

Articles

Patricia Reimer meets a local author living what he preaches

Balance, simplicity, consciousness

Every now and again we meet people who strike us as extraordinary. In the Byron Shire this probably happens more often than not, so when someone manages to stand out they can't help but leave an impression.

Daniel Reid is one such person. One of those impossible to box kinds that no matter how hard you try just won't fit into any of our preconceived ideas of how he should be.

A devotee of the Chinese way he has spent his entire adult life understanding and passing on the essence of Asian health and spiritual principles. But you'd never know it talking to this American born author who chats casually, colloquially even, without any airs or graces. Having just released his 26th book, *The Tao of Detox*, he is both prolific and passionate but the 54-year-old Mullumbimby man is understated in his manner. And with his healthy, compact physique he's living proof of the benefits of what he teaches.

Sitting in his stunning home in the hills overlooking the green fields and shimmering ocean, he is the picture of serenity in his silk Chinese robe and slippers. As we talk and his fascinating life unfolds he toys carelessly but intently, in a yin and yang type balanced way, with an array of beautifully crafted fine teapots and cups.

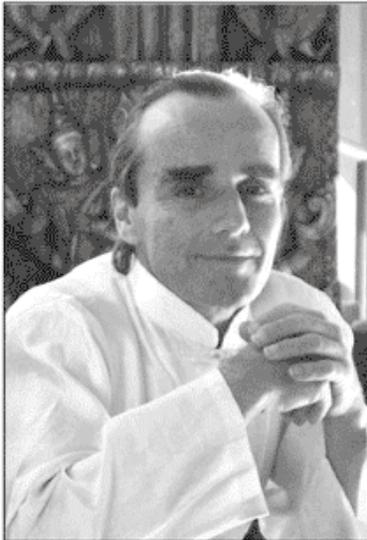
He labours over preparing our green High Mountain Oolong tea, a strong detoxifier and reputedly the most prestigious of all teas, studiously polishing his pots with its essence as though waiting for a genie or some magic realisation to occur.

Daniel is a man dedicated to bettering himself both physically and spiritually and one who believes the concepts of balance and harmony engendered by the Tao and Buddhism provide the best tools for this.

He was born in San Francisco and his family left for Africa when he was four so his father could help establish Ethiopian Airlines for Emperor Haile Selassie.

'I spent my childhood in Ethiopia, it was a great place to grow up, we had no TV, no commercial culture, no junk food, it was a pretty basic life,' he said.

'That's where I got my taste for so-called third world countries. I went back to the



States and as soon as I finished university where I studied Chinese I went to Taiwan and stayed 16 years.

'It was so wonderful to be in an exotic Chinese culture that hadn't been modernised. That's where I developed my interest in the culture, especially Chinese medicine. The specific thing that got me interested in medicine is when I threw my

Ethiopia, USA, Taiwan, Thailand, Mullumbimby... Daniel Reid's spiritual odyssey brings practical benefits to those trying to live the natural way.

back out playing racquetball. Someone took me to this Chinese doctor who did this massage and used a herbal poultice and I was fine the next day.

'I was so impressed I went and apprenticed myself to a Chinese doctor and that's how I started writing about Chinese medicine.'

He spent the rest of his time in Taiwan studying and writing about all aspects of the Chinese culture, particularly Chinese medicine and ancient Taoist health and longevity systems. In 1989 he moved to Chiang Mai in Thailand, continuing all the while to learn and write. He married his wife Yuki, or Snow, in 1991 and on the advice of a clairvoyant they emigrated to Australia in 1999.

It would take a book to fill in the gaps which include periods in New York and Mon-

terey, California. Not to mention the publication of freelance articles in the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Bangkok Post* and various airline magazines. And all those books ranging in subject nature from Chinese cookery and Asian travel to herbal medicine and the art of opium. More recently published works include *The Tao of Health, Sex and Longevity*

and its companion book *Guarding the Three Treasures: The Chinese Way of Health*.

While Daniel Reid is obsessed about the sanctity of his body he knows we don't live in a vacuum.

'Health is not new age, health is as ancient as human beings, what's new age is all the gloss, all the paraphernalia,' he said of the bad reputation natural practice has gained over the years.

'I don't write about anything that I haven't done personally, done and tested on myself, and then the real point is to be able to present it to my reader in a way that's relevant.'

And herein lies the paradox that is Daniel Reid. While treating his body like a temple, he allows for human failure and knows that talking

about health as though it were an exclusive right of only some is irrelevant. *The Tao of Detox* is a refreshing read because it talks to ordinary people with ordinary temptations and ordinary shortcomings. Not to someone who is already pure and free of many commonplace health issues. He grabs the attention of the average Joe by giving an analogy of a car, an idea that arose by witnessing Americans' respect for their cars and contempt for what they put in their own body.

'Imagine what would happen if you indiscriminately poured petrol, diesel, kerosene, propane and a cup of sugar altogether into the petrol tank of your car,' he writes.

'That's precisely the way most people eat today, mixing meat, bread, milk, fat, sugar and other digestively incompatible foods at the same meals and pouring them into their stomachs at the same time.'

'And what if you never changed the motor oil, neglected to clean the filters, and let the carburettor get crusted up with soot? The result would be obvious, the fuel would burn inefficiently, producing foul smelling toxic wastes and gases, the engine would soon begin to wheeze and splutter, vital moving parts would seize up and malfunction, and finally the whole machine would grind to a shuddering halt and need to be hauled to the nearest repair shop.'

Simply put and to the point, this is how Daniel expresses himself both in his books and in person. He also figures that most people cannot avoid toxicifying their systems and gives practical advice on smoking, drinking and eating meat. Rather than admonishing those who 'retox' their bodies he gives them the tools to deal with the side effects. There's that yin and the yang again.

The Byron Shire is lucky to have someone of his calibre and charm and could soon be benefiting from a series of workshops conducted by Daniel Reid as well as some detox clinics.

'It's a great area for healing,' he said.

'There's good stuff available but a lot of people become cynical about healing because they have had a bad experience. There's a bit of a problem here; there's a lot of bullshit in the healing world, a lot of healers here need a good detox.'

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