



The afternoon was still and sunny, ideal for a leisurely drive to Bundeena through Royal National Park. The sight of the little bridge in Sir Bertram Stevens Drive over South West Arm Creek became an instant invitation to stop and visit the creek. Half hidden by the many colourful shrubs that decorate its banks, it was as beautiful and lively as ever. Here was the rock we had sat on all those years ago.

Gazing at the flowing water now rolling and then rollicking its way to the sea, I felt a real sense of welcome.

“No, I’m not alone. Patricia will be here shortly.”

“I’m delighted to see you again. Where are all the lovely and happy children who were with you? The warmth of their embrace and the excitement of our love and care for one another are among my fondest memories.”

“Oh yes, and among mine too but that was 1974, forty six years ago. They’re all grown up now, all except one who passed away a couple of years after our visit here. My picture of her is the same now as it was back then and you are part of that beautiful picture. She so enjoyed sitting by you whether at the beach, on your banks or by the pool”

“That’s wonderful and I’m happy it has always been like that.”



“Don’t I know! You have been around for so long. You were the happy streams and brooks of my childhood that flowed into that sparkling lake at the end of our farm. You captivated and delighted me then as you do now. In school, I heard you say so joyfully:

*‘I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.*

*I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.’”*

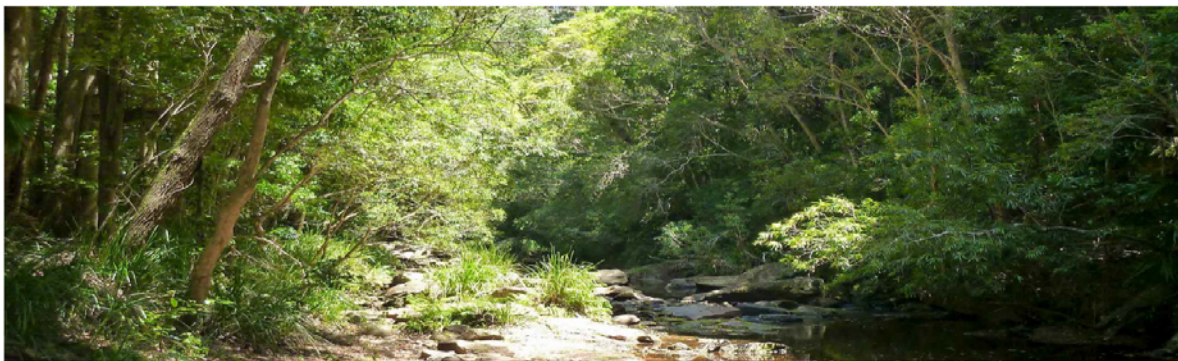
“I’ve been here for billions of years. You say life began on Earth shortly after it was formed or created about 4.54 billion years ago. Yes, I was here shortly before life began. I was here when the Spirit of our God, as later recorded in Genesis 1:2, was hovering over me. I am so honoured and privileged to be in the scheme of things responsible for all living forms like animals, fish, birds, crops, plants, trees, flowers and so many more. I live in them and they all, from the tiny cyanobacteria to the giant blue whales, need me to survive. I am a critical part of everything that has ever evolved and delighted to be as you know about 60% of you and in your tears of joy and sorrow, in your drinks and cups of tea and coffee, in your recreations, medicines and so much more.”

“So humbling and yet so ennobling to know that you are always with me. We humans have been here for such a short period of time, a mere 0.006% of the time that you have been here. Mind-boggling isn’t it? And equally so is the fact that in this short period of time we have managed to figure out a fair amount of the cosmic story of the last 13.8 billion years since the Universe came into existence. So we are capable of great things. Yet you and I know we meet today with feelings and concerns that were not part of our earlier meeting, ones that are the cause of great stress to you and me.”

“It’s so disturbing and disappointing. I feel sad for you too. My mission is to bring life and health to our world but now I bring lots of sickness to you, your children and your food because more and more every day I’m polluted and poisoned with chemicals inside the Earth, on the surface of the Earth and above the Earth. Forcing me to carry unwanted nutrients and poisoned sediments along my streams and rivers to my oceans is disrupting and endangering entire ecosystems. Oh, I am so abused and belittled, it hurts and it hurts terribly.”

“I am so embarrassed and guilty. If only my people, who are capable of much better, didn’t show such disregard and inaction in the face of overwhelming statistics.”

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“So, so true. 80% of pollution to my marine environment comes from the land as a result of runoff. 88% of my ocean surface is polluted with plastic debris. You predict that by 2050 the amount of plastic in my ocean will outweigh the amount of fish I enfold.

“And that’s only part of the problem. From oil spills and the burning of fossil fuels to the chemicals and wrappings we use in our homes, the number of factors contributing to global warming and your and air pollution are as varied as the activities we are involved in. With the rapid increase in world population since we first met, it is a horrible thought that only 1% of fresh water like you is now drinkable.

“An equally horrible and saddening thought is the great number of children across our world to whom I’m not available as my healthiest self. This is one situation you and your people must change as soon as you possibly can.”

“That said, we must listen to you now. There’s so much to be done by all of us – national, state and local governments as well as all workplaces, farms and all homes.”



”Imagine the comfort it would bring me to know that your people were making more conscious choices that would help to reduce immediately the extent of pollution with improved recycling, more comprehensive runoff management systems, reduced reliance on the use of chemicals in factories, homes and farms that pose a risk to my streams, my rivers and my oceans and avoiding all those plastics and non-recyclable products that make their way to my rivers and lakes and oceans. Please educate your people in the availability and use of eco-friendly products for cleaning and use in the workplace and in the home.”

“The road ahead is a challenging one indeed but if we listen to you and do as you say and more we will get there. Then you’ll continue as you said to me at school:

*‘I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows’.*

“That will be the day! I see you’re about to leave now. I’m so glad you called and I wish you and your people every success. Please call again.”

“Yes, with my grandchildren. Hopefully, one day when one of them returns and sits on my rock here, you’ll be able to greet him with ‘Well done!’”

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Martin Coleman - Sydney

