

1 TESLA



Spin Down Under



Welcome to my blog, “Spin Down Under”, in which I hope to give you a glimpse into the preparations for our annual meeting next May 2012 in Melbourne. First, here’s two answers to your questions on the logo: 1) yes, the kangaroo is in a low energy state, and 2) it’s an acronym for “Times Explaining Stuff Leading to Australia”. Because what’s an MRI blog without an acronym?

Having just come back from my initial visit to the conference site, I can tell you three things with certainty: 1) Melbourne and the convention center are fantastic, 2), it is, indeed, a very long flight from LA to Melbourne, and 3) Coriolis Forces appear to be a second-order effect, at best (N = 30 trials in 3 hotel rooms).

My wife Teri and I arrived in Melbourne on a Friday, to meet up with “The Five” - Roberta and Sandra, from ISMRM, and Kevin, Kevin, and Patty - who handle our AV and Exhibition Floor needs. While The Five spent Friday in the center working and negotiating, Teri and I took it upon ourselves to find - for all of you - places for great coffee in Melbourne. Which, it turns out, is pretty much everywhere. The same goes for great food and pubs, as we would find out in time.



The day and night view to the ~East from my room at the Conference Center Hilton, with MCEC in the lower-right foreground. My students’ hotel for next year is too far away to see.

After a weekend of adventures, I joined The Five for some actual work at the Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Center (they call it MCEC, pronounced like a Cow Parsley dish at McDonald’s). I was really impressed - it has large session rooms, a centrally-located, theater-

style plenary hall, very cool architecture, with lots of windows overlooking the Yarra river and the sailing ship *Polly Woodside*. We then sat down with the folks from MCEC to go over some details. As we discussed the many issues such as AV, security, catering, closing and opening ceremonies, and oh yeah - internet, with the MCEC crew, I gained yet one more level of appreciation for the fantastic team which our central office has organized. They really know their stuff. We all know that not everything goes perfectly at any meeting, but it is certainly not for lack of planning or expertise.

That night we also met with Graeme Jackson, chair of the Local Organizing Committee. Graeme and his team of Australian MRI'ers have been working for a long time, laying the groundwork for this meeting, raising money, and helping to pursue leads for our ceremonies. Again, it was a bit of a revelation for me to learn about all the work that goes on behind the scenes, that most of us never know about. The LOC will have made a very substantial, positive impact on our meeting, so to them I say a heartfelt "Ta"!

At the risk of making it sound like I did not work much while I was there, I want to talk more about the times outside of the meeting hall. On the weekend before MCEC, we thoroughly explored the city and surrounding area. Two guided walking tours taught us about historic locals such as the surgeon "*Diamond Jim*"** while taking us around the city, through laneways lined with restaurants and shops, past walls with amazing graffiti art, and along the beautiful - but muddy - Yarra river. There are art institutes, huge parks (there is a great dirt 3.8 km running trail, aka "The Tan", around the Royal Botanical Gardens), boat rides, a nice aquarium, and lots more things to see and do, all downtown near the convention center (outside of standard meeting times, of course). I also know one or two of you like play poker at night during the meeting; you may be interested to know that Crown Casino is located adjacent to the MCEC. Not sure who thought to do that.



(left) The plaza outside of Federation Square, (middle) the pretty but muddy Yarra river, with the home of Melbourne Footy in the background, and (right) the Queen Victoria Market with lots of great deals and fresh veggies.



(left) Melbourne's graffiti is impressive, as are (middle) the laneway restaurants. (right) As I am wrestling with native wildlife at a local park, a little girl in a pink dress foolishly runs up to help.

We also took a trip out to the Serendip Sanctuary, a one hour drive from the MCEC, to see Kangaroo in the wild. Collectively they are called “mobs”, evidently they didn’t get their program book or something. Our guide, John, walked us through some fields to the mobs, which roam freely (insert joke here about your nearest big city), and we got impressively close to them. John was very nice and knowledgeable, the way you’d expect an Australian guide to be. It was a true once-in-a-lifetime experience. Before heading back, we also stopped at a winery for lunch, which was in a beautiful setting, also about an hour from Melbourne. ISMRM will help you arrange tours like this, if you want - keep your eye on the website, and also look for the booth in the exhibition hall during the meeting.



At Serendip: (left) Sandra talks internet migration issues with Cape Barren Geese, (middle) our guide John makes Billy Tea the old-fashioned way, and (right) Patty makes a new facebook friend.



(left) These guys are fascinated by the emu behind them, except the one all the way to the right, who has his eyes on us. (right) A mob going to get their free lunch after the Gold Corporate Symposium.

A Tail of Two Lobsters

Here’s a little confession - I was always excited about this opportunity to chair our annual meeting in Melbourne, but I must say I got an extra dimension of happy while reading Bill Bryson’s book about Australia, *In A Sunburned Country*. First, let me take you to another island in the Pacific, namely Kauai. I’ve been there 3 times on vacation with Teri, the last time with our kids. Every time we have driven by a particular house on the North side of the island, its open garage has had a human-sized lobster suit stored in the corner. On the first trip it was a curiosity, but by the third trip it was an obsession for me (not so much for my family). I have photographs from all three trips, and obtaining such a lobster suit has become my white whale, so to speak. Thus imagine how I must have felt when I read about Bryson’s side trip to see Larry - *The Big Lobster*. “Teri!!! Great news, honey!” Imagine this trifecta; in Australia,

wearing a lobster suit, at *The Big Lobster*. As it turns out, Larry lives just a few hours outside of Melbourne, towards Kangaroo Island, the other destination Teri and I had decided to visit. Teri quickly agreed, after weeks of persuasive arguments, to take an extra day of our vacation and go see him. To keep it short, I'll just say that our trip was changed due to, of all things, the **Chilean Volcano** which erupted, shutting down Australian Airspace and tragically keeping us from *The Big Lobster*. Eyjafjallajökull, you have met your match. All of this to say that next year, you will have a lot to explore around the Melbourne area after the meeting; the Great Ocean Road, Australian wine country, Serendip, Adelaide and Kangaroo Island, and Larry.



"That's not a lobster..."



...that's a lobster!"

I think that's it for now - I'll be periodically adding new blogs, with news about the meeting, and filling you in on how these meetings come about. I hope to see you all there!

Hooroo,

Jim Pipe,
AMPC Chair, 2012 Melbourne

*** Besides his excellent moniker, Diamond Jim was known for drinking champagne while performing surgery, his fingers adorned with diamond rings. Unlike our surgeon colleagues of today, Diamond Jim was flamboyant and controversial.*