



Dear Charles

Did we get from Melbourne to Murwillumbah for McGrath? Yup, we absolutely did

With no, zip, zilch, not even ONE, mechanical hitch or glitch! Go Walter Owen Bentley

Since the 7th September Syd and I have been out there, exposed to the elements, as we racked up kilometre after kilometre through rural Australia and we did it; we got all the way from Melbourne to Murwillumbah. And back home again. We drove from Melbourne to Sorrento, to Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Rushworth and Shepparton. From Wagga Wagga, with a stop in Junee, to Cootamundra; through Binalong to Canberra and then Sydney. Ever north to Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Grafton, New Italy, Ballina, Byron Bay and finally all the way to MURWILLUMBAH, a distance of 3347.56 kilometres. WOOHOO!

For EVERY one of those kilometres Syd was behind the wheel; he drove our huge, heavy, ancient 1929 Speed Six Bentley for 10 or 12 hours every day for twelve days. Then he raced it around the streets of Murwillumbah before driving it back to Sydney, all of this to raise awareness of the work of the McGrath Foundation. Without him none of it would have happened; I thank him first and foremost.

The car used 867.54 litres of fuel, taking in approximately 100 litres each time Syd filled its always thirsty reservoir (it is too massive to be called a petrol tank). It caused pre-dawn trauma to the cashier at a servo in Bendigo whose massive double take when she saw the quantity of fuel spun her around in her stool at such a rate of knots that she nearly fell, surely almost dislocating her neck as she shrieked, "but where did all that petrol go?!"

It only used 4 ½ litres of oil; what a great relief! Friends had offered to sponsor us per litre of oil used; thanks to the good work of the Derby Works, they won't have to remortgage their home. On the road, Syd and I consumed 2 packets of cashew nuts, 2 packets of sour worms, 3 packets of fruit salad jellies, numerous bottles of water and countless bottles of coke – Syd's road trip fuel.

The sun shone most of the time, despite -2C in Bendigo. It *did* hail in Canberra and we *were* nearly picked up by gale force winds in Goulburn so strong that we were at risk of being wafted away and dumped unceremoniously into our backyard in Sydney. Balmy weather saw us into Murwillumbah which blessed us with perfect weather until the time came to go home; we raced a raging storm into Byron Bay and then got soaked all the way into Sydney. The car, our luggage, beanies, gloves and jackets and also the two of us, have been drying out ever since. . . .

The journey of a lifetime and a LIFE journey. Our thanks go to Tracy, Michaela and Lesley at the McGrath Foundation and to Noella, Roger and Tania from the Festival of Speed for giving us this opportunity and for your unstinting support. Our very special thanks go to Ross and Kim Warner who supported us in ways impossible to quantify; to Belinda Kemp, Renai Warner, Terry Hurst, Brian and Dorothy Hawke, Brian and Jannette George, John Hurst and everyone else who worked with us to raise awareness of breast cancer, to raise funds for the Foundation and to honour Jane McGrath.

Thank you to Sandra, Gillian, Colleen, Rhonda, Judy, Jude and Kathryn, Maureen, Barbara; to every one of the courageous women who came out to welcome us and tell their stories. We are humbled by your strength, your joy and zest for life, your shining, smiling happy faces - I treasure my dragon, Maureen, I am honoured by your gift. We have both learnt an enormous amount about breast cancer, marvelled at the depth of feeling people have for Glenn McGrath, how they hold Jane in their hearts.

We were charmed by those we met on the road; the 'truckie' who stopped his rig to donate money, the immigrants learning English in Shepparton who put coins into our tin while listening patiently to facts about breast cancer that they probably couldn't understand and the woman and her companions who left their park bench in Junee to donate what they had, leaving us in stitches with their parting comment about our GPS, "wha' is youse doing with a fish finder in your car?" To you, our family and friends who have donated with such generosity we say thank you; thanks also to Bentley Motors in Victoria, NSW and especially the Bentley factory in Crewe UK; to Lumley Special Vehicle Insurance, Bonhams and Goodman and to the organisers of the Bentley National Rally in Canberra all of whom donated so generously to the McGrath Foundation.

Travelling ever northwards, we were sitting in an RSL club, one of the many visits organised by Ross to give us the opportunity to talk to people about breast cancer and to raise funds. It was just after 10:00am; Syd heard the sound of someone winning a fair bit on the pokies and rushed off with our collection tin. From Kim Warner came the comment, "The thinking of donations". Ross's idea of visiting RSL clubs along the way was an inspired one; Syd and I seldom visit a club but were amazed at how great they are and what a community spirit surrounds them. Ross had another great idea and that was to send collection tins ahead for us to pick up on our way north. The management and patrons of the clubs we visited have been so supportive, and have handed over suitably heavy, well stuffed collection cans. Kim and I dissolved into giggles at one sartorially clad patron in his stubbies and thongs who, as he wandered into the club at 10:00AM spot on opening time, commented under his breath, "better get them going in, there'll be nothing left coming out!"

We had no idea just how much we would collect in those tins. I initially fetched two, 2, stupidly only TWO! from the Foundation. Then Ross asked if he could have a couple to send to contacts at various clubs, so we organised a few more. We filled 10 cans some so full that we could hardly lift them. Thank you Ross! Thank you also Terry Hurst who taught us to just get out there and ask people for money. We were hopeless initially but very happy to learn from an absolute master. Terry, it was a pleasure to watch you at work. And thanks also to Jannette George who went into Murwillumbah when we arrived with all of our tins full, to buy four more tins so that we could keep collecting over the weekend of the Festival of Speed.

We had two goals in embarking on this journey, obviously raising money was important but raising awareness was paramount. How to achieve this was a challenge taken on by Belinda at Fluid PR and she was incredible; a pain in the ass at times with expectations truly difficult to achieve when you are travelling in an ancient racing car, but really impressive. She created such awareness with her media massaging that most people knew who we were and what we were seeking to achieve the moment they saw the Bentley or our Pink overalls. In fact they began anticipating our arrival. We had people waving, calling out that they had heard us on the radio, people running between the cars at traffic lights to give us their donation. We doff our beanies to you Belinda.

Only someone who has gone through this disease can truly understand the experience. WE certainly can't begin to imagine the trauma, pain and uncertainty women with breast cancer endure but we do marvel at the strength, courage and beauty of spirit of Jane McGrath and the many women that we met. One of the legacies Jane leaves behind is that of helping women personally in the most supportive way. The McGrath Foundation places breast care nurses into as many areas as possible; providing emotional, practical and medical support when and how women need it the most, a fact reinforced by women in every group we spent time with.

The message from the McGrath Foundation is 'Together we can make a difference'. We all can and in so doing we can keep Jane's memory and vision strong while we support women fighting a tough battle.

One thing is clear as we put this fundraiser to bed and that is that if you are at all uncertain about YOUR breast health or that of your partner, do something about it immediately. EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES.

Thank you everyone, for sharing this journey with us. Together, as I write this letter, with donations still rolling in daily, we have raised \$54802.95.

Together WE have made a difference.

Syd and NPcti

Hope you're enjoying
your illustration & x