

QUEEN'S WHARF HERITAGE

Bellevue Hotel (Queen's Square)

Jazz/ Swing Era Celebrities

Meher Baba

Avatar Meher Baba (1894-1969) was the first Indian spiritual leader to visit Queensland. His books and maxims (most famously "God Speaks" and "Don't worry, be happy!") were - for many Western youth - their first introduction to Indian spirituality, and helped shape many of the values of the Hippy era.

During the 1930s, Meher Baba was known for his Avataric (Messianic) claims, his friendship with Gandhi and his influence on Hollywood stars. He maintained a life-long silence, often engaging in lengthy *incognito* journeys into Indian cities and villages to assist the disadvantaged. Promoting a synthesis of Zoroastrian, Hindu, Muslim and Christian mysticism, he emphasized love and service. In the '60s, a number of Rock celebrities including Pete Townsend of *The Who*, Melanie Safka, the Australian band Tully and Ronnie Lane of *The Small Faces* wrote music based on his teachings. At this time his campaign against drug use attracted much attention.

Although Meher Baba died over 44 years ago, his following continues to grow - most notably in India, but also in Latin America, Europe and China.



In June 1958, Meher Baba stayed twice in a cottage within the Bellevue Hotel grounds, *en route* to visiting followers and establishing *Avatar's Abode* - a retreat centre at Woombye on the Sunshine Coast. *Avatar's Abode* still flourishes.

Figure 2 : Feeding 'God-mad' derelicts at his home in India 1930s

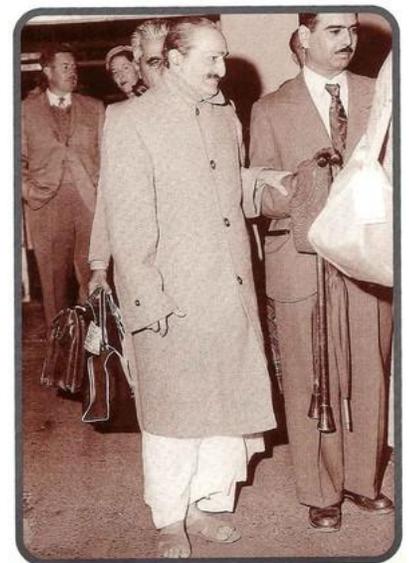
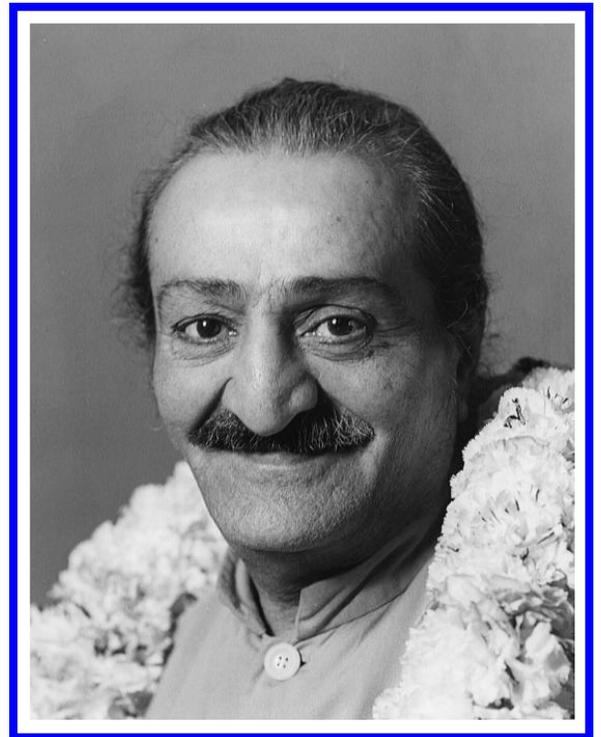


Figure 1: Arriving at night at Brisbane Airport, June 1958

Katharine Hepburn

“Leading lady” of Hollywood for 60 years, American actress Katherine Hepburn (1907-2003) won four Academy Awards – a record for any performer. She is best remembered for her spirited performances in *The African Queen*, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, and *On Golden Pond*. Hepburn was viewed as epitomizing the “modern American woman.”

Katharine Hepburn was touring Australia when she stayed at the Bellevue in 1955. From the hotel, she made lengthy phone calls to Spencer Tracy, and went on a trip into the countryside to see a ‘real’ Australian sheep and cattle station. She also dabbled in her love of painting watercolours – producing “Breakfast in Bed” – a self-portrait at the Bellevue. This was recently auctioned for \$47,000 (AUS).



Figure 4: Hepburn strolling outside the Bellevue, on George Street

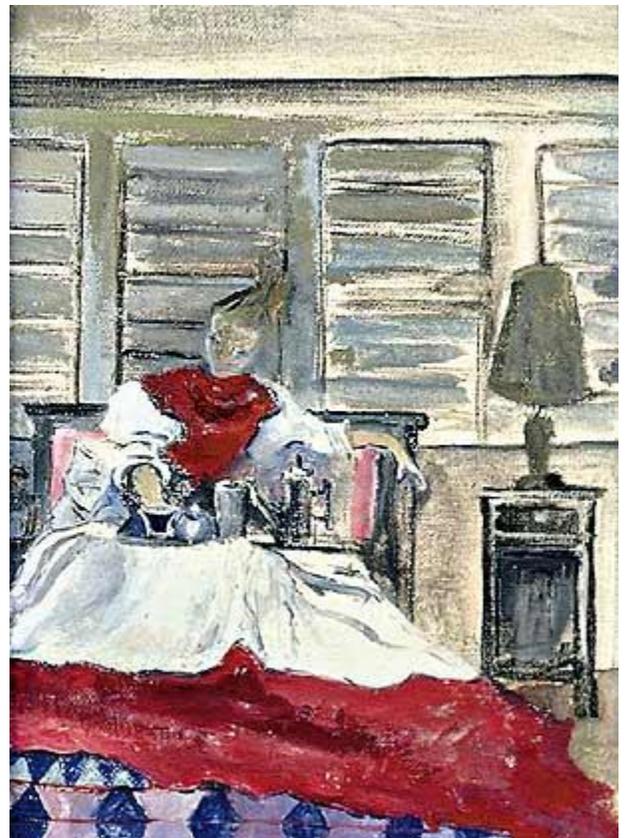


Figure 3: Hepburn's 'Breakfast in Bed' painted at the Bellevue

Frank Sinatra

Frank Sinatra (1915-1998) was one of the best-selling artists of all time. As a popular American solo singer and actor, he toured internationally for decades, and was close to numerous celebrities and politicians including American President John F Kennedy.



Figure 5: Crowds swarming Sydney Stadium to see Frank Sinatra 1955

Frank Sinatra came to Brisbane (often staying at the Bellevue) a number of times as part of his Australian tours – most notably in January 1955 and 1959, but also as late as 1974.

Nat 'King' Cole

Nat King Cole (1919-1965) was one of America's most famous Big Band and Jazz pianists, renowned for his soft baritone voice. He was also one of the first black Americans to host a TV variety show.



Cole stayed at the Bellevue during his "Big Show" Tour of Australia (1956).



Figure 6: Program of 1956 Australian tour

Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) was a foundational influence on Jazz music, and one of the most recognizable “faces” of the Jazz movement. Armstrong helped shift the movement’s emphasis to solo improvisation and scat singing. He was renowned for his ‘inventive’ style as a trumpeter. He was one of the first black American entertainers to ‘cross over’ the colour bars that at the time divided America.



Louis Armstrong came to Brisbane a number of times on his Australian tours including 1955, 1956 and 1963. He generally stayed at the Bellevue Hotel.



Figure 7: Armstrong at Brisbane Airport, 1963



Figure 8: Herb Armstrong - Louis' grandson - is a Jazz musician who now lives in the Brisbane suburb of Coorparoo