

Roger Cribb – a eulogy

By Gülçin Cribb, Roger's first wife, mother of our wonderful son Thomas Hasan

I would like to say a few words about Roger's background, his life in the 70s, his family and his academic career.

Roger was born on the 6th January 1948 in Brisbane. His parents were Jane Winifred and Thomas Henry Dunmore Cribb. They lived in the Brisbane suburb of Rainworth. His father came from a well known Brisbane family, the Cribbs, who had arrived in Australia in the middle of 19th century as missionaries to spread Christianity. They belonged to the Congregational Church. His mother was born in Wales, one of ten children. His Aunty Betty, his mother's youngest sister, and her husband Uncle Jack who is 90 visited Roger just one week before Roger passed away. Both Roger's parents were very musical. His mother was a wonderful singer; she won a number of prizes for her singing. His father used to play the violin in the Brisbane Municipal orchestra. His dad was a tradesman, an artisan, he was a piano tuner.

Roger started his life on a sad note; he lost his mother when he was only a few months old. But he had a wonderfully loving and supportive family around him - his dad, his aunts, and his grandmother. His dad married Peg when Roger was four. Peg was a wonderful mum to Roger. She looked after him as if Roger was her own child. Roger did not have any siblings.

Peg was like a mother to me too. She adored our son Thomas and Thomas adored her. She used to look after Thomas when he was a baby. He called her Gaga. When Thomas was sick and could not go to school, because I had to go to work, he used to go to Gaga's house at St John's Wood. Many years later, he told me that he sometimes pretended that he was sick, so he could go and spend the day with Gaga, because she used to let him watch midday movies, drink lemonade and eat Tim Tams.

Roger had a loving and supportive family. Peg, Tom and Roger moved to Cairns when he was young and they lived there for many years. Roger went to Trinity Bay State High School. Cairns was always his home. He longed for Cairns wherever we were. He missed the climate, the environment, and the mountains.

He then won a scholarship to go to the University of Queensland, and did an arts degree. He was very clever and did well. He did his BA Honours and then an MA in sociology and anthropology. His MA thesis was about the Cherbourg and Yarraba indigenous communities. When he was at the University he lived at Cromwell College. Later on, he lived in various shared households like many other university students did. He also spent some time at International House where one of his dad's cousins, Ivor Cribb, was the warden. He made friends with people from all over the world and developed an interest in different cultures and languages. He was particularly interested in Chinese, and had done his BA Honours thesis on Chinese bureaucracy.

Roger was an artist. He was a creative man with unconventional ideas and was always opposed to conventions and authority. He had many talents; he used to create sculptures, draw, make pottery, chess pieces, do calligraphy, and write poems and stories. He used to make furniture too; he made bookcases and our son's first school desk. We gave that desk to Sam Watson's grandson a few years ago. Roger's sand sculptures became quite well known in the early 70s. ABC TV did a program about him on Stradbroke Island. I am sure ABC archives would still have a copy of this program.

I first met Roger in Hong Kong in May 1974. Our love affair developed over the next few months. Roger spent some time in Hong Kong practising his Chinese, doing calligraphy and earning money by drawing tourists' portraits in night clubs for \$10 each. He then went to Vladivostok to take the Trans-Siberian train to go to Moscow and then to England to visit his aunt, Aunty Ida, his mother's oldest sister. He used to send me amazing letters from wherever he went, often with some dried flowers he would collect from the countryside. I have kept his letters. He was always a story teller.

He decided that he would change his itinerary and come to Turkey to see me. In those days, this was almost an impossible thing to do under the old Soviet communist system. They didn't like foreigners to go to places they might not have approved. But he did it in his usual fighter style. When he was trying to enter Turkey via the Soviet border in the East, he got arrested, because he had no cash on him, only travellers' cheques. The border guards rang me and I was able to persuade them that they should let him come through.

Roger and I saw each other a lot in Istanbul, secretly, without my parents' knowledge as the thought of their daughter having a foreigner, especially a bearded hippie looking man, as a boyfriend would have been quite a shock. They would have banned me from seeing him. My father was a colonel and had a very responsible position concerning security, law and order in Istanbul in those days. I used to work for Turkish Airlines at Istanbul airport.

After a while, Roger made friends with the priest in the old Catholic Church and was invited to live in the Brothers' quarters for free in return for doing some paintings for them. These were incredibly romantic and exciting days for us.

However, July 1974, the beginning of the Cyprus war created some complications for us and forced Roger to leave Turkey in a hurry. He was arrested again at Istanbul airport when he came to visit me on suspicion of being a Greek spy. He spent some days in the watch house there. He was released on the condition that he had to leave the country immediately. We were very upset of course. He made me promise to leave Turkey within the next few days to elope with him, so we could get married and live in England.

I left Turkey in early August and came to England to meet Roger, pretending that I was coming to England to study. We went on our honeymoon in Wales for a week before we got married at the Shrewsbury Registry Office on the 17th August. Once it started getting cold in England, Roger suggested we should go to Australia. He was getting sick of working as a labourer fixing leaking roofs. I was working as a waitress and we were very poor.

We arrived in Brisbane on the 1st December 1974. Roger's family was wonderful, supportive, loving, and caring. I met his mum and dad at Roma Street Station on a hot Brisbane day. So, there I was in Australia, my newly adopted country, meeting my in-laws for the first time.

Roger worked as a tutor in Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Queensland. We had a very 70s kind of life in Brisbane, with lots of friends, dinners, parties, trips to the beach, family gatherings, going to protest rallies on Saturdays at King George Square to protest against the Jo Bjelke-Petersen government. Roger got arrested at one of these rallies and was thrown into South Brisbane Watch House. I was his witness at the Magistrate's Court.

He started getting restless. Roger was never one to have an ordinary life, settled and with a routine. He always wanted to do the unusual, go where others had not gone and have adventures. He wanted to study archaeology, his biggest love and obsession. He managed to get accepted as a postgraduate student at the University of Southampton. I stayed back in Brisbane to earn money so we had enough for him to live. After a while, I moved to England too. He started working on his doctorate on the ethno-archaeology of nomads in the Middle East.

He had much encouragement and support from his supervisors. Professor Colin Renfrew, now Lord Renfrew (a world expert on the archaeology of the Cyclades in the Aegean), was one of his mentors. They found scholarships for him to do his work. He wrote papers, and gave papers at various archaeology conferences. He learnt to read in other languages for his research. I was constantly

amazed how he could learn so much, amass so much knowledge. He studied geology, zoology, palaeontology. He has always been an avid reader of the sciences, even though his original study was in the humanities and social sciences. New Scientist, Science and Nature were his favourite journals.

We were both offered academic positions in universities in Turkey so we went to live there in 1980. This was also to help him with his field work for his doctorate. That is where our son was born on the 21st May 1981.

This was a period of political turmoil, when the September 12 military coup happened. The army imposed a curfew, and tanks and soldiers with machine guns occupied university campuses. Roger was in his element. He loved ridiculing the soldiers and the army and started behaving in a dangerous way. I wanted to protect him so he would not get arrested or worse still get shot by an accidental or not so accidental bullet. Our apartment was searched by soldiers one day when we had a visiting Australian friend staying with us. We were all very worried and scared, and Roger's manic state started getting worse. One day he went out secretly taking photos of soldiers carrying machine guns. I was very worried.

He also wanted to travel in remote regions of Turkey in order to undertake his field work amongst the nomads for his doctorate. His requests for permission to do this were rejected. This was no surprise of course. Neither the Government nor the Army would want a foreigner travelling amongst minority Kurds and Yoruks (Turkic nomads). I tried to use my father's influence and went to visit the Top General, the Head of the Turkish army to see if I could pull some favours. I was 9 months pregnant and our son was born the next day. This was a memorable day, because when my labour pains started after midnight, I knew we could not go out of the house due to the curfew. Roger was furious. He wanted to defy it all. I said it would be far too dangerous to go out before 5am. So, we waited. We had no telephone to ring anyone to get permission to go to the hospital. Thomas Hasan was born at 7.30am on the 21st May in Ankara.

We spent the next 3-4 months travelling amongst nomads with our baby son, living in tents, so Roger could do his field work, all illegally of course. We spent a lot of time in the southern part of Turkey, talked to Turkic nomads who lived in beautiful tents, travelled with their goats and sheep. Roger used to wear the baggy Turkish peasant trousers and spoke some Turkish.

We travelled to the east, the forbidden zone, left our 3 month old son with my relatives in Elazig, and went to Lake Van and Nemrut Dag where a number of Kurdish tribes had set up camp. We had an old tiny Renault Five registered in England to travel with. Soldiers used to stop us on the road and ask us for our papers and search our car. Sometimes we used to give them foreign cigarettes. Roger

loved every moment of these dangerous adventures. My parents didn't know where we were or what we were doing.

The Kurds, members of the Alikan tribe loved us. They thought we should stay with them, we would be safer then. They even offered us 500 sheep and goats so we could live a nomadic life. Roger's book "*Nomads in Archaeology*" includes pictures of their tent cities and a group of these people. Roger collected a lot of old animal bones, like jawbones of animals and bits of rocks, and obsidian found in the mountains for his research. We carried boxes of these in our little car throughout Turkey and all the way back to England. My mother refused to have them in her apartment in Istanbul.

We left our tent and various Mother Care baby goods with some of these nomads before we headed back to England from Istanbul with our baby in our little car. We tried to smuggle our baby into Hungary as we did not have a visa for him but the border guards found out. We were hit by a municipal bus as we entered the city of Budapest with our baby in the back seat.

Back at Southampton, Roger was extremely depressed. He was working day and night on his thesis, our baby was small, we had hardly any money, and we were poor. It was cold. His mother visited us from Australia; that was a wonderful time. Gaga was lovely with our baby and very supportive.

When Hasso was one, I went back to Turkey to visit my parents, and that is when I decided that I had to get out of this marriage. I could not possibly keep going. Roger's depressive state was getting worse. I had to think of the welfare of my child. I could not possibly take care of our baby and support Roger at the same time.

Roger did a marathon job with his PhD, finished it in November 1982 and we returned to Australia. It was time for me to get a job and support my son. Roger's mental condition was deteriorating. Roger and I separated in early 1983. That was a very difficult time for me, as I had no family in Australia. Roger's mother and his Aunt, Aunty Jean, were very supportive and understanding.

Roger and I remained friends. He went to work in Perth, Adelaide, Alice Springs and then in Cairns as an archaeologist. We kept in touch, and our son spent some of the holidays with him. I have always admired his creativity, his artistic talents, his determined and focused way to do what he wanted to do even if that meant at the expense of hurting people close to him. He was a compassionate man, loved helping the disadvantaged, the needy, the minorities. He loved animals, especially cats. He was a cat lover. He has written many stories. He was a good story teller. Children liked him too, because

he could relate to them better than he could relate to adults. He had a sense of adventure in everything he did.

I met a number of his past students and heard incredible praise for his teaching ability. He was a good teacher. He taught me how to drive. He taught our son many things, like playing chess, making model aero planes, drawing, love of history, especially the classics. He loved arguing; that is probably why our son became a successful debater at High School.

He read the entire Muddle headed Wombat book and recorded it on tape so our son could listen to it before he went to bed when he was a little boy. He used to take him to the outback when he was doing fieldwork in central Australia or North Queensland.

Roger you were an extraordinary person. You achieved a lot. Your research, your book and papers, are read all over the world.

You suffered a lot. You could not help it. That was your destiny. But you left behind many loving friends, your son who loved you and many others. You had an incredible life, an unusual life. I am glad I knew you.

Thank you so much for sharing Roger's life in recent years and being his friends. I want to thank especially Peter and Karen Boyd. They are the brother and sister that Roger had to have.
