

FROM WHERE I SIT

JOHN COONEY

A Funny Thing Happened At Rugby

A funny thing happened to me last weekend. Funny in an embarrassing kind of way. And while I don't want to tell *everybody* (I mean, I've still got my pride, right?), I do feel the need to tell *somebody*. I think it might help if I could share it – you know? Get it off my chest, like they say. I mean, I don't need a counsellor or anything like that. No. Just someone who will listen. Someone who cares ...



Before I tell you what happened I need to tell you what happened *before* it happened – in fact, what's been happening for years. I'm a grandfather, you see. Which doesn't mean I'm *old* – because I'm not. It just means I've got grandkids. In my case, *lots* of grandkids. And all of them (or nearly all

of them) are involved in what people call 'extra-curricula activities'.

On any given day of the week you can find one or more of my grandkids doing tap-dancing, cheer-leading, jazz-ballet or *Mainly Music*. And you've got to make an appointment to see them because they're always rushing off to athletics or soccer, hockey or rugby.

Anyway, what happened last weekend happened at rugby.

For as far back as I can remember, our winter weekends have included rugby. It doesn't take much to get us there: usually just a phonecall and a small voice pleading, "Can you come and watch us play?" Which explains why very little else gets done around our place prior to Christmas.

Most Saturday mornings see me pounding up and down the sidelines in gumboots, frantically taking photos, stumbling over parents, and shouting encouragement at 'our' team as they beat the pants off the others.

The kids seem to like having Granddad

there. They seem to ruck and scrum and kick and tackle with twice the enthusiasm – and sometimes they even get to take home a trophy.

And me? I get to take home a wet umbrella, muddy jeans, a sore throat, and lots of wonderful memories – and I wouldn't miss it for anything.

But last week ... well, it all went rather pear-shaped.

Like hundreds of other grown-ups, we arrived at the appointed sports grounds, and I duly parked my car. We found our way to the appointed field, and I duly pounded, photoed, stumbled and shouted. And 'our' team duly won!

But, on the way back to the car, with grandkids hanging off me, demanding piggy-backs and begging, "*Let me come home with you, pleeeeeease!*" – I discovered that, oh no, I'd lost my car-keys!

I promptly blamed a granddaughter who, only 10 minutes before, had been digging around in my pocket for lollies.

"Hey, what did you do with my keys?" I called.

"Nothing," she smiled. "I never had them."

"You must've dropped them back there on the ground!" I grumped, about to go and search through that sideline mud.

"But the car's not even locked ..." she announced, pulling open the door.

"And the keys are still in it ..." she declared.

"**AND THE MOTOR'S STILL GOING!**" shouted six grandchildren in unison.

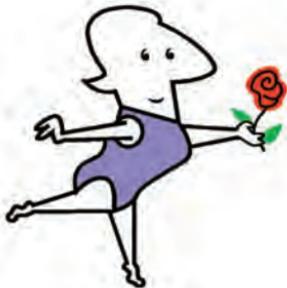
Looking back, I probably shouldn't have gone to rugby that day. I probably should've stayed home and mowed the lawns or sprayed the mould like normal men do. And I'm still struggling to understand how I not only parked the car – but left it unlocked – with the keys in it – and the engine running – while I pounded, photoed, stumbled and shouted my way through an hour-and-a-bit of rugby!

I can tell that my wife is worried. And my kids won't let me live it down. But I must've been distracted by the children, surely? Or the devil made me do it? Or my mind was temporarily taken over by aliens?

But it wasn't a senior moment, was it? It *can't* have been. Like I say, I'm not *that old* ...

JOHN (GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER & EDITOR) HAS BEEN ADVISED TO REBRAND HIS 'MIDLIFE MADNESS TOURS'. HIS KIDS ARE PROPOSING: 'ADVENTURE BEFORE DEMENTIA!'

THORT



I'll never understand you women. I mean, how can you take boiling hot wax, pour it onto your upper thigh, rip the hair out by the root, and still be afraid of a spider?