

Make love, not war ...

UNLESS YOU'RE MY DAUGHTER

Richard Neville hit the headlines in the '60s as the co-founder of Oz magazine and advocate of free love. Yet, as **David Leser** discovers, when it came to raising his daughters, he was nothing if not prudish.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GARY HEERY** STYLING BY **AMANDA NEWMAN**

IN THE PRIME OF HIS young adulthood Richard Neville was the pin-up boy for the 1960s counter-culture and scourge of the establishment.

He wore his hair long, smoked pot, attended sex fairs in Denmark and the Netherlands (one was the inaugural Wet Dream Festival in Amsterdam!), and published magazines that were satirical arrows aimed at the arid heart of Australian and British political and cultural life.

On one occasion, while still at university in Sydney, he was sentenced to six months hard labour (the charges were later dismissed) for producing what the magistrate said was a "filthy and disgusting" publication. It was Oz magazine's sixth edition and on the cover

was Neville and two others pretending to urinate on a Tom Bass sculptural fountain, set into the wall of a drab new building opened by Prime Minister Robert Menzies.

Seven years later, in 1971, as editor of London Oz, Neville was sentenced to 15 months in prison and deportation by Her Majesty's government following the longest obscenity trial in British history. (That conviction was also later quashed.)

After he and his two publishing accomplices, Felix Dennis and Jim Anderson, were led from the court in handcuffs, John Lennon and Yoko Ono proposed marriage to Neville so that his deportation could be stopped. They also wrote a song for the magazine, called *God Save Oz*, and invited the young Australian publisher over to their sprawling country house. In his purple ▶

HAIR AND MAKE-UP BY SASHA NILSSON. LUCY WEARS CARL KAPP DRESS. DINOSAUR DESIGNS NECLACE AND JAN LOGAN BRACELETS. RICHARD WEARS POLO RALPH LAUREN KNIT AND RALPH LAUREN SHIRT. THESE IMAGES HAVE BEEN RETOUCHEE.

Growing pains: Richard Neville and his eldest daughter, Lucy, 28, have had their differences, especially during her teenage years, but today they share a similar outlook on the world.



Above: Richard and Lucy, aged three. Right: Today, father and daughter are much more in sync on a number of issues, but as a teen, Lucy was embarrassed by her dad and rebelled.



velvet bell-bottoms and rainbow waistcoat, this son of a World War II infantry commander and product of a Sydney boys' private school had become the leading voice of the London underground scene, a self-confessed hippie dedicated to "whipping up a revolution ... aiming for world peace, putting acid in the drinking water and providing orgasms on demand".

Not a big ask really. Fast forward nearly 30 years and you'd expect this one-time radical's tolerance for youthful experimentation might extend to his own children. Not on your life.

Lucy Neville, his 28-year-old daughter, still chafes at the memory of her teenage years. "Dad became a colonel when I was a teenager," she tells *The Weekly* in her Bondi Beach kitchen, her father shifting rather nervously beside her.

"We used to call him Colonel Neville. We were all scared of him. I wasn't allowed to do stuff that everyone else was allowed to do. So I just started lying about everything and got myself into all sorts of trouble."

Richard Neville famously defended himself during the showcase London *Oz* trial of the early 1970s after being charged with obscenity and conspiring to corrupt public morals. How did he answer the charge of double standards today?

"Is hypocritical the word you're looking for?" he replies, chortling at

his own guilty plea. "Yes, it is," his daughter quickly chimes in. "I was always screaming at them [my parents] and telling them they were hypocrites."

One of the more climatic – and faith-breaking – moments came during a party Lucy had at their family home in the Blue Mountains, aptly named

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"Happy Daze". She was 16 and had tried desperately to cancel the party when she learnt – at the eleventh hour – that her father was

staying home for the night.

"I rang up everyone," she says, "and tried to cancel it, because you can't have a party if your dad's going to be there. Like, that's just the lamest, most embarrassing thing in the universe. So I tried to cancel it ... but the word had spread."

Indeed it had.

"I sort of woke up and it was two in the morning," says Richard now, recalling the night with a fresh rush of incredulity, "and there were *hundreds* of people around the treehouse and I realised the invitations were all around the pubs of Penrith."

(Lucy's mother, Julie Clarke, thinks there was actually a sign on the road saying "Party This Way".)

"It was incredible," the Colonel continues. "There were bottles everywhere and people smoking dope. *People didn't*

even know each other! And I walk into the living room and everyone is just leaning up against the walls, stoned. I said, 'Look, it's two in the morning and you said there'd be 15 people. I've already counted 500', and so I started throwing them out, just threw them all into the back of cars ... and there were convoys going on till dawn."

"That was nice of you to drive them," Lucy observes dryly.

"Well, I did," her father says. "And, where possible, I provided transport ... across the border to Tunisia."

Lucy, stony-faced, reminds her father there were only 50 people at the party, not 500, and besides which, her godmother, fashion designer Jenny Kee, and partner Danton Hughes (the late son of art critic Robert Hughes) were there as minders.

"Yes, Jenny and Danton were the minders," says Richard. "*Excuse me.*"

Jenny Kee, of course, was the silky Asian beauty who first gained notoriety in 1964 by claiming the bedroom scalp of John Lennon during the Beatles tour of Australia. She then engaged in similar delights between the sheets with Keith Richards during the Rolling Stones trip Down Under.

In London a few years later, she appeared naked on the cover of *Oz* magazine and managed to charm the pants off Roger Daltry from The Who and Eric Clapton from Cream. That was aside from joining

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY HEERY. COURTESY OF RICHARD NEVILLE.



Left: Richard with wife Julie and baby Lucy, aged 10 months. Above, left: Mother and daughter in the garden at their Blue Mountains home, Happy Daze. Above, right: Fashion designer Jenny Kee was Lucy's godmother and acted as a "minder" for the then teenager at a party which got a little out of hand, according to Richard.

Richard Neville in a *ménage à trois* with Richard's then girlfriend, Louise Ferrier.

So, yes, perhaps Lucy's godmother was not the ideal babysitter for a teenage party. Nor, for that matter, was Lucy's godfather, Martin Sharp, the creative genius behind *Oz* magazine's aesthetic. He often invited Lucy and her friends over to his museum-like mansion for parties where he blithely appeared in his pyjamas.

There were other indignities Lucy had to suffer – like having her father pick her up at school with Bob Dylan blaring from the car stereo (“She was enraged,” says Richard) or, even worse, having to introduce her boyfriends to her parents.

Julie and Richard had strict rules about boyfriends. They had to come home first to meet them, say hello, shake hands (a firm handshake was compulsory) and look them straight in the eye. Woe betide the limp hand or the furtive gaze.

“I had to tell this guy to get off at Blackheath station [in the Blue Mountains],” Lucy says, “shake hands with my father and then we had to wait at the station until the next train to go to Sydney. Imagine how embarrassing that was for me.

“And he [the prospective boyfriend] was really pissed off about it. He was like, ‘Why do I have to meet your f***ing Dad? This is bullshit.’”

WHO COULD doubt that parents are often a great disappointment to their children, especially when judged by their own early history? Richard Neville was not long out of his bread-and-water British prison and still clearly revelling in his notoriety as the wild, subversive voice when Julie Clarke was sent to interview him for the ABC's music program *GTK* in 1974.

The interview was at filmmaker David Elfick's house in Palm Beach and Julie, a fetching beauty and talented writer who'd helped Ita Buttrose launch *Cleo* magazine in the early '70s, was far less impressed by the people Neville knew – he seemed to know everyone – and much more interested in his athletic mind and silver tongue.

Richard Walsh, who'd started *Oz* with Neville and Martin Sharp in 1963, before going on to become chief executive of Australian Consolidated Press (publishers of this magazine), told *The Weekly*, “He was like an old-fashioned court jester who could charm the birds out of a bloody tree.”

Julie Clarke fell out of her proverbial tree, as did Richard. “Julie blew my mind,” he says. “She just completely

blew my mind. It was a sunny day, the wind was in the trees and she had this tight Mickey Mouse T-shirt on. She looked so sweet and was asking me these really quite intelligent questions and I just thought, ‘Wow’.”

The following year the couple met in Crete and then lived in a shepherd's hut on the Greek island of Ios before travelling to Tangier, the ancient Berber city that had served as home to writers like Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Paul Bowles.

In 1977 the couple ventured to India to research a book on the murderous charms of Charles Sobhraj, the infamous serial killer who'd been preying on Western backpackers across Asia. Their book, *The Life And Crimes Of Charles Sobhraj*, became a global best-seller and spawned numerous television docu-dramas.

By the early 1980s Richard and Julie had become one of Sydney's golden couples, their rambling home – “Happy Daze” – on the edge of a Blue Mountains escarpment, a salon for Australian expatriates like Geoffrey Robertson, Kathy Lette and Robert Hughes, and during the '80s and '90s, Bob Geldof, Paula Yates, Timothy Leary and Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*.

“HE WAS LIKE A COURT JESTER WHO COULD CHARM THE BIRDS OUT OF A BLOODY TREE.”

COURTESY OF RICHARD NEVILLIE.



Left: Richard and Julie at Pulpit Rock in the Blue Mountains in 1984. Above: Lucy (left), 16, and her sister, Angelica, 10, on holiday in Fiji.

Rushdie came to enjoy a few days respite at Happy Daze during his decade-in-hiding from a fatwa issued by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. Jack Nicholson also paid a visit with his then partner, actress Rebecca Broussard, following an Oscar-winning performance in *As Good As It Gets*.

“EVERY MORNING WE HAD TO SIT IN A NAKED CIRCLE HOLDING HANDS.”

“Perhaps you might like some exotic cheroots,” their Australian host offered the couple shortly after their arrival.

“Yeah, I think we’d all like some exotic cheroots,” Nicholson replied after a moment’s awkward silence, before the joints came out. “It was a day never to be forgotten,” Richard says.

This was the world into which Lucy Neville was delivered by a home midwife in 1983 and her sister, Angelica, six years later. Jack Nicholson coming over for joints. Salman Rushdie sleeping out in the treehouse. Tiny Tim cradling Lucy in his arms as a baby. (Yes, she screamed. Who wouldn’t?) Germaine Greer attempting to change Angelica’s nappy (Angelica peed on Germaine’s Persian carpet!).

And the two children being dragged off to New Age camps in the bush where they’d run the gauntlet of naked dreaming circles and adults making love in their hammocks.

“Everyone was hairy, naked and smelly and just telling me to take my clothes off,” Lucy recalls. “And every morning we had to sit in a naked circle

holding hands and saying, ‘The best is yet to come’. Richard and Julie hid in their tent most of the time.”

In 1995, when Lucy was 12 and Angelica six, their parents nearly lost their lives in a shocking head-on collision on the Spanish island of Majorca. Richard had just arrived from London following the launch of *Hippie Hippie Shake*, his memoir of the 1960s, when their car was crushed by an on-coming truck.

Both of them suffered multiple injuries, with Richard’s ribs nearly piercing his heart and Julie’s vertebra crushed so badly that, to this day, she still suffers from crippling pain.

“When we had the car accident I turned into an ultra conservative,” she tells *The Weekly*. “I stopped thinking like a hippie – that everything was going to be fine; that the sun was always shining.

“I realised that really bad things can happen and suddenly I thought, ‘One thing I can be really sure of is that our children get the best education possible.’”

According to Lucy her parents went into a “state of hysteria” when they overheard her talking about drugs on the telephone. “Mum used to pick up the phone on the other end and listen,” she says. “They were full on. They threatened to send me to a boarding school in the desert. The fact that my father had written glowingly in the 1970s about recreational drugs was irrelevant.”

Richard and Julie contest this version of things. There were no boarding schools in the desert, although if there had been ...

JAMES BALDWIN, THE black American writer, once wrote that “children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they never fail to imitate them”.

Having finished her schooling in Sydney in 2001, Lucy Neville went on to do an Arts degree in Politics and Latin American studies at the same university (University of NSW) her father studied politics and edited the student newspaper, *Tharunka*, 40 years earlier.

Today she is completing her Masters degree in Media Practice and Human Rights, while her sister, Angelica, turns her mind to an honours thesis on Somali piracy.

In February this year Lucy’s travel memoir, *Oh Mexico!* – an account of her time spent teaching English in Mexico, not to mention becoming romantically entangled with two local musicians – was published to rave reviews. It has been sold to Britain and the United States and translated into Russian.

In the book Lucy picks her way lyrically and lightly through the chaos and corruption that is Mexican life and politics, while at the same time poking good-natured fun at her parents, particularly her father who is turning 70 this year.

Forever the controversial commentator and professional futurist (“You still can’t shut him up,” his own website >

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN ARIS. COURTESY OF RICHARD NEVILLE.



“HE’S ACTUALLY FUN TO HANG OUT WITH ... HE HAS A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOUR, SO WE CAN LAUGH.”

her mother, “Julie, I hope you’re going to be mature about this”.

“It’s a battle as to how to bring teenagers up,” Julie concedes. “You spend your whole time trying to control them and stop them doing what they want to do, but finally they beat you and you’re exhausted.”

Not surprisingly, though, Lucy and her father’s politics coalesce these days around many of the ideas that shaped (and still shape) Richard’s thinking – issues of social justice, environmental protection, international human rights, freedom of expression, freedom from torture, the rights of the poor, gender equality ...

And mercifully he no longer feels he has to play the colonel, nor turn Bob Dylan up loud on the car stereo. (Lucy does that instead occasionally!)

“He’s actually fun to hang out with,” she says. “He’s interested in lots of things and he has a great sense of humour, so we can laugh about everything.”

Perhaps the turning point came in 2004, when Richard and Lucy travelled to the World Social Forum in India to listen to music and hear discussions from alternative voices on the perils of globalization, racism, fundamentalism and religious sectarianism.

At the end of the conference they went to a disco hotel where someone mysteriously drugged their coffee.

“Lucy and I were dancing to the music,” says Richard finally, “and suddenly I said to Lucy

‘I’m stoned’ and she said, ‘Yeah, so am I ... I think it’s ecstasy’. And I said, ‘It’s good, isn’t it?’ And she said, ‘Yes, it’s fantastic.’

“It was a wonderful end to an amazing holiday.” ■

PS: Oh Mexico! by Lucy Neville is published by Allen & Unwin.

PPS: New Oz Art, the best of the Sydney and London Oz covers, designed mostly by Martin Sharp, is now available in digitally remastered form online at ozcovers.com.au.

PPPS: This writer has known Richard Neville and Julie Clarke for more than 20 years and been a guest at Happy Daze.

proclaims), Richard Neville arrived in Mexico City reading *A History Of Bombing*, a testament to his continuing obsession with the costs of the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Lucy believes her father should try and be more “constructive” and “analytical” in his approach. Perhaps so, although it seems clear that she has imbibed the politics of her parents’ generation and adapted them to her own – proof, if ever it were needed, that children often use their parents as building blocks to sharpen their own teeth.

Lucy rejects the notion of free love and people power and has come to see

the idealism of her parents’ generation as necessary, but now a little quaint.

“Both our daughters have studied politics much more than Richard has, so they can critique his theories,” her mother says, clearly delighted by this fact. “And they wipe the floor with him sometimes.”

Richard doesn’t disagree. “The greatest gift is to have children brighter than yourself.”

Besides which, there is only so much a parent can do before raising the white flag. During Angelica’s late teenagehood, Julie discovered her younger daughter in bed with her next door neighbour’s son.

The following morning, as she was driving her to school, Angelica said to

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY HEERY. LUCY WEARS TRELISE COOPER DRESS AND JAN LOGAN NECKLACE. RICHARD WEARS POLO RALPH LAUREN KNIT AND SPORTSCRAFT SHIRT.