

Donya's home cow carvery

Harry, at Cooma

Goodnight Barlow

15 May 2005

Dear Members,

Last week my sister ran out of used tyres for her tyre swan business, so I promised her I'd pick up a couple of dozen for her from the local wrecking yard. On Saturday morning I went into town, had my monthly trim at the Lunatic Fringe and a cup of tea at the Bluebird Café. Midday found me standing outside the gate of Head's High Country Recycling Centre, proprietor the one and only Stan 'Donya' Head.

Stan got his nickname when he was just a toddler and I don't know whether the family got him to perform that trick once too often or whether he would have turned out like this anyway. But let's just say that Donya's not cut out for the big end of town, and as Cooma's a small town, what does that tell you. But Donya is a genius compared to his nephew Marius, his nephew and general helper around the wrecking yard.

There's no doubt at all that Marius is not the full quid. Despite that, he has the funny habit of standing around, leaning slightly backwards, tongue sticking out a bit between his lips, as if he's admiring a job well done. But he's only practising for the big day, let me tell you, because so far he's never done anything particularly well.

Last Saturday I stood outside the front gate for a minute trying to figure out what was wrong. Donya's roddy/staffy cross, Mabel, a bugger of a dog if there ever was one, is usually at the gate, threatening to eat you alive, but there was no sign of her. You have to ring the buzzer hanging on the front gate, which is connected to an old car horn, to summons Donya or Marius from some far corner of the yard where they're ripping lead out of old car batteries or whatever they do to

make a quid. I rang it a couple of times but no one appeared.

After grabbing a tyre lever out of the back of the ute in case I had to pat Mabel, I opened the gate and headed for the 'office' which is also Donya's grand residence. There was Mabel, the nasty bitch, half crouched, staring in through the open doorway to the kitchen, oblivious to everything around her. There was a pool of blood in the yard and drag marks all the way to the house. For a moment I feared the worst and I must admit I approached the scene with some trepidation and gripped the tyre lever a fair bit tighter. Mabel didn't move, never once took her eye off whatever was inside that doorway. I edged past her. Nothing could have prepared me for the scene of horror within.

Donya and Marius were standing in the kitchen, wearing those plastic raincoats that come free with artificial insemination kits. One had a hacksaw, the other a large boning knife. On their kitchen table was a cow, or what remained of one. She was upside down, raw white leg bones sticking in the air at four different angles, her hide was mostly cut off her and draped inside out over the edges of the table. All around the kitchen large, roughly cut chunks of raw meat—nothing you'd recognise in a proper butcher shop—were perched on shelves, the sink and chairs. Piled in the corner were plastic fertiliser bags full of white bones, each with a fair bit of meat still attached.

It turned out that Donya had sent Marius over to Tumut to buy two horses at a sale. Donya occasionally keeps a few little ponies in the paddock beside the junkyard and flogs them to families wanting a pet horse. However, Marius arrived late at the sale, missed out on buying the horses, and instead picked up a cow. In the mad Benny-Hill-kind-of-world that is Marius's brain, this was a perfectly acceptable substitute. He proudly arrives home with the cow; Donya doesn't

say much but starts up a tree shedder to cover the noise then shoots the cow, briefly gets Marius in the sights but remembers he's family and thinks better of it, bleeds the cow in the yard and drags it into the kitchen to carve up.

Donya's so pissed off about this that he can hardly speak. Marius, who is always happy with life as long as he seems to be surviving the current five minutes, is almost bursting with pride. Mabel has big bit bits of drool hanging like silicon sealant from her jaws. I'm almost perking up my morning tea: they've dealt with the meaty part of the legs and are at the stage of wondering what to do about the guts, which they should have got rid of outside, before dragging her into the kitchen, but it's too late now.

So I tell Donya I've come for tyres, he tells me to get 'em your fucking self, I poke a \$20 note under his electric kettle where he won't miss it and get out of their way. I grabbed 10 tyres, put them in the ute and headed back to Goodnight Barlow.

You might think that I've digressed from my usual advice on fishing, but remember my sister's tyre swan business?

Bernadette has recently gone into the tyre swan business. You don't often see them these days, but she'll soon fix that, and I've expanded her product range somewhat with my design for a tyre trout, modelled on the Big Trout at Adaminaby.

The initial problem she's facing is that tyre swans are surprisingly hard to make. You basically mark out the shape and cut them out with a jigsaw, or a chain saw for the really big tyres, but then you have to turn the buggers inside out, at which point they miraculously become swan-like, and the little bit where you put some garden soil and plant a few petunias suddenly appears. But turning a steel belt radial inside out is no mean feat, even for someone with shoulders like Bernadette's. She gets around this by laying them in the gutter outside her house and driving over them in her Falcon so that the weight of the car wheel pops the tyre swan inside out, and there you are. She's got this down to a fine art and it takes a lot of back-breaking work out of it.

The tyre trout design is a lot easier, as it's made from trailer tyres, which are softer, smaller and usually don't have the steel belts, and the only bit that needs turning inside out is the tail, which Bernadette, being the strong girl that she is, manages without the gutter method. Each tyre trout is then painted with silvery coloured Watty Solargard, an attractive row of coloured speckles is added to each side and a length of fencing wire is inserted through the body so you can prong it into the lawn. They look terrific and I know all you Sydney blokes have fancy gardens with real green lawns, so put aside a few spondoolies for when we launch them, probably at the Society's annual dinner in August. You will need a few to make a realistic school, but we'll knock a bit off for bulk orders.

By the way, while we're on the subject of the annual dinner, there'll be steak or chicken on the night. Ask for the chicken.

Kind Regards,
Harry

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