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FREE AT LAST!

by John Jiggins

The man previously known as prisoner A9379AY departed Bellmarsh prison on Tuesday 25th June and returned to Australia on Wednesday 26th June.

The private jet carrying him on his 36-hour flight to Australia touched down in Canberra that night.

As he emerged, incongruously chaperoned by a former Prime Minister, the cheering and applause of his supporters rang out through the darkness.

The TV footage showed him acknowledging his unseen supporters by raising his fist in triumph as he stepped onto Australian soil for the first time in well over a decade.

Waiting to greet him were two people who loved him dearly. Emotionally, he embraced his wife, before hugging his father. The footage of his return and his family's reunion was on high rotation over the following days.

It was a moment that many Australians had hoped to see, but thought they never would. For the government, for the parliament, for his supporters, for the Australian people, it was mission accomplished.

Julian Assange had been freed!

Over the phone, Assange spoke with the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and thanked him for saving his life.

At that time of year when our side of the world is at its darkest, his aged father said he felt like doing cartwheels!

Assange's return was judged to be so momentous that the ABC broadcast it live. Led by Sarah Ferguson, David Speirs and Peter Hartcher, the ABC coverage was exceptionally toxic, rehashing discredited smears, and belittling Assange's enormous achievements.

Like most of the legacy media, many ABC "star" journalists hate Assange.

Host of the 7.30 Report, Sarah Ferguson performed her hybrid interview/ambush technique on unsuspecting US congresswoman Majorie Taylor Greene, who had been lured onto the ABC to speak about why she, one of the most prominent MAGA republicans, supported Julian Assange, and why she was urging Donald Trump to pardon Assange.

Not unexpectedly, Sarah Ferguson was not very interested in the congresswoman's views about the honesty and truthfulness of Julian Assange's journalism. She spent the majority of the interview off topic, berating Majorie Taylor Greene over the 2016 theft of Hilary Clinton's emails, regurgitating Clintonesque lies about Russiagate, sneakily smearing Julian Assange in the process as a Putin-loving servant of that Devil Incarnate, Donald Trump! Majorie Taylor Greene



Assange greets his wife after landing in Canberra
Photo courtesy Winnipeg Free Press

summed her up perfectly: "That gal gets her marchin' orders from the Democrat party!" MTG exclaimed. Precisely. Ferguson is a Clinton junkie, who declared the Russiagate hoax to be the most important story of the 21st century: Hillary is her heroine!

Peter Hartcher followed on, explaining why Julian Assange, who has won many of the major English-language awards for journalism, is not a real journalist, like Peter Hartcher. Vanity? Pride? Delusions of grandeur? It was hard to decide. Rounding off the ABC coverage, Liberal Senator Jane Hume warned Australians against treating Julian Assange as a hero!

One Bay-FM colleague was so disgusted with the ABC coverage that she turned it

off during the Majorie Taylor Greene interview, but I endured to the end, stoically pondering which of the two, Hartcher or Ferguson, was the more chunderous.

Compared to the pages of vitriol and venom directed against Assange in *The Australian* the next day, Hartcher and Ferguson seemed almost benign.

Michael Ware and Justine Rosenthal are two Americans who were described by *The Australian* as award-winning documentarians. Their hate-filled rant described a fittingly pathetic end to a tawdry tale of a traitor, in light of the plea deal Assange was forced to make to end his ordeal began, "Finally, at long last, Julian Assange has confessed to being a traitor."

What is it about Americans that they don't

comprehend you can't be a traitor to a country unless you are a citizen of it? It was the extraterritoriality of the Assange prosecution under the US Espionage Act that turned the unlikely duo of Barnaby Joyce and George Christensen into Assange defenders.

It is often said that the reason the legacy media hate Julian Assange so much is that they are jealous of Assange's rock star status. But it is much more than that.

Not only did Assange make the MSM look dishonest; by reinventing Fourth Estate journalism with WikiLeaks, Julian Assange challenged the control of the narrative that is the source of the power of the legacy media.

The Assange prosecution was political persecution masquerading as justice, his father, John Shipton, maintains. The mainstream media was more than complicit, he said:

"If the Crown prosecuting service of the United Kingdom, the Swedish Prosecuting Authority of Sweden, and the United States Department of Justice had obeyed their own laws, Julian would never have spent a minute in gaol.

"The extradition treaty between the United States and the United Kingdom specifically forbid extradition for political matter. It was a state political persecution every minute of the day.

"The bullying, the

smearing, was on-going. Malice after malice after malice. The legacy media just write this stuff and make it up on the spot. I mean, it was appalling."

Years of campaigning

The freeing of Australian citizen Julian Assange from the clutches of our alleged AUKUS allies, the USA and the UK, was an enormous achievement for Australian diplomacy, the Australian people, the Australian parliament, the Albanese government, and most of all by the world-wide network of supporters that Julian's family, his father, John Shipton, his brother, Gabriel Shipton, and his wife Stella Assange, built over years of campaigning.

Through our interactions with John Shipton at Bay-FM in Byron Bay, I gained some awareness of the enormity of the workload of John Shipton and the magnitude of the family's campaign to free Assange, which entailed building a support network that spanned four continents.

Over the past decade, John Shipton gave us scores of interviews, toured the trendy triangle of Byron, Brisbane and Nimbin at least a dozen times, addressing numerous local gatherings. He did similar tours of the country towns between Melbourne and Sydney and the other capital cities.

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