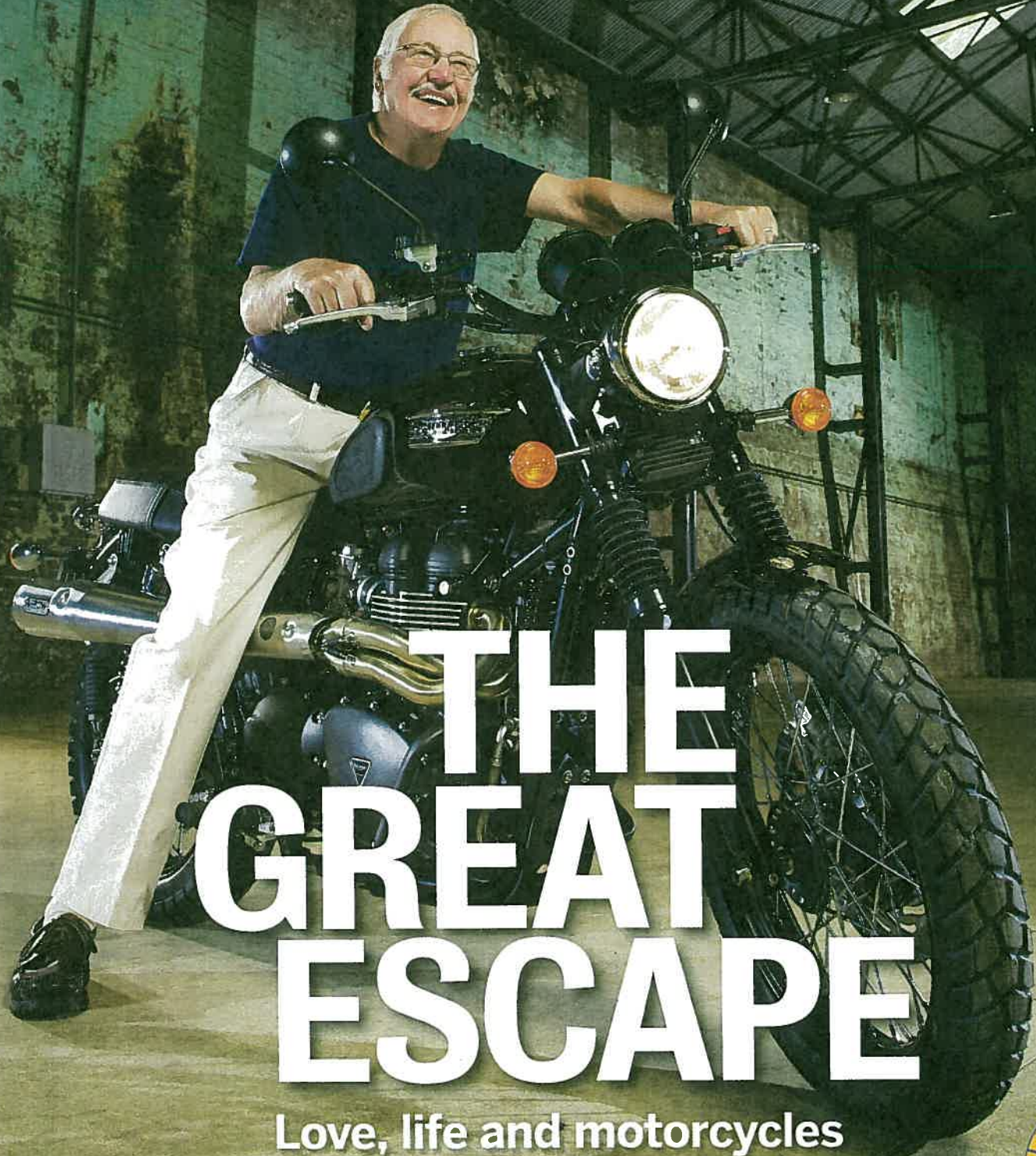


Active Retirees

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THE GREAT ESCAPE

Love, life and motorcycles
with Probus Cover Star of
the Year, Tony Martin.



THE WILD ONE



Ever since he entered the world during a bomb raid in Bristol in 1941, the life of Probus Cover Star of the Year, Tony Martin, has been filled with excitement. Here, he shares his stories of travel, love and adventure – all on the back of a motorcycle.

BY JO-ANNE HUI

In the past 73 years, Tony Martin has crossed the seas and migrated to Australia, been caught in the middle of conflict in Africa, travelled the world on the back of a motorcycle several times over, joined the rural fire brigade and even fallen in love with a wonderful woman and raised two children.

We have a chat with Tony about the greatest passions in his life – motorcycling, travel, his wife Lorel and staying young.

The great escape

It has been more than 50 years since Tony first rode a motorcycle and he hasn't looked back since.

"It's all about freedom on a motorcycle. When I'm driving a car, it's kind of like being in front of a TV set. You're driving and you're just pushing buttons," he explains.

"But on a motorcycle, you're part of the vehicle. When you sit on it, you're one with it. You work together. I love enjoying the freedom of it and being in the open air."

As a boy, Tony grew up riding pushbikes in and out of bomb craters in his hometown of Bristol, but when he reached 14, he and a mate bought their first motorcycle together for a few pounds. Neither of them had licenses, but that didn't stop them from teaching themselves how to ride it up around the muddy fields. It was exhilarating.

Since then, some of the greatest moments in Tony's life have involved being on the back of his motorcycle. A few years ago, he rode a Royal Enfield motorcycle in the Himalayas, up on the highest motorable road in the world at almost six kilometres above. And in June this year, he enjoyed a motorcycle safari and drove 3200 kilometres around Iceland.

Tony has also been a member of the Ulysses motorcycle club for the past four years, during which time he's clocked up 35,000 kilometres. Each week, the group enjoys rides up and down the coast and afterwards, they sit down, relax and grab a bite while simply shooting the breeze. »

← 1. Tony once did aerial acrobatics in this Trojan T27. 2. Tony's current motorcycle is a Suzuki 1250 Bandit. 3. A high plateau in the the Himalayas. 4. At 53.59 metres high n Khardung La, India. 5. Nelligen Rural Fire Brigade. 6. Tony hanging out with his Icelandic mates.

Photography: Studio Commercial. Art direction and styling: Nina Christian. Hair and make-up: Laura Iannitelli. Airport trolley set: Catherine Manuell Designs. Motorcycle: PSI Importers. Shoes: Shoes of Prey

The love of his life

Tony met his wonderful wife, Lorel, when he was 28 and they were both working near Orange in New South Wales. Tony was a geologist's assistant at an exploratory mining company and Lorel was at the local teaching college.

Every Friday and Saturday night, Tony and his workmates would hit the town and during the week, Tony was given the task of finding ladies to accompany them. But one day in 1969, he headed down to the local pub with a friend of his, and that's where he first met Lorel, who was at the teaching college in Bathurst at the time.

"He was a suave English gentleman, but I was keen on the other fellow – he was tall and Danish! Anyway, we sat in this pub, and we chatted up these guys and Tony must have found the phone number of the college where I was living at the time, because he rung a week later. I was really hoping it was the Danish fellow, but it was Tony – not to worry!" says Lorel, laughing.

Meanwhile, Tony remembers exactly what first attracted him to Lorel.

“She was vivacious [and] had a great personality ...Lorel has not changed over the years. She is still the same girl!”

"She was vivacious, had a great personality and looks and her eyes were full of life and honesty," he says, adding: "Lorel has not changed over the years. She is still the same girl!"

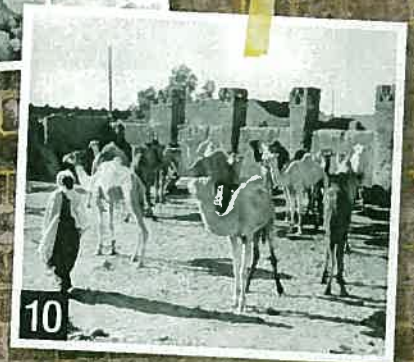
Tony and Lorel's first date was at a little country pub, but unfortunately, Tony was in a car accident on the way to his date. Thankfully, he wasn't harmed and as soon as he was checked out of the local hospital, he rushed to the pub, albeit two hours later, where Lorel was still waiting with a friend of hers.

"He was bruised, but he turned up, so that's saying something!" recalls Lorel.

Four months after that, the two were engaged.

"We work well as a team. It's not all bubbles and chocolate but generally things go very smoothly," she adds. "It's so easy being with Tony. We appreciate each other, we trust and respect each other and are absolutely loyal to each other. He's a good father, wonderful partner, nice bloke and fun to be with." »

→ Ever since he was a boy, Tony has had a thirst for adventure. In 73 years, he has travelled to 68 countries and is still counting. 7. Motorcycle racing in England. 8. Tony meeting the locals in Morocco. 9. Riding with 25 tonnes of peanuts in Nigeria. 10. A camel Auction at In-Salah, Algeria. 11. A temporary home on Takwa Beach, Lagos, Nigeria. 12. A temple at Agades in the Republic of Niger.



I always want to have something to look forward to in my life. You need to think and act actively and stay positive.



The fearless traveller

So far, Tony has visited 68 countries in total and counting. As a young man in England, he would visit the Isle of Man every year to watch the motorcycle races with his mates, but his greatest adventures weren't to come until he was in his 20s, when he came across a newspaper ad. A Nigerian student at Bristol University wanted to drive to Africa via Europe and he was looking for travel companions to share the expenses with him.

Nine months later, Tony and a friend of his were in a car headed to West Africa.

It wasn't the easiest trip, as several countries were at war at the time and the trio needed to make detours in order to avoid conflict. As they travelled along, the men would hunt game and eat the meat that they caught. However when they reached Nigeria, they were interrogated as authorities saw their shotguns and accused them of being mercenaries. They were separated and made their way to Lagos separately. Tony had hoped to make it down to South Africa but because of the Belgian Congo War, he wasn't able to go through and four months later, he was on a cargo ship to Liverpool.

By the time Tony had returned to England, he had been well and truly bitten by the travel bug and he couldn't quite settle down. So when he came across another ad in the newspaper one day, looking for migrants to come to Australia, he took the opportunity and later moved to New South Wales.

Since then, Tony has continued travelling the world over and there are still many places left on his itinerary, especially now that he is retired. When he was 64, he and Lorel walked the Inca Trail for the first time which also included a trip to Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Easter Island.

For Tony, the most wondrous aspect of travel is discovering other cultures and societies.

→ 13. Tony and Lorel at the end of the Inca Trail trek.



"I like meeting different people, learning about different customs and knowing how other people work and survive. When we go on holidays, we don't go and stay in the best hotels – we try and go where the local people go. We like to eat where the local people eat and meet them. If you're going to go there and stay at a hotel and eat at a restaurant, you're not seeing the real country are you?"

The boy who never grew up

Tony retired eight years ago, but there certainly haven't been any signs of him slowing down, especially since joining the Tollgates Probus Club and the rural fire brigade. In fact, his nickname among friends and family is actually Peter Pan – Tony has never been interested in what he describes as "acting old".

"I sometimes see people struggling to get around or they're not putting in any effort, and I think, 'I never want to be like that'," he says. "I always want to have something to look forward to in my life. You need to think and act actively and stay positive."

Indeed, Tony has a busy year ahead of him. In addition to caring for his summer vegetable crop on the acreage that he and Lorel live on in regional New South Wales, he will be spending a week in Wodonga as part of his 74th birthday with his motorcycle club and enjoying two small boat cruises along the Mekong from Vientiane to the Burmese/Thai border, followed by another on the Red River in North Vietnam.

"In the long-term, we'll probably need to work out where to live when the acreage gets too much for us to handle. Do old folks' homes come with a motorcycle garage and workshop?!" ••



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