.

Clowning at the Millgrove Market

The day before the market I was riding my bike past Millgrove shops and spotted Margaret aka Maureen who I met on the 683 bus months ago. She is the President of Millgrove Residents Action Group (MRAG) and we had a fun chat about ideas, life and community. For me community is laughter and happiness as I look at the world through the eyes of a peace clown. Maureen invited me to clown at the Millgrove market the next day. This is my story.

Today I clowned for the first time for a long time since I clowned on the streets. Maureen opened a door for me to come to the Millgrove market. It was a beautiful day. It was so inspiring I felt to write my story. First, I checked my clown gear: *feather duster (v)*, *star glasses (v)*, *Chester the jester puppet (v)*, *my stethoscope (funny bone checker v)*, *my rubbery tentacle ball (v)*, *my giggle stick (v)*, *turtle massager (v)*, *bubbles*, *balloons (v)* and *juggling balls (v)*. I jump out of my car, lock it up then launch into playing with stall holders giving bubble 'abundance' blessings and squeaking my nose. In the midst of my frivolity I reached for my bag, and whoops, where is it? hmmm. Yes I am a real clown, and yes identify as an idiot. I left my bag in my car for the first time ever. Right, stage left go and get it!

My approach as a clown is to smile, wave and give play-fool cheeky banter with people. I might joke, look surprised, drop my balls, blow a kiss, wave, juggle or throw or kick my rubbery ball (like a footy) to people and they propel it back. I am open to any fun-fooled interaction with my fellow clowns secretly waiting to step out and play with life. I have no plan. I move through crowds with no thought just responding to the moment and allowing life to make up the script. When you are happy the joy flows naturally, and I feel the world as my family. There are no strangers or anyone unacceptable, all are welcome in my world. You are in danger of making a friend. Everyone is included as participants, observers or passers-by. I put my star glasses on and see an Australian Idol in every face. Love just moves me and I am open to life 'as it is' without expectation. Everyone turns up exactly as they are meant to. This is how I become a *Peace Fool*. Happiness is not a 'doing', it is to 'be' yourself with no judgement.

It was a beautiful sunny day matching my mood. I returned to the stall holders blowing bubbles and joking. They started laughing. In the stall was this little boy around 5 with curly blonde hair, he looked at me cautiously watching as I chatted, blew bubbles and spreading my sunshine. His grandma had just bought him this little hand-made novelty sword. He thought it might be fun to stab with his sword. I said happily 'no no, no' as I guided him to not use it in this way. It is another aspect of culture we are in now, a lot of violent images, people don't realise how it impacts children. I play to try to reprogram him to innocent fun and real play to feel happy, as life is a dance not a war. At schools I taught kids 'arms are for hugging'. It was really interesting he tried to communicate to me that he didn't mean to scare me. He used a sentence I'd never heard as a clown, but the message was like an apology, he didn't want to scare me. That was a breakthrough. It was kindness shining. He became my friend and shadow for quite a while as he followed me around the market feeling drawn to the silly clown. The children loved this joy fool clown, absolutely, I have no doubt about that. Children need clowns. Clowns remind and encourage the *child within*, which we forget in our busy lives. It is our happy place and is felt when we are truly happy. Those who play together stay together. The class clown was the invention of children. Children inspire adults to play and be funny. They created clowns.

I saw a lovely woman sitting at a table in the sun. I massaged this young mother, she told me she was this gorgeous little boy's mum. He was at the stall with his grandmother. I massaged her back as I felt her energy to be very tired, she loved it and so needed it. He saw his mum happy.

I spotted an older Indian couple. I sidled up to them with a big smile. I happily chatted with them to find out about their lives. They had been in Australia for only a week. They were from the south of India. I had been to the south. I told them about clowning with 15 Australian 'Humanitarian clowns' in Vellore in southern India. We travelled in *tuk tuk's*, and connected to people as we made noise with horns, squeaking puppets and blowing bubbles. They had never see western clowns, the street suddenly transformed from serious to smiles and chatter breaking out in our wake. I always remember it was like slow motion, flowers opening, awakening to happiness wherever we went. Indian clowns came with us to the hospitals. We trekked to mountain tribes people who had never seen clowns before, they were so happy. Aah memories. The Indian couple were keen to take a selfie likely to send to their family and felt very happy. There was a real connection, opening like a flower, I could feel it. They said 'Namaste' this means 'the god in me greets the god in you'. I said it back with a big smile. How beautiful to meet.

I then met two Chinese gentlemen strolling through the market. I first spotted this lovely older Chinese gentleman who had an impassive demeanour. He initially didn't want a massage. I started with the young man and asked if he was with his father? He said 'no'. I said 'Aah he is your boss! Yes'. I brought out my giggle stick and offered a head massage to the younger man. He was keen. He took off his baseball hat, he had a lovely bald head. Jokingly I told him 'this will help your hair to grow'. He laughed. The older man watched his joyful happy expression. This broke down the veneer of the older man, when he saw the joy of his friend this silently opened the door for him to experience the giggle stick and allow joy in. I gleefully massage him too. That was a big breakthrough, I felt. It may have been his first time. Community is all about connection. We all have psychological walls and when we grow up in different cultures we may have strict social rules and not know how to interact. I've travelled the world and what I discovered was that we are *same same but different*. I remember loving families in Hong Kong, I always remember a father with his arm around his son surrounded by family. They understand community.

I massaged another couple. I can't remember what this lovely broad shouldered man said he did, but I found out his partner was a lawyer. I saw her hunched over, and could feel the *weight of the world* on her shoulders. She wasn't initially going to let me massage her but after hearing her partner's *oohs and joy* she changed her mind. As I massaged her I could feel she needed it as she relaxed. I'm so glad she let me bring peace to her this day.

As I write this I realise I broke down a lot of barriers. People who wouldn't ordinarily participate, did. That's a great feeling and honour in being trusted. This is what rebuilds real community. We have to feel safe to let others in and be open to simply play, relax and feel the freedom of life without judgement. This is what the essence of clowning is about. I am not a trained performer, more a buffoon, although people think I perform. I experience endless joy as I move through the crowds. I see no-one as unacceptable. No-one is avoided. Everyone belongs. There is no judgement in my world, only the possibility of more fun and joy to share as we are One family.

As I write this I think of the Japanese scientist Dr Emoto's who became famous for his experiment called *Messages From Water*. He had people direct their emotions at vials of water and then froze them. He saw the crystals change. When people directed happy, loving and compassionate thoughts this created *geometric symmetry* (balance), whilst unhappy, angry and hateful thoughts created disarray in the crystals (imbalance). The human body is around 90% water. He realised emotions impacted every cell. Perhaps that is why Dr Patch Adams became a clown doctor. He said loneliness and unhappiness are the greatest dis-eases. What if the conditions for dis-ease is affected by how we feel? He was famous for the quote 'Laughter is the best medicine'. As we lighten up, relax and have fun we come back to balance as harmony is peace. In 2021 Patch contracted MRSA and half his leg was amputated. He still smiled.

I met and interacted with little girls around 6 or 7. They were so enthusiastic. I showed them my giggle stick and gave them a massage. Mum watched as they laughed at the funny tickly feeling. My giggle stick is copper and is like 8 fingers massaging at once. I say it builds higher IQ, reconnects those neural networks and makes you tingle.

I bring out *Chester the jester* puppet, he emerges from my bag and is quick to kiss them giving love. I then searched for my balls and juggled. I always drop my balls and gesture a sore back, people then pick them up. I am letting them know it is okay to make mistakes and audience participation. I then shower them in bubbles as no troubles.

As I move through crowds I like to make sure the people *clean up their act*, so I bring out my feather duster and give them a quick dust over, maybe a tickle. Must be presentable for the market. They smile at the unexpected silly antics as they get the joke. So quick they are to join in and give joy to themselves. I believe life is out to do us good, no matter how it appears. Why not, *look for the good*? When we let in laughter and joy, we change our world.

I met two boys around 8 to 10 years. I said to the younger one 'I will teach you how to juggle'. He said 'I can't'. I said 'there is no such word as can't' (I hear my dad's words). His friend said 'I'll give it a try'. I said 'see, see what he said'. I said 'are you brothers?', he said 'no he is my besty'. I then taught the *besty* a two ball juggle and he did great. I went back to the younger boy and encouraged him to have a go at it. I said 'see you are getting better and better' it took me two weeks to learn (with fruit). I said 'you can do it and you are doing great'. And he was. I said 'what is important is that you keep trying, never give up.' They were important messages for these kids. There was a real breakthrough with that little boy. Kids just need encouragement and to believe in themselves. They can do anything when they believe and then see.

Impulsively, I asked if I could go for a ride on his bike. He suggested I take his friend's bike (bigger) and his friend agreed. I went for a quick ride around the market. I noticed from the corner of my eye a man looking serious, not allowing joy in, it is only because he doesn't understand. I didn't mind. Always you will see that. It is part of the mosaic that I find myself moving through. Life is yin and yang. Without yang you can't have yin. I love interacting with the kids. I thanked them for the bike ride and waved to them.

I saw a group of friends near the music man. I spontaneously broke into the group offering to dance, I had a taker and we hooked arms and did *strip the willow* and before I know it they are all interacting, dancing and coming alive with the music in the background. I hugged them all. I then turned to the music man, I didn't want to leave him out, and massaged him as he played music. He couldn't run away and didn't lose concentration *ha ha*. He plays music out of joy. I've seen him playing piano and guitar for people at the dinner at Koha community cafe.

I think massages are a great idea, because people don't get them much, I feel they work really hard and by the weekend they are tired. It feels good to be pampered for free.

I spotted another Asian man who told me he had been riding his bike from Lilydale with his friend. He adored being massaged with my massager across his back. He just was wrapped (*ha ha*). I gave him a big hug. That was another barrier broken down. It was quite profound. His Australian friend was happy. I gave him a massage and hug, can't miss him out. They preferred coming to Warburton as it is all down hill. Both felt relaxed and ready to tackle the uphill ride back to Lilydale. They looked super fit.

I chatted with a couple who sought advice on whether they should live here. I briefly turned into a residential adviser. I said it is a great place to live, the people are really friendly. They were thinking about moving. I wondered about people in Melbourne wanting to escape city life. People don't smile these days but hide in their iPhones. Trouble is you don't want everyone moving to little country areas, why not instead everyone bring the 'happy' vibe to the city? It used to be happy. The same guy and his wife I juggled for. He said '*can you go under your leg?*' I did and dropped my ball. He asked if I busked. I said '*no*'. He said '*are you being paid?*' I said '*no*'. He was surprised and realised I did this for joy. He wanted to give me money but I said '*no no*'. He would have given had I agreed but I felt so happy I just wanted to give to him and his wife. I understand what he was feeling, maybe I should have taken it given *my rules around not accepting anything unless given in a spirit of love* as I see this as the real currency. My ethos on my Happiness! Australia website is to *live to give, GNH4fun and how you feel attracts like a magnet*. I share the Hawaiian *Malama Philosophy* which inspires to '*take care of one's people*' as exchange. I typically don't take money unless someone feels love and desires to give to me genuinely. I know abundance comes to people when they *live to give* in this way. It is a magical universal lore. I have to laugh as my past life as a trained economist, life was analysed as transactional rather than social, reflective of a joy fool exchange to serve ones people. I experience real abundance as kindness without a motive. I encourage people to do what they love and what makes them happy. What is the point to life if you are not happy?

I live without any income, these days as I am living my philosophy of '*living to give*'. To allow life to show up as it does and be grateful for life as the real gift. For me, like Patch, love is the real currency or what I now call *The Fool's Gold*. It is our true nature to give when we are happy. All social problems disappear when we put happiness first.

I noticed a brave young girl on stilts, walking around. I wondered about her view of the little people. As I moved through the groups of people I smiled to see some friends in the crowd. They have never seen me as a clown.

I met a wonderful older lady who had been an academic, she was going to write her story. She told me a ABC journalist is setting up a group. I thought that would be fun. I told her I had a big story. I gave her my card, all my cards are different. She picked the one with a *signpost with values pointing in every direction*. She related to '*integrity*'. I really loved that. I gave her a hug. I saw her son next to her with his dog.

My friend turned up with her dashhound, he barks like mad, he recognised me and stuck his nose quickly in my bag curious to see what treats were there. He is definitely a *clown* dog. We often play, growl, roll over, tickle tummy. He has a cheeky sense of humour. Laughter and play is in nature, we witness in many species, as they celebrate life. Some people prefer animals to humans, yet the truth is we don't know ourselves or each other. We are still learning.

I saw my other friend, Claire who teaches joy through circus, she is a rising circus star and community builder. She and her wonderful husband Chris created The Dreaming Space. I met Claire over a decade ago as a guest on my radio program '*Bridges to Peace*'. At that time I recall her as a *Pioneer for Change*. They are famous in the area and often put on events and circus for school kids and community, they are the real stars unknown across Australia yet they made a real difference. They pass this banner to their children similar to passing the candle as a smile. They are committed to holding their *dreaming space* for a better world for children and have shared so much love, magic, smiles, wonder, enthusiasm and love as they invited others into a space of fun-filled community. This is the future.

It's incredible what clowning does, particularly freelance (free) when you enter people's worlds fairly quickly. It is playful way to connect, it is spontaneous, fun, positive, and it is what we want when we let go of fear. Did you know FEAR is *false evidence appearing real*? There is nothing to fear but fear itself. When you step out of fear, like a Fool, you realise life is an infinite opportunity. Fears are just shadow puppets we believe are real. The secret is '*what you think about you bring about*' and '*you see as you are not as others are*'. When you know this, you laugh at beliefs.

I felt inspired to *give* to the people at the Millgrove market, especially to Maureen who I anointed with my feather duster '*Joy*'. She called me '*Joy*' too. I felt Maureen aka *Joy* fool knows this abundance and lived by example. We were meant to meet the day before. I gave massages to the people volunteering at the MRAG tent. They laughed, smiled and chatted joyfully. I massaged a guy who was a tradie, he told me about getting trade skills and life as a tradie, he fixes what is broken. I saw another friend cooking sausages with a smile. Maureen, popped up and was full of smiles and goodwill, she has been building community for over 20 years. Imagine if we all just contributed for one year '*living to give*', what could be imagined and created for the joy of it. Can we do this with a sense of fun and sharing what you love for free? Can we choose to make time? It's about all of us pulling together and giving a little bit and to be surprised by what comes back. Many have forgotten or never experienced the richness of *happy* community that Maureen and I grew up with. Life has sped up, many are working long hours, cost of living pressures, shouldering more worries, online digital commerce and less face to face community, families breaking up, social values changing and many trying to make ends meet to survive. Some feel overwhelmed.

I remember when I travelled the world on my own as my own step out of fear, I realised the poorest countries were richest in community spirit. They had really strong families and put family above career, work and success. They knew their neighbours as friends. Adult children cared for their elderly parents. I remember when I clowning in Peru and stayed with a family, I wanted to give some American dollars to help the family. They had nothing, they said '*no*'. They, like me, did it for love. I was hosted by strangers who became friends in 20 different countries for free as members of a couch surfing website. They joined this network as they wanted to know foreigners and learn about the global family as community. We exchanged stories, experiences and laughter. I experienced generosity everywhere I went. We all become richer the more we gave of ourselves naturally. It is wise to give only from a place of happiness within and a desire to share and not from '*need*' or to be '*seen*' to give. For real community to grow it is wise to check your intention as to why you give and be sure it makes you feel happy. When you are *fool-filled* it feels like the cup overflowing, nothing more abundant than that. This is how you attract more in to your life. You can be poor in a condominium if you feel lonely or unhappy. So to be a *Joy Fool* is real abundance.

I found myself surrounded the kids again. The kids chased me around, I was getting puffed and flopped on the big wrestling mat with my legs up in the air. I felt unfit as I haven't run around like a kid for a long while. I had been going for 2.5 hours non-stop. The kids always say to me: '*where is your nose*'? They don't miss anything, they are my teachers and I bow at the feet of the masters. I have my nose around my neck as I use my nose to squeak as I walk (squeaky shoes). Sometimes I follow people and squeak as they walk for fun. They try to ignore me but end up looking back with a smile. The kids say '*put your nose on*'. I have a little red dot on my nose, is that good enough? I can see better, it is a very big nose. Hmmm. I then saw two really fat kids wrestling on the mat. I wondered if they had been eating fast foods? Hmmm. I saw Twister, a quick flash back to my childhood. I tried to step onto the right colours - yellow, red, blue.... The kids and I sat on the mat looking at giant snakes and ladders game. It seemed the START was a long way to the FINISH. Many ladders to climb, bit like life. Is it luck or skill or choice? I allocated a number to each child and juggled the dice and then rolled it. That game lasted about 2 minutes. Then I was back in my bag with bubbles and clowning around. The kids were not interested in board games but only to play with the clown who never frowns. I laughed. It is about human play!

I've been in many schools and remember taking a picture of a whole assembly of 50 children their eyes all fixed on the clown. I had 100% attention, the envy of all teachers. As a clown I taught kids my REAL HOPES program about peace, nonviolence and anti-bullying. This was an 8 week course of brainstorming, questions, games, jokes, props and play to inspire community and gentleness as the strength. REAL HOPES is an acronym for Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Love, Honesty, Oneness, Peace, Enjoyment and Service. It is a blueprint for building a peaceful, happy, harmonious community. The secret is to make it fun and truly happy!

One of the little girls wanted me to play 'tug o war'. As I played with kids we all made our way over there. So I tugged one side the kids were on the other. Then there was a little boy on one end and the girls on the other, I changed sides and joined him. Then we pulled gently for fun. The kids were all about having fun not winning the game. It is about playing together so everyone wins, it is creative, it is inventive, it is curious, it is exploring, it is bringing a big smile into their lives. This is the true human nature of kids and adults as big kids.

I always remember Dr Patch Adams telling we clowns in Russia "Everyone is great... now get to work". He pointed out that one clown thought she was less than great. On his clown trips, he saw everyone as great. He made clear you cannot do your dreams for peace and justice until you think you are great and get to work. Through my clown eyes I don't see anyone as better or less than anyone, we are all different, each has strengths. Imagine if we learn to inspire people to follow their strengths, joys and imagine the communities of the future we can build together. There is always yin/yang in life, but to keep focussing on the positive as our true north. It only takes a few people willing to step out of their comfort zones to explore the possibilities of life for us to joyfully play and remember:

'Your Happy Destiny is Unavoidable'.

Happiness! Australia is a call to action happiness in our lives, even if it means being a Fool. If you feel you are a Joy Fool or Cheer Leader like me, why not get in touch and let's create infinite possibilities and futures that we all can share for the sheer fun of it.

Signing off,

Peace Fool

aka Susan Carew-Holmes



Websites: www.worldpeacefull.com <http://ha.worldpeacefull.com>
Email: happinessaustralia@worldpeacefull.com

