

JEAN ROBERTS UPDATE

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Founder and Director of Roberts Management Concepts Pty Ltd from 1985 to 2012.
Jean is based in Melbourne, Australia

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Extract from my 2018 eBook "Making Order out of the Chaos of my Work-life"

My single aim in undertaking this extensive and personal search is to make order out of what seems like the chaos of my 80+ years – to know, accept and cherish who I am. My single aim is to attempt Masterhood in this life.

Now to define 'Masterhood' – you could liken it to reaching maturity in adulthood.

Masterhood is an awareness, similar to what you read about in philosophers' books. Knowing that the purpose is in what you make of an experience, rather than the experience itself. The purpose of an experience is what that experience leads you to in expansion and exploration, and as philosophers say, 'there are countless possibilities, but somehow you need to choose one'.

Masterhood is the process of selection - of selecting and creating order out of chaos.

Chaos as it is now understood has its own order. A Master understands that any set of circumstances has its own order in any culture and climate – no matter how chaotic it appears, no matter how out of order it appears.

A Master knows, understands, appreciates and respects order. Making order out of chaos can mean altering circumstances to provide order – or entering into the chaos in order to find the order; being prepared to step into the chaos. Nay, longing, searching, finding a reason to step into the chaos – willingly entering the chaos in order to find the order of that particular chaos. This is Masterhood.

Moving into the situation, moving into the circumstances, accepting without judgement the fact that this and this and this exists in this particular order, in this particular manner; understanding that one objective event can be understood in a multitude of ways according to the perspective from which you view or experience the event.

My belief can be simply stated thus:

The period from now until you leave this life will build on the preparation that you have painstakingly undertaken from the moment of your birth until now. The past is integrated into your future. Without your past, your future has no being. Your future cannot be without your past. (Jean Roberts, 1993)

Observation and experience through my adult life have shown me two valuable lenses through which to learn valuable lessons from the human experience. The first lens is 'small p' politics, and the second is culture:

- **'politics'** involves the link – and sometimes the gulf – between the formal and informal, between the expected and the actual, between the personal and the organisational, between the conceptual and the practical
- **'culture'** involves the 'group norms' within a formal or informal group of people – rarely documented, although providing a powerful basis for identifying acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within the group. New members joining any group need to be aware that there will be a culture – sometimes referred to as 'the unwritten law' – which they will only be able to discover through personal experience. Such experience can indeed be brutal.

Having been retired for 5½ years and now settled into the luxury of having time for intensive reflection, I can confirm this wisest of sayings 'the more I know, the more I realise I need to know'.

Establishing my own business in 1985 at age 51, my prior adult knowledge and experience stood me in good stead.

1. I started work at age 16½ in 1951 as office-girl at a small legal firm in Melbourne (Slater & Gordon), moving and progressing to secretarial positions in the Victorian College of Optometry, then to Radio Corporation Pty Ltd (makers of Astor radios, refrigerators, etc) then to Greatorex Textile Industries (manufacturers of elasticised fabric) and then to the Head Office of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labour Party. Along the way I experienced and learned about a variety of office and factory politics and cultures – and then about the administrative side of party politics and cultures.

a) **The office-girl and later secretarial responsibilities developed my interest and eventual skill in unobtrusive observation** – the art of understanding what is going on but having no active part other than doing errands for others, taking shorthand notes; typing letters, reports and a wide range of corporate documents; arranging and monitoring schedules, attendances and delegations – and the unending grudge of filing and keeping records up-to-date.

2. **After marriage at age 20 and then three sons, my experience eventually extended to being partner in a small family precision engineering company inherited by my husband.** Here, I became acquainted with the Metal Trades Industry Association's '5xMs' model for quoting and estimating – the five Ms were Metals, Methods, Men, Machinery and Money. These were critical to ensuring firstly, a safe and efficient toolroom, and secondly, a profitable business. The need to keep both up-to-date brought me into the world of risk/reward ratio, quality assurance, cost/benefit analysis, a trusting relationship with our toolmakers and apprentices, and establishing and maintaining effective customer relations.

a) **My knowledge and experience extended to the reality of owning and running a small business**, employing others, keeping the factory books and records, quoting and estimating, and the importance and value of repeat business and a steady customer base.

b) **Indeed, I learned much from the process of inheriting the family business – and then developing a husband and wife partnership to continue and expand the business.** It was essential to keep abreast of new machinery and methods, and we took a second mortgage on our house to do so.

Contact details: Ph: 61 3 9870 7595 M: 0419 521 172 jean146@ozemail.com.au

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