

ife

Sunday

Sunday Age Magazine



'Tis the season:
How we love a
custom-made
Christmas

Karen Martini's
festive treats

PLUS Baubles
and bangles and
bright, shiny things

NOW & THEN

Now The proportion of

letters

comprising total
mail delivered by
Australia Post is

13 per cent

Then in 1960, it was 49 per cent

HOW TO...

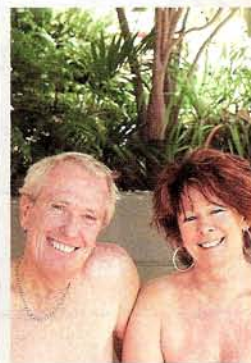
re-ignite a faltering conversation

arooned in a stuffy room on Christmas Day, you find yourself next to your cousin's boyfriend for two weeks. After the initial "What do you do?", the conversation fizzles out. Stalled in the social breakdown lane, the result is stranded silence.

Andrew Bryant, communications coach and co-author of *The Street Guide To Flirting*, says you can get things on the road again with "a softener". These are statements that signal both a willingness to kick off things again and an invitation for someone to re-engage with you. Four of the best phrases include: 'I was just wondering', 'I was curious',

'Isn't it strange that' and 'What's your opinion on'. These invite interaction as they require more than just yes or no answers."

Bryant suggests light, neutral but conversation-provoking topics, such as what they think about Daniel Craig as the new James Bond. "Make the other person feel their opinion is valid and valued, with follow-up questions taken from their initial responses. If, for example, they say they preferred Sean Connery as James Bond, ask why. Again, you're seeking their views and making them feel comfortable sharing information." *David Smiedt*



The couple
Darryl and Ronnie Jones,
married for 18 years.

For better, for worse

Darryl and Ronnie Jones, 60 and 51, both retired, were married in 1988. In 1997, they fulfilled their lifelong dream of becoming nudists.

Darryl says "I met Ronnie in 1987. I'm a Vietnam vet and I'd just spent seven weeks in a psychiatric ward and felt like I had to do something so I joined Parents Without Partners. The first time I went, I thought, 'I'm never going back there', but Ronnie and I became friends and we made it fun.

I asked Ronnie to come to Vietnam with me in April 1988; we both understood a lot more about each other after that trip, and we got married in October that year. We went from friends to love – it just hit us.

I'd always been interested in nudism but the real reason we finally did it was because Perth had a heatwave in January 1997. I said to Ronnie, 'Look, our life is rearing kids and breeding budgies. I'm bored out of my tree and if it was up to me, I'd see what this nude beach in Swanbourne's about.' So we went for our first skinny dip and it was great.

We joined [the Sunseekers Club] in March. In many ways, I think nudists are freer and easier – you just couldn't be a nudist if you had jealousy issues. It's mostly older people at the club, I think because they're finally free to do what they want without restrictions of kids or family.

You could have all the stress in the world but when we drive to the nudist club, it all goes away. Sometimes I get withdrawal symptoms when we're out and about – I just want to get home and rip off my clothes."

Ronnie says "Our daughter's been going to the nudist club since she was 13. She absolutely adores it. If I could have my time again, I would have brought up all my children there. There are no barriers and they become that much more comfortable in their own skin, embracing the natural. Darryl and I spend most weekends at the club, where I'm secretary. We even renewed our 10-year marriage vows at the club. We rarely go there without each other – that's always the rule.

I had a bit of criticism in the beginning, mostly from my family, who are strict churchgoers. It took two years but they came around and now we're closer than ever. I think you run into more problems when you pretend to be something you're not.

Sometimes Darryl and I forget to wear clothes. A couple of times I've forgotten my pants when we're already in the car. But at the club, I like to wear necklaces and things, even though I'm nude. That's how I dress up." *Louisa Deasey*