



If the pool is, for many, a place of devotion (maybe those churches that favour baptism by immersion got it right?) then the pool manager, invariably male, is the priest-figure. Everyone seems to harbour a healthy respect for him.

For Therese, 'Col was always a bit of a mystery . . . probably the same age as my mother, but a bit cooler.' Pool managers are safety officers, swimming teachers and trainers, maintenance men and for some patrons, surrogate father figures. Trent Dalton recalls the Sandgate (Brisbane) pool manager: 'He was the sweetest guy and never threw his weight around, but you'd never mess with him or give backchat at the canteen. He was a legend with my mates.'

Pools as meditative spaces

While the pool is a social space for many, these days Therese is often looking for a silent, more

contemplative space. 'You go into a church and there's that quiet that you don't get in the rest of the world. I find that at the pool at certain times; there's hardly anyone there, you see gorgeous pink sunsets – there's something beautiful about that.'

It's often said that the pool is a great leveller. When we have largely shed our accoutrements, boundaries disappear. Therese has many stories of encountering, and having conversations with, people she would not otherwise meet. She was able to introduce a writer with a distinctly Catholic approach to a woman who had gained a PhD in the theology of Shakespeare's plays, all because they swam at the same pool. As lifelong swimmer John McSweeney reflects, '[the pool's] a place where nobody matters but everybody matters.'

Swimming pools – at least public pools with their often distinctive

"There is one great question I ponder...how do we swim? One moment you sink like a stone, the next you discover the magic of buoyancy. How does that happen? Learning to relax, I suppose. Learning to trust yourself. Learning to trust the water, which holds so much of our ancestral past. Appreciating the wisdom of play, perhaps. Whatever is the magic of it, learning to trust the water and swim may be one of the significant rites of passage for us all, carrying much wisdom into the many experiences of our life. Letting go of the shallow end of the pool, letting go of the rubber rings of life, are momentous instances in our search for freedom and being our own person." (Father Tony Doherty)

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architecture – can be secular cathedrals, welcoming all and offering a space for refreshment, contemplation and fellowship. Amid many other dimensions of a rich life, Therese Spruhan's shared dedication to swimming and swimming pools invites each of us to dip into our own shimmering memory pools.

Where did you learn to swim? ●