

## Staying sober, clean and alive

There wasn't enough room in my final column of 2019 to cover some really important issues I wrote about last year, so I'll complete my "whatever happened to?" today.

Using gel in the shower instead of soap ranks as 2019's biggest achievement. I can report the transition has been accomplished, but not without challenges.

Gels contain something that cause me to itch if I don't wash them off properly, so my showering time (and use of hot water) has risen to allow for a series of demanding gymnastics. If I miss a spot, the scratching begins that evening while I'm watching TV. Lin hasn't said anything...yet.

I'm still trying to work out how to use the right amount. I may be applying too liberally, because we're going through so much of the stuff that a large container now sits in the shower stall, and every time I remember to check it it's nearly empty. I'm trying to absorb new instructions on how to lather in my hands before applying.

Another big issue I columned on (we verb everything now - medalling, podiuming, impacting...um, verbing) was low-alcohol beer. I've cut out alcohol of any sort, although there are occasional small lapses that suggest once you take such a step there's no going back.

The other day I drained a third of a bottle of cooking wine that was threatening to go off and I was crook for a couple of days. How quickly the liver slips into a "don't send that crap down to me any more" mode.

I want to give Heineken a plug. It's 00 beer is brilliant. It tastes more like beer than the 2.5% one, which is sweet by comparison, and I can quaff four at the pub and drive home hoping a cop will stop me so I can say "yeah, mate, I've had a few, so breathalyse me."

One of the bar people told me Heineken held a blind tasting at her establishment recently – and everyone on staff picked the 00 as the best brew.

What does that tell us about our drinking habits, if you put such an outcome alongside the fact the 00 is hard to find at the supermarket because it sits virtually alone in a sea of "proper" beer and is sometimes not there at all?

When I asked someone to please get me some from the back store, he was away for ages. They obviously sell so little that it languishes in a dark corner, rarely troubled by wowsers like me.

Big bureaucracy's stuff-ups didn't let me down in 2019. There was all that nonsense my neighbour went through with the masters of social welfare. He's moving out now partly because he can't afford his rent any more.

From what I read on WorkSafe's silence about its inspection of the White Island-Whakaari tourism setup prior to the tragedy, there may be lots more to emerge from the Wellington murk. Will it?

JT col for Jan 12 2020 – whatever happened to

So what else happened? For one thing, I hug more these days. My hug column was a confession that for most of my life I've avoided the big clinch. I'm sure my hug count with Lin is way up (no-one's counting, of course),

Advertising in Pukekura Park drew by far the biggest Facebook feedback I've experienced – 535 people commented, most of them dead against such despoliation of the place.

I have nothing against Jehovah Witnesses. Each to their own. They just happened to be the group taking liberties. They persisted for a while after the fuss – and the Hare Krishna choir did a session in support - but I haven't seen them lately, so hopefully they got the message they're welcome to market themselves as they please, just not there.

Not every column gets such support. The one against legalising cannabis earned me threats and for the first time we've banished ourselves from the phone book. I accept that not everyone agrees with everything I write (how boring would that be) but it's alarming when readers feel an urge to shut me up permanently.

I'll be going soon enough, I'm guessing, as I note the passing of good people in my generation, the likes of Mike Merrick, Maurice Betts, Ian Eliason and Jazz Muller. I remember once when Jazz was coming out of a rugby team-talk and debating with someone about whether it was 43 or 44. New line-out call, Jazz? Nah, said he. It was the number of times coach said "bloody".