



LONG TIME APPROACHING

An Incomplete Memoir

Glenn Martin

Glenn Martin lives in Sydney, although he lived in the bush on the far north coast of New South Wales for two decades. He has been a teacher at high schools and tertiary institutions, a manager of community services organisations, and a commentator on management, business ethics, employment law, and training and development. He has been the editor of publications for management and training professionals and an instructional designer for online learning. He is the author of over twenty books.

Overview of the book

Glenn shares threads of his life in this searching memoir. His life started out unfortunately. His father died when he was sixteen. He nearly lost his leg after a motorcycle accident when he was twenty-three. His relationships were disastrous. And his attempts at forging a career were haphazard. He spent many years in the bush, being a hippie, and then striving to be a member of the local community. Along the way, he carved out worthy projects in community development.

Then, when his job was sabotaged, he turned to university, and eventually left with an Honours degree and the University Medal. You could say it was after this that his career really began. He became a commentator on management, employment law, business ethics, and training and development. And he began to write and publish books.

He has produced over twenty books: on ethics, reflections on experience, family history, and collections of poetry. Was it a quest for a field of competence? Glenn would modify that answer. He holds that there are four pillars of life: competence, morality (ethics), beauty and love. In this book he charts his course to that understanding, including his experiences of music and the Woodford Folk Festival. At times harsh, this story is one to savour and enjoy.

The book contains a selection of photos from various times in the author's life.

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Glenn Martin asserts his moral rights as the author of this book.

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Foreword

A foreword to this book is unnecessary. The book is what it is: you will get the idea. I am saying it is a memoir because it is “a record of events, a history treating of matters from the personal knowledge of the writer” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1962). It has no semblance of fiction or fictional overlay.

In some instances, I chose not to use names, and I have not used made-up names. Where I wished to hide the names of persons or organisations, I have simply left their names out. In some instances, for simplicity and clarity, I resorted to the device, “Lady 1” et cetera. This is my story, not a vendetta or an exposé.

As a memoir, the book is incomplete. Firstly, this is necessary because the book could have become vast, and there is a certain point where enough is enough. One must “Leave the past alone and be happy with what you have.” The book is also incomplete because I have chosen to leave some things out. There were many reasons for this – enough reasons to fill a book. Suffice to say, not everything needs to be said.

Is this book my story? Yes and no. It is my story in the sense that it tells many of the significant events and episodes of my life. However, I have written around twenty other books, many of which deal with specific episodes or themes in my life. Not wishing to duplicate what I have said in those books, I have referred to them here. In that sense, this book is a doorway into many other of my stories, and it is incomplete without them.

This book includes a section of photos from my life, and there is a section of “stories” at the end (articles, essays, poems).

Enjoy.

1 Beginning

I could say this is another attempt to weave a thread through my difficult years, doomed relationships and fragmentary attempts at a career path where, by turns, I served communities, ran from them, wrote essays on ethics and universal spirit, tried to be a good man, practised teaching, and then built walls around so I could listen again for the words that needed to be said.

Clouds and thunder bring life. The seedling emerges to sway and lean, then to stiffen and green. Sprouting is everywhere, abundant and enthused, fresh and thick. No need to go far: the place of striving is here. It is sufficient; it is more than enough for now. The seed will grow into its kind, but what it will look like, only time will give of its secrets.

Noble one considers his principles. Life sucks in air, already triumphant against the windy, broad-scale tide of decay, of tearing things down, of wearing them out like a ragged shirt. In the midst, there is the seed's mild song.

Of course, there is the dream of plenty and ease. The king looks over the ripened harvest, deeply content – there will be enough for all. He will direct his strength wisely and fend off over-indulgence. Thus, his capacities will expand and the people will build on their meagre comforts, embellishing.

Meanwhile there is a path to be trod, and it is much slower, stumbling through the first ignorant steps, the gruelling practice and hapless mistakes, the wounds, and the stretches in time that seem to be exile or worse, stagnant.

2 Childhood

This is what a childhood at the fringe of Sydney could look like in the 1950s. I had unvoiced desires and I was ambivalent, hovering at the fringe, wanting to belong, and not wanting to, simultaneously. Every time my voice came to words, it chipped against the mob, resisting the edifice of my neighbourhood, the world as I was supposed to receive it. I recognise now that it was the belligerence of the world that I was not enamoured with. Home was a refuge, but the world was warning me that I would have to toughen up if I was to get on in it.

There were books. Very soon, as soon as possible after kindergarten, there were books. So much so that in First Class, at the end of April, the teacher and the Assistant Infants Principal decided that I should be promoted to Second Class. So I was walked across the playground to the new class, tentative but sufficiently confident, trusting that they must know what was best for me.

The new teacher decided that I could read well enough, and allowed me to sit outside for the reading lesson. I could choose a book myself from the shelf at the front of the room. I read many books; they were short. I remember the teacher as quietly affectionate. At the end of the year, she gave me a present, a book which she brought to me from her home. My mother was a little embarrassed when I showed her, but I had accepted the book with surprise and gratitude. I read the book until I knew all the words and all the story.

It signified to me that being able to read was to be treasured. I had no sense of competitiveness about this. It did not matter to me that other pupils had not received a book from the teacher. It was not a public event. I remember that it was a bigger book than the ones I had read from the front shelf in the classroom. It was a long story, and there was a dark part of the story in the middle that was a little frightening. I had to go through this. I had to make sure I

came out each time, safely. After this, I was going into Primary School, which was a male domain. I took the gift of reading with me.

Things I know

Everything in nature tends towards the fulfilment of its potential. Later, I learned that Aristotle had said this. However, it hardly mattered. It was true anyway.

3 God

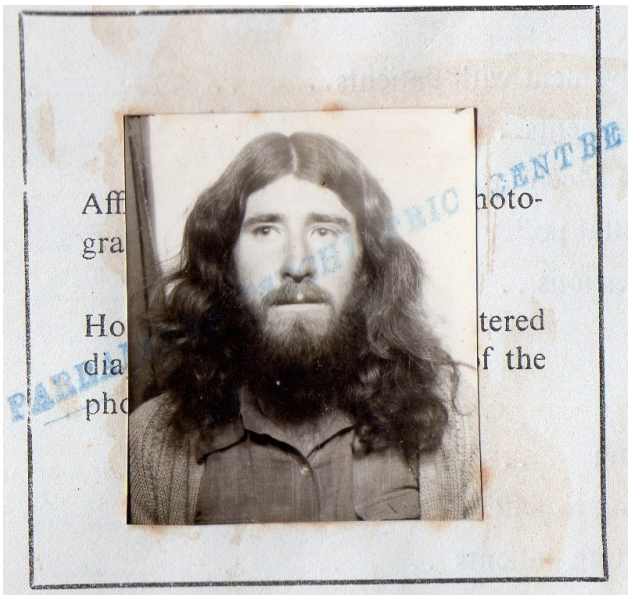
I went to Sunday School. Children need to belong, and I needed to belong. It wasn't really a choice. There was no question about it; it was like breathing. We learned from the Bible. All the stories were holy. One week we learned the story about Abraham taking his son up on the mountain. The son didn't know it, but his father was going to sacrifice him. At the last minute, God speaks and tells Abraham it won't be necessary. He has proved his faith.

It was a holy story, but I couldn't accept it. I pondered it all the time I was walking home. I didn't talk about it. I knew that this would be to question the whole fabric of the church. Indeed, not only the local weatherboard church, but the entire church all over. I had been through that stage where you write down your address as the full address – house number, street name, suburb, city, state, country, the Earth, the solar system, the galaxy and the whole universe. So I knew that to question what the reverend said at the local church had deep and long implications, and there were many leaders in the vast hierarchy who would demolish my questions – viciously, snidely, heavy-handedly, high-handedly – and they would not answer my logic.

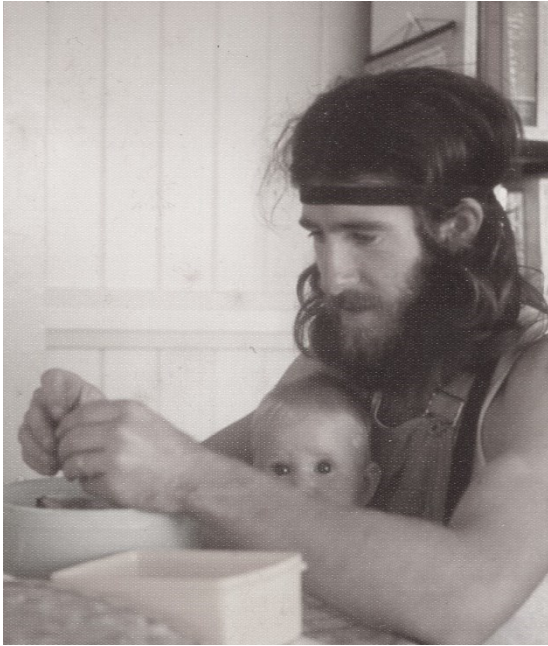
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Glenn, about June 1973, at home from hospital, in plaster



Identity photo as psychiatric nurse, Parramatta Psychiatric Centre, 1974



Glenn in Mackay, 1975 – shelling peas, with first daughter



Garden at Wyndham Creek, 1977

BOOKS

To purchase Glenn Martin's books, go to:

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WEBSITE

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