

I was at university with Martin. He never wasted much time going to tutorials! He was working at the Herald, a job his father helped him get. The famous phrase "No classical references in Dog of the Week" dates from that time. Martin had referred to the dog in question as "a veritable Cerberus of a dog". Needless to say they let him go.

I never met Charmian but I got to know George quite well. He said I was a bluestocking. He respected me because I knew Latin. Martin spoke demotic Greek as well as katharevousa the Greek equivalent of Oxford English. The Greek shopkeepers who initially thought we were just a couple of hippies worshipped him when he spoke his perfect Greek.

But he didn't know Latin. I had done Latin at school and was doing Italian Honours at Sydney University at the time.

During that year George died. I went to the funeral, which was well attended. I remember washing up with Maisie Drysdale in the house in Mosman. Raglan Street I think it was.

All of George's friends were artists, not literary people, or so it seemed to me. Especially the Drysdales and Ray Crook.

My daughter Lucy remembers Martin's death clearly. She remembered Roseanne arrived at our house and she, Lucy, saw Roseanne and I hugging and crying as she told us of his death. I have absolutely no memory of that event.

We stayed with Roseanne and Martin in Petroio borgo medioevale in the barn where they were living, so my daughters Lucy and Kitty knew them quite well, especially Lucy who must have been about 8 years old. Kitty was 2 years younger.

The barn had been rented from one of Martin's friends at SBS. We even left the kids with them overnight once. We went to Firenze and when we got back the kids were happy except that Martin was slightly miffed that they had not listened intently to the story he told them.

That was the place where I handed him a quill and said that he was a poet and he should go back to poetry, his first love. He had been telling me that nobody at SBS made any comments about his novel Cicada Gambit even though he knew they had read it. I knew when he said that, it was addressed to me as well. I never said anything about the book either.

David and I helped out while we were there. I spoke to the mechanics in Italian and got them to fix the car that someone had driven into the side of a hill. I even learned the Italian word for brake shoes (ganasce) !

David fixed the pump so that we could get water up to the kitchen.

Martin's job was to empty the slops into the fields, something he did without complaining despite the smell!

And Martin tried to cut down his drinking. At least he only drank after noon. Beer and wine. He needed alcohol and if he thought we were going to run out he would walk to the nearest town to procure it, no matter how far away it was.

These are my memories of Martin and Roseanne.

Sarah Ahern

