

## Introduction to “The Next Chapter: In the Lindrum Bloodstream”

She ran down the stairs like Cinderella, her shoes clinging to her tiny feet. Frank Cawood had sent the balls spinning round the triangle for his final trick shot of the session. The applause was deafening and Joy heaved a sigh of relief. The opening session at the 1974 Melbourne Show had been a success.

“Thank the Lord!”

Graciously, she expressed gratitude to the spectators for their attendance before delivering an impressive marketing spiel, she was an excellent public speaker, on the forthcoming release of Horace’s book *Snooker, Billiards & Pool* and announcing the time for the next session. It had not been easy without the renowned showmanship of the maestro but her choice of Frank to fill the gap was going to work and she sent up a silent prayer as she helped him pack away the equipment.

“Lunch Frank?” she asked.

“Thanks, Joy, but, on this occasion, I am going to decline. I have a couple of calls to make and will grab a snack at one of the stalls. You go ahead without me.”

“Okay, see you at 1.45.” The next session was at 2.00pm and sessions always started on time. Horace was known for his punctuality.

Joy made her way to the Centre Restaurant. Hosted by sponsors WD & HO Wills, it was a place where she and Horace had been able to relax between sessions. The regular waitress greeted her at the entrance but where was the usual welcoming smile? If anything, the lass appeared embarrassed. She was pulling at her skirt and finding it difficult to open her mouth to speak but managed to express her condolences.

“I was very sad to hear the news of Mr Lindrum.”

“Thank you, Sara.”

“Mrs Lindrum, ah, er.” The sentence hung in mid-air.

Joy sensed a problem.

“A slight problem, Mrs Lindrum.” It was the manager’s voice.

Mrs Lindrum. Mrs Lindrum. How strange! Why, the “Mrs Lindrum?” Horace and Joy had always been on first name terms with this young man.

“This is a private subsidiary luncheon. I have been asked to inform you that you are welcome to stay today but we would ask you to make other arrangements for the remainder of the show. I have a table by the window.”

“No. No, thank you,” She turned, pushed the door and ran down the stairs into the street where she lost herself in the crowd. It was all too clear. Crystal clear. Horace was dead. WD & HO Wills wanted to “distance themselves”. Cancer was not on their menu.

Tears started to fall and she made her way to the nearest ladies room where she sobbed her heart out. The first day of the show. Ten days to go.

Hearing Horace’s voice, “You can do it, old girl,” she gathered her strength.

The days came and went. They were helped along by kind members of the Melbourne public who visited the exhibit. Breaks between sessions were filled with hundreds of people wanting to chat about the incredible Lindrums.

“I recall young Horace making his first snooker century. He could only have been about 15 or 16. His speed play was phenomenal.”

“He was 16, sir, and the break was 103.”

Word quickly spread that the compere – Joy – knew a great deal about the games of the green cloth and the crowds poured in to see the show and spend time remembering past feats. 64 sessions in 11 days to capacity audiences. The little widow had kept the promise she made to her dying husband: “Carry the torch. The show must go on.”

Reward came at the end of October in the form of a letter from WD & HO Wills.

“Our Company people connected with the Melbourne Show were unanimous in their praise of the presentation of this exhibition and the excellent audiences it attracted.

We would like to thank you for your personal time and trouble you took to make the exhibition such a success.”

Joy let out a yell, dances around the coffee table then collapsed onto the lounge and buried her face in a cushion. She was still lying on the lounge when Pat Westlake, her next-door neighbour, popped in for a chinwag.

“Yoo-hoo, Joy, it’s Pat.”

“Come on up, Pat, I am in the billiard room.”

Joy quickly dried her tears but there wasn’t anything she could do about her red eyes and Pat could see she had been crying.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

Joy did not respond and Pat respected her silence.

Retiring to the family room, Joy poured them both a drink.

“I realised things were going to be different without Horace but I did not realise how different. I feel like a product on a conveyor belt bound for who knows where.”

Pat let her talk. Joy obviously needed to let the great river burst its banks so her words and feelings could flow out through her soul.

“A week after Horace’s death the man who manufactures tables with Horace’s name plate called to ask if I would gift him all my photographs. When I said “no”, he said his company was not going to pay me any further royalties for the use of Horace’s name.”

“Royalties ceased on Horace’s death,” he told me.

“Of course, I knew what the contract said and I was already wondering how I would manage my life without Horace. His death has left such a hole in me. But the way people have treated me in recent times is something I did not expect. I have been asking myself:

“Who am I?” I thought I knew who I was. Now I am not sure.”

“What do you mean, Joy? I do not understand what you are saying.”

“Well, I thought I was the woman behind the Showman. The woman who, for 25 years, was wife, mother, business manager, ambassadress, ghost writer, but, all of a sudden, I am being viewed in a different light. I am being viewed as the poor little widow and it is as if “they” – being the people we have done business with in the past – want to pension off the little black poker.”

It took six months but the little black poker managed to shake off the coast dust and set to work on the next chapter of her life. She opened Pandora’s Box, unlocking the

secrets of the immortals, and, in the process learning a great deal about the human condition. Of course, she did not know what she was getting into the day she lifted the lid.