

# Qweekend

CW

## the tattooed tycoon

The polo-playing former cabbie who now owns the taxi company

## double life & death

Dr Sneha Philip died a hero in the 9-11 attacks. Or did she?

# second chances

How Allan Pease became a father again after beating cancer... twice

By Karen Millner





# you only live twice

With the success of his first book, *Mr Body Language* had it made – until his body broke the bad news. But that was many more books and two bouts of cancer ago.

Story Karen Milliner Photography David Kelly

**H**e splay out his hands, then pounds a clenched fist into an open palm. "You know how they do it?" he asks, leaning forward, eyes alight. "Put your balls out on a plate, bang 'em out with a mallet and then pick over 'em with a special electron microscope."

Allan Pease, the man who turned interpreting body language into a moneyspinner almost three decades ago, grins broadly, pauses for dramatic effect (if I'd been a bloke I'd probably have winced), then goes on with his explanation of testicular sperm extraction: "They had to find if there were any live bits of tissue producing sperm that didn't have six heads on 'em. I went through that twice, *twice*," he repeats, eyes crinkling with mirth.

What Pease, 55, went through a couple of years ago to have a baby with his wife, Barbara, 44, makes for a humorous tale now. But laughter back then was in short supply, especially when a doctor questioned

why they'd want to try for a child, given Allan's 2000 diagnosis with aggressive prostate cancer and less-than-promising prognosis. "[The doctor] said to me, 'You're going to die soon, why do you want to have babies?'" Allan recalls. "I was debating whether I should punch the bloke out." He didn't, and the Peases, who have four adult children from previous marriages, found themselves a new doctor.

"Getting the cancer," Barbara says, "changed Allan's perspective [about having children]. We thought if he had died there was none of us together. There's his children and my child, but none of ours. So it became very important to both of us."

Allan had undergone radiation therapy for his cancer but, fortunately, it hadn't destroyed all of his sperm-producing tissue. After two IVF cycles Barbara became pregnant, and their son Brandon was born in March last year. Six years on from his ▶

**New life, new dad (again)** ... The sultan of self-help and survival, Allan Pease, with wife Barbara and their first son together, Brandon.

diagnosis, Allan is cancer-free, intent on staying that way, and relishing fatherhood the fourth time around. "I love it," he says. "Kicking a ball outside on the grass with Brandon is great. It's been so long for both of us since our first kids. We've got more time, more patience."

Allan is not only a new dad, he's also a granddad. His youngest, Jasmine, 24, had a son last year, and his eldest, Melissa, 33, had a boy just over a week ago. "It's great having kids [at the same time as] your kids," he says. "There's no age gap now. We have the same goals, and problems. We all talk about shirty nappies!"

**BRANDON IS A BLOND BUNDLE OF ENERGY WITH** a smile that's an echo of the one never far from his father's face, and it's obvious he dominates life in the Pease household. A huge playpen spilling over with toys is the first thing you spot as you enter the family's seven-bedroom, architect-designed home on 22 hectares, a few minutes from the centre of Buderim, on the Sunshine Coast.

The Peases bought the property as a weekendender after moving to a penthouse apartment at Point Cartwright, south of Mooloolaba, when Allan was approaching his 50th birthday and fancied himself as a born-again surfer.

"I went out in the waves twice and all these kids were dropping in on me, saying 'get out of the way, old man'. I was thinking, shit, I don't remember this being so hard. So I gave that away!"

The couple then opted to make Buderim their home and business base, hanging on to the penthouse for a while in case they changed their minds (it's now on the market for \$3.9 million).

As you drive through their front gate – the property is enclosed by more than three kilometres of security fencing – a sealed road takes you past the offices they had built. Here, five staff run Pease International, organising seminars, conference and sales training appearances, and distributing CDs, DVDs and books.

The Peases are Australia's top-selling authors of non-fiction, with 15 titles between them that have been translated into 52 languages and sold more than 21 million copies, including 12 million of the 1998 relationship manual they co-authored, *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*.

For the past eight years they haven't spent a lot of time in Australia – only about three or four months of each year – but Brandon's arrival caused a rethink. "Our European business was 70 per cent of our business, and we had a home over there [in Warwickshire, England], an office and distribution business, but last year we sold off all the properties and transferred the business to laptops," Allan says. He is still in demand on the sales seminar and speaking circuits – he commands fees of around \$12,000 per appearance in Australia, double that in Europe and the United States – but intends to halve the number of engagements he normally accepts to about 50 a year.

Brandon is not the only reason for paring back



**People who have serious cancer sometimes focus on what they don't want to happen ...**

**But whatever you focus on, your brain starts gearing up for.**

First steps ... Brandon may soon have a baby sister if the implantation of a fertilised egg is successful.

commitments. The couple wants to add to their family. They have one other successfully fertilised egg from their last cycle "on ice" at an IVF clinic. Barbara is planning to have it implanted after promotional tours for their latest self-help guide, *Easy Peasy*. "It's a girl," says Allan, "and assuming she takes, 'cause there's a one in three chance that she'll ...," Barbara interrupts gently. "Allan's the statistics man, I allow him to have that, but she will work. I'm confident of that."

**THINK POSITIVE. NEVER SAY DIE. PERSISTENCE PAYS** off. The jocular Allan Pease has enjoyed enormous success selling those kinds of motivational messages to his corporate clients. Tenacity and a positive outlook have also seen him through two battles with cancer and an embarrassing financial loss in the mid-1990s, the result of fraud by a close friend and adviser. The latter is something he and Barbara didn't discuss publicly until a few years ago. "We trusted people," he says, "we took our eye off the ball. The image was the hardest thing. Here I am, the body language expert, picking people who don't tell the truth and I get knocked over by one of our best friends."

Indeed, how to spot a fibber (look for telltale clusters of gestures such as scratching the nose, rubbing an eye and pulling at an ear lobe) has always been a popular line of Pease patter. Allan had lifted the lid on the silent language of finger, feet and facial twitching in the late '70s when he wrote *Body Language: how to read others' thoughts by their gestures*.

Working as a salesman had given him plenty of insights into human behaviour. He started selling as a kid in his home town of Lorne, Victoria, spruiking household sponges door-to-door after school. By 21 he was the youngest person to sell a million dollars'

worth of life insurance in Australia. *Body Language* catapulted him to greater fortune, and fame. For several seasons he had his own TV show, analysing the idiosyncratic expressions, tics and gestures of politicians, celebrities and royalty.

A decade went by and "Mr Body Language" was – in his own words – "dumb, fat and happy". He and Barbara, a former model, model agency owner and advertising sales executive, were married in January 1993 (they met in 1990 when she came to one of his seminars) and they had "a flash home on the water in Sydney and a big boat out the front".

Then, in 1994, it all came crashing down. They discovered funds had been misappropriated and taxes that should have been paid hadn't been, dumping them in a financial quagmire. "It was very traumatic, and Allan felt he had let me down," says Barbara, "because I lost all my money, too, which I had brought to our marriage."

"It's a blokey thing," Allan interjects. "Blokes measure their self-worth by what they do and achieve, and everything I achieved, and what we built, just went. We went back to zero – actually, minus zero."

During this period he started to feel unwell. It was stress, he thought, but tests revealed a cancerous growth on his thyroid. It was successfully surgically removed. "Allan was so tired, barely functioning," says Barbara. "He was doing seminars to pay the bills, but that's all he was doing. I was running the business, being the front person, keeping the momentum going, trying to show the world nothing was wrong."

They started legal action to recover some of their money but realised it wasn't going to help them claw their way back into the black. "It would have cost us too much to reach a conclusion and all we would have got was revenge, and we're not into that," says Allan. "We set a date and time, Friday at 4 o'clock, and we said from then on we'd only look forward."

He penned *Rude and Politically Incorrect Jokes* to pay debts, then he and Barbara hit on an idea they were confident would be a winner. They began examining the communication divide between the sexes, dissecting their own relationship in the process. "We clashed a lot in the early days because we're two strong people, and we wanted our own way," she says. "Furniture could suffer, definitely!" he agrees. "After two years [of being married], we were going to get divorced. We'd had a gutful!"

The result of their analysis was *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*. Its mix of science, strategy and humour propelled it onto the bestseller lists in Australia and New Zealand, but the couple wanted – and needed – a bigger market. In 1998, they flew to England and set up a home and office in a real estate agent's basement, with secondhand furniture bought at a liquidation sale. Initially, nobody wanted to know them.

"I went over thinking we've got all these famous books, I can just send them to publishers, they'll give us an advance," Barbara says. "But I kept getting these letters saying, 'I'm sorry, these books might work in Australia but they won't work here!'"

But she kept knocking on doors, talked to newspaper editors, and interest began to grow. The *Men Don't Listen* book ended up selling like hot-cakes, particularly in Europe's biggest book market, Germany (sales of five million), and in Japan

(four million), and then came the sequel, *Why Men Lie and Women Cry*, later updated to *Why Men Don't Have a Clue and Women Always Need More Shoes*.

**BY 2000, BUSINESS WAS BOOMING AGAIN FOR THE** Peases. Then Allan went to the doctor for a check-up. "I'm getting up three and four times a night to take a leak. What's that all about?" he said to his GP. A blood test revealed prostate cancer. "My first thought," he says, "was it's a secondary [after the thyroid cancer], but it wasn't. It was a brand new cancer, at the aggressive end of the scale. As it turned out it had already spread outside the gland. The doctor said I'd have about three years."

He and Barbara refused to accept such a bleak prognosis. "It was like 'here we go again' but we knew what it was like to go through it and come out the other side. In simple terms, I decided to live, instead of die," Allan says. He had surgery, followed by radiation therapy, talked with cancer survivors, practised meditation and, with Barbara, switched their already vegetarian diets to organic (they went vegan for a while, too). "I don't even think about it," he says of his cancer. "What I've found is that people who have serious cancer sometimes focus on what they don't want to happen – dying and all the misery surrounding it. But whatever you focus on, your brain starts gearing up for."

Allan now does some counselling work with cancer sufferers, and he and Barbara still get occasional emails and letters asking for their advice on sex. It seems people haven't forgotten the penis pump demonstration he gave during a *60 Minutes* interview in 2002. Erectile dysfunction is a common side-effect of prostate surgery, and Allan did rely on the pump for a while (it's now tucked away in a cupboard somewhere, he says).

"We ruminated about whether we'd do it, go on [TV] and talk about it," says Allan. "There's a lot of impotent blokes out there, and they remain that way because they don't want to talk about it."

However, the TV appearance wasn't without family fallout. "My daughter rang me up and said, Dad, all the girls came in [to the office] this morning and said, 'Your dad's got this dick thing. What's it like?' How could you? I don't want to know!"

It'll no doubt make an amusing anecdote in a forthcoming book. The Peases have recorded the ups and downs of the past decade and will publish it in the next couple of years. "It's in the computer," says Allan. "I figured if I died it would be a good read; if I lived it would still be good reading."

To remind himself of his determination to defy the odds, he visited a tattooist when he finished prostate cancer treatment. The idea for a tatt came to him while examining "best before" dates on tubs of yoghurt in the supermarket. "Do you want to see it?" he says, unzipping his jeans and proffering his flesh for inspection. Inked in a rectangle behind his right hip are the words, "Excellent to August 14, 2040". It's the date of his 89th birthday.

Sending out party invitations is a goal he's set for himself. "Without clearly defined new goals all the time, you become complacent," he says. "If you don't set clear goals you stop getting out of bed. You have to have a reason to get out of bed each day."

He glances toward Brandon and the look says it all. What more reason does a man need? ■

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