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Department of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Trade
Suite 211, 838 Collins St, Docklands, 3008, Victoria

www.dfait.federalrepublicofwestpapua.org
frwpwomensoffice@gmail.com

JACOB RUMBIAK , MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EMAIL: RUMBIAKJACOB@GMAIL.COM

REVIEW, PAUL STEWART'S 'ALL THE RAGE' (MELBOURNE BOOKS, NOVEMBER 2022)

All the Rage is a racy memoir by a charismatic bad boy who took years to channel his anger and anguish after his brother Tony (and five other newsmen) was murdered at Balibo during Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975. "I resolved at that moment to never take life for granted ... Yep, I wouldn't burn the candle at both ends. I would set the whole thing on fire with a blowtorch" (pp17-18).

All the Rage is biography of a life full lived, from the totally reckless to the utterly masterful, but it is also a mapping by an astute music journalist of Melbourne's rock and punk scene for the past forty years. Almost everyone and everything is named: the famous and infamous bands, musicians, radio shows, venues, roadies, producers, photographers, managers: what they said or didn't say, and did and didn't do. Many many facts but still a great read, and so many insider-whispers it's hard not to imagine lawyers sniffing at the trough. Airport bookshops should buy copies. Media lecturers should make their students read it (Paul, after all, was awarded an Order of Australia in 2020).

All the Rage is also an inspiring handbook for activists, with delightful vignettes about who did what for marginalised political causes like East Timor was and West Papua. Who knew that The Wiggles built water and sewage facilities in six Timorese villages? That a Collins St dentist raced his gold Ferrari around Albert Park for West Papua? (pp85,167). There's a couple of paragraphs about amoral politicians that Paul crossed swords with, like Joe Bjelke-Petersen and Gough Whitlam (pp105, 112, 169-171, 189-192) and even one about how he was ripped off by other activists (pp218).

PAUL STEWART AO was music critic for the local Murdoch media for thirty-five years, and even longer as frontman of the infamous PAINTERS & DOCKERS, 'an anarchist punk band that mounted fun-filled sweaty gigs', which according to the Vancouver Sun in 1989 were 'cheaper and more fun than The Stones' (ibid., pp88-89). Paul's newspaper job has long gone, but the band, now forty years old, is still performing its popular repertoire of three-chord street-anthems to full houses, most recently at the Maritime Union's 150th celebration, and at the RSL's Memo Music Hall in St Kilda in November 2022.

Paul's understanding of his brother's assassination deepened after he met East Timorese musician Gil Santos who had a much bigger story of family loss to the Indonesian military (and before that to the Japanese military for protecting Australian soldiers in 1942). 'I lost one brother in East Timor but found another in Gil, who I met in an old caravan parked at a protest rally outside the Indonesian Consulate in St Kilda Rd ... he changed my life' (ibid., p114). The young Fretilin activist convinced the anarchist that guitars can be as influential as guns, and together they formed the DILI ALLSTARS. This flexible clique of Australian and East Timorese musicians toured the world promoting freedom for East Timor: most raucously as Australia's representative at the celebration concert in Dili in 2002, most notably in

Lisbon for the Portuguese Communist Party in 2003, most sublimely in St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral for the funeral of activist-bishop Hilton Deakin on 13 October 2022 (have a listen, 45:16-minute mark, on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6fOYkJolYo>; see also, at 42:15, offerings from West Papua's Jacob Rumbiak, and Clovis Mwamba from the Democratic Republic of Congo).

Not many rock'n roll musicians would feel comfortable owning a miracle, but Paul does, after the intercession of an East Timorese nun in 2007 when he was at the pointy end of an eighteen-month battle with liver disease, lying in the Palliative Ward of the Austin Hospital with Hepatitis C (yellow skin), Ascites (fluid accumulation in the abdomen) and Encephalopathy (toxin accumulation in the brain). A liver arrived just in time for a life-saving transplant; just as "the little nun sitting on the end of my bed said it would". But Sr Helena, the ALMA nun, had also said: "If we pray for you Paul, and get you a new liver, you must help the women and children in Timor". Which is why Paul champions the work of the ALMA SISTERS with disabled children and orphan in East Timor and West Papua.

The ALMA religious order was founded in 1963 by a Dutch priest, Father Paul Hendrikus Janssen, who spent his life in Asia (working in China and Indonesia, studying in Manila) developing a unique style of treatment for youth with special needs. It begins with loving the kids without indiscriminate, and developing the right attitude of the carers, families and local communities. That means the children don't live in 'orphanages' but in 'homes' with their 'mumma' religious sisters. In Australia, the Jesuit Social Services 'Just Voices Speakers Program', where Paul has worked since 2011, provides awareness- and fund-raising platforms for the Alma Sisters whose most recent visit was in November 2022.



Readings Bookstore Melbourne, 17 November 2022. David Tenenbaum (Melbourne Books), Sr Anastasia and Sr Isabella (Alma Sisters visiting from East Timor), Babuan Mirino and Louise Byrne, (West Papua Womens Office in Docklands), Jacob Rumbiak (Minister for Foreign Affairs, West Papua Transitional Government).