



Observer Showbiz

Observer Overnights

News about the 3AW Overnights program with Keith McGowan

'Explosive' Kennedy letters



● Maureen and Henry Gay with Keith and Angela McGowan at Hervey Bay

■ Much fuss was made last year about the picture-book assembled by comedy writer **Mike McColl Jones** on the early television life of **Graham Kennedy**.

The book was launched at **GTV-9**, and there were plenty of photo spreads, including a colour feature in the *Melbourne Observer*.

Sitting quietly in **Queensland**, watching from afar, is former **Melbourne** radio man **Henry Gay**, who has a collection of private letters from **Kennedy**, that are described as "explosive".

Existence of the letters was revealed in detail in an interview with **3AW Overnights** host **Keith McGowan**. The recorded interview is expected to be replayed in the coming week on the weekday mid-night-dawn program.

The letters include candid assessments of **Melbourne** showbiz personalities, requests from the reclusive TV star, and many personal observations.

The letters are written from **Kennedy** to **Henry Gay**, who he describes as his "oldest living friend".

Gay has lived in **Hervey Bay, Qld** since 1978, with his wife **Maureen**, after a show business career that included work at **Melbourne** radio stations **3UZ** and **3AK**, and with **Reg Grundy's** TV organisation.

Henry Gay and **Graham Kennedy** worked together in the record library at **3UZ**, in the early 1950s, prior to television starting. They wrote pantomimes together, did amateur theatre work at **St Martin's Theatre**, and shared a lifelong friendship over 50 years.

"He trusted me. I was no threat to his career," **Henry Gay** told **Keith McGowan**.

"His career was important, very important."

Gay said he was given the opportunity to work with '**Nicky**' (**Clifford Nicholls Whitta**), but it didn't work out: "I had done **National Service**, I was so much in awe. I jus stood back and I was just hopeless. I got thrown off."

"**Graham** was the opportunist and took it with both hands."

Gay explains that his background with **Nicky's** family went back to the **Nicholson St Methodist School**, where **Nicky's** father was Sunday School superintendent.

Gay applied for a **Menzies Scholarship** after radio, and his referees were **Graham Kennedy**, journalist **Jim Murphy** and comedy writer **Freddie Parsons**.

Gay released one of the **Kennedy** letters to *The Australian* newspaper last year, but is keeping the other correspondence under wraps for now.

In hospital

■ A listener says long-time listeners, **Esme of Bendigo**, has been on the sick list. Our best wishes.

Top cats

■ **Ross Stevenson** and **John Burns** were listed with more than 20 per cent of the available audience, with their **3AW** breakfast program, in the **Nielsen** ratings released on Thursday.

Birthday

■ **Overnights** host **Keith McGowan** celebrated his birthday on Monday (Mar. 9) with a series of calls from listeners.

Nightlines

■ A man is a failure who goes through life earning nothing but money.

'3AW is football'



● Luca Gonano with Keith McGowan

■ Preparations are well underway for the **3AW** coverage of the 2009 **AFL** season which begins on Thursday, March 26. **Bruce Eva** has been recruited to oversee the footy broadcasts which will again feature **Rex Hunt**, **Dennis Cometti**, **Tony Shaw**, **Shane Healy**, **Tony Leonard** and **Robert Walls**. **Luca Gonano** (photographed) is Senior Producer for **3AW Football** for 2009. **Keith McGowan** says **Luca** often assists with production work for the **Overnights** program.

Pub of the Week

■ A favourite haunt of the **Overnights**, the **Kingston Hotel**, in Highett St, **Richmond**, was named as **3AW Pub of The Week** by **Tony Leonard**. The hotel is operated by the **De Fraga** family. **Chris De Fraga** presents the motoring segment on the **Overnights** program every Thursday morning.



● The Kingston Hotel, Richmond

Auction on May 17

■ **Rick Milne** has announced that a **People's Paraphernalia** auction will be held at **Princes Park Bowling Club**, **Carlton**, on May 17.

Rick made the announcement in last week's **Antiques and Collectables Show** (12.05pm Fridays) which was the first of the new 2009 series.

Guess the mileage

■ A prize is offered in a competition to estimate the distance travelled by the **McGowans** on their annual walkabout. The entry coupon is on Page 48.

All in the family

■ **Michael James** is often seen working the 'panels' for **3AW** personalities, particularly at outside broadcasts and in the **South Melbourne** studios at weekends. **Michael** is the son of weekend breakfast presenter **Darren James**, and the grandson of **3AW-3UZ** legend **Peter James**.



● Michael James



● Newsreader Eleanor Quirk was pleased to see Keith McGowan return from holidays. Eleanor prepares many of the overnight bulletins

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On This Day

Wednesday, March 11

■ Author **Geoffrey Blainey** is 79.

Media mogul **Rupert Murdoch** is 78. He was born in Melbourne.

Football identity **Sam Kekovich** is 59. He now calls the football on MMM.

Actress **Simone Buchanan**, who played **Debbie** in *Hey Dad*, is 41 today.

Thursday, March 12

■ Actress **Googie Withers** is 92. She was born in India.

Liz Mullinar, former casting agent, is 64. She quit as a casting agent to become an Anglican priest.

Jim Sharman, stage producer and son of the late boxing show promoter **Jimmy Sharman**, is 64 today.

Friday, March 13

■ US singer-songwriter **Neil Sedaka** was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1939. He is 70.

TV reporter **George Negus** was born in Queensland in 1942 (67). He host the SBS show, *Dateline*.

Geoff Cox, presenter of *Coxy's Big Break*, was born in St Kilda in 1951 (58).

Saturday, March 14

■ US music producer **Quincy Jones** was born in Chicago in 1933 (76).

Actor **Sir Michael Caine** was born in South London in 1933 (76).

English folk poet **Pam Ayres** was born in Oxfordshire in 1945 (64).

Comedian **Billy Crystal** is 61 today.

Reporter **Tara Brown**, of *60 Minutes*, is 41.

Sunday, March 15

■ The Ides of March.

Val Lehman, who played **Bea Smith** in *Prisoner*, is 66.

Football identity **Lou Richards** was born 86 years ago.

US television evangelist **Jimmy Swaggart** is 74. He made news in 1988 when it was revealed that he was involved with a prostitute.

Monday, March 16

■ English explorer **Matthew Flinders** was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1774. He died aged 40 in 1814.

Australian-born actor **Leo McKern** was born on this day in 1920. He died aged 81 in 2002.

Comedian **Jerry Lewis (Joseph Levitch)** was born in New Jersey in 1926 (83).

Tuesday, March 17

■ St Patrick's Day.

Jazz singer and pianist **Nat King Cole** was born in Alabama in 1917. He died aged 47 in 1965.

Little Pattie (Patricia Amplett) was born in Sydney in 1949 (60).

Actor and director **Rob Sitch** was born in 1962 (47).