

Dedicated to Jah Son Smith, blues brother, wingman, poet warrior – gonna miss our road trips Soul-Jah, Ben

DEADLINE PRESENTS

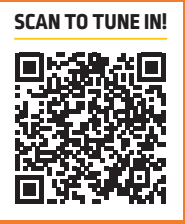
- IMAGINATIVE DUNEDIN  
ROLE PLAYING AND GAMES
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- S.O.S – SAVE ONE SELF  
DIY CIVIL DEFENCE ADVICE
- POISON GOLD  
AND AN UTTER BASTARD



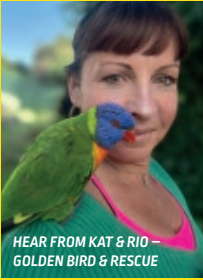
THE DEADLINE REPORT

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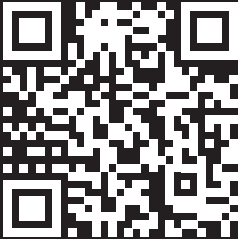
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SPECIAL GUESTS JOIN BEN VIDGEN TO CHAT OCTOBER–FEBRUARY  
SEE THE GUEST LINE UP ON PAGE 6



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COVER ART BY DEAN RAYBOULD  
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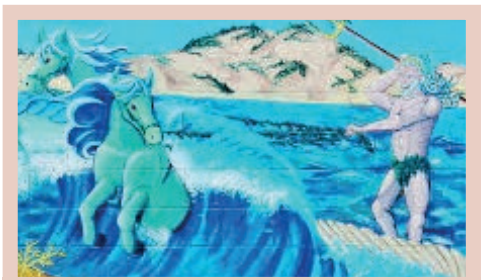


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“I like the cover. ‘Don’t Panic’. It’s the first helpful or intelligible thing anybody’s said to me all day.” – Arthur Dent in *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, by Douglas Adams.

Through my time spent in the army, and in traveling in strange lands, I have learned that when a crisis strikes (be it flooding, fire, or losing your passport), often the only person who can save you and/or your loved ones in the immediate circumstances is yourself. Being prepared for a possible civil defence emergency will make it easier to deal with, should it happen.



- M. Essential personal items: glasses, hearing aids, mobility aids, etc.
- N. Pet go-bag: food, water, leash, medicines, and other pet needs.
- O. Children's activities: books, cards, and games for children. Entertained kids are not frightened kids
- P. Play Zombie Apocalypse: ask what else would be useful and see if you can get this list expanded to Z.

**3. Exit strategy.**  
Choose a place for your loved ones to meet, and make sure everyone knows where it is. Identify the most probable threat for your neighbourhood, i.e. earthquake or flooding, and prepare for that first.

**4. Neighbourhood collective clout.**  
A local volunteer civil defence organisation probably already exists near you. You will benefit greatly from finding out who your local volunteers are and reaching out to them before the crisis comes calling. Community planning need not be boring. Hold a civil defence party/pot luck with team building games that double as civil defence training. Make future-proofing groovy and empowering.

**5. Assumption is a donkey.**  
“The mayor is frustrated he is not getting guidance or planning data from Wellington.” This is a recently overheard direct quote from a senior South Island civil defence planner. If the mayor isn’t getting that data then don’t expect anyone else to. If you’re aware of a potential civil defence threat, don’t assume the authorities have it covered. Ask questions about that threat now, and until you get a satisfactory answer.

**6. Sand bags are an essential first line of defence.**  
In an ideal world they would be provided by councils at prearranged points. Sorry, this is not an ideal world.

**7. Hygiene.**  
The major killer in WWII wasn’t bullets, it was disease. Wash hands using boiled water. Dig a pit (6ft at least). Make sure your poop pot is not near the chow pot. Get a gas bottle and outdoor cooker.

**8. Hard copy.**  
Prepare a printed copy of your plan that includes data such as NZ Civil Defence number 0800 22 22 00. For local emergencies, contact the local council’s Civil Defence directly, or dial 111. Remember that in emergencies help may not come quickly.

**9. Do what you need to do.**  
Ruffling bureaucratic feathers lasts a while. Death lasts forever. Note: taking emergency action on the spot (when no-one is there to ask permission) should not be confused with permission to ignore authorities or laws.

**10. Be realistic.**  
Keep your plans simple. Plan for what you can control in the here and now.  
–Ben Vidgen

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# Midnight in Mexico

A pared down version of the Mexican chapter of my road journal, which covers my travels from Australia to Mexico, the USA, Scotland and other parts of Europe, and Asia as I complete my book *Gold, Guns, and Bloody Gods*.

Back in New Zealand, Rocket Lab's launches are becoming increasingly militant. The Government earmarks NZ\$12 billion for defence. 85,000 Kiwis can't get the specialist care they need. But before I have time to process this, it's time to get back on a Boeing and roll the dice on sketchy aviation maintenance.

In Mexico, the country has just elected their first Jewish and female president. Claudia Sheinbau descends from Jews who fled Europe to avoid persecution and pursue freedom. This gets me thinking about how Latin American freedom fighters in the 1700s threw off the yoke of colonial tyranny. The rebels beat Spain using the continent's immense mineral resources. They also borrowed heavily from London and from French Rothschild-controlled banks, ensuring poverty and debt for Latin America for centuries to come. Liberation is never cheap.

To fly into Mexico City I go via Houston, Texas, which is named after Sam Houston, the American who wanted Mexico's minerals and its even more valuable commodity – water. For centuries, diplomacy assured mutual use of the water of the Rio Grande that flowed between the USA and Mexico. But in these tenuous times for relations between the two nations, Trump has called to change the name of the body of water that begins life in Mexico to the Gulf of America.

I fly into Mexico City at midnight. The city of 24 million people is lit up like a forest of glow worms. Unlike border control in Texas, getting through Mexican customs is quick. In no time I'm checked into my room at the Garibaldi Hotel. The hotel is named after Italian Giuseppe Garibaldi's grandson, Australian-born Jose Garibaldi. Jose, with the legendary Poncho Villa, helped Mexico achieve independence in the 1900s. This happened just as oil was discovered in Mexico, thereby attracting the attention of London's BP and New York's Standard Oil (which became ExxonMobil), run by the Rockefellers.

The Garibaldi Hotel is just off Garibaldi Plaza, in a car-free street, lined with statues of famous Mariachi musicians. During the day it's quiet. At night-time it fills with Mariachi bands. Costumes vary from traditional classical, with wide brim Spanish Sombrero, to gangster rappers in cowboy hats and sequins with AK-47 and skull'n'bones motifs. They are joined by flower sellers and hawkers selling trinkets.

The plaza is lined with cantinas selling cheap beer and Mexican cuisine. The hawkers and buskers go table-to-table as dancers fill the plaza. Off the plaza, night clubs pump out a digitised version of Mariachi music. I don't go in. The vibe feels shady. Locals agree, but say crime is decreasing over all. The week I'm there a mayor in a rural Mexican town is decapitated. The killing is alternately explained to me as the Sinaloa cartel in its death throes or as a sign of the emergence of MJ13, a new, even more violent, cartel.

Americans and Mexicans both confirm there is no real war on drugs. There are simply cartels who cooperate with the status quo (banking, oil, mining, and telecommunications), and those that don't, so get squeezed out. Ultimate power resides not with the cartels but with the top twenty Mexican oligarchs who

descend back to old Mexican landed gentry. I ended up, after visiting art galleries and museums, at an up-market cafe, Restaurante Los Girasole. It looks onto another plaza where the statues are spray painted in the punk battlecry "All police are b\*stards" and the number 43, which I don't get. My waiter brings me my wine and explains I am sitting where Daniel Craig had lunch after filming a scene of the 007 film Spectre, a movie that focuses on the idea that Transnational crime and corrupt billionaires represent more of a threat than state national actors. Art mirroring real life?

The meal is basically an anti-platter. It pairs perfectly with a red so horrible I promptly drink a second glass. Then I head home. Big day tomorrow. I'm off to visit the Pyramid of the Moon and Sun.

I like my guides instantly. They don't sugarcoat explanations. I spotted another spray painted 43. My guides explain the number stands for 43 students executed by the cartel in 2014, assisted by the army. Since then, 30,000 people have likewise vanished.

During my stay the President changes the constitution, giving the army more power. Then she tweaks the judiciary so they will now be more susceptible to the power of corporate lobbyist dollars. In return the army gave up Lambertina Galeana Marín, the judge who managed the 43 cover up. There is no drug war, just musical deck chairs.

At the Pyramids we get told the usual story of bloodthirsty Aztecs, but I'm principally struck by three things.

One, the pyramids' size – the photos you see don't do justice to their scale.

Secondly, the basic myth is that the Aztec leader told his nomadic people their God Huitzilopochtli had told him they would stop wandering when he saw a snake in the beak of an eagle. The pyramids of the Sun and Moon are located topographically on a natural defensive position. With that in mind it occurs to me the snake represents proximity to water but is removed far enough that eagles would land on its tallest cactus on its upper slopes where settlements can be built on terraced planes free of disease and flooding. I suspect Aztec leaders were more pragmatists than mystics.

My third thought is how the extreme violence of both Mexico's cartel and military draws from a glorification of its violent past. A toxic machismo that traps the Mexican psyche into a tired repetitive revolution.

This thought was reinforced when on the way back we visited a Catholic Basilica. Our exit and entrance from the underground store is via a trinket-loaded gift shop soaked in brightly coloured Virgins and skulls. A weird mix of Catholic fanaticism and post-modern interpretation of pre-Europe Mexican indigenous paganism. Inside priests hustle for donations under giant artworks of Christian angels and indigenous demon snake gods.

The same Frida Kahlo inspired art fills the gift shop where we stopped for lunch and learned the full properties of the agave plant. This wonder plant is not only used to make tequila. Its use extends to writing

Continued on page 7

## ABEL TASMAN

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# Role-playing games: Now and then

I first became aware of role-playing games one summer when bored. I found a box that an older cousin had left at Mum's house. As an avid Tolkien fan, I was instantly drawn to the figurines of wizard warriors, elves, and monsters, and to the strangely-shaped dice that had up to twenty sides. It was love at first sight.

I became one of the millions of people who enjoy the wild ride of role-play games – a combination of improv theatre and puzzle solving – that began with the *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D) Basic set. It has since evolved to include countless versions, editions, and role-playing universes, including not just D&D role-playing games (RPG) but also board games, novels, books, trading cards, conventions, movies, and video games. In fact, RPG gaming is now only limited by the scope of one's imagination.

Modern gaming today commonly acknowledges that the father of role-playing games is Gary Gygax, an American game designer and author who in 1974 co-created the pioneering tabletop role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons* with Dave Arneson. Gygax' invention came about due to him wanting to combine traditional tabletop war-gaming with something more interactive.

The game's success spawned an instant industry. In a few years other fantasy games appeared, including such names as:

- *Traveller* – set in a sci-fi world, the complex space battles of which successfully taught me trigonometry and basic physics
- *Top Secret* – a game based on espionage
- *Paranoia* – a dystopian sci-fi game which, even in the 1980s, lampooned the danger of over-reliance on technology
- and an abundance of now well-known tabletop and/or electronic RPG titles such as *Tunnels & Trolls*, *Baldur's Gate*, *The Witcher*, *Fallout*, *Skyrim*, *Mass Effect*, and the many others that have followed D&D like a tsunami.

The popularity of these games has at times sparked concern among parents, teachers, and religious groups, who have often been spooked by ratings-hungry media. These sensationalists were also drawn to pictures of fantasy wizards and monsters, but instead of displaying curious and open minds, they sought to cash in on fear of the unknown. The truth is that RPGs are what one initially concerned grandmother called "a successful attempt to make math interesting for kids with ADHD". She had insisted on sitting in on a gaming session to make sure it wasn't the road to hell and the Devil's lettuce that she had been told it was by friends who had never played and had believed the fake news.

D&D public hysteria was born from the book *The Dungeon Master: The Disappearance of James Dallas Egbert III*, a 1984 book written by the highly self-publicising and ironically Walter Mitty-ish private investigator William Dear. Dear exaggerated the role of D&D and Michigan State University service tunnels in the disappearance of student James Dallas Egbert. And the media took his claims at face value and did no fact-checking. In reality, Egbert, depressed at his grades, had simply dropped out of college without telling his parents, and ran away. He was later found several states away, unharmed, washing dishes and living in a bed-sit.

*Dungeons and Dragons* is now played by families and friends,

## ARTIST PROFILE: ANDREW MCCULLOCH

My name is Andrew McCulloch, an artist and educator based in Dunedin, New Zealand. While my roots are in traditional art – particularly oil painting – I've explored a wide range of creative forms, from digital illustration and 3D imagery to generative art, animation, and even stop motion.

I'm currently building an art school in Dunedin with a focus on classical oil painting and drawing. Together with my business partner, Blake, I've been running weekly life drawing sessions for the past six months, and I recently taught my first class at Otago University. I love teaching and facilitating artistic growth, and I aim to balance this with commercial work in illustration and visual development for the entertainment industry.

For my own part, much of my inspiration comes from the snow-capped mountains and boundless oceans of Southern New Zealand, as well as the gothic stone cathedrals of my hometown and its rich Scottish heritage, which captivated me as a child. I also draw from literature and film that shaped my imagination early on – Tolkien, George R. R. Martin, H. G. Wells, and Lovecraft among them.



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and educators and therapists use it to teach critical thinking, empathy, literacy, and even history. Hell, the CIA uses it as a training tool to explore potential threats. Role-playing games are a form of brain gym that sharpens the mind and evolves the intellect.

Gygax, while the father of modern role-playing games, wasn't the first to make war gaming interactive. Table-based war games have ancient origins linked to chess, a game which originated as the 6th-century Indian game chaturanga. Ancient Indian warfare, particularly the Kurukshetra War, was played out using pieces representing roles such as rajas, infantry, cavalry, chariots, and war elephants. Chaturanga overlaps another still-popular war game. Backgammon began in ancient Persia, where it was known as Nard, and dates to 3000 BCE. Nard was popular during the Sasanian Dynasty (224–651 AD) and is considered a foundational game for the modern version.

In Europe, training being both physical and mental was initially adopted not by knights, but by early stone masons who were building European forts after learning from Saracens they had encountered due to the Crusaders of the 1200s. This development gave birth to playing cards, where the Jack refers to a master artisan or journeymen who incorporated Middle Eastern esoterica and architecture into their techniques.

In the late 18th century, chess variants began to evolve into modern war games within the feudal classes. Helwig, Master of Pages to the Duke of Brunswick, is credited with creating a battle emulation game in 1780, according to Max Boot's book *War Made New*.

Some time around 1800, the Prussian General Staff began to develop war games, with staff officers moving metal pieces around on a table, where blue pieces represented friendly forces and red the enemy. Dice rolls were used to indicate random chance or weather, with a referee scoring the results. During the 19th century this became an important part of military training, and it still is, even though computers have replaced dice.

War games in which people dressed up in elaborate costumes were popular outside of the military, with the court of Louis XIV known to play versions of chess in which courtesans dressed up in elaborate costumes on a full-size board, landscaped to scale.

Cosplay, the hobby of dressing up as fictional or mythical characters, is rooted in early 20th-century science fiction fandom. The term "cosplay" itself is a Japanese coinage, attributed to Nobuyuki Takahashi, who used it after attending a science fiction convention in 1984. Today the global cosplay costumes market is projected to reach USD \$2 billion by 2030.

Live action role-playing (LARPing) emerged from tabletop role-playing games in the late 1970s, evolving from early "boffer" or "theatre-style" games using foam weapons, to more complex, multi-day events with elaborate settings and characters. In 1980, students at New Zealand's Canterbury University combined cosplay with LARPing. Killing rounds used water pistols, and there were points for imagination. My personal favourite was death by Nana Mouskouri, after a victim was lured into an empty lecture hall and locked in for an hour as the shrieking of the bespectacled Greek Diva was pumped in through the sound system.

In the 1990s, Richard Garfield drew inspiration from



Art by Andrew McCulloch. @andrew\_mcculloch\_art

*Dungeons & Dragons*, Strat-O-Matic Baseball, and a culture of not being afraid to mix things up and think imaginatively outside the box, and *Magic: The Gathering* was invented. It was conceived as a way to provide entertainment during downtime at game conventions. The cards also have collectable value, and can fetch crazy six figure sums. Its financial potential was realised by gaming giants Wizards of the Coast, who gained the rights to *Magic: The Gathering* in 1993. More recently, this corporate gate-crasher of what has largely been an open-source industry/fan base, tried to ban all non-Wizard RPGs, setting to establish a legal precedent which would have real life ramifications that stretched well beyond the gaming world and threaten artistic license itself.

Luckily, the Wizards backed off after they realised their corporate necromancy was a great way to piss off your customers. It sparked a real life version of Revenge of the Nerds. The gaming community, who made it quite clear they had no problem giving Deep Heat-coated wedgies to gaming executives dangled off high-rise LA skyscrapers, taught Occupy activists a thing or two about the power of international solidarity. They demonstrated the impact of consumerist voting with the power of their wallets.

Role-play gaming continues to evolve and to be a powerful creative force, not just inspiring originality but teaching teamwork, community, and empathy. It provides room for us to express ourselves freely and to shine by being different, and to enjoy and appreciate genuine originality in a world often perceived as increasingly homogenous. It is the Jedi to the Sith lord of corporate tech banality. Gaming is a means to find your inner Yoda and get away from the algorithm of insidious conformity. So come on players, find your inner force and roll them natural 20s.

–Ben Vidgen

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# Meet, game, build, paint and role-play!

The Dunedin Models and Games Store opened Easter 2023, with Lindsay and Richard at the helm.

Our vision is to offer a venue for Dunedin-ites to meet, game, build and paint models and figures, and to offer kitsets that have been missing from town. We want to establish ourselves as a role playing venue, and we have a range of different game systems and settings.

We are all longstanding members of the Otago Miniature Tacticians Society (OMTS), the oldest incorporated wargaming club in New Zealand (1970).

As time has gone on, the focus of the store has developed. The model kit side of the business has exploded, as has the range and breadth of paints and model supplies. This year we have welcomed both David and Maria to the team, rounding out the wargaming and role playing sides of the organisation, and allowing Richard to further develop his commission painting business.

We stock Games Workshop products, including their specialist game lines, however, we also stock other publishers, such as the Osprey Games rules lines, and Bolt Action from Warlord Games (not forgetting *Battletech*). We also stock the ever-popular *Frostgrave* and *Stargrave* range of plastics, as these multipart figures can be used for many different games.

A new line for us has been the *Saga* rules from Studio Tomahawk – we have brought in a range of Dark Age (early medieval) plastic



kits from Vitrix games to support this. We demonstrated this game at the 2025 Medieval day at the Otago Museum. We are also supporting *Silver Bayonet*, *Carnevale*, and the *Muskets & Tomahawks* games.

We have a number of role playing groups using our venue, playing *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Pathfinder 2*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Cyberpunk Red*, and more. We also have a range of wargames played every day in our upstairs games room, for example historical games nights every Wednesday using *Saga* and *Le art de la Guerre* systems. Gaming tables can be booked up to the day before for any role playing or war game, with game mats and terrain provided.

Dunedin Models and Games Store is open 11am till evening, seven days a week.

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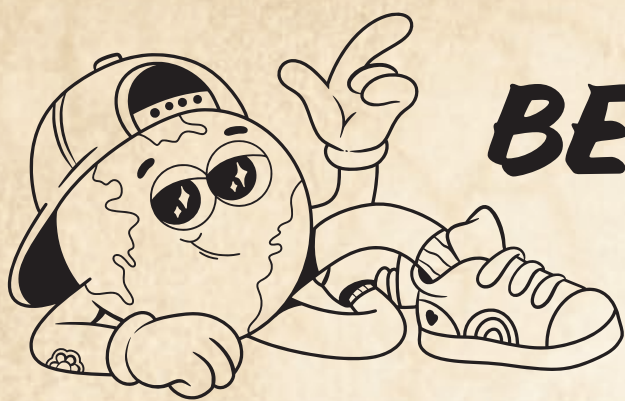
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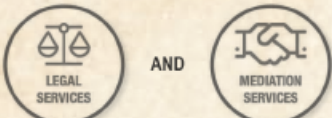
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# TASTE NATURE URBAN MARKET GARDEN PROGRAMME LAUNCHED IN DUNEDIN

Taste Nature is launching the Food Provenance urban market garden programme, centred around the Taste Nature Café.

From the beginning, Taste Nature's mission was to create a flourishing community and provide access to locally grown, organic food, and offering a welcoming space where people can connect over nutritious, home grown, tasty meals. Our well-established organic garden makes us the only garden-to-plate café business in the region, integrating sustainability into every aspect of food preparation and hospitality.

"What we envision with the Food Provenance programme is a natural extension of our existing self-sustaining model," says Clinton, owner of Taste Nature.

Food Provenance will initially fund up to four urban market garden start-ups in Dunedin. Those selected will receive practical training and support into small scale urban market garden development.

Growers will be paid wholesale prices to supply the organic produce they grow to the café, establishing them as income-earning urban market gardens.



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## Midnight in Mexico Continued from page 3



quills, parchment, knitting needles, antiseptic, pesticide, and water storage. Our lunch is served with a mouth-watering selection of indigenous plants, fish, and wildlife, even including insect-based cuisine. It speaks of Mexico's biodiversity, displaying lessons in resourcefulness and offering a bounty with a permaculture-based efficiency that has the means to bring plenty to all.

In my last two days I took a tour of Frida Kahlo Museum, the villa of Frida and her partner, muralist Diego Rivera. This was followed by an inspection of where Russian revolutionary Trotsky was assassinated. I then visited the Rivera fortress of art, Museo Anahuacalli.

The Frida Museum is located in an upwardly mobile suburb. I arrived late and missed the tour, and the plaques are all in Spanish. That said, her vibrant art and carefully cultivated garden speak for themselves. As do the wheelchair and back frames that supported Kahlo most of her life. A mixture of pain and a determination to live life to the fullest.

There are many similarities between the Kahlo villa and the villa where Trotsky died. Not surprisingly, the famous Mexican artists were originally Trotsky hosts when he arrived on a Norwegian petroleum tanker in 1937 at a time when Rockefeller, one of Rivera's chief patrons, was dictating Norwegian oil politics. Trotsky soon ran into two problems; one self-inflicted and one a byproduct of the same conflict that currently has ExxonMobil duelling it out with BP in Palestine, the former USSR, Crimea, and Africa.

In Mexico, the USA, and Russia, Rockefeller used the Russian Revolution to compete against BP for control of oil in the Crimea. Rockefeller's on-again-off-again support of both Stalinism and Trotskyism was deliberate. Rockefeller used the possible support of Stalin's only remaining living rival, Leon Trotsky, as leverage against Stalin. Simultaneously, the tactic ensured bitter in-fighting within American socialism, preventing the movement from taking root in the USA.

On the personal front, Trotsky's non-discreet affair with Frida Kahlo damned him in Riviera's eyes. Trotsky's villa had already stopped one full-on assault. Trotsky was not so lucky in the second attack; he was struck down by a pick to the head.

Post assassination, Kahlo admitted she had met Trotsky's assassin in Paris and given him inside information on Trotsky staff which he used to seduce Trotsky's secretary. He then used this relationship to gain access to Trotsky's armoured villa as a welcomed guest. Kahlo,

spurned by Trotsky (following a me or her ultimatum from Trotsky's wife), converted to Stalinism and returned to Rivera in her loyalties.

Despite Kahlo's confession, she was released. And history promptly glossed over her role. As quickly as it had brushed over Rockefeller patronage of Rivera, the Rosicrucian whose belief in mysticism and New York millionaire sugar daddies had (until the assassination of Trotsky) thwarted his attempt to become a card-carrying communist.

Not that Rivera's popularity with America's ultra-rich wasn't put to good use. Funds from Rockefeller in NY, along with money secured in San Francisco from rich intellectuals, were used to build Museo Anahuacalli, which is dedicated to two exhibitions. One is an ongoing display of pre-Hispanic artefacts. The second exhibit is devoted to contemporary issues.

At the time I visited, the contemporary exhibition was a sophisticated multimedia presentation devoted to 100 Seconds to Midnight, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock assessment of the likely threat of nuclear war. It's now, in 2025, at 89 seconds. During the 1963 Cuban Missile Crisis the clock sat at 2 minutes to midnight.

The exhibit points the finger at banks such as HSBC, Citibank, and JP Morgan. Banks which not only profit from nuclear proliferation but their own histories include colonial slavery, opium trading, and laundering for both the Mexican Columbian drug cartels and the Russian oligarchy that helped bring Putin to power and start a second Cold War.

Today, class rooms and lecture halls surround Rivera's Fortress as Mexico seeks to provide knowledge as a means to break the cycle of abuse. It's not an easy road. At the Avenida Paseo de la Reforma, anti graffiti barricades sport "Free Palestine" flags, freshly spray painted over the number 43, a symbol of changing alliances and Mexico's complex politics. It's at this spot that Omar Garcia, a culprit in the 43 killings and the current president's confidant, survived an ambush in his car when rival cartel gun men opened fire in a war that Washington Eagles and New York snakes are in no hurry to end.

—Ben Vidgen



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR – BEN VIDGEN

Ben is half Ozzy / half Kiwi who really does live in a Magic Forest. An ex borrower (teen reprobate), former soldier, full time hobbit turned investigative journalist, author and award winning broadcaster. He has a background in political science, constitutional law and history, and is currently writing a book on the history of gold and globalisation ('Gold, Guns, and Bloody Gods'). Ben's hobbies include panning for gold and hanging out with dogs.

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## ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST – DEAN RAYBOULD

Dean is an ex-Ozzy, long-term pop artist who lives in Oamaru, having long lived in Takaka, Golden Bay. His art – featuring native birds and comic relief – features in many galleries and stores around the motu. Not a bad chap for a Dingo. Check out more of Dean's art and creations online @deanraybould\_art



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# Poison gold and an utter bastard

The mineral bounty of the Onekaka-Parapara hills was recognised early on by the colonists. It has long been associated not just with gold but rare alloys of extreme purity due to its tectonic composition. But few know the epic story of the Hidden Treasure Mining Company which revolves around an alleged discovery so monumental it compares to the discovery of free energy, or having the ability to turn lead into gold. “This alloy will save an enormous amount – of work in coining, whilst coins manufactured from it will consist entirely of noble metals.” (Jan 23rd Colonist 1899.)

It wasn't that surprising that Jacobsen had grown up thinking he could discover his own treasure hidden in the earth. His father, Issac, was a keen prospector who had even once kicked off a diamond rush in South Canterbury, New Zealand when he claimed, in 1883, to discover diamonds in the Alford Forest. Testing of Jacobsen seniors samples had shown a small proportion of his stones were genuine diamonds. They were, however, “so low grade that they were of ‘small value’.”

Many felt Joseph's story smelt like Jacob Senior's diamonds – but it is clear that Joseph himself, mistaken or not, genuinely believed he had found the ultimate hidden treasure. This ‘ore’ became the basis of a new type of metal which Jacobsen claimed “had not yet been discovered anywhere else in the world.”

Not everyone was convinced. Archive papers report – in an 1894 Parliamentary report into gold mining – that WF Worley, the director of the Nelson School of mines, took a swipe at Joseph. “One of the above-mentioned assays calls for special mention, and that is the so-called platinum-ore from Takaka. For several years past some of this stone has come to me at intervals for assay, but the results have always been negative.”

The whole affair seemed to have to die out, until an unnamed assayed reported 60 per cent of platinum. Many people immediately thought that Jacobsen was right. £1 shares went up to £10, and changed hands at that price. A Mr Segar Bastard declared 50 ounces of gold to every ton of ore, was “nothing short of fabulous. Even one ounce per ton is considered payable.”

The investment cash was not used to feather Jacobsen's nest or spent on luxury items. It paid for the stamper battery and smelter located ‘not far from the mouth of the Puremahaia River’, which is now called Battery Road – a reference to the iron smelting operations which came later. Praise was poured on Jacobsen as the ore was no longer ‘the product of a brain of a fool’.

Then tragedy struck on October 2, 1905 Joseph's body washed up wrapped up in a fishing net, after having dropped off his son Walter and returned home alone in a storm.

In 1958, Joseph's other son Charlie Jacobsen recalled the ore; “Was something like platinum to look at, very heavy. You could put it in a furnace for three days and nights and take it out and it was the same weight when you put it in.”

Charlie Jacobsen is himself a mining legend who found uranium in the West Coast near Pike River and sparked a ‘gold rush’ of sorts. For a brief time the Coast was gripped by uranium fever. Local shops even advertised, as a poster at

Hornblower's Hotel revealed, ‘*uranium flavoured ice cream*’. God only knows what that tasted like. We assume it did not make one's tongue glow in the dark.

The area where the uranium was found was in the Buller near where a proposed new road linking the West Coast and Nelson-Tasman through the Kahurangi National Park South Washington by the Buller District Council in 2015 (pre-Fast Track legislation – and then shot down). It is increasingly proving to be the heartland of a modern mining rush. All keen to access the national forest in return for a pittance in royalties that will barely cover the national expenditure, or the infrastructure cost needed for such an operation, or the tax cuts the same government plans to give these offshore operations their version of chlor gold ... as the government sends the rest of the country mining for *un-obtainium*.

Jacobsen himself shows great foresight “I wrote to the Government and asked them not to let any company have a lease because generally all the money would go to England. By letting the seashore to small companies it would keep the money in the country.”

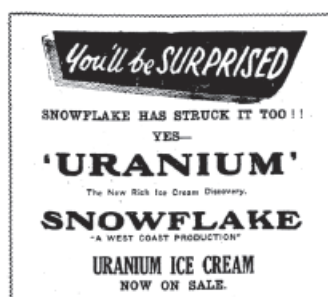
Ultimately following Jacob's death and the failure to produce results, the mine wind up in 1906. Mr Bastard's positive results seemingly occurred only with small samples and government experts noted the results of a larger scale may have well been shaped by the mine's furnace being inefficient and incorrectly placed. And that was that... except for a grisly post-note.

In 1910 a series of press reports declared a Segar Bastard was found in Sydney, Australia, in a house barren of furniture with his wife and child poisoned after an anonymous note declared “Prussic acid had done it's work”. Prussic acid, or cyanide, is almost as poisonous as the arsenic that off-shore mining firms wish to use to access Golden Bay gold at Sam Creek, near a fresh water aquifer that feed Golden Bay crops and farms.

Mr Bastard was found in a house with seemingly no key and locked doors. The case is littered with contradiction of a product of flawed Victorian science and social values. Some misreports a result of sensational tabloid reporting and a coroner encouraged by relatives to doom Mr Bastard's name. In some accounts Mr Bastard had cash, in others he was destitute and on the run “from someone or something”. Was Bastard an insane murder who chose death over disgrace? Or did Jacobsen's discovery pose an immense threat to vested parties? Or was revenge the name of the game?

The reality is that we will probably never know. Yet when considering the importance of the super alloy – the kind that has only surfaced in post wars years in remote locations of Africa, Australia and the Paparoa Range of New Zealand – it's an intriguing thought.

–Ben Vidgen



Advertising 'uranium' ice cream.  
(Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand,  
Reference: Grey River Argus, 23 November 1955)

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