



Source: Caren Bohan, 'US to alter tactics as army has rough time', *Sun-Herald* in *Sydney Morning Herald* online, 22/10/06.

Tags: [Malaysia](#), [child/parent](#), [intimacy](#), [music](#)
Writer/s: [Sarah Rodigari](#)

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I am the only child born to Francesco and Zophia Zampatti. My father's father was an Italian soldier during the Second World War. As I have mentioned somewhere before, he was one of those opera soldiers recruited by Mussolini to be a singer soldier, bellowing out ballads across the battlefield as the regiment marched towards the front line.

Although his attempts have always been admirable my father can neither carry a tune nor speak Italian with any dignity. He struggled for years to find a place for himself in life and after studying to be a priest he finally met my mother and settled in Canberra with a good government job. As my father rose through the ranks of the diplomatic corps, he travelled extensively to parts of the world taking his wife and child with him.

Timmy is my first memory of friendship. We met in Malaysia during the late seventies, when there was a mass exodus of post war Vietnamese refugees. His father worked in foreign affairs and mine in immigration. At the age of five, Timmy had dark skin, dark eyes, thick black hair and oversized black glasses and was also an only child. He was said to be an insecure boy and I, a confused girl. Both of us, unlike the children of other diplomats were extremely socially awkward.

Isolated from the rest of Malaysia and, it seemed, the rest of the world, our mothers, under the delusion of grandeur, would sip gin and tonics by the decrepit badminton court, vacantly staring into the adjacent cemetery, hiding their tears for home behind their oversized sunglasses.

For reasons no one can remember, we had taken to breaking into local houses, which was easy because no one had any doors, and pissing in the kitchen, the lounge and the hall. Our behaviour ostracised us from the other children in this small community. Although our parents at first tried to separate us, my father reasoned that our behaviour was the early mark of revolutionaries and thought it better that we had one friend as opposed to none at all.

News of our behaviour in Malaysia had travelled so widely around the community that when we met again three years later in Austria, the time of the Polish Solidarity movement, neither of us had managed to make any other

friends. Timmy's parents had channelled his creative energies into the guitar whilst mine felt that the rigor of piano would give me discipline, motivation and help with my sluggish masculine posture. By day we would skip school and steal cherries from the local orchard and sell them to old ladies in the street whilst pretending to be homeless. At dinner parties we performed renditions of Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder's *Ebony and Ivory* under the strict supervision of our parents. My father thought we were creative revolutionaries.

In London during the Thatcher years, Timmy had disappeared from the community of diplomatic children, and my parents, unable to find a friend or a focus for my displaced frenetic energy, finally decided to send me to military school. During my time there, whilst completely isolated, I turned to music. Following the footsteps of my grandfather I started to sing and although it wasn't quite opera, the school thought in my case, it was better than nothing. My father thought I was a musical revolutionary.

A few years ago after travelling aimlessly throughout Europe, I returned to travel aimlessly around Australia, making a living as a jazz singer and although I have found peace with myself, I would still agree with those who once called me confused. Recently, by chance at a party, I ran into Timmy. He was wearing white sneakers, chinos and a plaid shirt, his thick black hair was slicked back and he was still wearing black thick-rimmed glasses. He was smoking Kent cigarettes and drinking whisky.

Following in his father's footsteps, Timmy, now called Timothy, had become a secret agent, a private detective working in Canberra...and had converted to Buddhism five years ago. He said he found this unlikely combination to be the solution to all his problems.

He said he had a band. He was undecided as to whether to call it Marine Corps or Sons of Dad, but either way, if I wanted to, I could come along and watch him play and maybe, if I wanted to, I could join in. The band, whatever it was called reinterpreted 1950's Barbershop songs in an Elvis-meets-rockabilly way. I said, I liked that, it sounded truly revolutionary.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Sarah Rodigari.