

# Senior Stories

2021

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Front cover artist - Kylie Hill

Kylie is a proud Aboriginal woman from the Kalkadoon and Waanyi from Far North Queensland, Mount Isa. Kylie originated from Mount Isa but has now called Ipswich home for the past 35 years. Kylie is well connected in the Indigenous communities and has strong connections to the Yuggera, Ugarapul, Muninjali, Bundjalung and Yugembah nations. Kylie is well known to her community and all over Queensland and Australia. Some of her artworks have gone to Las Vegas, Japan, Germany and Ireland. Kylie has worked on murals and canvas pieces for Daycare Centres, Schools, Medical Centres, Indigenous and non-indigenous organisations across the country, Government, sporting associations including Hockey & Softball. Kylie donates her pieces of artwork monthly to charity to help raise funds for Cancer and for children in sports.

For more information or to view Kylies work visit:

**[www.KJHartworks.com.au](http://www.KJHartworks.com.au)**





# Senior Stories 2021



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## Able Australia

is a leading provider of disability services for adults and community supports for seniors. Our vision is to enable the people we support to live the life they choose. Our mission is to build on our heritage and empower the individuals we support to reach their potential by living our values of trust, kindness, respect and excellence every day. Our values underpin everything we do.

### ABLE'S VALUES

- **Trust** - For more than 50 years we have been trusted to deliver high quality, reliable services safely to those we support.
- **Respect** - We are respectful, upholding the human rights of everyone we support and work with.
- **Excellence** - We strive for excellence in everything we do – from the services we provide, to the outcomes we support clients to achieve.
- **Kindness** - We are kind and compassionate to all.

## Acknowledgements

Able Australia acknowledges the outstanding efforts of every author who contributed to this year's collection of Senior Stories. Thank you to all those people who change the lives of others by living as an example and empowering others to do the same. You are a reminder that in a world where you can be anything you choose to be kind.

We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of family, friends and carers who helped loved ones capture their story and put it into words. For those that may not have been able to do it themselves you have allowed their story to be told.

A special thanks to Janet Rowlings for sharing the inspiring story of Dexter Kruger, Australia's oldest man ever, and to the exceptionally talented artist Kylie Hill for allowing us the honour of showcasing her artwork on this year's front cover.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships who assist to fund Able Australia's Active Living Program for Seniors to deliver community initiatives such as this. It is with their support that we are able to continue to deliver such fantastic projects with the aim to prevent social isolation and connect and inspire our senior community.

# A Message from the CEO

## Able Australia's Kate MacRae

*"There are constant cycles in history. There is loss, but it is always followed by regeneration. The tales of our elders who remember such cycles are very important to us now".*

**- Carmen Agra Deedy -**

These words have resonance as we continue to live through the COVID-19 global pandemic. Capturing the wisdom of our elders in these powerful stories creates lasting insights into the lives they have lived and the lessons we can learn from them.

As CEO of Able Australia, I am proud to present Senior Stories 2021 and thank all the authors for their valuable contributions.

This project has been funded by Able Australia, the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships who assist to fund Able Australia's Active Living Program for Seniors. The project has been championed by Able Community Project Manager Jessy Byrnes. This collection of wonderful stories recognises the value of the life experiences of our Seniors and provides them with an opportunity to impart their wisdom to us all.

The impact of last year's Able Australia Senior Stories Collection didn't end with the publication of the book. Moira Christensen, one of our 2020 Authors, went on to publish a children's book and thanked Able Australia for helping her find her purpose and inspiring her to pick up a pen and write again. Moira's book "Jazzy the One Eyed Pup" will be available for sale in the coming months. Remarkably two authors Alla Craigie and Joseph Penkaitis found connection through their stories; discovering that 70 years ago they were on the same ship leaving Naples in Italy, to arrive in Australia and be placed in the same Refugee camp in Bonegilla Victoria.

This year we are featuring stories from first time authors and those who have been published previously. We have received several centenarians' stories, including a special story of Australia's oldest man Dexter Kruger who sadly passed away in July this year aged 111 years 188 days old.

Everald Compton, is also a contributor. He has written a book about John Flynn, the founder of the Flying Doctor Service, who you may have seen on your \$20 note. Everald's drive for change and dedication to community service has placed him as one of the few Australians to have received the Order of Australia honour twice.

During this year of lockdowns and social isolation, writing these stories has provided a creative outlet and a means of connecting with others. It is interesting to note that a survey conducted by Allianz Insurance group found that the passing down of family history and stories was far more important than leaving financial assets to heirs.

These stories really are more precious than gold.





# A Message from Hon. Shayne Neumann MP

On his 88th birthday, former US President George HW Bush said: "I'm pretty darn old. I'll tell you, I never thought I'd get this far in chronology. Ageing's alright. Better than the alternative."

I met Everaldo Compton AO when he was a young man of about 82 years of age. He told me if he stopped working he would die. So, it has been a smart move to keep working. We met and became friends I was made the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and the Shadow Minister for Ageing. He taught me that ageing is not a curse but a blessing. He had worked with former Treasurer Wayne Swan on ways to turn "grey into gold". In other words, to maximise the economic benefits of ageing and older people, rather than seeing them as a burden on society.



Through my work with Everaldo and other inspirational seniors, I became more aware of the negative connotations around "ageing" and being "old". Far too much money is invested into perpetuating the myth that we can reverse or stop ageing. There is only one alternative to ageing. To that end, I am most assuredly "Pro-Ageing."

I want to acknowledge the contributors to this publication. Seniors who have made a huge contribution to our community and who continue to inspire all of us to embrace ageing and the senior years.

This year, Everaldo Compton was made an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia in June 2021. It was a worthy award for an extraordinary man who has dedicated his life to service. In October of 2021, he turns 90 years of age. He will celebrate by walking 14kms along the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail and enjoying lunch, cake and a few cold drinks with family and friends in Linville – the small village in the northern Somerset Region where he went to school as a boy. I know you will enjoy reading his story along with the other stories in this publication.

## SHAYNE NEUMANN MP

Federal Member for Blair

Shadow Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel



Hon Shayne Neumann MP & Everaldo Compton AO

# A Message from the Editor

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## Able Australia's Community Project Manager Jessy Byrnes

It has been an honour to manage this project and to receive the most incredible stories; to go on journeys with people deep into their past and along with them in the present. To read of lives full of adventures, challenges, victories, relationships and the events that shape people – the good and the bad. I feel a deep sense of responsibility to share these treasured stories to help inspire, motivate and educate others, and to fuel hope while passing on lessons learnt along the way.

This year I have had the pleasure and opportunity to meet and read about the most incredibly inspiring people.

Everyone has a unique and individual story worth telling about how they have experienced the world. There is a great power in sharing our stories, as it is our stories that live on forever. We all carry untold stories and we at Able Australia believe our senior generation should have the opportunity to bring them to life.

I feel honoured to be able to help writers leave behind a legacy for their families and record their history so their great-grandchildren and beyond will be able to pick up this book and read about their ancestors and the lives they lived.

Thank you to all the authors of this year's edition, for opening up your hearts and allowing us to go on a journey into your history. You all touched my heart in so many ways - you are our unsung heroes.



Enid 'Jean' Clifford celebrated her 100th birthday in 2020

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# Special Tribute: Dexter Kruger

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The light remains

There are some who bring a light so great to the  
world that even after they are gone  
the light remains



Dexter Kruger – Australia's oldest man ever at 111 years 188 days old

# Australia's Oldest Man

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## Dexter Kruger

Dexter Ronald Kruger was the oldest man to ever live in Australia when he died at the age of 111 years, 188 days, on 20 July 2021. He published his autobiography, "The Life and Times of Dexter Kruger" on 17 May 2021 to celebrate reaching that milestone. The following is an extract from that book:

I have lived for the last 111 years between 1910 and 2021. I have seen drought, fire, flood, two World Wars, the Great Depression of sixteen years or more, the Spanish Flu of 1919 and Coronavirus (Covid-19) of 2019-2021; as well as the great influx of migrants, mainly from Italy and Greece, which changed the Australian demographic from "White Australia" to a "Multicultural Society". During my lifespan, the Australian population has increased from just over four million in 1910 to over twenty-five million today in 2021.

I have had my cattle herds decimated with the diseases brucellosis, tuberculosis, pleuro pneumonia, tick fever and the great programme that would eradicate those four diseases from Australia. I have also seen numerous very low prices for my produce. Through all these vicissitudes, I have prospered. Why? Well, whether the weather was wet, or whether the weather was dry, I have weathered the weather, whatever the weather, whether it was wet or dry!

Born on 13 January 1910 as the fifth child of Mr and Mrs A.H. Kruger, my life has spanned what is probably the most interesting period in the history of the world; from 'man' and 'horse' power to all this modern technology where little manpower is needed. I was born at Nundah in Brisbane, Queensland, as my mother went to her Aunt Sidonia Beck (who was a midwife) to have five of her six children. As the railway line only came to Woodford, my father met my mother and I with a horse and sulky and drove us to Union Park, which was my family's property on the Sheep Station Creek Road, three miles from Kilcoy. I was then three weeks old.

I have had an extraordinarily long working life, although I was never a very strong person. My claim is that, with the physical strength of half a man, I have done the work of a man and a half.

Having ridden a horse to and from school for two years, at the age of seven I was an accomplished horseman and took my place in the workforce on the property at the weekends and on holidays. Our farming property of seventeen hundred acres was a mixture of one hundred and twenty dairy cattle, a beef cattle herd of two hundred head, pigs, fowls, ducks, turkeys and twenty acres of land under cultivation. The University in which I was educated consisted of the integrated workings of this mixed farming enterprise. The office work included accounting, recording, form-filling and filing which was also done by myself. All trade work including concreting, carpentry and plumbing was also done by the family; no outside help was employed. Who were the teachers? Dad and Mum.

At age nineteen, I was appointed secretary of the Sheep Station Creek Rate Payers Group; then treasurer of the Oddfellows Friendly Society for eighteen years. I was a member of the Kilcoy Volunteer Defence Corps; Trustee of the Kilcoy Methodist Church Property; Member of the Kilcoy Show Society (of which I am a life member); Member of the Brisbane Valley Branch of the United Graziers Association of Queensland, of which I was secretary for twenty years and chairman for nine years; Treasurer and Elder of the Nanango Uniting Church; Treasurer of the Roma Uniting Church property committee; Agent for the Uniting Church Investment Service; Member of the Yalebone Creek Rural Fire Brigade; and Accredited Bush Veterinary Surgeon. I have been asked what I did in my spare time!

All these activities, experiences and my occupation as a beef cattle breeder, coupled with the stories handed down from my forbears (particularly my mother), have enabled me to write the stories I have written. I did not set out at first to write any stories at all. Initially, by request, I wrote a few pages and sent them to the Kilcoy Library. From that, the Librarian asked if I would write some more. I did, and so it continued as more anecdotal stories came pouring into my memory. At this point, I have written three hundred stories.



Through all the previous, I have maintained reasonably good health and I am now the oldest person in Australia, the oldest man to have ever lived in Australia, and currently number seven in the list of the world's oldest living men.

I am often asked, "What is the secret of your longevity?" My answer is:

"Always eat when you are hungry.

Always drink when you are dry.

Always sleep when you are sleepy.

Don't stop breathing or you'll die!"

The following, I think, goes a long way towards it: Eat good food, live one day at a time and make the best of it. When I was about fifty, I would have said there was no chance of me living to this age. I think that country living is the key to reaching this milestone. I think it's just that I have lived a life in the bush in the country air. I keep as close to nature as possible. I think it's the outlook that you have on life that has a great bearing on your longevity.

But I know how to live, and I knew how to work. Lots of fellows do a lot of hard work for little return. I did hard, physical work. I made every blow count, because I didn't have the physical strength. As well as hard work, I enjoyed every day. I was determined to succeed in the industry of my choice, and I think I can claim a great measure of success, and always doing what I enjoyed doing in the process.

My advice to young people is choose an occupation that you like, and do it well. Be diligent. Do not fill your mind with the thoughts of other people to the exclusion of your own. Stop! Look! Listen!

Think! Really it's all about what's going on up here, in your head. That determines where you are and how you will be.

Dexter Ronald Kruger - Australia's Oldest Man Ever



26 September 1942 Dexter and his wife Gladys getting ready to leave on their honeymoon

# 100 mph in a Morris Minor

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Joseph Penkaitis

I had bought a 1956 modified Morris Minor. The original motor was 918 cc, however this had a 1600 MGA sports motor in it with twin carbs and everything a young kid wanted in a 'hotted up' car. It was a real chick magnet except for the bucket seats. Back in those days, the seat of choice was the bench seat. If you had a bucket seat arrangement the girl sitting next to you would be too far away from you making a bench ideal because she could almost be sitting on your lap when you were driving, and that was cool. She was right up next to you and you had your left arm over her shoulder. What more could a young bloke wish for except maybe perhaps a miracle not to have an accident and die due to reckless driving. It was almost like a status symbol, to have a girl sitting next to you on a bench seat in a car, but you have to put up with minor problems to have the car of your choice, so it was with the Morris Minor. I had my chick magnet but what would it do, how fast would it go, and could it take corners as fast as Jack Brabham did at Warwick Farm in his racing car. We were about to find out.

One night after work I decided to take the car for a spin and test to see what its top speed was. It was equipped with an electronic tachometer so we could accurately determine what speed we were doing. I gave the job of estimating the speed to Ken and we set off to find a suitable, safe place to conduct the test. Being outside TV technicians, we knew the Western suburbs of Sydney very well, so we picked an industrial part of Chullora to conduct the test.

Roberts Road was the entry point to most of the factories around that area and where after 5:00 pm hardly any traffic remained. There were also very few side streets for cars to come out of. It was about 7:30pm so we thought we were safe. Like Donald Campbell in his Bluebird we took off down Roberts Road like the Syrian Army was after us. Gathering speed my navigator kept me up to date with my progress. The right foot was flat to the floor and I had changed every gear that I had so it was now up to the car to determine how fast we were going to go. Ken said excitedly we have reached a speed of 100 mph, then the car hit a bump in the road and we were airborne.

I remember saying to myself that there was no point in engaging the brakes because all the four wheels were off the ground. It seemed a long time but we finally hit the tar again and the car gradually slowed down. We had survived a very scary situation. It was time to go to the pub to thank God that we had survived, which we did.

This was before RBT's and I think we had more than our legal limit. Which raises an interesting question; what was the legal limit in the 60's and 70's? If you were pulled over for being suspected of being drunk, the only test was for you to walk in a straight line. If you could you continued your journey. If you couldn't and you hadn't committed an offence, they took your keys from you and told you that you could pick them up from the local police station the next morning. Today it's slightly different.

There has only been one other occasion, on a public road that I have exceeded that speed and that was on the German Autobahn. It was a 12 lane freeway that had no speed limit. I had been on the Autobahn for a good length of time and was getting sick of watching cars going past me as if I was stationary. My then wife, Carol, had fallen asleep and I decided to keep up with the Mercedes and VW's that were cruising past me.

I accelerated and got to 176km/h before the front wheels of my small Daihatsu Charade began wobbling. The Mercedes and VW's were still overtaking me so I decided to slow down which was a good idea because Carol then woke up and the journey continued without incident.

Years later I was given a Birthday present where I got to drive six laps around a race circuit in a V8 Super car. That was fun. I did exceed that figure again but it was done with safety for the first time.

# A 'Snippet' from My Work Life

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Steph Shannon

Within the very best job I found the worst of tasks.

Unlike the hospital wards we see today, nursing in the late 1950's found patients hospitalised and in beds for very long periods of time, in wards designed in the Nightingale era. The nurses' station was situated in the middle of the ward with 16 occupied beds to the left and another 16 to the right. An alcove with two beds dedicated for the sickest and most vulnerable of patients was incorporated beside 'the Sister's' desk for close access and observation. Balconies balanced the ward and housed less acute and rehabilitation patients. These balconies were of grand design with large dome like brick arches which allowed cross flow of breezes and blinds that lowered when presenting weather conditions proved threatening. This was achieved by opening or closing the wooden blinds. There was certainly no air conditioning in homes or buildings.

Kitchen and clean utility rooms were easily accessible and down in the hinterland and dungeon of the ward was found 'the pan room'. This was where the most junior student nurse found herself rostered and allocated tasks of cleaning. One knew exactly on which rung of the hierarchical ladder they were placed! The only direction was a sharp curve upwards!

The age of 'disposable items' wasn't even in the dream stage. Elimination needs of bed bound patients were met by the patients' use of stainless steel bedpans and urinals. These utensils were then covered with navy blue cotton fabric and taken for disposal and sanitation to 'the pan room'. Found in the arsenal of pan room tools of trade were vomitus bowls, sponge dishes, kidney trays and sputum mugs. Each had its place on storage racks and strong angled wall pegs.

Faeces, urine, vomitus, sputum and other bodily fluids were always examined analytically for volume, colour, consistency, odour, pH reaction and any abnormal findings reported and recorded on the patient's fluid balance chart. There was paper trail only in that era as the tsunami of cyber technology and e-health information wasn't yet on the horizon. With protective aprons and gloved hands, the task of cleaning was performed until the utensils gleamed and seemed to 'wink' appreciation to the junior student nurse. It was as if this now shining inanimate object was adding a little encouragement to her otherwise unenviable task. Scrubbing was helped along with use of Bon Ami!

Always of short stature, my dexterity skills quickly sharpened as I reached up to stack the bedpans onto the allocated rack space. To drop one resulted in thunderous clashing with subsequent sound waves flooding the ward as metal rebounded on cement. The reprimand from the senior nurse to the junior nurse was equally thunderous. Should this occur in the middle of the night when patients slept and with the Matron's sleeping quarters in the adjacent building than double the outpouring of wrath.

In the paediatric ward nappies were either towelling or flannel and of hospital issue. During outbreaks of bacterial dysentery many very ill babies and children were admitted and nursed in isolation. The most common invading causative organisms at that time were Shigella and Salmonella – both would cause a profuse diarrhoea and fluid loss to our young patients. It was back to the pan room where there was installed a large electric boiler into which such nappies were directly placed, along with fluid and faecal content. Protocol dictated such boiling action before they were removed, rinsed and bagged to be forwarded to the general laundry. Similar to the big copper boilers at home, the items were lifted by the use of wooden props of appropriate length and placed in adjacent large sinks.

Nursing these babies and young children heightened my olfactory sense to such a level I could differentiate the odour between these two invading organisms even before the pathology studies were to hand. Many the period that I imagined the same odour permeating the very fabric of my uniform and skin pores! These named unenviable tasks also carried with them teaching components that were to prove invaluable in heightening



the cognitive and sensory receptors of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch and all had their space in relation to the patient's illness, recovery and building nursing skills.

Reflectively they were but minute seeds in the vastness and scope of what lay ahead as I travelled my paediatric nursing journey of 50 years.



1964 – The passion was ignited

# A Decorated Community Worker

## Bessie Conomos OAM – with thanks to Carinity

A Brisbane senior who was recognised in the Australia Day Honours List celebrated another major life achievement in 2021. Bessie Conomos (OAM) became a centenarian after turning 100 at the Carinity Wishart Gardens aged care community in Brisbane.

She was born Vasilike Gianniotis on the small island of Kythira in Greece on 20 April 1921, the first and only girl in a family of six siblings.

Migrating with her parents to Australia seven years later 'Bessie', as she became known, spent most of her younger life living in rural New South Wales.

While she was living in Tullibigeal west of Parkes, Bessie met and later married Theo Megaloconomos.

"Mum was smitten straight away. Her mum though thought he was too old; it happened a lot in those days. However, my mum won," Bessie's daughter Regina Hadgis explains.

"Both my mother's and my father's families came from the same island in Greece, but from different villages so the families were known to each other."

The couple had four children and settled in the small town of Carinda, a two-hour drive east of Bourke, where Theo operated a garage, movie cinema and ice works business and served as a councillor.

"They ended up having a very happy and fulfilling life in Carinda with the various associations they were involved with," Regina says.

Bessie was actively involved in the community and also in other regional towns such as Walgett and Dubbo, before the Conomos family moved to Mansfield in Brisbane in 1984. She volunteered for Meals on Wheels and also at the St Nicholas aged care home in Highgate Hill and the Greek Orthodox Church at Mt Gravatt.

Bessie loved cooking and her talents in the kitchen helped drive her fundraising for numerous charities.

At the age of 87, she was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of her service to the Greek community in Brisbane, including through organisations which provide assistance to the elderly.

The award also recognised Bessie's contributions to the community of Carinda, particularly as an avid member of the local Country Women's Association and Bush Nursing Association.

"Mum always hoped she inspired young people to become involved in their communities. She loved to cook and was an avid knitter," Regina says.

Relatives from as far away as Sydney, including some of Bessie's four children, nine grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren, gathered in Brisbane for her 100th birthday party.

"She is blessed with having family visit regularly, which always brings her joy," Regina says.



Bessie Conomos celebrated her 100th birthday in 2021



Bessie pictured 16 years old in the 1930s

# Always Turn Your Negatives into Positives

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## Jessie Prowse – with thanks to her daughter Jennifer

Jessie Florence Prowse (Nee Wagner) was born on 7th July 1911 in Valley Heights, New South Wales. She was the youngest of 6 children, 2 girls, and 4 boys. Her Father was a Fetter with the Railways and her Mum looked after the family, sadly her Mum passed away of T.B. when Jessie was only 9 years old but her sister Ivy was 14 years older than her and looked after her while growing up.

Jessie saw her brother David go off to the 1st World War when she was a little girl and saw him come home, he was wounded in France but recovered well.

Jessie remembers walking up with her sister to Valley Heights Railway station to get a mask as the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918 was on, there was a room at the station full of masks and when the passengers got off the train from Sydney the Station Master would hand them a mask.

Jessie moved to Granville, NSW when she was about 15 years old, after she left school she got a job at Hordern Bros. in George Street, Sydney in the Haberdashery Department and was assigned to make the curtains and blinds for the administration office in the newly built Luna Park that opened in 1935.

She walked over the Sydney Harbour Bridge the 1st day it was opened in 1932 in high heels with a couple of girlfriends and after that, they went to Romanos Night Club in Martin Place and danced the night away.

Jessie was a member of the Parramatta Choral Society and she did a skit as a Beach Girl with Chips Rafferty (the Australian Actor) as he was a member also and was just starting off his acting career.

She was an avid tennis player and that's where she met her husband Alfred James Prowse, they were married in August 1939 and lived in Bondi, NSW. Jessie has 3 children, 2 boys, 1 girl, 2 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren, and 5 great-great-grandchildren (5 generations in all).

When Alfred passed away in 1965, Jessie took up bowls and became President of the Bondi Ladies Bowling Club in the late 70's early 80's.

In 1989 the Family moved up to Brisbane and Jessie was still playing bowls well into her 80's, she became an avid card player - twice a week she played cards with a group of ladies at Brisbane Town Hall then moved later on to the Catholic Club.

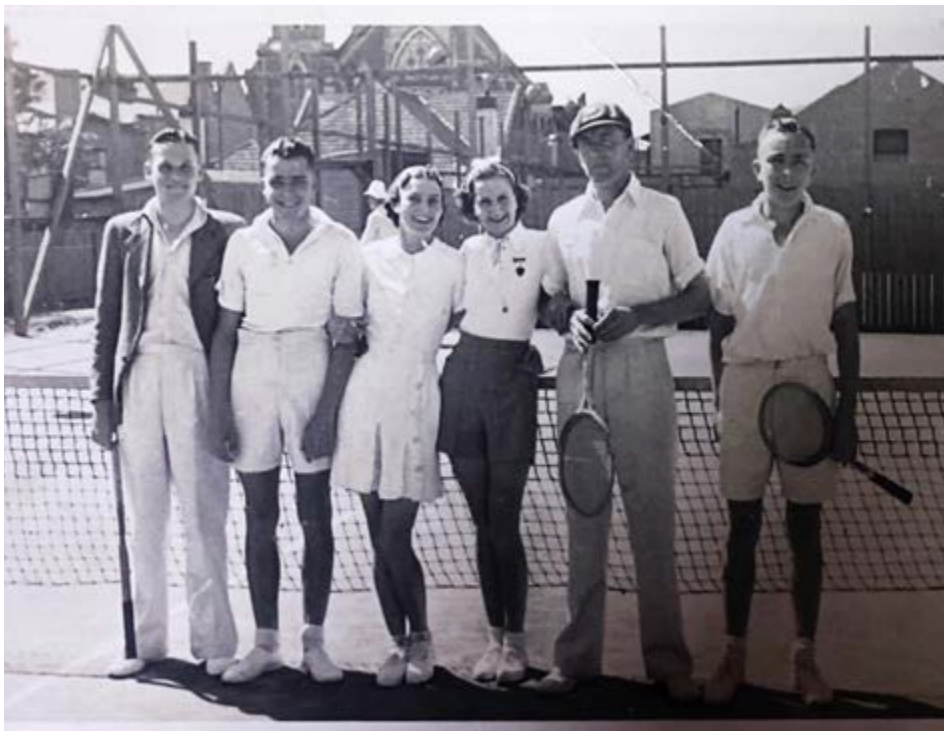
In Jessie's spare time she did a lot of knitting for charity, e.g. she knitted little vests for the oil-covered Penguins, and other charities too.

Jessie celebrated her 110th birthday in July 2021. She has had a very interesting and active life and always has a positive outlook on life and has a great saying "Always Turn Your Negatives into Positives".





Jessie Wagner - 1915



Jessie, Alf & Friends 1938

# An Immigrant's Experience

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Lynda Young

I was an immigrant, a person who goes to live in a foreign country. In 1959 I was twelve when my parents broke the news. There had been a lot of talk about joining my aunt in Tasmania, but I had never taken much notice. I had passed my 11+ exam in the UK, and had been kitted out in the new Grammar School uniform. Why would I want to travel to the other side of the world?

I had spent an idyllic childhood by the sea with the woods at the end of my road, in Hampshire opposite the Isle of Wight. The day that the bottom fell out of my life I remember walking slowly down to the cliffs and sitting soulfully staring at the white cliffs of the Needles, thinking 'I'm never going to see them again'.

They say that trauma sticks in your mind forever. I remember that moment sixty-two years ago quite clearly; it was cold, windy and grey, but the sun was glinting on those jagged, white rocks. The sense of loss was enough to numb my adolescent mind. I should, in retrospect, have been elated, excited and full of a sense of adventure, not one of impending doom.

I had no concept of Australia at all, except for heat and kangaroos. My Nan had been the go-between, bringing back my favourite toy, a stuffed kangaroo, complete with straw hat, joey, and basket of carrots and shopping list. How absurd, kangaroos do not eat carrots, let alone wear hats.

My mother and I were seasick the whole trip. Even now when I step onto a large ship I get queasy with the smell of the paint, the movement of the deck and the creaking sound of metal against rope. Eating was torture and the rise and fall of the cabin horrendous. I can really identify with the convicts of two hundred years ago. Our ship, the Strathnaver, was scrapped the year after we were deposited on Freemantle's docks in January 1960. The earth still moved for a couple of days afterwards and the flights to Hobart remain a blur. What I do remember was the hot wind that greeted us at the top of the steps when the TAA plane door opened in Hobart. We thought we had come to Hell. We could hardly breathe and the hot air that was vaguely circulating sapped any moisture we had left in our travel weary bodies.

My father had a teaching position at a remote place called Glenora in the Derwent Valley. Mum and I had looked at the map and talked about me catching the train each day to school in Hobart. On arrival we found that the train only passes by once a week and had to be flagged down to stop. Having attended Grammar School for a term, a very prestigious event in the UK, my parents wanted me to go to Hobart High School as my very clever cousin had. I remember sitting in a very hot, little room in Education House completing exam paper after paper until there was nothing left in my head.

I became a boarder in Hobart, going home only on weekends. A new country, a new school, no wonder I cried myself to sleep every night, like a character from a Dickens poor house. The worst humiliation was wearing my Brockenhurst Grammar School uniform for the first term until my pleas resulted in me looking like everyone else, even if I sounded different.

That first year in the New World is etched firmly in my memory. Fridays saw me bursting with excitement at going home. Monday mornings came far too quickly as Mum and I waited for the bus lights to come over the hill to take me away again.

In the floods of that first year, I willed the bus to keep going through river water that was lapping at the second step. Let me get home and never go back. Luck was with me and I had a week to witness the drama and mate-ship that happens in a natural disaster. Hop pickers were rescued from tall hop kilns in tinnies, families were made homeless and crops destroyed as the mighty Derwent river broke its banks, cut corners and engulfed the valley. Our house became an island but was just high enough for the mud to stop at our doorstep. When the water finally subsided, we helped the store keeper clean up his shop that had gone completely under water and now stank of ruin. We hosed mud out of the boots that

had hung from the ceiling, threw out ruined biros and washed tins of food still salvageable but now un-labelled lucky dips.

I do have happy memories of my new home. Holidays that saw me sitting up the garden gum tree with my kitten and walking in the Mount Field National Park getting to know the strange new plants and birds. The best thing was, we moved so that I could be a day pupil. Mum and I persuaded Dad to buy a house in Taroona by the sea. The two of us sat on a huge driftwood log looking out to the entrance of the Derwent, to Antarctica, and decided this was it. Forty years my parents stayed in that little yellow weatherboard house by the sea, many idyllic summers until dementia had stolen the scene.

I have twice sat on that English cliff and looked again at the Needles, once when I was forty and more recently at sixty. I still hanker for the seasons, the deciduous trees with their fallen leaves and nuts. Guy Fawkes nights with fireworks and the summer smell of newly mowed lawns accompanied by the sound of the cricket commentary on the radio. My husband and I have recently returned to live in Tasmania, enduring the heat of Brisbane for many years. This state has the feel of the old country! Australia is a land full of grateful immigrants who now call the Great South Land their own.



Lynda, her father and brother arriving in Fremantle, January 1960



# An Introduction to Music

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## Lloyd Knight

During WW2, I lived in Sydney with my wonderful step-mother, Kitty, my foster-father, Charlie and my six siblings. They included a full sister and brother, half-sister and brother, and foster-brother and sister. The mix was good because our Mum always taught us to be all-accepting of others. We were just one happy family, except that I did not get on well with Charlie most of the time. I was eleven in June 1944, when things came to a head. During an argument with him about making my bed, I lost my cool. I picked up the whole mattress and bedding and hurled them at him. He was hit with such force that he fell backwards, out the doorway and almost went all the way down the stairs to the ground-floor. He wasn't hurt but he certainly got a fright, and so did I!

Mum decided that I needed a break from the tension. It was affecting my health. So, she sent me off to Melbourne to spend a year with her Mum. Grandma McAulay was a small, forthright lady and welcomed me into her family. Kitty's two sisters, May and Barbara, also lived there. May was a loving, but firm hand and was a good disciplinarian. She was about twenty-five and worked as a secretary at Myer's department store. More about Barbara later.

So, I took the trains, unaccompanied, to Melbourne. Back then, you had to change at Albury because the rail gauges were different. I remember quite vividly that I was confused by the names printed on the toilet facility doors. One read 'Lavatory', but there was only a wash-basin in there. The other was labelled 'W.C.' that I later learned meant 'Water Closet'. That was where you 'went'.

I was enrolled in East Kew Central (now Primary) School to complete sixth class, now called year six. That was a bit of a wake-up because the maths, history and even hand-writing, were different from NSW. However, I managed to pass and started 1945 at Richmond Technical School. I think that in later years, it was swallowed up by Swinburne College.

I did have a reasonable appreciation for music, because my Mum loved to play classical records. Also, I really enjoyed the 'pop' music and Jazz of the day. Very old-fashioned now. I have lovely memories of sitting with Mum and my sister, Violet, listening to the old, sometimes scratched, records on the wind-up gramophone. The discs are called vinyl now, but then I think they were made of shellac which was a bit like black Bakelite. The speed was 78 RPM and the 10 or 12-inch discs lasted about five or six minutes on each side.

My 'Auntie' Barbara McAulay, was only three years my senior. I joked that if we married, I would be my own uncle. Hah! However, apart from later being the National Diving Champion, she was at fifteen, also a superb pianist, violinist and Harp player. She taught violin and piano. I sat for hours listening to her practice Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven and beyond. It was sheer magic. She offered to teach me piano. But this silly little twelve-year old was too dull to take up her offer. This would have been a wonderful introduction to becoming a musician. I've kicked myself ever since.

In my adult years I taught myself to play Spanish guitar, mainly to serenade my two sons, Philip and David. A primitive strumming. Philip became a remarkable professional singer/guitarist and he always said that those early memories were a large part of why he became an entertainer. However, he inherited most of his musical talent from his mother, Shirley, who was a fabulous soprano and had been star of the Goulburn Liedertafel.

I loved to sing, but not so much anymore because of a soft palate operation. I will forever have a great appreciation for music of all types, except for angry Rap. It is often profane and disrespectful of others.

# An Ode to a Fortunate Life

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Ian Wallace

As time passes I start to ponder  
on what I have achieved in my life?  
Memories fade as I continue to wonder  
and the most enjoyable has been 51 years married to my wife.

Ipswich was where my life journey began  
Born into a working-class family of four  
our family was part of a larger clan  
arriving from Norway and England generations before.

My dad spent 50 years as a railway man  
and the unions and Labour he supported, were there  
Weekends were enjoyed as a Rugby League fan  
Plus help in the community everywhere.

Mum was a teacher and infants she did dote  
Training school choirs was her other fine skill  
She was also a writer of some prominent note  
Magazines and newspaper pages she often did fill.

My sister and I were educated well  
including speech and music lessons  
both of us remember weird tales to tell  
of how the nuns supervised our practice sessions.

Some high school subjects eluded my brain  
Science and maths were a challenge to me  
in history and literature, I did train  
for my graduation at University.

My career as a teacher was filled with pleasure  
as I transferred all over the state  
Primary and secondary teaching I did treasure  
and through one memorable high school event, I met my soul mate.

I supervised the Army school cadets  
the camps with the boys were great  
on daily sick parade, an Army nurse I met  
and I asked her out on a date.

After one year of courting, we were wed  
Five years later a promotion was offered to me  
At Thursday Island high school, I was appointed Head  
On the tip of Cape York across the sea.

Living island style, local customs we were taught  
encountering many experiences, we did not expect  
Eating turtle, dugong and fish that the locals caught  
it was a staple diet we did not reject.

Island dancing and feasts were part of the tradition  
There was no internet, television or radio to enjoy  
we acquired the skill to medicate an extreme condition  
Termed leprosy and suffered by a local schoolboy.

Fresh fruit and vegetables came weekly by plane  
Frozen meat, ice cream and dry goods landed monthly by ship  
Baking our own bread was a skill to attain  
As was looking forward each year to flying out for a trip.

A promotion to Tully was received in the post  
Life was to change after the two years  
Supermarket shopping nevertheless we looked forward to most  
as we left TI shedding lots of tears.

Tully is Australia's wettest town  
it rains for five months of the year  
Cane fields and banana farms never look brown  
but drying washing in the wet was a chore to fear.

The cane cutting season was always a highlight  
with rumbling harvesters and trains  
Fires blazing in fields throughout the night  
during harvest, the hope was for no drenching rain.

An Italian community existed in each sugar town  
Italians migrated to Australia to improve their lot  
Reliable, hardworking and never let you down  
what we absorbed from their culture, we have never forgot.

In a later career in distance education, I again travelled the State  
Charleville, Longreach, Charters Towers, Emerald, Cairns and Mount Isa  
Long drives between towns often without a mate  
Meant each day as the lone driver, I was an early riser.

There were friendly people wherever I went  
Pubs, motels and truck stops served good steaks  
Kangaroos were a hazard and my car suffered dents  
Coffee stops on my travels were never that great

My employment options changed as the years passed  
University postings, the ABC, freelance media writer and marketing all went well  
These changed employments were not my last  
As in retirement, I pursued new goals with stories to tell.

Children's stories writing was assigned a great run  
Then social media commentary, Facebook and podcasts came on the scene  
Retirement for me has been lots of fun  
As I look back on my life and recall where I have been.

Poetry writing proved another easy task  
to create word images of life, land and sea  
I have no regrets as I now do ask  
who am I - well I am just me.



Ian Wallace and Grandson Ben 2020



# Beachcombing

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## Margaret Dakin

I wandered into the kitchen where my mother had pushed up the sash window and was talking to our neighbour. Mrs. Wagner had opened her dining-room casements and she and Mum could almost have reached out and touched each other. "You won't need much Anne, just togs and a couple of pairs of shorts for the kids," Mrs Wagner was saying.

My mother smiled. "We haven't been away all together as a family before." She reached back and pulled me to her. "Margaret's in charge of packing for herself and the two boys. Did you hear what Mrs Wagner said, Marg? You'll only need one suitcase."

I stood beside my mother at the open kitchen window and leaned into her soft breast. Slowly tracing the vein on Mum's hand which rested on the windowsill. I nodded, too shy to look directly at our neighbour.

"Will you be swimming, Anne?" Mrs Wagner asked.

"I'm looking forward to being in the water again. I used to love it when I was a girl. It's good of you and Frank to take Nana in your car. Her ulcerated legs would never make it on public transport. It's a matter of a tram ride, the walk over the bridge to the train, and then at the other end, a bus to get to Currumbin. She could never stand the journey the rest of us will be doing."

"No trouble Anne. The holiday place is big, and we'll be up and you'll be down-stairs, so she should manage once we get her there."

The journey to Currumbin did not start off well for me because, to my mortification, I dropped Nana's enamel chamber pot on the platform at South Brisbane railway station as we were waiting for the train. It was wrapped in brown paper, but I was sure everyone must have known what it was from the sound it made.

Ever since I'd started school, life for me had become a minefield of embarrassing events, which, at frequent intervals, intruded and took me by surprise. Fortunately, each new episode wiped the last one from my mind, allowing me to recover from that which I'd thought I could never forget.

I was glad that just then the guard blew his whistle and we hastened on board the train.

My brothers and I were no strangers to public transport. We frequently went by tram from our home on the north side of Brisbane to visit, with our father, his friends in other suburbs. Mum usually stayed home with Nana on those occasions. Now the novelty of all five of the family being together without having to attend to Nana, turned this trip into a gala affair.

The holiday house, when we finally arrived, was unremarkable – a chamfer board box with no embellishments, right on the narrow, partly washed-away road that ran parallel to Currumbin beach. Nevertheless, Elephant Rock dominated the scene, and the sand and thundering waves crashing so close made it exciting and exotic.

Next morning Mum took the boys and I to the beach. Dad didn't have any togs but our mother had on her old-fashioned woolen costume, and her ginger hair was parted in the middle and done up in a high bun. Another introduction for me that morning was to my mother's legs, shapeless and very white.

But that first swim set the tone for the whole holiday, because almost immediately Mum was dumped by a wave and her bottom false teeth were washed from her mouth. She was horrified, and once again she was transformed in front of my eyes, as her bottom lip became that of a stranger.

"Quick," she lisped as she surfaced, "help me look for them."

I could tell she was dismayed at the thought that she might have spoiled the holiday – and how to tell Dad.

Every day for the week of our stay, at high tide and low tide, we searched for the teeth.

A hand-written note went in the window of the only shop along the front.

“Anyone handed the teeth in, Boss?” Dad would ask the shopkeeper.

Mum didn’t go swimming again but walked along the water’s edge, eyes down to the scum that appeared every morning to mark the high tide.

Dad took time out from the surveillance one evening and hiked up the hill behind the beach houses with the boys and I. There, a man whom he’d been talking to in the shop, welcomed us into his steep back yard. “Any minute now,” the man said to me, and I stepped closer to my father, wondering what we were waiting for. Then they started to come, first in ones and twos, and then whole flocks of them, wheeling and screeching – hundreds of lorikeets coming in to be fed.

“You’ve got a great view here, Boss,” my father said, gazing out over the ocean. My only thought was, could I, from this vantage point, see the treasure I so badly wanted to find in the distant incoming waves – the teeth.

A few years later this man founded The Currumbin Bird Sanctuary and Animal Refuge.

At the end of the week we had to abandon the quest and go home. As we waited for the bus to start us on the first leg of our journey back to Brisbane, I glanced at the holiday house and turned for a last look at Elephant Rock.

My five-year-old brother took our mother’s hand. “We’ll come back next year and look for your teeth, Mum,” he said.

She smiled her sad new smile, and then surprised her family with the most adamant words I could ever remember hearing her speak. “Listen everyone,” she looked at my father, “not one more word about the teeth.”

The way that last word came out forced a girlish giggle from Mum, and instantly turned the holiday, ‘when mum lost her teeth’, from disaster into family folklore.

# Burning

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## Lloyd Knight

Three words come to mind when I think of 'Burning', the first is: - Sunburn.

I am blue-eyed and fair-skinned, so I am particularly susceptible to that ultra-violet attack from old Sol. When I was young, I often ventured out-doors with little or no protection. I did a lot of hiking and camping which often included sun-bathing by a stream or a peaceful lake. My greatest pleasure in the sunshine was surfing on many of Sydney's magnificent beaches. I couldn't afford to buy sun-screen, and anyway, I didn't need to. It was freely supplied by the Life-Savers in the form of an oil spray. I'm not sure now what sort of oil they applied; it smelled awful and tasted salty. I think it may have been Mutton-bird oil mixed with coconut. It probably helped in keeping the skin from drying out but I don't think it offered any protection from UV radiation. Who knew what that was in the forties and fifties anyway? So, I certainly experienced many bouts of painful sun-burn. Once I got over the blisters and skin loss, I managed to develop a reasonable sun-tan.

I particularly remember my worst bout of sunburn. My wife, Bonnie and I were enjoying a wonderful holiday in Acapulco (name drop). We were staying at a magnificent resort named Villa Vera that had an attractive pool, with the world's first in-pool bar. The bar was at one end of the pool. The bar-stools were in the 1.2 metre-deep water in front of the bar. The accomplished bar tenders produced every sort of beverage imaginable. It didn't take me long to realise why the whole pool was so shallow. The local, attractively tanned dippers, wore so much gold that they would have drowned if it had been deeper! The day was hot with a heavy cloud cover. We laid on the comfortable couches for a couple of hours, not appreciating that the tropical Sun's UV radiation was punching straight through the overcast clouds. We got roasted! We walked around like a couple stiff sticks for the next few days.

The second word that comes to mind: - Fire.

I have never been in a fire. However, the mental image of trying to escape from a burning building, or being trapped in a bush-fire, I find rather scary and potentially scary. During my fifty-two years as a pilot, I have only been involved in two serious crashes, neither of which resulted in fire. This was extremely fortunate because they were both gasoline-powered aircraft with fairly full fuel tanks.

I will always remember a graphic picture of a USAF air-crash victim's cadaver that was depicted in a flight safety magazine. The pilot's body was fully clothed in a fire-resistant suit with full helmet, oxygen mask, goggles, boots and gloves. However, he had his sleeves rolled up to the elbow. Both of his forearms were burnt through to the bones. He was killed by the impact trauma, but the rest of his body was unscathed.

This very potent image is enough to discourage anyone from flying with rolled up, or short sleeves. It also conjures up an image of what may happen to those 'cool' guys, who drive with their arm hanging out of the window. How would they fare in a side-swipe?

This reminds me of an incident involving my mother. She was in the habit of driving one-handed with her right arm perched on the open window space. She slid on a wet patch, tipped the car on its side and scraped a lot of skin and flesh from the top of her forearm. Another lesson learned.

The third word that comes to mind is: - Bridges.

We've all heard the expression, 'Burning your bridges behind you'. I've burned a few actual bridges during wartime when I fired my rockets at an enemy's structure over a river or rail-line. But I prefer to talk about the figurative use of that expression as it relates to human behaviour. Taking action to avoid returning to a previously experienced situation or relationship.

I only remember two such occasions. During my Air Force service, I deployed as a helicopter pilot during the Viet Nam war. My first wife, Shirley, like so many people during the sixties, was opposed to that war. She urged me to not go. As a commissioned officer in the RAAF, having been posted to a conflict situation, it was my duty to go.

About eight months into my twelve-month tour, Shirley arranged with a chaplain at the Richmond RAAF Base to have me brought home. I had no say in the matter. I was taken home and posted as the Officer in Charge of Recruiting in Sydney. This was like a punishment for not completing my tour of duty. I had already completed two, two-year stints on ground postings during the previous eighteen years and was not due for another one. I stuck it out for about six months, but my already shaky marriage was falling apart.

We received no counselling during that period and I went off the rails. I resigned from the Air Force, and left my family. Two gigantic bridges. There was no turning back. I started a new life as a civilian pilot and a separated, then divorced, person. I moved on, married Bonnie and continued my flying career for another thirty-three years.

I have one son, Philip, who lives in Sydney. We lost his brother, David, at age twenty-three. My oldest step-son, Phillip, lives in Brisbane and his two brothers, Michael and Sylvan, live in Melbourne. I have a loving relationship with all four of my sons. Shirley and Bonnie have both passed away. I still have a few bridges to cross, but I will not be burning any of them.



# Childhood Memories

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## Val Mulcahy

I was born in the roaring twenties to a mother who could do a mean Charleston and a father who was a talented sportsman. I was to be the eldest of 3 girls with Shirl, 16 months younger than me and Janice, 17 years younger. By the time Janice was born I was a young woman and working.

We moved around a bit at first from Red Hill and then to a little house in Paddington. In those days we didn't have a radio but the family next door did and after dinner sometimes they were kind enough to invite Shirl and I over to listen to it. One evening there was a scary story that involved a headless body outside a window which scared the bejesus out of us and we ran home in the dark. I don't remember us ever going back. Other nights our parents would take us out to a friend's home to play table tennis in the evening. While they played Shirl and I would curl up under the ping pong table and go to sleep.

My mother was a wonderful dressmaker who made all our clothes. Dad went to work by train to Allan and Starks where he was the manager of the Floor Covering Department. He was also the captain of the Allan and Starks cricket team. Often on a Sunday we would take a picnic lunch and watch him play cricket in parkland near the Royal Brisbane Hospital. In those days there was no such thing as professional sportsmen. Dad also played football for Wests League club which later became the Brisbane Broncos. Dad won many trophies for his sporting prowess as well as prizes which were generally white silk shirts.

When I was around nine or ten, Dad started having trouble with his knees due to his sporting injuries. He was told it might be a good idea to move to a beach as he could put warm sand on them and have some relief from the pain. My grandmother had a holiday house at Margate on the Redcliffe peninsula so we moved in to her house. It was wonderful, and she had chickens! One of my jobs was to collect eggs in the morning but the rooster didn't like the idea and always chased me around flapping his wings. Moving there was still wonderful! The neighbour had a cow and would give us fresh milk.

We went to Humpbong School and as there was then no road along the foreshore, the school yard went right down to the beach. We wore a simple uniform of a navy blue Pinafore and top and no shoes, as most lunchtimes we went for a swim. We had learnt to swim from dogpaddling after Dad when he went swimming and eventually getting competent in the water. Sometimes Dad's cousin Les Lewis a hairdresser came to visit and we played with his son Jimmy on the beach. Later Jimmy was to have his own son Wally, who became the great Queensland footballer Wally Lewis. Other times we explored the bush, often with our tall school friend Pat Henry. Mum would give us raw sausages and matches and we would roam all over the Peninsula. We would "cook" our sausages on sticks held over a fire, until they were invariably charcoal on the outside and raw in the middle. Mum was definitely not concerned about our nutrition or the danger her children with matches might pose in the bush!

There were times we encountered some tricky situations, like one day we came upon a hole with what looked like a tail sticking out of it. We decided to poke it with a stick... All of a sudden a most frightening creature emerged! We didn't know it then but it was a Frilly Lizard and it was angry. With its frill up and its yellow mouth open it charged! We ran! Pat Henry with her long legs in front me next and Shirl with her shorter legs at the back. As we ran I called out to Shirl "Is it still coming?" Shirl who was crying responded "I don't know I'm not game to look!"

Another time we found ourselves in a tricky situation was at the red cliffs near Woody Point. We encountered a band of gypsies, some had trucks and some had horse drawn caravans. In those days they often cut down forked tree branches which they sold for washing line poles, however this time they were having fun, jumping off the cliff into the sea naked. We were shocked and ran home to tell our tale as fast as our legs could take us.

We always made sure we were home before dark, when Mum would heat water on the wood fire and we would bathe in a tin tub.

Sometimes we would go to the pictures at Redcliffe and the matinee would always include a newsreel and a cartoon.

Gradually we became aware that there was trouble approaching – war was coming. With all that it entailed; rations, books, men going off to war and the arrival of American troops. I still remember when Shirl and I would be out with Mum and Dad and we would encounter American servicemen. They would often give Shirl and I attention, and Dad would say in his most commanding voice “On your way, soldier!”

When I look back, I look back fondly and remember the time before all that, when we were happy kids innocently roaming freely through the bush, without a care in the world.



Shirl, Val & Jimmy Lewis

# Christmas Treasure

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Toni Risson

September trails off and Christmas looms on the horizon like a thundercloud. It will soon be time to think about the pudding, that staple—some might say highlight—of Christmas dinner. The pudding must be made by the end of November at least so its flavours can develop. I use my grandmother's recipe, and like her, secrete a dozen shillings, sixpences and threepences in the batter before sealing the pudding basin and steaming it for six hours. Nana married in 1930 but who knows when she began this ritual. It has been going on in my kitchen for forty years.

I store the coins in an eggcup, and after the last slice disappears, I scrub them and put them away until the following November. They've been in and out of our Christmas mouths forty times! Little wonder the rams' heads are worn and some of the emus, kangaroos, and sheaves of wheat are a little blurry round the edges. Several profiles of Her Majesty bear deep scratches. The pudding basin is in a deep drawer, where tins of all shapes and sizes wait for birthdays and anniversaries. Each year, when it comes time to rummage for the basin, a single memory rattles louder than the rest.

It's Christmas Day. We are in Katoomba. Nine of us sit shoulder to shoulder around the table in my grandmother's kitchen—parents, grandparents, four kids and an unmarried uncle with a cowgirl tattooed in colour on his right forearm. In the centre of the table sits the pudding, warm and moist and aromatic. In that dry December heat, it fills the kitchen with a smell that makes you think of smugglers and pirate galleons. That's the mixed fruit, a whole packet of it, and the half-packet of raisins all plump and dark with rum. There's a sprig of fake holly on top.

Nana sets out the bowls and slices the pudding. Hungry eyes watch for a flash of silver as she places a piece in each bowl and pours hot custard over the top. She passes them round. At least four of us are mindful of which is the biggest serving. And which is the smallest. 'They're all the same,' says Mum. But they're not. Already stuffed with ham and chicken and other delights seen only at Christmastime, we kids fall upon the pudding like street urchins. Treasure lurks beneath that steaming yellow custard.

The taste of the pudding is as exotic as its aroma and I savour every mouthful, alert for the hard, thin edge of a threepence between my teeth. I love them best because they're tiny and delicate, although a shilling is worth four times as much. Our pocket money is sixpence a week, so the booty is real. After the arrival of decimal currency in 1966, our grandfather would exchange our pudding coins for their equivalent in the new money, which cannot be used in cooking. The pudding is a sacred object in the rhythmic mythology of our childhood, and the coins make it almost magical.

Not a single coin appears. My brothers eat twice as much as I can, and they eat it twice as fast, not caring that pudding tastes better than anything else in the world; they're only after the treasure. The boys are well into their second bowl. Dad finishes his. Nana refuses to consider the possibility that she has forgotten to put the coins in. We scan each other's bowls, most of which now hold only a scraping of custard and a few crumbs. We eye the plate in the centre of the table. A dozen coins in the slice that remains? It's not possible. Mum finally finishes her bowl and announces the unthinkable: Nana must have forgotten.

My grandmother studies the remaining portion, which has fallen sideways and wears the holly like a wilted corsage. She rises from her chair and disappears into the inner sanctum of her bedroom. This is where she keeps her Christmas coins. Several minutes pass in silence. Then a girlish giggle comes to us through the timber wall like the sound of kookaburras chortling in the bush that runs down into the valley, or like the water that plummets, laughing, at Mini-Ha-Ha Falls. There it is, the stash of silver she keeps especially for the pudding, still in its hiding place.

There were no coins that year to trade for the grubby currency in our grandfather's pockets, which smelled of beer and tobacco and firewood. But I had my treasure, a memory of Christmas past. Whenever I make my grandmother's Christmas pudding, as I do each year in

November, I remember the hush of that moment when we sat around a desecrated feast in a room that was heavy with the smell of pudding and expectation, and the memory of that laugh comes to me across the years, and I smile.

And always remember to put in the coins.



Nana



Christmas Pudding



# Each new day is a bonus

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Mike Winton

My name is Michael Winton, and I am 73 years young. I used to tell my students at school I am not old, just young for a very long time.

I was born in Scotland and came to Australia in 1960 by ship. I was one of the boat people. People have mistaken me for Billy Connolly, when I was in hospital last year, they called me Billy! I have lived in Ipswich since my family arrived in Australia. My wife was born in Ipswich, we married here and raised our children here. We have worked here for all our lives. All sounds very boring!

I started my working life studying industrial chemistry, working at Morris Woollen Mills. When I completed my studies, I never worked in the industry again. I joined the Queensland Public Service in the Department of Health at Wolston Park Hospital. This was one of the most fascinating periods of my working life. Recently I was spending time with some of the gentlemen at Villa Maria and low and behold one of these gentlemen had worked there at the same time, so we spent the next 90 minutes reminiscing. Ipswich is still a small place.

For the next 33 years I worked in various sections of Queensland Health reaching the dizzy heights of the top floor in the Minister's Office. I spent six years there. I had another change of direction and studied late in life where I gained employment in the Special Education Unit at Redbank Plains SHS. I found studying most rewarding at the very mature age. It is amazing what the brain retains. I spent the next 15 years at the school. The highlight was the co-development of the Choices not Chance Program. This program helped the young people gain employment together with their families, some being third generation of unemployed. I was particularly passionate in assisting the pacific islanders. It changed many families' lives and I was invited to present a workshop at the Talanoa South Pacific Conference in Cairns in 2014 about how we engaged the youth at the school. The program received state and national awards. I was given the title of "Honorary Samoan" by the community which made very proud.

I have always had a passion for helping disadvantaged youth. My wife Averil and I fostered children with special needs for over 20 years. Many of these young people have families of their own now, and we are grandparents to their children. With our own and extended family, we have 12 grandchildren. Santa is very busy at Christmas. We are very proud of how some of them have made the most of the opportunities given to them. Sadly not all, but I am a realist in life.

I recent years I have dodged a bullet so to speak with some health issues. I was riding a skateboard with some of the grandchildren, fell off, knocked myself out and still have no memory of three hours of my life. All the doctor said to me was I was lucky to be alive and to act my age in future. Never!

Bullet 2. My wife and I had just returned from a cruise, and we were going to our farm 80kms from Dalby. I forgot the keys, so we went to Caloundra instead. I had a massive heart attack! I was in theatre within 60 minutes so my prognosis has been great. No after affects. The cardiologist said had we gone to the farm, I would be dead. A very sobering thought.

Bullet 3. We went on another cruise, this time to New Guinea in early 2020 just before COVID. While in the jungle visiting a remote school, I was bitten by a mosquito. It must have been an open sore when I went swimming off one of the islands. My leg got infected with necrotising fasciitis (flesh eating bug). I spent 7 days in the ICU at Ipswich in an induced coma while they operated. They saved my life and my leg. Overall, I spent three months in hospital at Ipswich and the PAH with eight operations in all. They took a large piece of muscle out of my back and inserted it in my lower left leg. It works and I can walk again after many months of rehab. While in hospital I thought I had been hard done by but there was always someone worse off.

All that time my wife only missed three days of not visiting. She was my hero working all day then driving down to the PAH. When in hospital. I heard many stories. The 95 year old man

who was in the French Foreign Legion, another patient flew Lancaster bombers in England in WWII. So much history there.

So many never received visitors. This is where I am now, spending a short time each week visiting male residents in a nursing home. Hopefully, I can bring a little joy into their lives. The good Lord has spared me for something, I'm still waiting to see what it is.



# Excitement

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## Gordon Moore

As children we could see huge, empty green fields at the rear fence of our house, but there was no exit there, nor could we venture out the front gate because the Crumlin Road Belfast was a busy major route with double overhead electric powered tramways. At the age of five, blissfully unaware that a war was in progress, I joined my brothers going through the median hedge to the next door house of the two retired ladies at number 683.

Games there were exciting. Placing selected cards in the slot of a wooden viewer we could see the amazing pictures in three dimensions. Varying with each shake of a triangular tube, called a kaleidoscope and looking up one end there appeared the most beautiful multi-coloured arrays. If you turned the handle on another device you could see a moving image of Gene Autry riding his horse. The ultimate game was tiddlywinks on the carpet, trying to get more plastic discs to jump into the egg cup. Mother, worried that we could well be a nuisance for the two old dears, said, "It is all right for you to visit the Misses Campbell's, but you are not to have any tea!" So the trio would troupe in and say; "We won't have any tea thank you, but could we each have one of those nice home-made scones with strawberry jam?"

Despite not being able to go out to the main road or to the fields at the rear of the manse, there were two sights that, had we been bright enough, would have given us pause. The rear vision was the nearby huge grey barrage balloon up in the sky tethered to the ground by thick steel cables. As in those days the accuracy of aerial bombardment could only be reasonably done by low flying aircraft, the purpose of this device was to cause German aircraft to become entangled in the balloon's wires when they were trying to destroy the shipyards. Luckily the only close call we had with a bomb was one which was far enough away to just cause the ceiling plaster to fall. At the front the other frequent vision was the huge long tubular metal framed trailers enfolding the fuselage and both wings of each single new air force plane. With the familiar red white and blue roundel markings, being taken north up the Crumlin Road to Nutt's Corner aerodrome. With petrol being in short supply the other oddity on the roads were cars with billowing gas bags fluttering on their roofs.

Belfast was better known for shipbuilding, but it was also very early into building aircraft. Long ago Huguenot people fleeing religious persecution in Europe brought with them their flax, their spinning wheels and their skills at weaving linen. As this linen was used for covering the wooden wing and fuselage frames of early aircraft, it became the impetus for an aviation manufacturing industry. At the city suburb of Sydenham, right on Belfast Lough, Short Brothers Ltd made the huge Sunderland flying boats. They were noisy and slow, but exciting, in that for the first time, there was now a passenger service to far flung parts of the British Empire. Short Brothers kept making exciting aircraft. One of those was the beautiful twin boom, single seater Vampire fighter jet plane. Another was the economical versatile 'Skyvan', either a twin turbo prop cargo or a passenger plane. The Belfast Telegraph newspaper reported on a really exciting jet plane referred to only as the mysterious 'SB.4', that we often saw overhead. This revolutionary experimental swing wing 'Sherpa' aircraft was partly due to the brainy ideas of a Mr Barnes Wallis. He is more widely known for inventing the 'Bounce Bomb' used to destroy water storage dams in World War II. Unfortunately it was the Americans who later went on to develop this technology and the end product became known as the successful 'F-111' swing wing jet fighter as later supplied to both the British and Australian air forces.

I was absolutely thrilled, (in outback Australia of all places), to be given a short trip in a Burt Rutan designed 'LiteEasy' plane with a rear mounted rotary pusher engine. It was eerily quiet above the clouds and there did not seem any sensation of speed until the pilot warned me to hold on as he was going to go into a tight turn. All of a sudden, when he swung the plane around, I was thrust deeply into my seat and then understood how fast we were travelling. It was absolutely exciting. The pilot had to delay landing because he had to ensure another plane was well clear of the strip, because having three tiny wheels and

brakes the two seater 'LiteEasy' was very skittish on landing, needing the whole airstrip clear to stop safely. What could be more exciting than that!

Again it was this same American designer who came up trumps in creating the world's most exciting aerial challenge. Designer Burt, with his penchant for incorporating the forward canard wings, allowed his brother Chuck to take off from the longest runway in the world at Edwards air force base with co-pilot Mrs Jeana Yeager. This was a brave attempt to circumnavigate the earth non-stop with the clever option of having either the regular front engine or the rear pusher engine to be turned off to save fuel. The twin boom 'Voyager' designer was again clever in deciding that they take off from the longest runway because the wings, (as wide as a Boeing 747), were so loaded and drooping with the maximum amount of fuel that one wing tip was sheared off on the tarmac just before finally getting airborne. Amazingly in 9 days they made it!

As this December 1986 round the world non-stop trip is the only time it has ever been done, I view it as the most exciting achievement event in human history.



# Former Prisoner of War

## Gordon Jamieson – with thanks to Carinity

Gordon Jamieson, 100, is one of last surviving Queenslanders who laboured on the infamous Thai-Burma railway during World War II.

He was born on 14 June 1921 at Amiens. Soon after, Gordon's family moved to nearby Stanthorpe and then to Brisbane.

When World War II broke out, Gordon put his age up and joined the army "to go on an adventure". He fought in the Malayan campaign and following Japan's capture of Singapore in 1942, was a prisoner of war.

"We became captives of the Imperial Japanese Army six months after arriving in Malaya and following a ten-week battle," Gordon recalls.

"It was quite eerie when the din of gunfire and high explosives ceased, to be followed by the cheering of the enemy soldiers at close proximity.

"We became slaves and thus began, unexpectedly, a 42-month phase of my life, a period of tragic events the memories of which will remain for all time."

Gordon was held in prison camps in Singapore before he and fellow Allied troops were "herded into metal rice vans" and transported to a remote jungle area to work on construction of the infamous Thai-Burma railway.

The prisoners of war (POWs) would work shifts of up to 18 hours building embankments, bridging creeks and digging cuttings with picks and shovels.

"On the completion of a strenuous day at work our boys would commence the walk back to camp, several kilometres in pouring rain with little or no footwear. Then someone would start to sing a tune... and others would follow, and the heads would be lifted proudly," Gordon says.

More than 2,800 Australians were among 12,500 Allied POWs who died while working on the railway. Only five of Gordon's small Platoon of 16 soldiers survived the war.

Upon his return to Queensland, Gordon bought a café, worked in a chicken abattoir and owned welding and tractor businesses. Gordon's sister introduced him to his future wife, Shirley. They had two children together and adopted a third child, a South Sea Islander girl.

The Jamison's were members of the anti-conscription movement during the Vietnam War. Gordon travelled to Thailand and Japan to take part in commemorative ceremonies honouring prisoners of war and lobbied the Australian and Japanese Governments for reparations for prisoners of war.

"My wartime experiences convinced me of the futility of war. The memories of my war are not those of victorious battles or ignominious defeat, but of the human spirit of our Australian soldiers," Gordon wrote.



Gordon Jamieson 1940



# Francie's Fifteen Fabulous Females

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Gaie Maddock

My beautiful mother was naturally the very first female who nurtured and influenced me.

I was the second daughter and we lived on a farm. As little girls, my older sister Anne and I played together and shared a bedroom. We had a big sandpit with pots, pans and teaspoons. We also had a cubby house made from a big wooden crate. I still have my large teddy bear; Mary Bear is her name, and she sits on a chair in my bedroom.

My Mother loved picnics and birthday parties, storytelling and A.A.Milne poems. I continued enjoying these poems as a mother and grandmother. When Anne and I built a fairy house she would put sixpence in it when we were asleep. My mother enjoyed attending the ballet and Anne and I were always so excited when we were given a ticket to the ballet. She was a very loving grandmother, known as Nana and knitted jumpers for all her nine grandchildren. She loved to dance and sing with them and set up special play areas and organising yet more picnics in the lovely Australian bush near The Grampians.

My sister and I are still very close, often going to movies, concerts, lunch and weekends away. We also have two younger brothers.

As a five-year-old I rode my bike and attended a one room, one teacher country school with Anne. Mrs Phillips was our amazing teacher. With fifteen plus children from grade one to grade six she taught us with firm but caring instruction. Mrs Phillips love of grammar, manners and respect for others taught us important skills for our future.

During the six years at this little school, each day we all listened to Kindergarten of the Air with Miss Anne Dreyer. I was enthralled by her voice, along with music, songs and stories. From the age of five I decided I wanted to be just like her. I kept my dream of being a Kindergarten Teacher in front of me all through my secondary school education

As a very small group of children we all played together in our big play area. Val, being only one year older became my very special friend. We always sat together in school and enjoyed each other's friendship. We both moved on to secondary school, once again supporting each other at the big high school with over one hundred students. We made new friends but always made sure we were together.

I spent weekends at Val's and now that we were teenagers we started going to parties with a group of girls and boys. My parents had a car, so we often collected Val to come to the lake for picnics and swimming. She also came on camping holidays by the sea with my family. Val was an incredible seamstress and made beautiful ball gowns for herself and others. She often won 'Belle of the Ball'.

We both married but our friendship continued for over 75 years. We both owned apartments on the Gold Coast. Val and Lyle, Graham and I spent many happy times there. We also met up in Bangkok, once again enjoying this special time.

I did have female teachers at high school but only one that I can say was a great influence on me. She was my Home Economics teacher. Cooking and sewing was not only fun but stood me in good stead as a teacher, wife and mother.

Now I was at the Kindergarten Training College and to my surprise and great delight Miss Anne Dreyer was one of my lecturers. She was such a sweet, gentle and beautifully spoken lady. I lapped up everything she presented to us as Early Childhood trainees. Miss Heather Lyon was principal of the college, and she too was a woman of grace and discipline. I admired her leadership throughout the three years of my training.

My next very special friend was Heather. As we were both country girls, we needed to find accommodation near the college. We found a flat to share and as young adults began a life of fun and freedom. With our boyfriends, Alan and Graham we enjoyed cooking meals together and going to the movies. We both married and even though we lived in different towns we remained great friends for over 50 years. Heather and Alan spent time staying with us on the Gold Coast and they met Val and Lyle which often meant a group of six.



These two special girlfriends have both passed away, but I am in regular contact with Lyle and Alan.

As the song says.....

“Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver, the other gold”

My life changed in a new direction. I was now married to Graham and a mother of two little girls Sally and Katie. How I loved this amazing time. I continued working part time as a kindergarten teacher and also took on the challenging role as District Commissioner for Girl Guides. I had been a Girl Guide, a Ranger and a Leader in my hometown so Guiding was not new to me. My mentor in this new challenge was the next amazing women in my life, Glenys Soderlund. She was completing her five-year term when she asked me to take over. She knew I had come from a country town to live in Doncaster and was aware that some of the leaders would find this difficult to accept. Glen was always available for a chat and gave me confidence to carry out my role. Over the years we became very close friends.

During this busy time my family and I were given a very special task to billet and help train a young Girl Guide leader from Thailand. Isa became part of our family during the three months she lived with us. For the next forty years our family spent many happy holidays with Isa and her family in Bangkok. Isa and two of her brothers stayed with our family many times. Isa was always full of laughter and love, and we all loved her. Sadly, all these wonderful women have passed away but every day some small or big event triggers a memory and I turn my thoughts to one of them. They have all certainly influenced my life over many years.

I am now a grandmother with four grandsons. My two little girls have become fine young women who love and care for me without a thought. They have raised their boys to be loving and respectful young men. I am forever grateful for all the love I receive.

I have been a Rotarian for three years, being one of thirteen women in my club. One stands out as a special woman. Jill is an incredibly motivated person. She is gentle and thoughtful, and I enjoy working alongside her.

To complete my story of females in my life, I must include my two female dogs. Butchie, a very sweet Cavoodle was my very first dog. My husband passed away just after we got her as a puppy and Butchie helped to fill the void with her sweet face and loyalty. After thirteen years she passed away suddenly and now I have Bella, a King Charles Cavalier. She too has a sweet little face, and her big brown eyes are always looking at me. I am so lucky to have had these special little females in my life.



Butchie



Bella



# Good Luck and Good Genes

## Shirley Davison – with thanks to Carinity

Shirley Davison reckons the secret to reaching 100 years of age is “good luck and good genes.”

The avid sports fan and bookworm, a resident of the Carinity Hilltop aged care community in Brisbane, turned 100 in 2021.

The oldest of three siblings, she was born Shirley Flower in Camden, an outer suburb of Sydney, on 25 June 1921.

Her father was a banker, so Shirley moved around country New South Wales a lot when she was a child.

Shirley went to boarding school in Gunnedah, which she enjoyed. She recalls being a good student who relished learning new things.

Like her father, Shirley worked in the banking industry as a bank clerk, but she didn't really enjoy it, so she undertook secretarial work for a solicitor which was much to her liking.

The days were long for Shirley during World War II. After working her day job, she would undertake farming duties.

“During the war I continued to work as a bank clerk but after hours I worked harvesting hay as the men were all away at war. I enjoyed the work a lot. It was fun,” Shirley recalls.

Shirley's fiancée, an Australian Army soldier, sadly passed away during World War II.

Soon after, Shirley met her future husband Clifford Davison and the couple lived in Sydney.

They had three children – two sons and a daughter – and Shirley also has five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

“I am very fond of my family and friends. I have very loving and supportive family and friends,” Shirley said.

Shirley, who moved to Brisbane from Nowra two decades ago, loves watching sport. You will often find her in front of a television enjoying a game of rugby league.

“Even though I was born in New South Wales, I am a Queensland State of Origin supporter now. It is because I became a fan of Johnathan Thurston when I moved here,” Shirley explains.

“I enjoy watching football and tennis too, especially Roger Federer.”

Shirley is also an avid reader who enjoys historical novels and Agatha Christie mysteries. She has many other favourite authors and will try any book recommended to her.

“I have always enjoyed reading and consider myself to be very well read of all sorts of genres,” Shirley said.

When asked what she thinks the secret to living a long life is, Shirley replied: “I think it's a combination of good luck and good genes. Most of all, have fun.”



Shirley Davison celebrated her 100th birthday in 2021

# Growing Up in Melbourne

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Margee Ellis

I am eighty-seven now. I was born in Numurkah, Victoria with two older brothers. The family moved to the Albury – Wadonga area until war broke out in 1939. My dad, born in 1900 was too young for the First World War and unfit for the second, so we moved to Melbourne where he worked at the aircraft factory at Fishermens Bend. The only accommodation we could get was sharing part of a two storied terrace house that opened onto the street, in a factory area at the edge of North Melbourne one block away from the Victoria Markets.

I walked about ten city blocks to school in Rathdowne St Carlton, which was opposite the Exhibition Gardens. So different to what they are now, known as the Carlton Gardens. My friends and I used to climb the old oak trees outside the Exhibition Building and ‘Spy’ on the Air force people that were there during the war years. I never saw how beautiful it was inside until I went back on a visit about thirty three years later. It was a good childhood. We went on birthday parties to the Fitzroy Gardens with Captain Cooks Cottage and there was a beautifully carved Fairy Tree.

The Methodist Church in Lygon St (which no longer exists) was the centre of my activities. They would organize holidays to Mount Evelyn where we enjoyed the joys of country life. The Flagstaff Gardens was another playground for us, and we also used to ride our bikes around the Melbourne University grounds. My High School years were at University High School which was only two tram stops away, although many students travelled by train every day from the outer suburbs.

I got holiday jobs at Myers and Coles in the City, where we often caught the tram and went to the movies. The State Theatre used to be my favourite with its roof filled with stars and someone played a large pipe organ before the show. When I left school I worked for a short while at the mail sorting room of the Post Office, biding my time to enrol at the Melbourne School of Nursing which had been my life’s ambition.

I was sent to Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital as the start of my probationary training. Unfortunately, I developed eczema from my knuckles to my elbows. However, fortunately while I was visiting my cousins in Shepparton I met my future husband George at a party. ‘Some Enchanted Evening’ became our theme song. He had recently had an accident with the side car of his motor bike and was off work from his job as a fruit packer at the Shepparton Packing Company, so it was back to Melbourne on the train with me to meet my parents.

The eczema remained with me for several years until I discovered I was coeliac. I wasn’t too disappointed that I could not continue my nurse training; God had been very gracious and changed my life’s direction. We were married twelve months later at the College Church in Parkville, and we rode away to Bendigo for our honeymoon on the motorbike - which now had a box for a side car.

We lived in Shepparton. George was a drummer and we carried the whole kit – big bass drum and all in the side box of his motor bike and he played at parties and dances. When my first daughter was born she used to sleep behind the bass drum. Eventually we got a commission house at Shepparton South and helped fundraise to build the Presbyterian Church where we both taught Sunday school. In 1961, due to George’s ill health, we decided to move to New Zealand.

We sold up and moved in with my Mum and Dad in Melbourne for five months, both still working at our jobs. We set sail on the SS Iberia with our two little girls, our worldly possessions in eleven tea chests and thirty pounds.

Life in New Zealand held many blessings before returning to Australia to Gatton, Queensland in 2002, but that is another story.

# Growing up on a Cane Farm

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## Maurine Payard

I was born at the Nambour General Hospital on the 5th of October, 1940. I grew up on a cane farm with my two brothers and a sister. We had great times on the farm, building cubby houses and little gardens for the fairies to come at night and play.

Swimming in the creek while the horses were having a drink was great fun. We used to help mum and dad strip the sugar cane ready for plating and would complain about all the little hairs that used to come off. I also had a cow, Strawberry was her name, and it was my job to milk her.

In the school holidays we got to ride the horses home from one paddock to another and then home. I went to School in Nambour with my brothers from primary to high school only going for one year when mum and dad sold the farm and we moved to Millaroo, a farming town west of Ayr, along the Burdekin River. I went to school in Ayr for about Twelve months.

While living in Millaroo we had great times, going for picnics, swimming in the Burdekin River which later we found out there were crocodiles in there. The river was just over the road from the farm.

While on the farm I loved to drive the tractor. Dad grew tobacco and I had to help plant, then pick the leaves, then string them up. I hated every bit of it.

I got a job with the Irrigation and Water Supply (I.W.S) and to get to work bought myself a Vespa scooter as we lived five miles away from Millaroo, the little town.

I only stay in this job a short time and decided to move to Ayr with my scooter and found myself a job as a waitress. It is where I met Michael, we married and had two beautiful children.

We decided to leave Ayr in 1966 for Gladstone, as we heard there was a lot of work down there and Mick got a job working construction. While living in Gladstone we had two more beautiful children. In 1975 we bought our first home and lived there for twenty seven years.

We sold our home in 2002 and moved to Bli Bli where we built another home. We lived there for a few years until 2008, then sold and moved to a retirement village called Bremer Waters.



MAURINE



# Happy Years

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## Sue White

I was born in Brisbane on Christmas Eve, 1940, in the old Fermoy Hospital at Auchenflower. My younger sister and I grew up at Sherwood. My father was a keen gardener, and it fell to my lot to be his offsider, raking, clipping and weeding – the reason, I'm sure, why I have always loved plants. He grew all our veggies, we kept chooks, and the bread and the milk came by horse and buggy. The love of art was already there. I used to crush flower petals from my father's garden to make colours, until they got the message and bought me paints for Christmas.

My sister and I went to Sherwood State School and later to Girls Grammar, and after junior I left to work as a clerk at the AMP Society. Social life was tennis fixtures, church fellowship and office dances.

When I met Alan in 1964 he worked for National Bank, and two weeks after we became engaged he was transferred to London. We saved up our fare, got married and sailed off to England for two wonderful years. We lived in Wimbledon where I worked in Australia House in the Department of Trade, and at weekends we went off in our little minivan in which we explored England, Scotland, Wales and Europe. When we returned to Brisbane in 1967, National Bank transferred Alan into their travel department and after another year sent us to Townsville to open a travel branch there.

We had our three children in Townsville, survived Cyclone Althea, and returned to Brisbane in 1974. We bought a house in Kenmore and after another transfer, this time to Toowoomba, settled down to the years of child raising. I was a stay at home mum, did all the sports, dancing, music and tuckshops, and our holidays were camping in national parks. I was a brownie leader and Alan did cubs. Happy Years.

After many years with National bank travel Alan resigned and with another ex-national bank travel staff member bought his own travel agency, Harvey World Travel Milton. I went to TAFE to learn the ropes, and had many marvellous years in our agency; two husbands, two wives, and I loved every minute of it. Alan however, fell in love with someone else after fifteen years and left us.

I picked myself up, stayed with the business for a few years more, then retired and bought my wonderful block of land in Wivenhoe Pocket. I built my little house and here I am and here I'll stay as long as I am able.



My father home on leave from the war



S  
U  
E



And I didn't always have white hair



Sherwood Presbyterian Fellowship presents *Oklahoma*



Fourth Kenmore Brownies



Sydney Harbour Bridge climb on travel agent trip

# Heading West

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Jeffrey Thorpe

To quote The Village People:-  
(Go West) Sun in winter time  
(Go West) we will do just fine  
(Go West) Where the skies are blue  
(Go West) this is what we'll do

Taking their advice, our west quest is many chaptered,  
getting there has seen many travel modes adapted,  
and quantifying "west" means not only WA  
but Queensland, SA, and Northern Territory on the way.  
It began in '87 with Wimbledon winner Pat Cash  
whose victory was broadcast in a news flash  
while we viewed Uluru as backdrop for sunrise,  
no colder morn have we felt, as I memorise.

This was on a coach tour, tenting every night,  
mum and dad and three kids on a trip to delight,  
through western Qld, Territory and down to Port Augusta  
an adventure which for city kids, an outback blockbuster,  
we rode camels, climbed Uluru and slept underground  
at Coober Pedy, camped at Devil's Marbles, a vista to astound.  
We flew over the Olgas and hiked all through Kings Canyon  
nothing more than striking scenery required for a companion.

By two thousand and five, the kids had left the nest,  
t'was time to resume our interest in the west,  
more up market on this visit to Perth and southern parts,  
on to Margaret River, famed for wine making arts  
and a hike of a difference, not one seen as petty,  
return of 3.6 km on historic Busselton Jetty,  
longest wooden pier in the Southern Hemisphere  
with observatory and train, anything but austere.

July that year saw us captivated, touring the Kimberley,  
sky and land and water merged in perfect synergy,  
beehive domes of Purnululu, haunting Cathedral Cave  
where a didgeridoo performer played in the nave,  
gorges, rock art, waterfalls, intense colours of Cape Leveque  
from Kununurra to Broome, indeed nature's blank cheque.  
The trip of a lifetime, one we never will forget,  
such a little visited area, yet an exceptional asset.

Back west again in '06, to hail spouse's retirement,  
life now saw more travel almost a requirement  
with this trip extending to a leisurely four weeks,  
bushwalks through wildflowers, scaling Porongurup peaks,  
stays at Albany and Esperance amidst their glorious beaches,  
gleaming sand and turquoise water their top features  
then back to Perth for Red Bull Air Race, downright electrifying,  
death defiant stunts by pilots needing certifying.

Come twenty -o -eight on the move, the west won out again,  
two excursions realised, neither one mundane,  
launching in South Australia early in the year  
a month or so's visit on days scorching and clear,  
riding bikes on Clare rail trail, tasting wine along the way,  
the commanding Flinders Ranges, nirvana on display,  
Makybe Diva's statue, tall on Port Lincoln's shore,  
Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas, treasure troves and more.

May back in Queensland on a Happy Wanderer's tour,  
three weeks camping to places well known and obscure,  
Longreach and Winton, to home of Crocodile Dundee,  
Cloncurry then Gulflander train and Karumba by the sea.  
Explored Undara lava tubes and Chillagoe limestone caves  
where sundry stalactites performed the role of architraves.  
Skilled in tent logistics by the end of this trip,  
well-informed on when and what to zip or unzip.

Twenty-fifteen heading west once more, unable to abstain  
this time on the lavish Indian Pacific train,  
haute cuisine on rails, a bed on which to sleep at night.  
We embarked at Sydney, Broken Hill stop at first light,  
Adelaide next halt after sampling Barossa Valley,  
two days before Perth for further tasting from the galley  
however, all came to an end while on the Nullarbor,  
derailment on the line ahead, we could proceed no more.

But the appetite was whetted for travel on the rails,  
next year we tried the Westlander, at the speed of snails,  
Charleville the destination, a place we'd never been before  
and truly, what a surprise that town had in store,  
superb Cosmos night sky show and bilby presentation  
plus fascinating tales of US war participation,  
coupled with the comical history of Coronas hotel  
made the trip to Charleville go down very well.

On to twenty-seventeen and another journey west  
by Spirit of the Outback, no need for Sunday best,  
summer fares of "two for one" made the trip appealing,  
no helter skelter on this train, just peaceful calm freewheeling.  
And this, I guess, reflects an attitudinal change to travel  
where what was relished years ago would today unravel.  
Twenty-one days tenting now, I think would cause divorce  
but, add up the memories and there's no trace of remorse.



# I have a Grandmother

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Vivienne Cole

As I took my seat on flight KE 128, bound for Incheon airport South Korea, the young Korean man greeted me warmly. "I'm Stephen," he said in good English, using his western name. "I'm Vivienne," I replied. "I am on my way to your beautiful country to teach English as a volunteer for a couple of months."

Stephen had been learning English in Queensland and had then been working on a farm in the South Burnett and he was as happy to practice his English as I was to chat to a native Korean in my language since I don't speak Korean.

"This could be an interesting trip" I thought, as we all complied with the hostesses' command to fasten our seat belts and make sure our seat and tray table were in the upright position.

As the plane ascended, suddenly I felt the bacon and eggs that I had eaten at the airport café earlier, also ascend. I closed my eyes fervently wishing to gain some equilibrium and settle the nausea, but instead, as vertigo took hold, it felt like the plane was somersaulting in the air and, with it, my breakfast.

"Oh no," I groaned inwardly. "This is all a bit déjà-vu." I remembered a similar experience on a flight from Melbourne but that was 10 years earlier and I had been on many flights since without a problem!

Several thoughts collided in my mind as I struggled to keep the food inside my stomach. "Why am I doing this? I think I am going to burst! Please God don't let me die on the plane! How totally undignified! What are the Koreans around me thinking?"

Unable to contain myself any longer, I searched for the sick bag in the seat pocket in front of me. There was none. Frantically, I ripped the plastic bag in which the airline slippers were, ditched them and began to use that. Just then, I dimly heard Stephen summoning the hostess in Korean. She brought me a large duty free bag to use. As I heaved, I felt the young man next to me use tissues to wipe away the sweat and muck from my face and my neck, then comfortingly pat my back as I heaved and heaved and heaved again. I felt utterly wretched but at the same time very moved by his actions.

Fortunately the plane was not full. All around me the passengers were getting up as the hostess was moving them to other seats. "Would you like to move too?" she asked Stephen.

"No, not yet," he said as he continued to comfort me in my distress.

After what seemed like an eternity, though probably only a few minutes, the hostess brought me a travel sickness pill and moved me to another section of the plane, allowing Stephen then to move also. I finally managed to raise my head from the duty free bag, and, as I got up, I looked at this gorgeous young man and mouthed weakly, "Thank you so very much."

"I have a grandmother," he said.

# I Married a Sailor

## Becky Skillington

I was born in the UK on the 1st of September 1940. The first day of autumn in a new decade. When I was five years old we moved to Stretton in Rutland, the smallest county in England, where my parents took over the local pub, the Jackson Stops. Rutland had twenty-eight houses, two pubs, one church and was surrounded by farms.

I went to school first in Stamford, then to Ranksborough in Langham where I had to cycle about fifteen miles each way. I also had a R.A.F tutor.

I was married at eighteen to a sailor and spent two years with him at sea, eventually coming home because I was pregnant with our first child. We had three children in England, then on the 11th of March 1968 we sailed to Australia where Luke our fourth child was born in 1972.

After living in a few different places in South East Queensland we decided to settle here in Lowood.



# Ipswich Citizen of the Year

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## Glen Smith

You may already know me as President of Arts Connect Ipswich Inc. (originally Ipswich Arts Council), local artist and one of the owners of the Vintage Advantage, a little shop in the Top of Town. However, you may not know that I was awarded 2021 Ipswich Citizen of the Year and I couldn't have imagined any greater accolade.

Many people have asked me as an artist what it is that I have done to deserve the title of Ipswich Citizen of the Year. What most people don't realise is that Art is not just about hanging a pretty picture on the wall, placing a sculpture in the hallway, winning awards or making money. Art is the tool like no other that can be used to obtain so many goals. Art can give a voice to people who usually cannot be heard, raise funds for charities, be used as therapy, build our economy by creating jobs and income, break down barriers and change people's awareness and opinions, and the list just goes on. There are so many people like me who work tirelessly and endlessly not wanting anything in return but just knowing what they do will help other lives in our community become that little bit easier. We are all creating a world that's safer, friendlier, healthier and much more fun and joyous.

With art as my tool, I have been able to use it to help the community. I'm lucky to be in a position where my employment and life circumstances gives me the time and opportunities to do the work that needs to be done. Having empathy and understanding, I have found that we need to look beyond the first impressions of a person and look for what's inside them. We don't know people's circumstances we don't know why someone is in the place that they are in so let's not judge, no one is perfect.

Passion. You must have passion without passion you have no drive to do anything. My passion is the arts and I'm able to turn that passion into a drive to be able to complete many tasks and reach goals. I have used this passion of art to a greater advantage for the community.

Realisation that as an individual you can do something to make changes in other people's lives no matter how small or big the change maybe. Your commitment to helping others can be simple or dramatic but no matter what you decide to do it will make a difference in someone's life. You may never get to experience that change but trust me it's there.

Also looking outside the square you are in. Again as an individual regardless of what group you are in or not look at how you can improve your community. I know walking groups who pick up rubbish on their walks and others who place clothing and goods in places for the homeless on their daily exercise route. Environmentalists who when not picketing plant trees and clean up waterways and our forests. Musicians and actors who give time to perform at nursing homes and other venues. So look at your group and yourself and make a little addition to what you can do and that will make a huge addition in how someone may live.

That's what myself and the Arts Connect group have done. We realised that through our passion for the Arts we can also have a social conscience and use the arts as a tool to benefit the whole community.

In the past 8 years as President and member of Arts Connect we have raised thousands of dollars for charities and disaster appeals including both flood and fire. We have given people voices that usually cannot be heard in the way of art exhibitions for seniors, people living with disabilities, environmentalists and later this year our amazing indigenous community. These exhibitions all help break down walls and barriers and many misconceptions people have.

These fundraisers and exhibitions have been so successful that two of our events "Having Your Voice" and "The Fire Appeal Cent Auction" won community events of the year at the Ipswich Australia Day Awards.

Giving a person the reason to get up each day is such great therapy, having a reason and a responsibility gives us a purpose.

I know a local person who gives so much time and care to the homeless. Why? Because he realised one day that caring and providing for others makes you forget about your own personal issues. Life is not always perfect, sometimes you find yourself in a place where we think we will survive. I was like that once; I never knew if I could get out of the dark hole I found myself in.

Art was one of the tools to help me crawl out of that hole. It was the best therapy anyone could offer. From my own experiences I have been able to offer support and help to those who also find themselves in a dark place. I find the more I help others the less I worry about my own problems.

So here I am today, organising art exhibitions, workshops, charity events, social events, clothes and food drives and offering any advice and help anyway I can.

Is it tiring? – Yes

Is it hard work? – Yes

Is it long hours? – Yes

Is it worth it? – Bloody oath it is.

I don't think I'm any more deserving or special than anyone else in our community. I just know I have to have a reason to get out of bed every day. My life is too busy to think about me and my goal every day is just to reach out to at least one person in a way that makes them smile and look at life a little better.

You will be amazed about how much better you feel about yourself when you start to give to others. I know volunteers are not meant to be self-servicing but the joy I get from helping others is immeasurable and that is all the payment I need for my hard work and time.





# Itchy Feet

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## Kaatje (Kate) Vermeer Bowers

I was born Kaatje Vermeer in Holland in 1930, and have always had a sense of 'itchy feet', or rather a sense of adventure. It was this that made me decide one day in 1951 to follow my two older brothers. My brothers had been sponsored to go to Australia the year before by an Australian pilot, Mr Jimmy Casos, whom they met while in the forces on a troop ship. This was just after the 1940-45 World War, when many people in Holland were looking for a new future and wanting to forget the horrors of the past. As a young Dutch nurse of 20 years old, I was intrigued by their very interesting letters home.

One day I decided I wanted to see for myself. I put my studies on hold, packed my bags and managed to get my brothers to help me finance my trip. Unfortunately, I could not get on an assistant migrant ship and had to book a berth on P&O liner 'The Stratheden' leaving from England. The journey on the ship was very exciting, and is where I got my very first wedding proposal – which I declined!

After several weeks we arrived at our first Australian port, Freemantle. My first impression was seeing lots of wooden houses on poles. I first set foot on Australian land in Sydney and I felt very excited. I was met by my brothers and my new adventure had begun.

Ipswich was a lovely town and I was fortunate that my brothers had made several friends including the Cribb family and I was welcomed quite warmly. My brothers had bought a strip of land at Tivoli.

I found employment as a nurse at the Chalenoir Centre, which was a real eye opener. I came from a modern university clinic in Holland, to an old fashioned nursing system in Australia, with many elderly people. Here is where I got my second wedding proposal. Every time I would deliver the soiled linen to the laundry, Frank, an elderly patient, proposed to me by putting out his hand holding 12 pennies, then telling me he was rich and asking if I would marry him. Once again I declined.

My next job was at the local department store, Cribb and Foot, where the manager was Mr Andrews. I worked there as a store interpreter and was stationed at the book department, at the guidance of the department manager Mr Jim Larsen. He was very patient with me as our currency system was different to Holland. Here they had pennies and shillings, we had Dutch guilders. It was a wonderful job, and was my first taste of Australian culture.

In the meantime, my brothers had started to build a cottage on the land in Tivoli they had bought. In my spare time I carried bricks and mixed cement as a builders' labourer, to help to prepare a house for us as a family. We intended to bring our parents and remaining two sisters to Australia, but as we had been boarding, we needed a place to live. My sisters and parents eventually did come over.

After a while my 'Itchy feet' took me on a trip with my girlfriend Evelyn backpacking North, all the way up to Cairns. Backpacking and hitchhiking in those days was a very popular mode of transport. At one time we were given a lift from one place to another. One couple of young Italian men - who gave us a lift to Proserpine - were becoming quite amorous in the car. At the nearest country pub we passed, we asked them if we could take a short stop. We escaped into the pub, rented a room and barricaded the door. In that pub we waited for a less romantic lift to the next stop Mackay. After a few more adventures we reached Cairns and worked there for 3 months. I worked as a house-maid in a hotel and my friend got a job as a waitress while boarding with an elderly widow. We had a wonderful time hitchhiking all around the country as far as Lake Tiberius and The Tablelands. In my spare time I went bush with two wonderful young men, shooting wild boars and swimming in the ravine as well as spear fishing.

The rainy season drove us back to Brisbane, however the train tracks were flooded, so we took a 12 passenger cargo-boat back. We were both violently seasick, but were okay after the journey. When we returned I went back nursing. I met a young Merchant Naval officer who proposed to me, and this time I accepted! We had three lovely boys and 19 years of marriage. Sadly he died, and I had to find employment again.

After the 1974 floods I worked as a typist for a while which set me up for my next position as a teacher-aide at the Brassall school, where I stayed for 17 years. I managed to bring up my three sons, James, Timothy and Peter, and at the same time take care of my elderly parents. When they passed away I went to university after work as an external student, where I gained an arts degree after 9 years.

At the end of my study, I resigned from my position with the school and my son asked me to help him run his business on the Gold Coast as his secretary. I did that for another 17 years and during this time I accompanied my son on several trips to Korea, Vietnam and Japan. Over the years I have been back to Holland five times. At the end of my holidays there I was, longing to go back to my adopted country Australia and my sons.

At the age of 91 I am independent but receiving some assistance from home carers and my sons. I still keep contact with my last remaining sister Anneke, who lives in Holland, via my iPad as my other relatives have now passed away. During all those years I have relied a lot on my faith to see each day as a challenge and a blessing.

I continue to live in a world between my house at Ipswich and my unit at the Coast and I have never regretted listening to my 'itchy feet'.



Kate graduating in 1994

# Leaving China in 1949

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Gordon Kidd

For a person who spent his working years teaching History at a university, it seems somehow appropriate that my childhood coincided with momentous events in the history of the twentieth century. This story recounts my leaving China in 1949, the year the Communist Party under Mao Zedong took control of the country after the flight of the nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek. I will of course tell you the reasons for my being in China in 1949 as a boy of 10, and what happened to me after I left.

I was living in Shanghai, the cosmopolitan city that was the commercial capital of China from 1947. My father had been a civilian prisoner of war in Hong Kong after the Japanese had captured the British colony in 1942, and in 1947 he resumed working for Jardine, Matheson and Company; the large British trading firm whose history in China went back to the Opium War of 1840 and the cession of Hong Kong that followed it.

My father, a Scotsman, had gone out to China in 1918 to work for Jardine's, as a manager in various port cities. He met my mother, who had come out from Yorkshire to work as a secretary in Singapore. They married in 1933, and I was born in 1939 in what we now call Tianjin, the port city for Beijing.

1939 was not a great year to be born in. The Japanese had invaded China in 1937 and the North of the country was under occupation. It had also been suffering a civil war since 1927 between the government and the Communists. The Second World War broke out in Europe in September '39, but the Pacific War was yet to begin. By mid-1941 my mother had decided that the Japanese would sooner or later go to war with the United States who were resisting their expansionist ambitions in Asia. She decided to go to Australia with me, while my father, believing that Japan would not attack The US or the British Empire, chose to stay. He paid the price when the attack on Pearl Harbour happened on December 7, 1941.

Fast forward six years and my mother and I had spent the time in Sydney, living in harbour side suburbs, financially supported by my father's employer. My first memory was actually of the night of the midget submarine attack in Sydney Harbour. We were living in Double Bay in a garden flat, and I remember smoke and explosive noises and my mother wouldn't let me out in the garden to see what was going on! The six years were spent comfortably, but I was a small boy without a father, like so many Australian kids whose Dads were in Changi, on the Burma railway or fighting in Europe or in North Africa.

When my father was brought to Sydney in 1947 on the Royal Navy ship Striker he was really a stranger to me. I had to get used to having a father in my life. We had a great holiday as a family, taking the train up to Queensland and staying in the old Lennon's Hotel in Brisbane, the Southport Hotel and a guest house in the Numinbah Valley. From Southport we even went to a funny little township of modest cottages they called Surfers' Paradise. My father thought he would like to retire there one day!

But I should move the story on to Shanghai. My father went back to his old job in an office on the famous Bund, looking across the river to the giant office towers, forming a second commercial city to look over to the old skyline built by Western interests in the '20s and '30s. We lived in a big house in the British Concession, a part of the International Settlement. My wife and I actually visited the house on a trip in 1978. It had become an educational establishment.

Life for Western business people after the war was pretty good. We enjoyed good restaurants, frequent trips to the cinema, and we had eight servants to look after us, including a cook, chauffeur, gardener and one especially assigned to me. I learned to swim the 'Australian Crawl' at the Shanghai British Club and I went to school at the Shanghai British School. But there was a very dark side to life for the ordinary Chinese inhabitants, particularly the poorest ones. The post-war economy was in a bad way. There was hyperinflation and the cost of rice rose faster than that of a worker's wages. My father gave me three million dollars in local currency as pocket money each week, worth a shilling or so!

For Western businessmen, the political situation was dangerous. China was once again in a civil war between Mao's Communists and the nominal government, led by Chiang Kai-shek. Westerners, including the British, had been humiliated by the Japanese victories, and respect for them had been destroyed. I used to see huge painted graffiti on the walls of the British Consulate urging "Get out you filthy British Pigs!" Every time we went to the city the crowds, the beggars and the chaotic traffic, made me scared even though my parents tried to shield me from it all.

Eventually, in May of 1949, The British Consul told my father that the Communists would soon be heading for Shanghai to seize it from the Nationalist government, and that he should send his wife and son home to Britain. He chose to stay to look after the company's interests. My mother once again had to leave my father with their now 10-year-old son. I had to say goodbye to him and to my black and white cat 'Floppy' and go live in a country I had never been to before.

My strongest visual memory of the whole hurried departure from Shanghai was being on the deck of our British cargo-passenger ship, the Glenearn, as she sailed down the river that leads from the city to the mouth of the Yangtze and the East China Sea. As I remember it, we 'overtook' the flotilla of the Nationalist or Kuomintang government heading out to cross the strait to Formosa as we called it, which became the independent state of Taiwan. It was about ten days before Shanghai fell, almost without resistance, to the Communists. The People's Republic of China came into being in October, 1949.

I thoroughly enjoyed the sea voyage to England. I had the run of the ship. Arriving in London, we reunited with family, though none of my grandparents were still alive, sadly. Sydney seemed a distant memory of bright skies and warm sunshine.

My mother and I settled in Sussex and I went to school in Canterbury, and to university at Oxford where I studied Modern History. My father stayed on in China, back in Tianjin, dealing with the Communist government's demands on the company, eventually coming home and died before I left school. I had never been able to have much time with him. He would have loved to have retired to Australia but never got the chance. My mother and I migrated to Sydney in 1962, and I came to Brisbane in 1965, with my wife and the first of our four children.

When I look back on my life in Australia after fleeing China in 1941, and my two years in China after 1947, followed by another hurried exit from conflict in 1949, I reflect how fortunate I have been, and how as a student of History, I was affected as a child quite dramatically by historic events.



# Let's buy a Farm

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Yvonne Hurst

My husband Hylton was a perfectionist in an imperfect world. This resulted in a nervous breakdown while working for the Customs Department and led to the decision to resign. What to do? He had worked for the government since he was fourteen.

While having a beer, the publican told him how he had made a fortune through owning and operating country pubs. That was the answer, my husband thought! He had worked behind bars so knew all about pubs!

Well, we had two teenage sons. I certainly didn't want my sons at that impressionable age near any pub. They were also strongly against the idea. That's when I found an advertisement for a hobby farm near Gatton, so let's buy a farm!

Our small farm was just eleven miles North West of Gatton. It was a long narrow block squeezed between a dirt road and another property. The house was located on a ridge overlooking a most delightful valley complete with a tiny church. In no time Hylton had a job in town and the boys were settled happily in school.

I was still unpacking our goods when I went to check for mail and couldn't believe my eyes. There, in the middle of the road, at the top of a rise, were our six pigs! Somehow they had escaped from the piggery! What to do? I had seen pigs in pens at the Royal Show, never touched one, didn't realise how big they could be! Our pigs could be run over on that road! Between shouting and waving my arms madly, they cooperated and moved back into the piggery. What a relief! I don't remember if I ever mentioned this escapade to my husband or sons.

Only the road separated us from our German neighbour, Old John, who had farmed there for sixty years. He was wonderful in so many ways. I always felt he knew everything that happened on our plot of land but never interfered.

He helped us to purchase a milking cow, taught us how to milk her and allowed us to use his bails. It became the boy's job to bring Pet up from the paddock every day and to milk her. Well, she became sneaky! She played hide and seek games with the boys. The games increased once she had a calf to protect.

Meanwhile in Brisbane, my eighty year old father was concerned about our lack of bails. He purchased second hand timber, transported it on top of his old car, and then proceeded to build the bails for us. He then decided we needed a shed! So a few more trips with weathered timber and he built a huge shed too. I've no doubt these constructions are still standing!

That winter brought such an unexpectedly heavy downpour, just when our pigs were giving birth. Early that night, an avalanche of water poured down the hill and through the piggery. Old John appeared, helping to save as many tiny lives as possible. I sat at the open oven door, rubbing warmth and life into those tiny bodies, crying when they died. Several of the survivors later developed arthritis.

With the coming of spring, Hylton decided it was time to start ploughing. It was sports day so I was committed to driving the boys to town, however I later heard what had happened in my absence. Old John came out of his house, dressed in his suit to attend a wedding. He wandered across the road and stood watching Hylton. When Hylton reached that end of the paddock, John asked what he was doing. Hylton thought it was obvious but said, "I'm ploughing the paddock". Old John slowly replied "Well, if it was me, I would plough in the other direction so I didn't lose my soil in the next storm." When I arrived home, there was Old John sitting on the plough in his good suit, ploughing the field, repairing the damage done.

I started to feel anxious about leaving Hylton alone on the farm after an incident which could have had dire consequences. He decided it was time for a burn off. By the time I arrived home the blaze was out of control with rising smoke and crackling flames. It was so scary! Beating the fire with hessian bags wasn't working, the fire racing ahead of our poor

efforts. Then Old John appeared with several neighbours and they won the battle. This is what neighbours did - helping but also protecting their own properties.

The boys loved that farm; the ploughing and planting. But there wasn't sufficient income from the crop of sweet potatoes so I opened a dress shop in Gatton. The nearest dress shop at that time was in Toowoomba. I called my shop 'The Bird of Paradise'. Being at the entry to the RSL hall which hosted frequent events meant potential customers, so I changed the window daily. I couldn't afford staff so I was salesperson, buyer, and decorator. It was so rewarding when customers asked for guidance. At that time the clothing industries in Australia and overseas were not producing blouses. The demand was there, so I started making these items during the quiet times. I really loved my shop but that life was to change again..... I was pregnant so the shop had to go on the market. I managed to sell just two weeks before Bruce was born.

By this time we had a major problem with our crops. Our neighbour owned most of the valley. His cattle were jumping and trampling the fence, then destroying our crops. They trampled more than they ate but it was devastating. Old John called them rogue cows. Every morning we were up early shooing them out, till the next time.

Finally, we visited a lawyer. The only action we could take was to impound those cows and look after them. We couldn't win so with no option we sold the farm. As we drove away, I couldn't look back. It remains my heart home.

# Life is a beautiful journey

Barbara Banar

I was born in Sydney New South Wales in 1940, spending my earlier life in Bargo which is located on the Goulburn Line. Going to school I would ride my bike a mile each way in all weather conditions.

In the early sixties I moved to Brisbane where I joined the workforce, with my most rewarding position being as a funeral arranger for John Hislop and Sons. Leaving Hislop's I became a secretary to the Fashion Buyer for Rockmans.

From the eighties I worked in the administration office at St. Joseph's Nudgee College until my retirement. During my lifetime I have been fortunate to travel to many countries including Papua New Guinea, The United States of America, Canada, Egypt, Africa and Cambodia.

At the end of 2018 I resigned from my position after serving nine years as a volunteer in policing with the Ipswich Police Service.



# Life Must Go On

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## Robert Christensen

With Danish and Irish blood coursing through my veins, I opened my eyes to the world on 23 January, 1951.

My great grandfather Niels, born 1853, left Denmark to fulfil his desire of becoming a sailor, arriving in Queensland in 1873 and plying his fishing trade in Hervey Bay. Niels and his wife Grace were the parents of my father Vernon, born in February, 1919 in Mount Morgan.

On the Irish side of the family, the start of life in Australia for my great-great-grandfather William is a story worth telling. William fell victim to the judicial system in Limerick for Pig Stealing, resulting in his being sentenced to seven years servitude in Australia. He achieved his Certificate of Freedom in 1835, and the rest is history. My mother, Veronica, born January, 1924 in Tenterfield, was the daughter of his great grandson, Michael and his wife Mary.

My father fought in the Second World War as part of the 42nd Infantry Battalion. Upon arriving home, he married my mother in 1946. My father was a plumber by trade, my mother a registered nurse.

I grew up in a weatherboard house in Ellis Street, Toowoomba with my sister Denise, born 1947, and Brother Stephen, born 1954.

When I was about 9 years of age, a stick was thrown into my eye. Even with glasses, my eyesight was very poor, which resulted in problems with my schoolwork. I think the teachers thought I was just not that bright, so I always ended up at the back of the classroom. The problem was that I could not really see the blackboard from the front of the classroom, let alone the back of the classroom.

Upon finishing school at fifteen, I was looking forward to joining my father in his plumbing business. However, due to ill-health necessitating an indoor job, I joined the Myer team in 1966, in the Toy Department.

I met my wife Moira at the weekly dance at the Trades Hall. One night, I noticed a cute little chickie over the other side of the room and asked her to dance. That one dance lasted our entire lives, as it was pretty obvious at that moment we were meant to be together forever.

We were married at Holy Name Church, Toowoomba on 24 March, 1973. It was not long until Moira fell pregnant with our first child. However, the 'powers that be' decided I would be better suited working in the Brisbane Myer stores, so we moved to Ferny Hills, where Michelle was born on 17 September, 1974.

Moving house seemed to herald the birth of a child, and just two months after moving to Alexandra Hills, Anthony was born on 26 May, 1977, and our family was complete.

In 1976, I left Myers, moving to Hobby and Toyland. Times change, and so do jobs, and in 1980 I started a new job as a Toy Buyer for Toyworld.

One of the highlights of my working life was being asked to assist the overseas buyer of Toyworld in trips to Hong Kong, China, Macau, Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

Looking to move closer to our families, with the added advantage of the children growing up in a country atmosphere, we purchased a Toyworld store in Dalby in 1985.

In 1994, envisioning a seascape adventure, we moved to Hervey Bay, where we opened Santa's Wonderland. Eighteen months later, we decided we had had enough of 'playing with toys', and I entered the real estate world.

The draw of the big city was still with us, and in 1999 we moved to Brisbane.

Finding I had a natural aptitude for teaching, and enjoyed sharing my experiences as a real estate salesman, I attained my Workplace Trainer and Assessment qualifications, and gained employed in TAFE as a part-time a tutor/marker in the real estate division.

As I had many years' experience in the retail side, I worked part-time from 2005-2008 with Myers to upgrade my qualifications, allowing me to secure a permanent position with TAFE as a Workplace Trainer/Teacher training Retail Certificates.



In 2009 we made our last move to Bundamba, Ipswich. Due to ill health in 2011 and further worsening of eye conditions I retired, becoming a 'house husband', and a very good one at that!!

I have since been diagnosed with Parkinson Disease, but this does not stop me. I have always loved my garden, and it is testament to the fact that if you give your garden lots of love and attention, it will thrive. My garden is blossoming with an abundance of flowers and fruit trees, and a flourishing veggie patch.

My other love is music. I have thousands of albums covering an assortment of music, and I am an avid collector of any old CD's that people don't need any more. I have created many USB's for friends and family for use in their cars and home.

My story would not be complete without mentioning my children and grandchildren and of course our little one-eyed puppy Jazzy.

Michelle became a child care teacher, and is now Director of Inala Community Kindergarten. She married 'the boy next door' Darren Hallesy in 1998, and it was not long till we were the proud grandparents of Luc, born March 2000, and Gabrielle, born October 2002.

Anthony joined the Air Force in 1999, and met 'the love of his life' Tracyann Sheather in Tindal, where he was stationed. They married in 2007 and have three children, Connor, born November, 2007, Georgia, born June 2010, and Emma, born September 2013.

Being a grandparent means the world to me, and I was thrilled when Gabby, asked if she could have her 'formal' photos in my garden amongst the trees and flowers.

Connor plays the guitar and I was delighted when he asked if he could have my forty-five year old guitar. His songs are probably very different to what I played, but the strings of my old guitar are alive again in his young hands.

Regardless of what life throws at me, I will continue to look forward to the future with resilience and hope.



# Life of the party

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## Joan Davey – with thanks to Carinity

Joan Davey has worn many hats during her amazing life: professional musician, racehorse owner, socialite, mother and wife, charity fundraiser, and family matriarch.

A resident of the Carinity Brookfield Green aged care community in Brisbane, she was born Enid Joan Davey in Macclesfield, South Australia on 24 March 1921.

Joan's love of music led to a professional career as an accomplished pianist from an early age.

As a teenager during World War II, she fell in love and married her childhood sweetheart, Robert. They had two children and set about establishing a happy family home in Adelaide.

The couple had a successful electrical business and enjoyed the sport of horse racing, owning and racing trotters.

After Robert and Joan divorced, Joan re-married in the early 1960s. Her second husband Norman's work saw the couple travel extensively abroad, living in countries such as Philippines and Singapore.

Always the socialite, Joan quickly established herself within various charities in Manila and became a champion for underprivileged children.

She set her sights on creating a steady source of vital nutrition for children in need throughout the Philippines, with great success.

After Joan and Norman returned to Sydney in the early-1970s, Joan began volunteering at Royal South Sydney Hospital and soon filled a vacant position as chief fundraising officer, raising money for a new rehabilitation centre.

Leaning on her social skills, Joan was a favourite of many high-profile notable Australians who supported her fundraising efforts for the hospital.

Joan enjoyed this role immensely and created a number of prestigious events that supported the building of one of Australia's leading rehabilitation centres.

Following Norman's sudden passing, Joan moved to Queensland to be closer to her daughter and grandchildren, living with them on a thoroughbred stud on the Gold Coast for several years before relocating to Brisbane.

At the age of 80, Joan met a charming Scottish man called Daniel with whom she spent 14 years before his passing.

For four years the couple lived happily together at Carinity Brookfield Green, where Joan continues to reside.

Joan is a much-loved mother, grandmother, great grandmother and great-great grandmother to over 18 descendants.



Joan Davey celebrated her 100th birthday in 2021



# Life on Stone Hill

## Heather Schiefelbein

I Heather – nee Lelesanft, was born in Toowoomba General Hospital on the 27th of March 1940. I lived at Maclagan, a small town outside of Toowoomba until I was two years old. We then moved on to a grain property at Cecil Plains on the Darling Downs near Dalby.

I went to school there from five until ten years old. We then moved to Chinchilla and I finished school at fourteen years old.

I worked at a doctor's surgery cleaning, then at commercial and Tattersalls Hotels as a waitress. At eighteen I bought my first car, a mini minor. I worked in Oakey at a home, Range Motel. I then moved to Brisbane and started nursing at Chermside Chest Hospital now the Prince Charles Hospital.

I married Graham Gayler and in 1971 had Charmaine. We bought a house in Ipswich and I continued nursing at Lauriston Nursing Home for seventeen years before I lost my husband. I re-married to Trevor Scheifelbein, and lived on Stone Hill, Glamorgan Vale Road, Lowood for thirty two years. Trevor passed away and I was forced to sell and move to Fernvale in 2017.





# Live life

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## Enid 'Jean' Clifford – with thanks to Carinity

“Just live life.” That’s the advice from centenarian Enid Clifford.

Enid, better known as ‘Jean’, turned 100 years young at the Carinity Clifford House residential aged care community in Brisbane in 2020.

The centenarian was born on 20 December 1920.

With her father working in sawmills Jean and her family moved around a lot. She also grew up in other places around the Scenic Rim region, such as Mt Alford and Kalbar.

Before she married Jean worked as a mental health nurse in a place called Sandy Gallop, a job she loved.

After World War II ended Jean married George Clifford, a soldier who was a member of the famed Rats of Tobruk which defended a Libyan port during the Siege of Tobruk in 1941.

After the couple was married in 1946, they moved to Lutwyche in Brisbane, where Jean lived until coming to Carinity Clifford House – located in the adjacent suburb of Woolloowin.

Together the Clifford’s had two daughters named Ann and Jenny who Jean looked after as a stay-at-home mother.

As well as her children, Jean also loves the other three ‘C’s – cards, cooking and clothes – which were big parts of her life.

She loved playing cards with her favourite game being poker, which she enjoyed playing every week for decades and was very skilled at.

Jean was also renowned as a great cook dubbed ‘the best fish cooker out there”, and was a talented seamstress who made all her daughters’ clothes.

A woman of strong Christian faith, Jean never drank, was never stressed and always expresses herself.

Her advice for a long life is to “eat good, plain food, live plainly and just live life”.



Enid Clifford celebrated her 100th birthday in 2020

# Living in a Country Town through a Global Pandemic

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Beryce Nelson

Well, the madness continues around the world with governments of all persuasions trying hard to manage the COVID pandemic whilst having to combat the lunacy coming from some small sections of their communities. We are fortunate to be living in Queensland Australia, where the management has been excellent, and the lunacy levels seem lower than average. The good news for us is that spring has well and truly arrived and the garden is flourishing again. The fruit trees are all in blossom again and the vegetables are growing, so we expect a grand harvest in the summer and next year. This is why we love living in Toogoolawah, a country town 120km north- west of Brisbane.

One of the many things that motivated us to come to this rural community in the Brisbane Valley, was the keen sense of community which was evident right from the first visit. This has proven significant over the past eighteen months during the COVID pandemic. The whole town pulled together with health services enhanced and the local supermarket and other food outlets increasing home deliveries. Neighbours helped neighbours. In some cases, new friendships formed, and older ones strengthened. Our ongoing health issues meant that we were classed as vulnerable to COVID and the help we have received from the community has been amazing. We have also helped where we could and now that things have improved, we are trying to become more active in the community again.

A great love is the garden, and we were fortunate enough to gain the services of a near neighbour, to help us with the more back breaking work in the garden. It has transformed our lives. All the beds are cleaned up, fertilised, newly mulched and the spring flowers are in full bloom. The Native Hibiscus has doubled in size and is full of flowers and the roses are budding. Walking around the garden is now a joy.

Apart from our two families, our other great passion is Arts and Cultural Heritage and we have badly missed our usual programs of concerts and family gatherings in other cities. However, some really good news in 2021 is that the cultural life in our region has been revitalised with funding from a number of sources resulting in the appointment of a new curator at our regional art gallery and some interesting new exhibitions planned for 2022 and 2023. As well as that, the local Council has created a new Arts and Culture management position and a series of cultural events are now planned for the Civic Centre, beginning in late September and October. The first is a learning session on Growing the Arts in our region and the second will be a classical music concert by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra live-streamed from Brisbane.

The Council also subsidised a weekend Writers Retreat held in early September. It was fantastic and looks like becoming an annual event. Somerset Writers Group has grown in strength and numbers since its inception in 2019 and their books of short stories are available through the region's libraries and elsewhere. I have been kept busy writing and Merton has been busy in the garden or the studio.

The local cinema in Toogoolawah has also re-opened and is screening new releases at Alexandra Hall on a Saturday night. The Community Choir held a fantastic concert there in mid- September with a full house and plans another two for later in the year. Several of the local arts groups are planning new workshops and have great plans for 2022 so the atmosphere for the Arts in Somerset is very positive. Toogoolawah & District History Group is also working on a series of new exhibitions to be ready for 2022. Apart from all of that, the region is abuzz with greatly increased property sales, new business initiatives such as the Picnic Society Cafe, huge numbers of domestic tourists in cars, caravans and on bicycles and there has been an influx of new younger families making the 'tree change' decision to live and work in our region. This is stimulating the development of the local economy and bodes well for the future of this unique little town full of architectural and cultural gems.



Like so many other people, we have not been able to visit family and several plans made have had to be cancelled or postponed so let us hope the intelligent majority who have been fully vaccinated (like us) will enable the country to open up again in a sensible way soon. Roll on, 2022!



Looking to the front



Native hibiscus flower



Daisies and small sculpture

# Loss

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## Julia Carroll

It was half-past ten on a Thursday evening. My grandson Jeremy rang me, he was distressed. "The police came to the door. They said 'your mother is dead'. How could it be true?" he said.

Vicki was my youngest, she was 50. I had said goodbye the previous morning as she set off happily to spend a few days with the new man in her life. I can still see her at my door, looking at my little dog Eliza lying on the settee. "I'll be back!" were her last words.

Sudden death, a heart attack, she had no idea anything was wrong, and neither did we. It is difficult to grasp that she has gone, not coming back. I'll never see her again.

We had a special supper the night before. I cooked some roast pork, we lit a candle, and we had a glass of wine. We often did that when she came to stay. She loved coming to Aveo. She would say "I can't wait till I'm 65 and can move in". All my friends here knew her. We often went together for a drink on Friday and joined friends for supper in the restaurant. When I had a party she was there to help.

Vicki was the wild child, the rebellious teenager who sent her parents' hair grey; two lovely children born when she was 16 and 18, a series of unsatisfactory partners – I used to joke that my attempts to bring out the best in them may tip the balance with Saint Peter when I turn up at the pearly gates.

I always knew she was the one who was going to support us in our old age. She moved back home to help me when her Dad developed Parkinson's disease and then dementia. She helped me to downsize and sell our home; she has been a constant presence in my life since I have lived here in Aveo Retirement Village.

We remained Mother and Daughter but became the best of friends. When I went away, Vicki moved in and looked after Eliza. She helped with the garden. She had never been much of a gardener before but she clambered up my back wall to plant flowers. I bought a step ladder to make the climb easier. No-one has used it. She grew sunflowers from seed and had the joy of nurturing two sunflowers that grew to be taller than her.

Now retired I have been able to buy 'going out dresses'. Vicki was always encouraging me; and borrowing them! Her new man invited her for a weekend at the coast; we had such fun deciding which of my clothes she should take with her.

I still can't grasp that she's not coming back. I find myself thinking I must tell Vicki there are 10 paw-paws on the tree and already 2 little figs on the miniature fig and 'remember those tomatoes that did so well next to the biodegradable bin, they've come back!' I find food in the freezer that I bought so we could share.

Life was at last looking up for her; a new partner, at last a really good man; a new work interest, an online course in veterinary nursing at which she was getting 100 per cent for every assignment. Why take her? Why not me, I'm 84, my work is done.

Now she no longer has to worry about losing me. Now I no longer have to worry about her future; she had so few resources or superannuation.

Do I tell people, when they ask "I have five children" or "I had five children"?

I still can't grasp that she's not coming back; that I have lost her.



# Memories of Old

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Wendy Svartz

A memory is a photograph taken by the heart.

While searching through a multitude of photographs from several years I happened upon a photograph which stirred up memories of a time long gone. The picture is a family group photo taken in the early 1960's. I am about twelve years old.

Mum and Dad are in the picture. Dad idolized Mum and the feeling was mutual. They were the epitome of love and respect. I could not have wished for better parents.

Aunty Rita and Uncle Joe are in the picture also. They were my favourite relatives. Aunty Rita was a jolly soul and led us all in song when we visited. She talked non-stop and loved to cook and entertain. Their daughter, Janet was a competitive ballroom dancer and sang in a band. Her evening gowns were lovingly crafted by her mother. Living to well into her nineties and still sharp as a tack, Aunty Rita fended for herself until her demise. Uncle Joe worked in a factory that made steel barriers for highways. A short stocky man- he always wore a hat. Sadly he died of a massive heart attack on his sixty-first birthday.

We loved visiting them, never a dull moment. Outside, beside their outdoor lavatory a huge cage housed a white cockatoo, very old and smart. He would often screech when anyone walked by, "Giss a kiss! Giss a kiss!" We figured he had most likely picked that up from Janet's boyfriends. She often had admirers visit and they would disappear out back for a little private canoodling.

My older sister, Helen is there too – my best friend. She left home at eighteen to live in Sydney. She later traveled to New Zealand on a six-month working holiday, then moved to London and stayed for two years. She traveled overland by bus back to Australia stopping off in Kathmandu and Marrakesh on the way. She married at thirty-five to a man she met on a cruise and bore him three sons. She and her husband recently down-sized after living on acreage for many years and moved to suburbia. "I can walk to the shops." she said.

My younger sister, Jan, six years my junior is also in the photograph. She was the happiest baby in the world and I recall that I felt somewhat smarted when she was born after having been the baby for so long. I soon bowed to her charms and relished my role as big sister to her. I married and moved overseas when she was fourteen. Returning four years later she had transformed from a gangly, tentative, self-conscious teenager and blossomed into a beautiful young lady. She moved to Brisbane, worked in a bank and married a co-worker when she was twenty-nine. Jan and I share a love of quilting. She is talented. Her needlework is exquisite. She accuses me of sometime playing 'mother' to her.

My brother, Ron is absent from the picture. By that time, he was most likely wooing his future wife, his childhood sweetheart or playing cricket or tennis and didn't have time for trivial family outings. They have been married for over fifty-five years. Ron became an award-winning journalist, author of several books and a recipient of an Order of Australia. He is a wonderful, genuine, sincere person and devoted husband, father and grandfather. I treasure the all too few times we have spent together over the years. He is an inspiration.

In the picture we are posing in front of a blue and white Holden station wagon, Dads 'pride and joy'. We didn't always have great cars for the longest time. When we finally had one that was reliable it opened up a whole new world to the family. Gone were the days of uncertainty as to whether we would have to change a flat tire or push the cars to get them running. We always carried extra water in case the engines overheated. Despite always being a concern, it never stopped us taking numerous weekend jaunts to interesting destinations.

We all shared a love of history, instilled in us by Dad so we visited historic towns, bush-ranger sites, monuments, cemeteries, and the odd historic jailhouse. We spent the year planning our summer holidays. We tented or rented stationary caravans which were fitted with all the comforts of home, albeit comfortably cramped. We spent most of the time outdoors. Our trips usually coincided with a test cricket match or two which may explain

my love for the game. I remember wishing I could play in a real cricket game, not just after school in our backyard. Girls didn't play cricket back then. To me, boys seemed to have more fun. They never needed to worry about not bending over and exposing their underwear. Or wear mantillas to church or dresses like those in the picture – short with full-gathered skirts and puffy sleeves. I wondered if Mum used curtain material to make our clothes. She was practical. We did not have an abundance of money, certainly not enough to splurge on store-bought clothes. Matching outfits were common.

Remarkable that a simple photograph can stir so many memories of people I have loved and lost. The hours fly by. Several more boxes, full of sixty years of memories, remain to explore. I will most likely need another sixty years to do that. I can't wait to start.



# My Blue 'Mini' and Me

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Alla Craigie

In 2004 I was saying my final goodbye to a very dear friend of mine. This friend has been with me for many, many years. She has been there for me every time I needed her. She never asked for anything in return. All she required was to fill her tank and pump up her tyres, and occasionally a wash and polish would not go astray. She has been by my side for nearly 20 years. I know that she and I were made for each other.

Very few cross words were spoken over the years, the odd one or two; when a flat battery occurred was a common one, but otherwise her performance was quite exemplary. She was a good listener, never answered back. Agreed with whatever I had to say. Never asked where we were going, she would be there, and will wait patiently for my return. She took everything in her stride, in any weather. To her it did not matter if it was cool, hot, wet, dry, she was always there, waiting to be of service to me. You cannot ask for more than that!! We were a perfect fit.

I am describing my Blue Morris Minor, affectionately referred to as a 'Mini'. Mine was a 1976 model with a white top and 'Mag' wheels. She has also be referred to as 'the flying brick'. We purchased her in the mid 1980's. The history behind the 'Mini' came about because of the fuel shortage caused by the 1956 Suez Crisis. The population of Britain did not take to the 'Mini' straight away.

I read in the newspapers, at the time, that Princess Margaret was seen in one, which was the beginning of the 'Mini' popularity. The movie 'The Italian Job' in 1969 further popularised the 'Mini'. In 1999 the 'Mini' was voted as the second-most influential car of the 20th Century. The 'Mini' was produced by British Motor Corporation (BMC).

She came into my life while we were living in Beaudesert. This rural town is about 70km south of Brisbane. In the 2016 census Beaudesert had a population of 6,395. This region is known as the Scenic Rim. Some of the nearer towns are Rathdowney, Canungra, (Army Training Base is situated here), Boonah, and Mt. Tamborine. It is a beautiful area, people pass through the town to go to O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. The Kooralbyn International School was situated there – it produced two young Australian of the Year Recipients – (Cathy Freeman and Scott Hocknull). Boys Town was also situated there at the time.

We arrived in Beaudesert from Townsville in 1977. It was a typical rural town; a main street, no traffic lights at that stage, but this was to change as the years went by. No fast food outlets, KFC was to arrive at a later date. This was a great day for celebration in the town.

The majority of the population worked at the meat works, which were situated not far out of town. It was a sporting town, as most, rural towns seem to be. It also had a weekly newspaper "Beaudesert Times".

In the early days there was a family owned supermarket. When Coles supermarket opened, the family owned store closed its doors as they could not compete. There was a corner store which remained open which was run by a local family.

It was the only 'Mini' in the town. During Primary school our daughter did not hold the 'Mini' in high esteem. She would often say to me, "Mum park further away from the school, I don't want them to see that you are picking me up in a Mini". Then, as she attended High School, all of a sudden the 'Mini' became popular, her High School friends remarking "I like your mum's Mini".

The 'Mini' was never short of admirers. Many a time I would park the 'Mini' and someone would walk up to me and say "my first car was a Mini," or "I used to repair Mini's!" a common one was "they don't make them like that anymore". To me it was a unique car.

In 1991, my husband was transferred to Brisbane and we settled in the eastern suburbs. This would be the 'Mini's' new home.

While residing in Beaudesert, the 'Mini' was housed undercover, the new home we purchased had only one garage. The 'Mini' was parked on the side of the house. This was to be her home for many years exposing her to the elements. As the years rolled on, repairs



were becoming more frequent, replacement parts, at times had to be sourced from car wreckers.

The time had come for me take my last trip in my 'Mini' to an establishment who specialised in 'Minis'. Passing the keys to the salesman was a final act, it closed a huge chapter in my life. The next time I would see her, would be in an advertisement in a magazine 'Just World Cars' ready to be sold to a new owner.

It is with fondness that I bid farewell to her, she may only be a blue 'Mini' with 'Mag' wheels to anyone who saw her, but to me she was a lifeline for a journey through a greater part of my life. Looking back, I have had the opportunity of having this unique experience. All I can say is little did I realise that, my 'Mini', would leave such an impression on me.

Looking back at some of the photos taken of the 'Mini and Me', I realise that I have changed with the years but she still looks the same. The new 'Mini' is not for me, it does not hold the same charisma. There will never be another one like the original for me.

It was interesting to read an article in a magazine of a lady that had a Morris Ute for 48 years, she mentioned the words "character and mystique" describing her car. That is exactly the way I felt about my 'Mini'.





# My Working Journey over 50 years

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Shu-yin Wong

I still remember on the day of 1 July 1972 when I finished seven years of secondary education (five years plus two years at matriculation level). By 1 September 1972 I had started working, earned a living and began to contribute part of my earnings to support a family of eight members in total.

At the time I lived in Hong Kong, the last colony of the British Empire. Hong Kong's economy was beginning to pick up in the early seventies. There were jobs of all varieties available for people to choose. Of course, one required the suitable qualification to be selected for a particular job.

The job I chose was a postal worker working for the Hong Kong government and I was employed by the Postmaster General. My secondary education was adequate for me to apply for this position. I read this vacancy application in the local newspaper. After I completed the application form and had it sent to the Postmaster General, within two weeks, I was asked for a short interview and was told in the interview that I had got the job and reported for duty on 1 September 1972.

In-house basic training was given to understand and practise how a post office was operated. This training was carried out inside the main post office situated in Pedder Street, Central District and it lasted for two weeks. After this two weeks' training, I remained in the same building to sort out the incoming mail (letters, postcards, aerogrammes and likewise mail) for postmen who were assigned to deliver the incoming mail to the residents of the Wai Chai District.

It was a tedious and tiring job in sorting the mail into different cubicles (20 cm x 20 cm each) built against a wall - I called them pigeon holes. Each of these pigeon holes are to be delivered to residents living in one of the streets in the Wai Chai District. In a way I liked this physical work and yet my mind was already thinking about my future career and a job which would suit me more.

I would not have much more to say in this story if I kept working in the same job, and at the time I was contemplating pursuing tertiary education in the local university. I resat two more matriculation examinations in the following years, yet my examination results were not good enough for me to secure a place in university. I decided it was time for me to change tack and look for a career job I could pursue with my secondary school education qualification.

With this in mind, after working two years in the post office department I applied for the position of health inspector. At the time the health inspector was responsible for the environmental hygiene and food hygiene of Hong Kong. This profession attracted my attention as there was good career advancement up to the rank that I might be able to head the food and environment hygiene department. I was accepted for the position and underwent two years' training. At the end of this training I obtained the professional qualification to work as a health inspector.

I did enjoy working as a health inspector as it gave me opportunities to meet people from all walks of life during my daily work. I worked diligently, up-skilled myself from time to time and gradually rose to the rank of chief health inspector. Throughout these years, I observed that generally work was abundantly available for people to choose. Especially those who had completed their university education would secure well paid and secured jobs.

Middle way through my health inspector career I would have thought that I would continue to work in the health inspector profession until I reached retirement with a good lump sum of retirement pension.

I would not have more to say in this story if I kept working in the same profession. Somehow, my life had a turn again. With full support from my wife, I resigned the well-paid health inspector job and migrated to New Zealand at the age of 45 with my young family (a wife and a son aged nine). At the time I was contemplating that I would be able to retire to do something very different.

As I did not wish to continue my health inspector career in New Zealand, I gave myself another opportunity to pursue my dream of university study which I planned in 1972. Subsequently I took up studying law in New Zealand and practised for about ten years after I graduated in 2005.

All in all I sailed safely through my first job as a postal worker, then as a health inspector and as a lawyer for the first 40 years of my work life.

I would not have more to say in this story if I stayed in New Zealand for my retirement. Somehow with the consent of my spouse I was on the road again and moved to Brisbane towards the end of 2011. When I came to Brisbane I had similar thought about retirement from paid employment altogether. Somehow I changed my mind and decided to go back into the work force working as a bailiff in the Queensland courts. I am still working as a bailiff and I do find this job keeps me abreast of what is happening in Brisbane which would very likely be the place for my retirement.

I came to Brisbane in 2011 and have been living in Brisbane for nearly 10 years. Assessing the job market in Brisbane in this decade, I find it is a total different working environment and work opportunities compared to the days when I began my working life in 1972. University education is no longer a guarantee for well-paid and respected jobs.

Jobs like production line workers, typists and bank tellers disappeared at the advent of robots and information technology. I remember during my second job as a health inspector I was using a typewriter to write my report. Typists and stenographers were employed in all government departments to type up documents and reports. Now with the provision of a desktop computer and a connected printer, one can write and print a document immediately without going through the hands of a typist and likewise for another staff to have it printed out.

The other phenomenon I witness in the current working environment is that a person is very likely to work through at least five different jobs before they reach the year of retirement. I reckon it is not a bad thing to have worked through five different jobs and in a way it may widen one's perspective to know more. However, unless a person is rising through the ranks in these five jobs setting, the likely scenario is that that person may be lingering at the entry point of earning in each of these jobs. That would become a concern as it would affect the total amount of superannuation subsequently accumulated at the end of that person's work life.

It is nearly 50 years since I began my work life in 1972. I reckon everyone should be given an opportunity to have basic education up to year 12. Whether one would continue university education it depends whether one has ambition to pursue his or her dream. It is quite obvious that nowadays university qualification does not guarantee any good job prospects.

If I had the chance to repeat my work life I would be pragmatic to find a job which is more stable and the earning should be enough for me to have a decent living. I do not discount the significance of furthering our learning of something new throughout our lifetime as I have written in the Senior Stories 2020. Having said that, I still have the belief that the concept of going through university education is not just for us to attain higher education. More importantly, I reckon it is through the process of tertiary education we learn how to organise our thoughts in a rational way, how to develop skills of critical thinking and be able to assess the rights from wrongs and also be able to hear two sides of arguments before we make up our minds where to stand and lastly not to blindly accept one side of argument before assessing the consequence of doing so.

Though the era of job opportunities and work environment may be different from 50 years ago, what has not changed is that a worker has to work hard and smart in order to earn a decent living.



Shu-yin Wong

# Reflections on Achievement

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## Viola De Barros

I was born in Goa in 1939 and married in 1961. I went on to have 3 children (who have produced me 9 grandchildren). These are some of my greatest achievements by far!

Moving to Brisbane in 1975 was another achievement of which I am proud, however, being the Head Teacher at St Xavier's in Dar-es-Salaam I count amidst my proudest.

In Brisbane I worked in Medical Benefits and ANZ Bank. In 1990 I went backpacking around the world for five months, meeting and staying with strangers in all corners of the world, guided by my instincts as to which people to trust.

On my return I took up ballroom dancing. Before moving to Aveo Durack, I had a few surgeries and also divorced after 54 years of marriage.

I count the length of time I was married as another achievement and I have moved on from this stage of my life.

I now live in Aveo Durack, which is a great place to live. This is the happiest time of my life and I thank God for my faith and all my blessings.

The secret to my happiness is love and forgiveness.

If I was to give any life advice, it would be this: "Bless the people who love you and pray for those that hurt you. Prayer is the solution to all problems."

# Retirement

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## Wilhelmina "Willy" Eaton

My wifely chores are done at last  
And cut up lunches are the past  
How many have I done? Can't guess  
a marathon of kids to dress.

Don't get me wrong, t'was done with love  
Admire it though, t'was sometimes tough  
the times when sickness was abound  
my vows were tested all around.

But hey, somehow we all got through  
and now it's time for me to do  
what's best, it's yet to come.  
I look around me and it's clear  
that paradise is really here.

No more top buttons left undone  
that tease is for a younger one  
High heels that have been thrown away  
Phew, the relief is here to stay

At night I'm happy at the feat  
of finding my warm toilet seat.  
I'm in a place of no regret.  
Yes, three score plus and yet and yet  
somewhere my life has just begun  
Can still see bullets in my gun.

The morning birds, the gorgeous trees  
the smell of life among the breeze  
there's so much beauty in this world  
So many roses yet unfurled.

"Good mornings" from such friendly folk  
they all have stories, so bespoke.  
They tell me yes, they still do roam  
but finding pleasure in coming home.

Here in Aveo is no feat...  
Instead it's really hard to beat.  
And I, like them, could want no more  
I'm finally home  
I've shut my door.



# Smiling Through

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June Hopkins

I sat and stared at the blank page on my computer, trying to decide if I was willing to write about what was on my mind. Knowing that honesty and a willingness to be vulnerable often brings resolution, or comfort, or peace, or all three, I decided I would tackle the topic of depression in older age.

I have been a confident, busy person for most of my life, able to enjoy independence, a career, parenting, then grand-parenting, and good friendships. I enjoyed relatively good physical health and an optimistic outlook. As is often the case in older age, the past two decades have brought a lot of letting go, and loss. My mother lived to the good age of ninety-two and passed away suddenly in her own home twenty-one years ago. I missed her so much but was glad she went peacefully at the end of a well lived, long life. Five years after that I stopped working in order to travel overseas with my husband. I enjoyed our trips but working in my career had given me great satisfaction, and a sense of my identity. Giving up work made me feel a bit lost. My four children, all grown up, left home and married. I was happy for each of them, but I found the experience of the empty nest unsettling. Within a few years each one gave me the joy of grand-parenthood which compensated somewhat. Then, just as we were approaching the time when we were free to travel more, my husband developed a brain tumour, and after a short intense illness, passed away in 2010.

As each loss has been encountered, I faced the new challenges brought, and I developed new interests. I did writing workshops, and joined a writers group. I joined a couple of seniors groups. I learned to love gardening. I had coffee with friends. I voluntarily cleaned house once a week for my daughters, when they were at work. I did lots of baby-sitting with my cherished grandchildren. It didn't seem so hard to be happy when I accepted the changes in my life. Then my seventies arrived.

Quite unexpectedly, ageing caught up with me. I developed a heart condition. My mobility became compromised, and I found it necessary to use a walking stick, then a walker rollator. I began to have issues with my sight and have macular degeneration, still in the earlier stages. I could no longer walk my small dog, so I acquired a mobility scooter to enable me to take him out. He runs ahead of me as I motor along at a slow pace. Going out has become a bit of an ordeal for me. If I walk a lot, I have pain in my legs at night. Doctors tell me to keep walking, but I am slower than slow, and if accompanying my daughters, they have to be very patient as I try to keep up. Instead of coffee with friends, I more often stay in touch by phone but it's not quite the same.

I cannot mind my youngest grandchildren now, and I can no longer clean house for my girls. Twice in the past six months I have had significant falls, once in my garden and once on my patio. I suffered a dislocated shoulder and after five months of physio I still don't have a good range of movement. I now wear an alarm gadget which will summon help if I fall again. Despite all of this, I feel I need to hide the fact when I feel down. Each morning when I wake up, I choose to act happy, but the reality is that there is a constant struggle to not descend into depression, because I seem to have transitioned from a full, independent, useful life to a dependant vulnerability. I am not interested in being medicated as it is all situational, and I think positive self-talk works just as well. I am constantly seeking new ways to feel fulfilled and significant. I took on a four-year online course in Creative Writing and was successful beyond my hopes in eight subjects. I enter writing competitions, plus I am slowly writing my second novel, although the first one is yet unpublished.

I feel alone though not lonely, quite often, even though my offspring are very caring and supportive of me. I practice lots of positive self-talk, engage with social media, sew, write and keep occupied. I know I am still the same me inside, but the outgoing person I used to be, no longer seems to be who I am now.

The truth is that older age is no picnic. One needs emotional fortitude to keep on keeping on and smiling through.



June Hopkins and her 14 grandchildren

# Sports

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## Lloyd Knight

Most Australian boys love and play cricket. Not this boy! I know it is one of Australia's greatest sports and I do like watching the highlights of the matches and find the diversity of the international aspects very entertaining. However, I found playing the game rather boring. In high-school, where it was virtually compulsory to play, I remember sitting for ages waiting for my turn to bat. Then, when the other team was batting; unless you were a bowler, you had to stand somewhere on this big oval on the off-chance that a ball may happen to be hit in your direction. If you were lucky, you might catch it, with great cheers or boos if you drop it, from the spectators and your team.

One pleasurable cricket incident that comes to mind was when I was a 20-year-old fighter pilot in Korea in 1953 during that forgotten war. One of the USAF squadrons based with us at Kimpo near Seoul, challenged us to a game of baseball. We all had problems trying to direct our shots with that funny round stick they call a bat. Well of course we challenged them to a return match, playing cricket. I will never forget the comment from one of their pilots who was actually a baseball league player. One of our bowlers was bowling full tosses at him and he commented, "Hell man! I can't with this big flat bat." He hit a few 'Sixers' and I think they beat us. I know my personal attitude to cricket is hyper-cynical. But to me it's a bit like angling, waiting for some poor fish to get hooked on your line. Another sport I dislike.

In the winter, I loved playing rugby. Plenty of action with some risk attached. I was a front row forward where you are in the action continuously. In the scrums and scrimmages, it could be a bit rough on the ears and the incidence of sprains and strains was relatively high. During my pilot training, our base at Uranquinty near Wagga Wagga NSW had a team in the local Rugby competition. During one game, as we were forming a scrum, I didn't get my head down in the right position quickly enough and the strain on my neck felt as though my spine would snap. But I loved the game in High School and in the Air Force. I have many memories of the Camaraderie and fun we had playing.

Come summer, for me it was swimming and tennis. I used to swim in the Balmain Baths with Dawn Fraser, not that she knew who I was. The 'Baths' are actually part of Sydney Harbour. In those days a high, square pier type structure extended into the harbour, 'fencing off' the swimming area. Of course, it had underwater mesh to keep out the 'bities'. Today, it has been extensively modified and is named the Dawn Fraser Baths. I did reach a relatively high, though non-competitive swimming standard. I also earned the Bronze Medal with the Royal Life Saving Society. Later, during my Flying Instructor days, as a Bronze Medallist, I was given the task of assisting young cadets in reaching the necessary swimming skills before they graduated. This enabled me to achieve the Award of Merit with the Society.

My second summer sport in the 1940s was tennis. Punch Park, opposite our house in Wortley Street Balmain, was a beautiful site with rolling expanses of grass, well established Cyprus trees (great for climbing) and two tennis courts. Actually, they are still there. They have a modern surface now. In those days they were 'en tout cas', red clay. This dried out more quickly than the harder surfaces. However, it required much more maintenance than other courts. This meant hosing and pulling a large drag mat back and forth over the surface to even out rough spots caused during play. We players were expected to perform this feat at the end of a day's sport. It was relatively hard yakka, but good training in pitching-in and being part of the team. Also, a big attraction for a healthy teenage boy was the fact that it was a mixed gender sport. I think I met my first girlfriend there while 'courting'! Ha!

The courts were operated by the Balmain City Council and their use was free to us teenagers. There was a council employee in charge of running the show. He was very helpful in coaching and giving advice. He seemed like a very nice man. However, I learned in later years that he was fired as a paedophile who interfered with young girls, which was rather disappointing.

I loved playing tennis, it was a great vehicle for social connection, fitness and competition. And being right across the road from home, it was certainly very handy.

# Still Rolling

## Jean Bell – with thanks to Carinity

Jean Bell isn't exactly sure what the secret to a long life is, but she reckons lawn bowls might have something to do with it.

The great-great grandmother from Ipswich still bowls competitively and travels around Queensland to participate in carnivals – all at the age of 101.

Jean, who lives independently at the Carinity Elim Estate retirement community, has played lawn bowls since 1972 and served as President of both the Booval and Ipswich Bowls Clubs.

When she celebrated her 100th birthday in 2019 she had a party at her bowls club!

“We had a celebration up at Ipswich Bowls Club and all the bowls clubs from around Brisbane and everywhere I've been in the last 47-and-a-half years, they were all there. It was a great day,” Jean recalls.

Jean puts her longevity down to working hard, maintaining a healthy diet and an active lifestyle, and “always keeping busy”.

“I like being active. As the old saying goes, you either use it or lose it. I don't feel any older, I just feel the same,” Jean says.

Jean is the third centenarian in her family with two of her sisters also reaching 100 years.

She was born Daphney Jean Bell at Harrisville on 3 December 1919, the youngest of nine siblings growing up on a farm at Mutdapilly.

After leaving school at the age of 13, she went to live with her sister Maud to help with her children and then moved to Ipswich at 16 to work as a housekeeper/cook at a solicitor's home.

As a young teenager she attended dances at St Mark's Hall at One Mile where she met her future husband George, who she married in 1938.

“Getting married was the best and we had 66 years of good family life and the kids are all good,” Jean says.

Jean recalls a bonus of her husband running a grocery shop in Ipswich was the delivery truck being able to transport 17 children to swimming club.

Gifted at sewing and craft work, Jean made wedding dresses for her daughters.

Jean is the proud matriarch of six children, 20 grandchildren, 51 great grandchildren and six great-great grandchildren.

“I've had a great personal life and I've had a great bowling life. You can't ask for anything more,” Jean says.



Jean Bell will celebrate her 102nd birthday in 2021



# Surprise!

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## Vivienne Cole

The students at Bingham Academy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia were an interesting lot. I was teaching Social studies to years 7 to 10. The school was started in 1946 to educate the children of missionaries but in modern times had become an International School with an Africa wide reputation. The students came from Western countries; mostly children of missionaries and business people, and from African countries; mostly children of diplomats, politicians and United Nations workers. There were a few Ethiopian children there but they had to have been born overseas.

They were in some ways different from Aussie kids but in other ways similar, as children all over the world are. Kobi was one child who impressed me. He was wise beyond his years and had a strong grasp of international relations that far outstripped mine. He was from Ghana and one day I commented "You may one day be another Kofi Annan." (Nobel Peace Prize winning UN Secretary General at that time, also from Ghana)

"Oh I hope so," he replied. "My parents are with the United Nations and they go into conflict zones to bring about peaceful resolutions."

Precious, Beautiful and Bethlehem were girls from Malawi whose parents were attached to the Organisation of African Unity. They lived up to their names and made a joyous addition to the class.

Suzy and Anna were grieving the loss of their comfortable American homes and resented just about everything in Addis. I needed all my pastoral care skills and classroom strategies to manage the diversity.

Year seven was the biggest and most difficult class, mostly because there was a trio of African boys whom I found difficult to engage and to physically keep still. The most fidgety of all was Dawit, a small spindly Ethiopian lad, with energy to burn. His bright dark eyes and mischievous smile singled him out as the leader of the trio.

One day as he was cavorting about more than usual, I noticed a bulge in his jacket. "What is that bulge in your jacket?" I demanded to know.

"Nothing, Miss" he ventured. Just then the bulge moved, like a baby moves in its mother's womb near birth. A nice undulating wave.

"OK then," I said, "Show me your nothing."

Defeated, he opened his jacket and there, on the inside, was a chameleon. I was transfixed. I hadn't seen a chameleon in real life before and this one was quite tiny, the size of a small lizard. It was mottled bright green and had startling eyes inside protruding, cone-shaped lids. It had a humped back and a long curled up tail at its rear. It was much smaller than I imagined.

Soon, the whole class was out of their chairs wanting to see what had me so fascinated. I abandoned the lesson as we crowded round Dawit. That day, it was the teacher taught. I subsequently learned that chameleons can grow very large - as large as a goanna. I was glad this was a small African species or my response might have been different.

As a teacher, I was always learning. That day I learned to turn a boy's passion into a means of educating others. I also realised the importance of channeling the learner's interests into positive, educational outcomes.

Nevertheless, I stressed to Dawit that in future the chameleon had to stay home.



# Tea with Ellen

Julie Holtam

After retiring in 2013, I embarked on a journey, well, many journeys really. My husband Keith and I took great joy and pleasure in many wonderful trips over the following years from the UK to Europe, Asia and South America, and saw some wonderful sights such as the magnificent Machu Pichu, the Acropolis in Athens and the stunning Greek Islands, the desert of Morocco, a wonderful safari in Africa, a fabulous cruise to Alaska, another cruise to Norway to see the Northern Lights, and an incredibly special holiday on the Amalfi Coast to name just a few.

Of course, we all know that 2020 brought a stop to all that although I can say in all truth that I am incredibly grateful to live in Queensland, a beautiful state that we are discovering more of all the time. So, it turns out that it is no real sacrifice to remain within Queensland's borders, given what others have had to endure and the unending beauty of this part of the world.

Apart from our wonderful physical journeys, I also embarked on a journey to discover more about my family and their origins. Along the way, I learnt many things about my ancestors, such as my grandfather's brother James dying of Typhoid in 1892 at the age of 24 and my father's older sister Johanna who also died at the age of 25 of cardiac failure.

Then, one day, on a visit to the Queensland State Archives, I discovered a file relating to my great grandmother Ellen. Little did I know that from that day I would frequently find her in my thoughts. As is often the way with family research, I now have many more questions than answers.

I know extraordinarily little about Ellen, and although I have discovered some facts, there is so much more that I find myself wondering about.

So, what do I know?

I know that she was born in Limerick, Ireland in 1843. Her father was Owen Buckley, a farmer and her mother was Johanna Quish. Ellen married my great grandfather, David Donohue Senior, in Mitchelstown, Cork on the 12th of February 1861 at the tender age of 19.

In 2019 Keith and I travelled to Ireland to extend my family research and to visit the village where David and Ellen lived and the church where they were married.

After their wedding, they proceeded to have eight children in quick succession, from 1862 when my grandfather David was born, until 1873 when Thomas was born.

In 1879, David Senior, along with David Junior, who was then 17 years of age, travelled to Australia on the ship, *Arthurstone*, arriving in Brisbane on the 31st of July 1879. Ellen and the other 7 children travelled to Australia the following year, arriving on the 14th of January 1880.

These are the facts I have gathered. But, as we all know, behind facts and figures is a person, with all the emotions and feelings that encompass our complicated lives. What was it like for her? She had to travel alone with the children all the way from Ireland to meet her husband.



What was that journey like? I do not believe the conditions would have been the best. She was leaving everything she knew to start a new life with her family, but what did she leave behind?

What was she thinking as she stood on the deck of that ship with her seven children huddled around her? Was she afraid? Was she nervous? She must have had many conflicting feelings as the ship made its way to the other side of the world and her new home where her husband and oldest son were waiting. Were the children excited? Perhaps they felt it was a grand adventure.

Johanna was 17, James 15, Ellen 13, John 12, Michael 11, Winifred 9, and Thomas 7. I often wonder what the conditions were like on that ship. Where did they sleep and what did they eat? Were they seasick? Were they treated well? Were they terribly sad to be leaving Ireland and everyone and everything they had known since they were born?

The family settled on the Darling Downs on a dairy farm, and I would like to think they had a wonderful life on the farm and came to love this beautiful country as much as I do. I am sure they had their fair share of challenges and hardships. How isolated Ellen must have felt, although her family was now reunited. Did they have a happy marriage? I will never know. Ellen died on the 8th of September 1918 in Toowoomba at the age of 75.

That is why I say to you, whoever is reading this. Please record your story. I have done so for my family, and although they have not all read it yet, I know that in the future, they will always have it to refer to if they find themselves asking questions about me or my life.

Our lives are all unique and wonderful, with their own collection of stories that combine to make us who we are. I say, whatever challenges and hard times occur, they are uniquely ours and we should share them with our loved ones. For, although times change and the lives our children and grandchildren are living may be vastly different from our own, we can learn so much from the previous generations.

So, Ellen, if you were here, I would love to sit down with a cup of tea and hear your story in depth. Sadly, instead I can only imagine what your life was like and hope that you found some happiness in this beautiful country so far from your home.

I am so grateful for Ellen and David and their 8 children for making that journey, for if they had not, I fear I would not be here. David Junior would not have married Mary Keating and become parents to my father, William. I am so incredibly grateful that they did.



# The Good Old Days

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## June Spooner

Do you remember the good old days when things seemed a lot easier than today? I often hear people talking about when they were children and how times were good, but were they? In the “olden days” we had no TV, no mobile telephones, no computers, I could go on forever about how things have changed, but we all know that. Let’s compare.

We didn’t have a telephone at home, we had one in a phone box three streets away and you walked down with your 3pence in your hand to make your phone call. This was an inconvenience, but we only used the public phone in emergencies. Today we have constant interruptions, lack privacy and we are bothered with salespeople, but we have immediate contact in emergencies.

What about television? Before television we amused ourselves at home with games, singing and general conversation. What about the long walks enjoying the countryside? Today we see violence, misinformation and programs that add to our stress levels. We are much more informed today but is it all for the best?

Computers; something that today most of us can’t do without, so how did we manage in the good old days? We had personal contact with trades’ people, and we could work out any problems as they occurred. Today we have misunderstandings with logical computers and our illogical brains. It seems like the computer has caused more problems with communications than before.

Remember letter writing? It seems a lost art these days, but for me the computer has helped me enormously. As a problem speller I now can type my letters and use spell check, a god send for me. I am no longer regarded as an ignoramus because I can’t spell. Because of the computer I was able to resume my education, but there is still nothing like the joy of opening a personal letter.

What about the cinema? The invention of television helped to kill off the cinema, another outing enjoyed by the family. Film ignited the imagination. Our trips to the cinema told us stories of good and bad, even though the films were bias towards the western world.

When we left the cinema, everyone could tell what the film was about as we re-enacted sword fights, or war battles or fairytales on our way home. Sometimes we would be singing songs from musicals or reciting dialogue from the film. Today we are bombarded with violence, sex, and anti-heroes. Most shows on television or DVD can be watched by anyone.

I also remember Sunday walks, because on Sunday everywhere was closed except the churches. We went for a walk on Sunday afternoons, weather permitting. In spring we would enjoy spring flowers and the songs of the birds, which was great after a frigid winter in England. Summer was a time to enjoy the sun (when it wasn’t raining) or a trip to the seaside to play on the amusement arcades. The excitement of these trips was terrific in our childhood lives. Life seemed so peaceful, or was it because we were so young, and it was great after the war with more freedom?

Do you remember dances? Saturday was dance night, the girls stood on one side of the dance floor and the boys the other side and you waited to be asked to dance. Women in those days were told to be polite and wait to be asked. Today we are more equal, or supposed to be. We have equal pay and equal opportunity, and equal responsibilities and worries.

In conclusion, life seemed to be more peaceful in our youth, but we were less informed. With knowledge we have become more stressed, we have lost our innocence, but we have gained wisdom. Women have gained equality and medicine has improved our lives. We have gained a lot, but we have lost a lot. As the old song says:

“There’s something lost and something gained in living every day” – Both Sides Now, Joni Mitchell 1969.

# The Holiday of Contrasts

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## Valerie Halliday

My husband Don and I were on the first plane from Australia to land in Los Angeles after the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre. A few days earlier our daughter had rung and said "Turn your TV on, you won't be going to America on Saturday!" Thus began a few days of 'will we' or 'won't we', but we made the decision to go if the tour we had been anticipating, was still operating. On being assured it was, we duly arrived at Brisbane airport, checked in and proceeded to the boarding lounge. Sometime later a Qantas representative came and announced that Los Angeles airport had been closed and the flight would not be going. We headed back to the check-in counter to collect our luggage and go home. Before we did that, it was announced Los Angeles airport was open again so back to the departure lounge we went.

This was to be the pattern of on again, off again, cancellations, changes, etc. for the next couple of weeks.

When we presented ourselves to the folk on the reception desk in Los Angeles we were met with blank stares and incredulous questions. They had no idea we were coming, everything had been cancelled! In the chaos no one thought to let Australian travel agents know and it never occurred to American agents that anyone would be foolhardy enough to visit America at this terrible and threatening time. Our tour guide had cancelled her holidays in fear of more attacks, so she was astounded to see us. We were in limbo so we sat at the window of our room and watched the traffic. We were struck by the fact that just about every passing car was flying two American flags.

We made good use of our unexpected days in Los Angeles visiting Santa Monica and the Getty Centre which was amazing.

A group of German tourists arrived, only to be booked on a flight back to Germany as their tour was definitely cancelled. A representative from our tour contacted us and we expected to be sent home also, but in the meantime a group from England arrived and by good fortune we were able to join their tour which was to start a couple of days later. On this tour we met a couple who would become firm friends, so that was a silver lining to all the anxiety and disruptions.

The itinerary for the tour was adjusted to cope with the nervous anticipation of more attacks. We were unable to cross the Hoover Dam, no helicopter flights were allowed at the Grand Canyon, and Disneyland was subdued, but the clam chowder made up for that! Las Vegas, San Francisco and Yosemite National Park, were fascinating.

After the tour we were booked to fly to friends on Cape Cod, but we were days later than originally planned and hundreds of American flights were cancelled. Thus began the frustration of trying to re-arrange things. No mobile phones then, and I had a contact number to ring which had a line of digits as long as your arm. After punching them in, I'd get a taped recording and after the request for my date of birth I'd hear an automated voice saying 'I cannot understand'. This was frustrating and stressful until a friendly American put me right. The automated voice wanted me to give the month first, followed by the day. Once I got that straight, we got a flight.

We had a wonderful time on the East coast. We visited friends on a farm in Vermont and were amazed by the splendour of the autumn fall. The countryside was a blaze of orange, red, yellow and a few green and brown leaves. It was almost overwhelming.

Our friends took us to their Daughters on Peak Island in Portland Harbour, Maine, where we were treated to a traditional lobster dinner. We had large plastic bibs, eating lobster is a messy business!

Our visits to Boston and New York were memorable. You could feel the tension in New York, any unexpected noise or bang caused a yell or scream from some pedestrians.

The Statue of Liberty was closed to tourists and guarded by a patrol boat, but we had a sightseeing trip on the harbour. We had glimpses of the ruins of the Trade Centre.

After leaving the boat we walked back to the hotel and unexpectedly came across a fire station bedecked with flowers, ribbons and photographs. Most of the men from that station had lost their lives in the disaster. It was so moving it brought me to tears.

At the end of our stay we flew out from Providence. Airport security was really strict, everything was thoroughly searched. When we landed in Los Angeles there seemed to be some difficulty. After a while the Captain announced there would be a delay waiting for a bay to pull into. Sitting strapped in a plane, in the middle of an airfield, late at night wasn't exactly a comfort zone. People became restless and apprehensive. Eventually the Captain announced a bus would come and take us to the terminal. It drove us there but simply unloaded us onto the footpath and quickly left. We discovered there was no access to the building, and all entrances were securely locked. Later we learned that this was because of an anthrax scare.

We sat in the gutter to wait while police motorbikes and cars roared by. Eventually, a representative from Qantas arrived and shepherded us through the terminal to a waiting plane. Taking our seats on our Qantas flight felt like we were safely home.

This was a trip that had everything from frustration, indecision and apprehension to wonderful sights, the company of friendly and generous people, and unforgettable experiences.

# The Hungry Flats

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Vivienne Cole

The Hungry Flats demarcation zone started at Thora and Bill's house and encompassed about a quarter of the town that I grew up in. The wide, unsealed roads were almost devoid of traffic and were a safe playground; a kind of sports arena for Rounders, Brandy and athletics training, a place where I honed my athletic prowess by sprinting between telephone poles. There, fathers taught their kids to box; boxing being quite a sport for locals with one or another young man going off to join Jimmy Sharman's troupe when it came through at show time. The nearby irrigation channel was a source of endless pleasure as kids gathered to look for yabbies, to paddle or to 'swim'.

To me, the Hungry Flats meant community; oodles of kids to play with. My cousin Bill and his wife, Thora alone had nine of their own. It meant family and fun. So many of us were related to each other that we had a wonderful freedom to safely roam the neighbourhood, and be constantly in and out of each other's houses.

Thora and Bill's house was my favourite. Bill was a carpenter so the house was square and built to a plan, unlike the haphazard construction my father built for us. But it wasn't the house that attracted me, it was what happened inside. Life was kaleidoscopic. Chooks, dogs and kids alike warmed to Thora's gentle and patient acceptance and chased each other around inside the house. The 10 beds were always laden with unsorted washing which made lovely nests for the chooks to lay their eggs in. The house had a chip heater. I rather envied them this contraption which provided hot bath water in contrast to the outdoor bath we had on wash days, bathing in the sudsy copper washing water. But best of all was Thora's and Bill's outhouse.

Alongside the squares of newspaper torn up for bottom wiping were the Man magazines scattered on the floor. In the very centre of the magazine was a double A4 page centrefold with cartoon style pictures of Hell. Funny looking demons went after the human inhabitants with an astonishing array of creative torture instruments. I would stay in that dunny poring over those pages in stunned wonderment until the next urgent rap on the door forced me to leave them behind until the next visit.

It was obviously no sanitised childhood. It was the era of the TV soapie, 'Peyton Place'. Adults always drew parallels with our own neighbourhood. Children (well me anyway) hung around the adult's salacious gossip for the tasty morsels of indiscretions and misdemeanours made by the neighbours. There were plenty.

Our poverty was obvious to the outsider but superficial for us. Our childhood was rich, laced with fun and laughter and marked by the stuff of folklore.

There was no avoiding the colourful and conflicting realities of our environment but as foundational years lived in true community, they were unbeatable.



# Featured Story: The Man on the Twenty Dollar Notes

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Everald Compton AO

I was born and bred in the bush in Queensland and went to little bush schools. When I was a boy, John Flynn the founder of the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the man on the twenty dollar notes was in his prime. I never met him personally but I heard him speak on ABC radio on a number of occasions and I read books about him. John Flynn became my role model in life. I thought that John Flynn was the greatest nation builder Australia has ever had, and I still hold that view. John Flynn established bush hospitals from one end of the continent to the other and eventually created the pedal radio, the flying doctors and the school of the air.

When I finished schooling in the bush, only a tiny handful of people got to go to university. I eventually went to high school in Toowoomba and out of my class of thirty students, only three got into University. At that time, the only university was the University of Queensland and getting into university was a prize thing. I got a job in a bank and studied at night to be an accountant and a marketer. I received certificates in those areas and went out into the world. After I worked at the Commonwealth Bank I decided that fundraising was my forte in life and I was appointed the organising secretary of St Andrew Hospital on Wickham terrace in Brisbane. I raised the money to build the first section of the hospital and then embarked on a fundraising career around the world lasting 40 years. In that time I organised more than 1000 campaigns in 26 nations. I was a founding director of National Seniors Australia and served on its board of Directors for 35 years, 25 of them as Chairman. I then took up a new role as Chairman of the Federal Government's Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing and served a 3 year term. I founded the Inland Railway in 1996 and then I got interested in writing books. I thought the older you get, the less active you are and I always loved history; it was the only subject at school I did any good in.

As I grew older, I travelled in the bush and visited a lot of the places where John Flynn built his hospitals. These are now obsolete as the flying doctor service takes people to the nearest large hospital these days. I thought John Flynn was so remarkable that I went on to write and publish a book called "The Man on the Twenty Dollar Notes". People everywhere when they read about my book are enthralled about the life of John Flynn.

It is a historical novel depicting Flynn as an old man reminiscing about what happened in his life. A lot of research has gone into writing this book and I have all the correct facts about what happened in his life. Flynn is a great role model, Australia desperately needs someone like him now not just to do the sort of things he did but to help build the sort of compassionate society that John Flynn set out to create in the bush.

I sold many copies of my book at the book launch and when depositing the proceeds at the bank, the teller who had worked there for over 20 years asked me "where did you get all this money?" I told her I had been selling my book about the man on the twenty dollar notes. This woman who had been working at the bank for twenty years then said "who the hell is on the twenty dollar notes?!" She had never looked, she just went by the colour of the notes.

Flynn pioneered the Royal Flying Doctor Service in partnership with Hudson Fysh who was a founder of Qantas Airlines. There were very few airports in Australia at the time so Flynn and his doctors used to land on roads, in paddocks and wherever they could find as there were often no airfields where they were needed. In all the years of operation they never lost a single plane - Extraordinary! Qantas emerged onto the world scene on the back of the fame they received from helping John Flynn and the work of the Flying Doctor Service.

Flynn saw there was no point having a flying doctor if you couldn't contact them, so he worked to develop the pedal radio. There were no telephones back in those days, only Morse code which was sent around the world. Flynn said it was alright having a plan to get people who were sick but how does someone send word that something has happened? Flynn and a man named Alfred Traeger designed the pedal radio, which was the first means

of communication in the bush. They accomplished this by means of radio signals, and sent the world's first long-distance communication over a distance of 300 miles. It was extraordinary.

Flynn then went on to found the School of the Air as he could see that kids in the bush weren't getting a quality education. Now you can visit not only Flying Doctor bases all over Australia, but also School of the Air bases.

Flynn died of cancer at age 70 in the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. Sydney was where the headquarters of the Australian inland mission and the flying doctors were situated at the time. John Flynn pioneered the training of bush nurses and helped to develop and raise the status of nursing as a whole. When word went around the hospital that John Flynn only had a few minutes to live, nurses came from all around the hospital and stood around his bed laying hands on him. He was so very well respected as the man who upgraded and elevated their profession and showed them they could do extraordinary things out in the bush.

When ABC announced that Flynn had died, for the first and only time in ABC's long history, they went off the air for two minutes. ABC had never done this before and have never done this since. The only person the ABC ever went off the air for was John Flynn. This in itself shows what an extraordinary person John Flynn was and the impact he had on the nation.

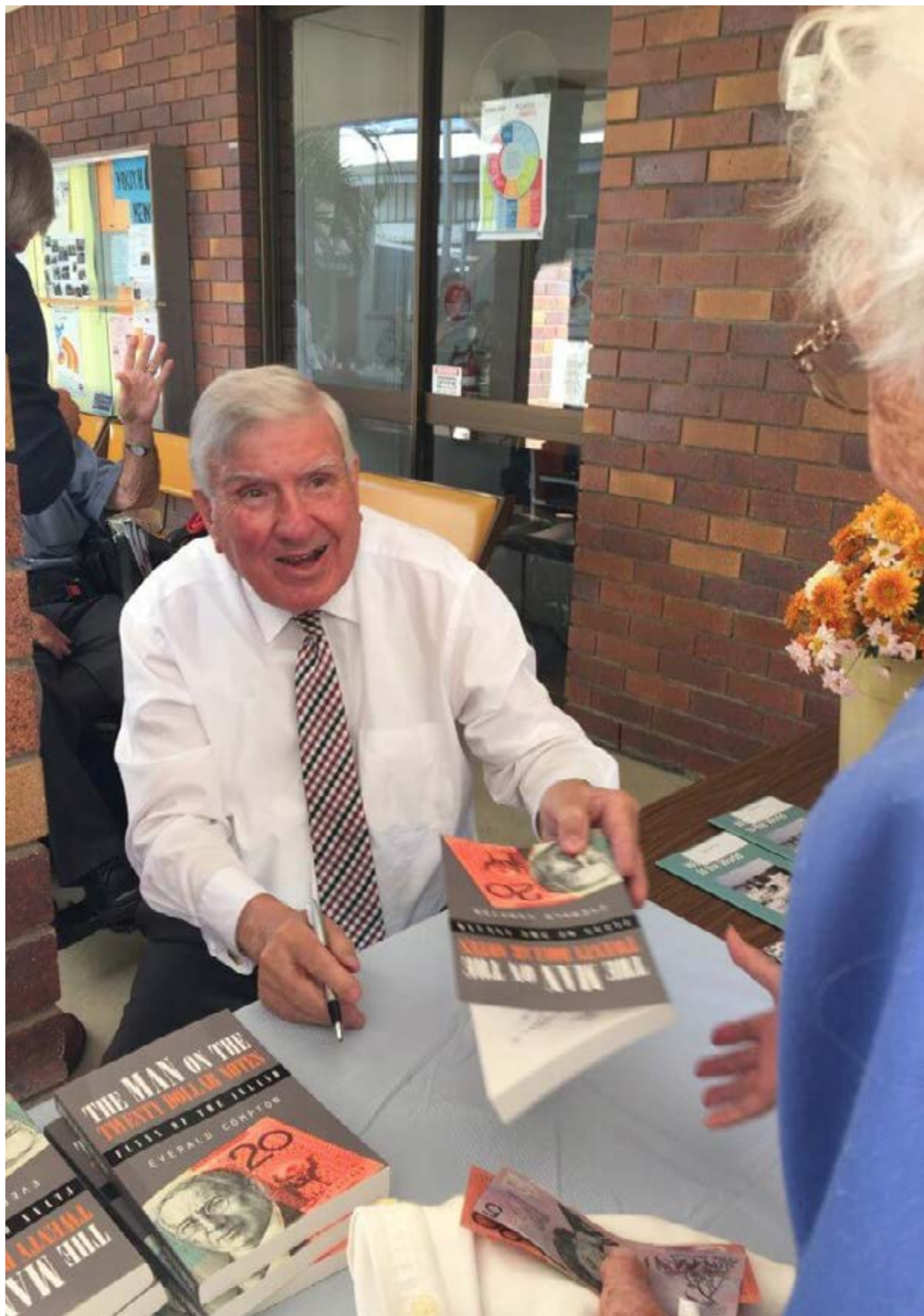
After I wrote the book about John Flynn I followed it up with one called 'Dinner with the Founding Fathers' which was launched last year. Few Australians have any knowledge of how their nation was established on 1 January 1901, when six self-governing British colonies joined together as one nation. Since then I wrote a fiction novel which has just been released called 'A Beautiful Sunset' that tells a story of four very different people facing death and coming to terms with the end of one's life.

I am an active and passionate advocate for voluntary assisted dying campaigning for the right to make a choice as to whether or not people may end their lives this way. I have been canvassing voluntary assisted dying for decades and I helped get the issue heard in parliament just last week.

I was awarded the Order of Australia twice, in 1992 and again in 2021 and was told there are not many people in Australia who have won this award twice.

I have been an elder of the uniting church for 63 years and I am the longest serving elder of the Uniting church in Australia. Christian faith is an important part of my life and I was inspired into the Christian faith by John Flynn who was of course was a Presbyterian clergyman who decided he was to be a bushman. I have been married to my wife Helen for 63 years and we have enjoyed a happy life together with our four children and eight grandchildren.

There is no point hanging around sitting in front of the television, life is to be lived. I turn 90 next month and I have a ten year plan - Five novels in my head that I am going to write!



# The Search for my Family

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Helen Kerr

The search for my family history began with Harry. A relative of my mother, an elderly man with a shock of white hair. Harry was a World War 1 veteran. He survived four years on the Western Front, albeit with two serious injuries and a mustard gas exposure. He was one of three brothers who signed up - Walter was at Gallipoli and the Middle East, Harry and John on the Western Front. Walter was one of the last soldiers to evacuate Gallipoli, and he served in the Desert Campaign in Palestine and survived the war uninjured. John lasted only six weeks dying in the 2nd Battle of Bullecourt.

Harry gave me an extract of his war diary, typed by himself in his retirement along with many documents of his family, painstakingly hand copied. Harry was then 82 and passed away 18 months later. Harry's diary was published as 'Over the Top' A Digger's Story of the Western Front', 30 years later. In 2008 I visited the Western Front and made a pilgrimage to the scenes of Harry's battles and found John's name on the Australian Memorial Wall at Villiers-Brettonnaix. It was a journey of profound sadness and one I will never forget.

My goal was to discover when the first family members had come to Australia.

On all sides, my ancestors were working class people from England, Scotland and Ireland, who with ambition to better themselves, became settlers in the Colony of New South Wales. With limited knowledge of what to expect, they embarked on long sea voyages - two families losing one child on the voyage. Two had no choice, they were transported as convicts. All arrived between 1835 and 1860 and settled in rural areas. They cleared the land to build homes, establish food crops, and sustained large families and in so doing, they were pioneers in the formation of many country towns in NSW.

They were mainly agricultural workers, shepherds, servants and dairy maids. There was a sailor, a railway guard and a builder. In their new life, they were farmers, gold miners and successful builders in Bathurst during the gold rush.

The search for my family took me several times to Tumut, Adelong and Batlow for my mother's family; Wantabadgery, Junee, Illabo, Cootamundra, Boorowa and Langs Creek for my father's family and for my husband's family Bathurst, Raymond Terrace and Newcastle. I researched at the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and I found information in Birth/Death/Marriage certificates, State Records, War Records and a trove from the National Archives, newspapers and various publications on the history of the towns where they settled.

On a visit to the Boorowa Museum, I met a woman who had death certificates for those who lay in the Langs Creek Cemetery. I discovered that my Grandmother's family lost six children in two weeks to diphtheria in 1894; their grief-stricken Father took his life a few weeks later.

On my mother's maternal side, the original ancestor was a convict from Cork, Ireland transported for seven years for stealing a cloak on a winter's evening. Visiting Cork I stood at the scene of the crime and reflected on if he had not been cold that night, I would not have been born. Completing his sentence, he became a valued farm labourer who took the bullock wagon regularly to Melbourne for supplies. Later he searched for gold at Adelong and fathered 15 children. On her paternal side, her Grandfather was a sailor from Norfolk, England who joined the gold rush, found enough gold to make large land purchases and become a grazier.

My Father's paternal family were from Scotland. His Grandfather made the transition from railway guard in Scotland to farmer and grazier in Junee, NSW. He was involved in the famous standoff with police at Wantabadgery when bushranger Captain Moonlite held 39 people hostage. On his maternal side, his Great Grandmother was one of the Irish Orphan Girls who were gathered from the workhouses of Ireland to become servants to the settlers. Her husband was the child of other poor Irish who fled the Potato Famine.

My husband's maternal family were agricultural workers from rural England who settled in the Hunter Region of NSW, purchasing their own land and farming for generations. On his paternal side, their search for a better life was ill-fated. Settling in Bathurst during the Gold Rush, they were in the ideal place to make their fortune. They formed a building company



and five years later they had a workforce of 60 and contracts for many of the city's civic buildings, including the construction of the Catholic Cathedral. One died of a heart attack aged 41 and three months later, the other partner was struck by lightning and died. My husband's Grandfather was orphaned six years later aged 9 when his Mother died. Taken in by relatives, he found his way to Newcastle where the family still remains.

Having placed them in Australia, my search took me to the sites connected to them in England, Ireland and Scotland. To a beautiful seaside town in south-west Scotland which I liked so much I went back a second time – the Artist's Town of Kirkcudbright. To Wells-next-the-Sea on the Norfolk coast, to the highlands of Scotland, to Cork and County Down in Ireland.

Though most of my life has been spent in cities, my formative years were country based and the strong community values of friendliness, looking out for others, being able to entertain myself, the security of being part of a large extended family, have stayed with me all my life. In times of strife, I have contemplated the difficult lives led by the pioneer women of my family and found inspiration to keep going.

From humble beginnings to the prosperity of the present time, through hard work and perseverance, my ancestors prevailed and established families which extend to the sixth generation of Australians.

The search for my family complete, I now know exactly who I am and the influences that shaped me.



My great grandparents Elizabeth & Archibald McLean

# The Things Nobody Told Me about

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Betty Geldard

I grew up in Brisbane very much a city girl. In 1955 at the age of 22 I married a handsome grazier in the Western Downs area of Queensland. I found there were a great many things nobody ever told me about, that certainly added to the novelty of living in the bush.

The first thing that nobody told me about was that the bitumen road ended at Bowenville. The rest of the journey was a few miles of gravel that deteriorated into many miles of not much more than a bush track for a very long way. Kangaroos and wallabies were a regular hazard.

The next thing nobody told me about was that our property, aptly named 'Riverside', was on the Condamine River. It did not in any way resemble the Brisbane River, my only other comparable river at the time. It was a chain of water holes which needed good flood rains to be classed as a river. Our creek, the Columboola Creek, did not resemble a babbling brook with maiden hair and ferns growing therein.

Thus began a lifetime of surprises nobody told me about. There was no rural power at that time which was to last 9 long years of kerosene fridges and no appliances to switch on. We had an ancient generator with a Lister engine, started by a giant wheel beyond my reach and strength, and batteries way past their use-by date.

My stove was a Kookaburra wood stove, which my husband would start before he disappeared until dark, working on our property five miles of melon hold infested track away. He left me a good pile of chopped wood, but complained I was using enough to power the Queen Mary. I was nervous of how to re-start it, so he suggested starting with chips and 'a bit of kero'. Nobody told me what constituted 'a bit of kero', so I succeeded in blowing off all the round movable rings on top of the stove, and singeing my eyebrows, eyelashes and front of my hair.

Then there was the snake. I had made a little veggie garden near the house and saw a small snake lying on top one day. Thinking it was a bit too close to the house, I used a large spade to deliver a mortal blow. Unfortunately, being on soft soil, it was still very lively so reluctantly, as it seemed quite a small snake, I whacked it again. This time, successfully. When my husband returned home, I boasted of my prowess! He found the dead snake and told me it was a Death Adder! Obviously for snakes, size doesn't matter.

Nobody told me the phone could only be used for a few hours a day – very few at weekends – or that the mail would be delivered by a man on horseback on Tuesday, and by horse and sulky on Saturdays to carry parcels.

1955-56 were to be flood years. It was remarkable to see acres and acres of the Condamine River and all the creeks and other rivers bursting their banks. Ten days after they subsided, nobody told me about the sand flies that made life so miserable. I was severely allergic to their bite and spent many nights wrapped in cold wet sheets to get relief. No such thing then as Rid or other deterrents we have today. I could get some relief if I carried a smoke billy containing smouldering cow dung.

The creek near our house would flood again and again in those years, so I was taught the art of paddling a home-made canoe to cross the creek; if my first baby decided to arrive. There was no seat in the canoe, just two sheets of corrugated iron welded together. A more uncomfortable position for someone nine months pregnant and shaped like Humpty Dumpty would be hard to find.

The township of Miles was the venue for many balls in those days. It was great to get into pretty ball gowns and dance the night away. I had been a bridesmaid four times before my own wedding, so I looked forward to opening the suitcase containing my glamorous outfits. Alas, nobody told me there were bush rats that loved pretty dresses, so a shower of colourful material turned to confetti was all that remained of my glamour gowns.

I could tell you many a good yarn about those years, but you know, nobody told me how I would grow to love my many years in the Australian bush, bringing up our four sons. I would not have had it any other way. Well, perhaps without the sand flies!



# The Wonders of RAAF Life

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## Lorna Hutchins

I was born in Victoria at the Daylesford Bush Nursing Hospital on the 30th of May 1940, the second child in a family of five girls and one boy.

I lived in a small country town called Lyonsville, mainly a farming and timber mill community. As small towns go, it was small; one general store, one pub, one single room school of thirteen children, one community hall and not a horse in sight.

I started school at the age of five and was taught by one teacher from grade one to grade six. I then started my secondary schooling at Daylesford High. I left school and went into the workforce at Kyneton, a larger town not far from home.

My older sister asked me to join her at Mornington as she was a bit homesick and needed some family contact. As a result, I got a job as a wards maid at the hospital. It was here that I met my future mother-in-law, she was the dietitian cook. It was Christmas and she was unable to get time off, so they gave her permission to have her family for Christmas dinner at the hospital. It was here that I met my future husband John in 1958. As John worked in Albury, NSW, I went to Albury to join him.

John joined the RAAF in 1960 and we were married in Mornington on 28 December 1960. John could not get leave due to training commitment and our honeymoon was spent at Wagga Wagga, NSW. On completion of his training we were posted to RAAF Laverton in Victoria and lived in Werribee. Both of our boys were in the new Werribee Hospital.

In 1963 we were on the move again, this time to RAAF Williamstown NSW. We lived in the very pleasant seaside town of Nelsons Bay. In 1965 we were on the move yet again, this time overseas to RAAF base Butterworth Malaysia. We lived on the island of Penang and enjoyed a very pleasant lifestyle. The only downside is I had one Christmas on the island with two children on my own.

John had been posted to Thailand for two months, the second of three tours of duty he had to do. A highlight was when I, along with other dependant wives, were introduced to and shook hands with our then Prime Minister Harold Holt on his visit to Butterworth.

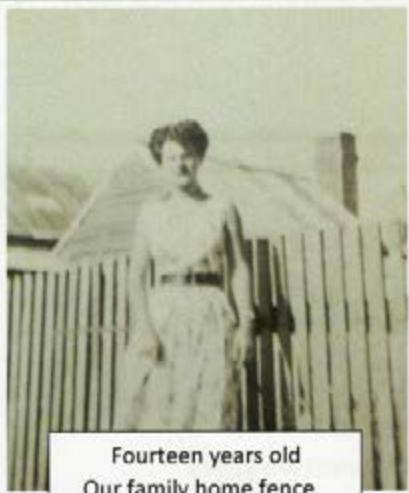
From Malaysia it was back to Williamstown. It was here that we decided to purchase a block of land in Beresfield, an outer suburb of Newcastle. We arranged a loan with a building society and had a home built for the princely sum of \$7250.00. We struggled as most young families did in those days, but they were happy times. I loved that house and found it very difficult to leave.

Six years later off to RAAF base Richmond, located at the foot of the Blue Mountains, very cold in winter and stinking hot in summer. However, we enjoyed our time there as it was a very historical part of NSW.

Three years later, another posting to Amberley. John said that this would be the last move and he would do his time here and then take his discharge and five years later he did. During this time we sold our house in Beresfield and purchased one in Raymond's Hill, where we lived for thirteen years.

After John left the Air force we purchased a small business in Sumner Park and worked there together for twenty five years and retired from it in 2007. Twenty six years ago we sold our house in Raymond's Hill and bought a house on forty at Wanora in the Somerset Region of Queensland and we are still here.





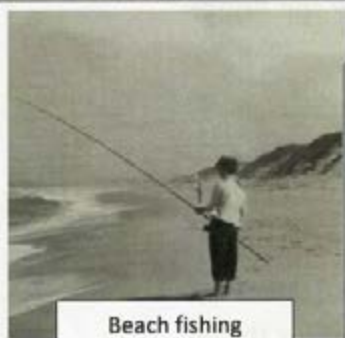
Fourteen years old  
Our family home fence



1952. Gardens in Kyneton



Home at Lyonsville, 1954.



Beach fishing  
Welshpool 1957



Presentation function, 1965



Farm, Tallangatta 1958



Albury 1959

LORNA

# Thoughts of Mt. Bogong

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Patricia Allsop

The longest, most sustained climb in Victoria, 4,000 feet.

Will I try it? Could I make it?

The challenge of Bogong.

The up, up, up. The rocky track. The heavy pack. Could be freezing up there, put in the kitchen sink, I did! Can I keep going? My friend's encouragement. Their wonderful lies. The heady smell of horse manure. The flies. The wetness of perspiration. The bursting lungs. Can I go on? The last staggering steps to the top. I've made it. ME!! I'm on top of Victoria's highest mountain.

The magic of Bogong.

The congratulations. The tears in the eyes. The proud feeling of achievement. The exhilaration. The excitement. The exhaustion. The view. Blue mountain peak, upon peak, upon peak. The wonder. The humility. The awe. I wish my sister were here too.

The down, down, down. I hear music. Couldn't be. It is. The gentle breeze blowing through holes in old metal ski poles playing a little tune.

The sound of Bogong.

The down, down, down. The jarring steps. The aching knees. The screaming muscles. The staggering exhaustion. The 25 kilometres. The 28, 583 steps.

The pain of Bogong.



# To Write or Not To

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Joseph Penkaitis

This has been the most exciting and unexpected “Road less travelled” adventure in my life. The last essay that I remember writing was when I entered my new school, Birrong Boys High School, at the age of 14 to complete my schooling. It was a strange request from the teacher but I had to do it. The teacher said I had to write an essay about ‘The Tyranny of fashion’ to assess my ability in written English.

After I left school, reading and writing were not on my radar. Becoming a T.V. Technician was good because that was about all I did besides playing up and having a good time. I must thank my parents for putting up with all the crap I got up to. I probably didn't pick up a book to read until I was somewhere in my 20's. Yes, I do remember the event – we were on a train that left Vancouver and was destined for Toronto - a three day journey. After looking out of the train window for the first day it did get a bit boring. John had a couple of books and I asked him if I could have one to look at. He gave me one and the size of it left me a bit overwhelmed. It was ‘Hawaii’ written by James A. Michener. I can't say that it was the best book I've read because it was my first but WOW what a book. I loved it. That changed my attitude to reading.

My brother had a second one - ‘The Spy who came in from the Cold’ written by John le Carré. I grabbed that one after finishing the first one and that one was good as well. I find it amazing that I remembered the books titles but being the first ones I ever read it stood out. Although I did not become an avid reader my attitude to books did change.

The only thing I ever remember writing was a reference for Ken who needed one. That was written on the 21st of February 2011. That's a long time between January 1964 and February 2011.

Then on the 17th February 2016 a thought came, because I had had such a diverse working life I should put down on paper all the jobs I had. It actually took me a couple of days because I kept on remembering new ones. Reflection does take time to sink in. Looking back on what I had put on paper and the diversity, I realised that I should put in some explanation as to why some changes were so diverse. I enjoyed it and that's where it started. I didn't know what to write about so if something came into my mind that sounded interesting off I went. I never wanted any of it published. It was just a personal thing that I did.

When it got to over 40,000 words I knew I had to call it something. It wasn't a novella or novel. It wasn't an autobiography. It was a recollection of one's experiences.

So I called it “essays”. That also meant that I could write about anything I wanted. There are no boundaries in essays. When I got to 60,000 words I thought ‘wow!’ I have now nearly doubled that. Then one day the thought came to me, with all the travelling I have done, maybe I should put those experiences, into an interesting pictorial version. After finishing a couple of those I also realised that I had a few building and renovating projects. So it continued, and I hope it will. Writing is an interesting pastime.



# Under the Street Light

Noel Bulow

I could take you to the place where I kissed my wife for the first time; she was 16 and I was 17, Station Road on Silkstone under the street light on Morris and Station Road.

We had 64 wonderful years together. I am a baker by trade and my wife Sylvia used to ride her bike from out near Swanbank right over to the East Ipswich Woollen Mill where she was a mender.

A friend of mine worked at the Woollen Mill with Sylvia and one year there was a Christmas break up. I had my licence back then, had it since I was 16, and when it came time to leave my friend had organised all these girls who wanted a lift home. My car was only small and I had to fit 7 girls in as well as us. Before we left we heard a small voice saying “wait for me, wait for me!” and 64 years later I still had her.

All the girls seemed to have a thing for me, perhaps it was the little kiss I gave them as I bid them a goodbye. This got me in quite the hot saucepan at times. Being a baker I had to start work at a certain time and I couldn't participate in all the activities.

Sylvia's parents were very difficult at the start and didn't want Sylvia to come with me but we went on to have two boys, two girls and we were so proud of them. Sylvia and I were married in Newtown Methodist church on Glebe Road and it was the happiest day of my life. My employer was reluctant to give me time off for our honeymoon though. Sutton's Beach Redcliffe is where we had our honeymoon and spent our time fishing and to this day Sylvia and I loved fishing.

We had a hard life, Sylvia and I worked all our lives and not always in the nicest conditions. We worked on a cattle property and they wouldn't even let us have a drink of water all day. If we had two pennies to rub together we were rich. Sylvia had only the one dress when I met her. Sylvia drove the tractors, the trucks you name it. She was there for me all my life and I miss her terribly. We went through very hard times, so many sorrows and yet so many wonderful times.

When my beautiful darling had to go into Riverview Gardens Aged Care I drove down every day from Glenore Grove to be with her. The pain of losing my darling never seems to go away. My cousin just turned 90 and I wonder where the time has gone. I can still remember the horse and cart going through Ipswich on a Saturday morning and delivering bread as an apprentice baker to all the houses in Ipswich.



East Ipswich Woollen Mill



# Vulnerable Fault Lines

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Mary Ward

I have lived in Australia for 43 years but I was born and grew up in Christchurch, New Zealand. I attended a Catholic Primary School that was severely damaged in the Christchurch earthquake on 4 September 2010 with a Magnitude of 7.1. This earthquake struck the city at 4:35am. On 22 February 2011 a catastrophic earthquake struck at 12:51pm with a Magnitude of 6.3 but caused widespread damage being centred close to the Eastern suburbs. The aftershock lasted just 10 seconds.

Due to liquefaction, the area surrounding the Catholic Church, the school, and numerous homes was designated a Red Zone and demolished over the next several years. Landscape has replaced the devastation. The area now has grassy fields with many beautiful trees bordered by the peaceful meandering Avon River.

My story of growing up in that area was triggered by seeing photographs of the earthquake's destruction. It reminded me of my vulnerability as a child in the 1950's and 1960's. It has been told by many people who also like me experienced difficult home circumstances where their ability and desire to learn effectively was compromised. Of course some children were fortunate and had only positive experiences of teachers and education with the support and encouragement from their parents. However many young children endured harsh discipline in classrooms and environments not conducive to encourage learning, but caused embarrassment and indignity.

I was born into a family of six children. I had three older brothers, one younger brother and a younger sister. My mother suffered from severe depression and soon became overwhelmed caring for six children. My father too had problems. He worked hard as a mechanic but drank equally as hard which triggered rage in him. In order to survive I became quiet and shy. Invisible. This was considered an admirable trait in a large family. I remember my childhood home as too many children, no privacy, a raging father, stoic mother, and washing and ironing forever piling up. Cricket balls frequently broke windows at both home and the house next door.

All this is backdrop to my starting school at age 5 years. That first year I thrived. I had a novitiate nun who was young and kind. I learnt basic reading and writing, easily established friendships with the other girls, cold milk was delivered daily which I loved and had vegemite sandwiches on white bread. Who wouldn't be happy, I felt nurtured and warm.

To my dismay the following year was dismal like the Christchurch weather, overcast and cold for most of the year. The warm atmosphere changed. Replaced by discipline and control. In year 2 I had a real nun for a teacher. She was stern and unapproachable. Rosary Beads with a cross was stuck in her belt. A brown heavy looking habit with the full head covering.

The desks were now in rows so she could easily patrol the aisles with her weapon of choice - the 12 inch wooden ruler. It was used to either hit the desk hard or some child's knuckles for some minor infringement. Boys I recall were soft targets. Discipline such as this remained the 7 years I attended that school. I survived by keeping my head down as I did in my home life. Quiet and good. As a child this school atmosphere was menacing but I knew no different. I merely accepted it. However, I learnt out of fear more than understanding but nonetheless I managed to survive. Life wasn't always grim, I know I enjoyed school holidays free at last and school fairs and sports days were fun for me.

Secondary rolled along, again a Catholic School taught by nuns. Discipline was not so heavy-handed now. I biked every day, often into cold southerly winds. Inevitably I lagged behind in many subjects, especially science and maths. On my final day after 4 years of secondary school my name wasn't called out as having passed the University Entrance exam. I naively thought I had a chance. I sat in that classroom stone-faced showing no emotion. I was good at hiding my emotions. In that instant that day my confidence in any learning ability was shattered. I knew I wasn't going anywhere.

In hindsight and due to a non-supportive home life I was never encouraged to study let alone given effective study skills. Years later, on facing up to my failure, I understood slowly

and at times brutally how easily stress and anxiety in that environment had compromised my ability to learn. I finally wept and gave myself the self-compassion my sadness deserved. My quietness too had become my safety zone for survival. Underneath all of this pain I valued the education that had eluded me.

I embarked on my life's journey, albeit painful at times, but with no ill will or lasting resentments. My husband and I came from Christchurch to Australia in 1978. We luxuriated in the warm weather, found jobs and never looked back. Little was I to know that out of all my pain I would find purpose ensuring my own children had positive learning experiences, respect for teachers and a safe, nurturing home life.

One day I'll cross the Tasman and stand on the grassy field where I once played skipping with my school mates. My mother and her siblings had attended that school as well as my brothers and sister. My husband and I were married in that church in 1973. I'll grieve for that community that was lost in an instant in 2010 and 2011.

# War experience 1940-1945

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## Adeline Limberger

I was born in Rotterdam; a prominent city of Holland. I was 4 years old when the Second World War broke out.

Rotterdam was a vibrant workers' city, famous for its transit harbour which flowed into the North-Sea. Activity galore.

Unfortunately for the citizens, it was a target for the Germans, who wanted control of the harbour and occupied our country en-masse. Schools were closed to pupils as the soldiers needed to be housed and protected.

The bombing had started and citizens were urged to go and seek protection as the sirens went; quite often in the middle of the night. Shelters had been built for this purpose and were safe. Unfortunately a bomb landed on the rear of our house while we were at the shelter and the fire took hold. My parents decided to move and buy in an adjacent suburb named Hillegersberg.

My Dad had grown up in The Hague and his family still lived there. He had four brothers, and was in regular contact with one of his brothers named Jack and his wife Mary. They did not have children.

The war was taking its toll on my Mum and when Uncle Jack suggested we should come and stay with him and Mary for a break that seemed like a great idea. It became reality and the invitation was gratefully accepted.

My Dad continued to stay in Hillegersberg, where he was a podiatrist and he joined us in The Hague on weekends.

My sister and I were enrolled at a local primary school and another stage in our lives began. A new city, new school new teacher and new friends.



Mum, Dad, my older sister Tine, baby brother Hans in the pram, and me on the far right.

# We Need More People like This

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## Bev Ruthenberg – a Tribute

Bev was born on the 15th of July 1940 at Lowood. She had diphtheria when she was a baby, whooping cough at 7 years and rheumatic fever at 15 years old. Bev started working at the Lowood Butter Factory at the age of 14, this was her second full time job. Bev was married in 1958 and lost all her wedding presents in a house fire in Mutdapilly the same year.

Bev raised a family of four in Lowood. She was one of the first TAB agents in Queensland, joining when the TAB started in 1956 and was there until 2021.

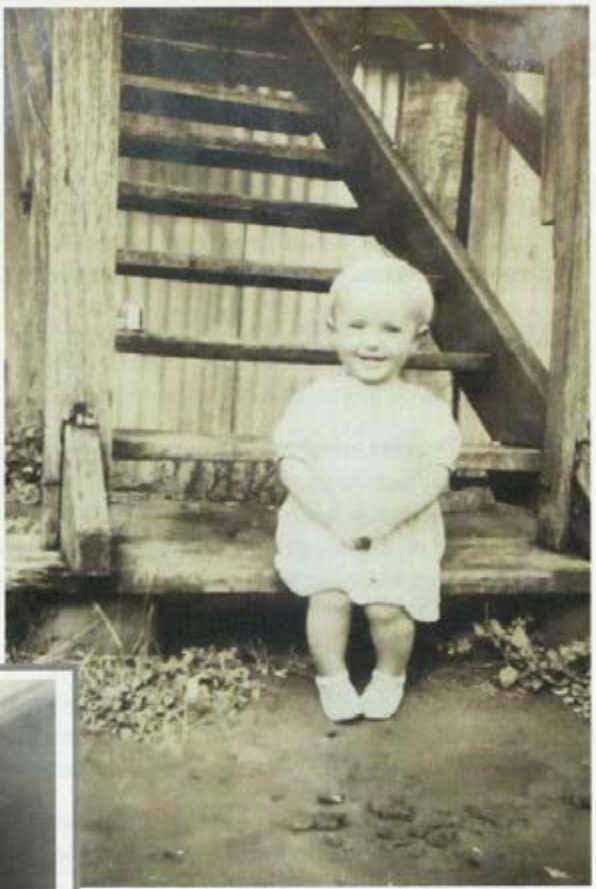
In 1959 her second child was born with a hole in the heart which was very serious back then as there were only two doctors in Australia that could help and they were in Melbourne. The local church, the Queensland Times newspaper and a mob called 'The Bush Children's Association' (now known as the Bushies) raised the funds needed to send Bev and her son to Melbourne for a lifesaving operation. Bev never forgot that. She later organised a yearly concert and a raffle with the Lowood and surrounding schools with all the proceeds going to the Bush Children's Association. This lasted for 22 years. They gave her an honorary life membership on the 14th of November 1985 and invited her to the Government House in Brisbane on the 7th of December 2016 to meet the Governor and to help in the release of a must read book about the Bushies.

Bev was also summoned upon to help raise money to build an ambulance centre in Lowood. She was on the first committee for the Glenwood Hostel Lowood. Unfortunately her son passed away suddenly from a heart problem in 1990 and her husband passed away only 13 months later to the day.

Those who have been fortunate to meet Bev and have gotten to know her are much better for it. Bev currently has 9 Grandchildren and 18 Great Grandchildren.

We need more people like this.





BEV



Great granddaughter Ava, two years old

# Where I still call Home

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## Gladys Freese

I was born 1932 at Marburg Hospital to Ernest and Maria Schultz. I was one of seven children. Five were born at Marburg Hospital and the youngest two at Lowood Hospital. We lived on our grandparent's dairy farm just out of Lowood, where they also grew small crops. The oldest children started school at Lowood before the family moved to Buaraba on Cecil Dolan's farm and begun share farming with them.

The five eldest children attended school at Buaraba. We all had cows to hand milk before going to school and then we would have to walk approximately 5km's, often cutting through the paddock to attend. Until one day the next door neighbour bought a new bull and we all had to turn on our heels and go along the road.

The family grew small crops of sweet potatoes and the kids often chewed on the vines on the way to school.

Glen Cairn (now Forest Hill) was to be the next move for our family to the Charles' farm. The school was small and just out of Forest Hill. The Luck family and Jackwitz family children attended school with us. We were only here about nine months before moving to Stone Gully, Tarampa to the dairy farm belonging to Ernie Sempf. We stayed here for five or six years. The children all attended school at Tarampa. I finished school here.

My sister Margret and I would ride our push bikes to Coolana for confirmations classes, we used to have a half day off from school to attend. As a family, we attended the Coolana Lutheran Church on a regular basis. We would ride our push bikes to church or if we were really lucky we would get to ride in the back of Sippel's old truck. Then if we had worked hard enough through the week, Clarence my older brother or myself would ride our bike to Beutel's Store with the 7lb syrup billy to buy enough scoops of ice-cream for all the family and pedal back home as fast as we could before it melted. This was our Sunday treat.

I was 13 years old when I finished school at Tarampa to help my father on the farm as the older boys had now left home. I had to harrow, do the scuffling and couple the horses together. I became my father's main helper and he bought me a big black coat with a fur collar as a reward, which was most unusual as most times we didn't even have shoes to wear. I was left to milk the 40 cows and separate the milk by hand. The pigs also had to be fed as part of my chores.

I was 16 or 17 years old when the family moved once again to Lower Cressbrook on another dairy farm. George Launder was the Boss/Landlord and this was one of the first farms in the area to get milking machines installed, which made life a little easier at milking time. There was an orchard with orange and mandarin trees. There were also bee hives on the farm which I helped rob.

This is where I met my first husband Gordon Eastell. We were married at Toogoolawah Cornerstone Lutheran church in 1951. We moved into a cottage so I could still help out on the farm, while Gordon took on some drilling work. Our first son was born at Esk Hospital and we moved to Gordon's parent's farm at Cooeeimbardi to help share the farm with them. We later moved to Esk and had three more children before Gordon was tragically killed in a car accident in 1964.

I later met my second husband Keith Freese, when he came to pick up my oldest son to play cricket. We were married 1968 at the Esk Rock Lutheran Church. We were the first to be married in the church after it had been moved in after the old one was sold and moved to the Ruthenberg's farm. We later added to our family with two more children.

When the children were at school, I often helped out at the tuckshop. I had let my licence expire, so I used to ride my pushbike to town where I cleaned both the Club Hotel and Grand Hotel. I also had a few house cleaning jobs. I also became involved with many community groups such as Esk QCWA, Esk RSL, Ladies Guild, Overs 50's, Meals on Wheels/ Care and concern groups for many years. My husband Keith worked for the Forestry Department for over 30 years and then retired to become a truck driver for Allen's

Transport for 10 years before retiring. Sadly, he was diagnosed with cancer and passed away 2014.

I have lived in my Esk house for over 55 years now. I have seen fires, floods and drought in my lifetime but have managed to come through it all.

I enjoy going to Over 50's, attending bingo, helping deliver meals on wheels and spending time with my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.



Gladys Freese



# Special Tribute: John Brett

## Stories live forever if only we tell them

John Brett was a great poet and a wonderful role model. As a tribute we recapture the story he wrote in the 2020 Senior Stories reflecting on his life as a Mining Engineer which saw him travel all over the world.



John Brett 2020 "I am enjoying the book very much.  
There must be a million stories like some of these, what a terrific initiative it was."



# A Miner's Tale or Two

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John Brett

As a youth I entertained thoughts of joining the Royal Navy, but I ended up becoming a Mining Engineer. I'm glad I did, because it has led me all over the world, much as it would have had I become a sailor. Like the old adage says, become a sailor and see the world. The only difference is that a sailor sees the better coastal parts of a country and the mining engineer usually the more remote and unromantic parts. We tend not to 'have a girl in every port' like sailors are said to have.

Mining, especially underground mining, is not for the faint-hearted or those suffering claustrophobia. But, it is interesting and has its challenges. You truly have to be a jack of all trades but not necessarily a master of none.

On 1st July 1958, I met a lovely young lady at my home town of Broadstairs, Kent, England and then left soon after for a six week work experience in South Africa. I graduated from Sheffield University in June 1959, married that lovely young lady on 11th July 1959, and we set sail for my first full-time job in South Africa on 23rd July 1959 aboard the then Union Castle Line's 'MV Capetown Castle'.

## South Africa

My first appointment was at the St Helena Gold Mine in Welkom in the Orange Free State, where the first of our children, Mandy Jane, was born on 16th June 1960.

The St Helena Mine was some 1500m deep, which effectively meant that I went to work on surface at 1300m above sea level and got to the workplace some 200m below sea level – although the sea was some 500km away!

The mine was worked by way of vertical shafts some 8 - 10m in diameter and with horizontal tunnels driven along the strike of the gold-bearing reef at 60m intervals. The reef typically dips at about 25 degrees. 'Raises', as they are known, are driven up from one level to another in the reef from which 'stopes' are mined outwards either side of the raise. The fun part is that these 'stopes' are only about 1 to 1.5 metre high, which entailed a lot of wear and tear on one's posterior!

At those depths (and in other mines depths can be 4000m or more) temperatures get pretty warm, and this is exacerbated by increasing humidity. Heat stroke and heat exhaustion were things one always had to be wary of (along with rock falls, methane explosions and various other dangerous events). The human body sometimes measures things in a relative sense. As an example, in the middle of winter, especially at night and on the 'Highveld' temperatures can get below freezing. As you descend the shaft, the temperature increases and at the working levels it can feel uncomfortably warm. As you go further along the levels, it gets hotter and more humid. Your clothes become saturated with sweat.

At the end of the shift, you walk back out again and you sense it getting cooler such that the uncomfortably hot feeling you had at the start of the shift is now quite chilly and you need to change into some dry clothes.

## Cornwall

In 1967, we had the opportunity to return to the UK on secondment to work at a tin mine in Cornwall. Cornwall was the birth place of 'modern' mechanised mining with the invention and utilisation of the steam engine. There are a couple of particularly interesting aspects to this which, in a way, form a highlight of this story. They both involve the Levant Tin Mine near Penzance where mining began in 1857.

Being right on the coast, some of the mine workings went out under the sea, actually under the Atlantic Ocean. The ore-body was vertical in nature and some mining worked upwards towards the seabed. An old wives' tale is that mining only stopped when the miners could hear the waves breaking!

Water needed to be pumped from the mine. The basis of the beam engine was that it operated in a reciprocating motion. For water pumping, this involved an inline series of

pumps (individually much like a village pump) which pushed the water up from one pump to the next. By today's standards this is pretty inefficient and in order to minimise the vertical lift involved, drainage adits were driven from the shaft to a point where the water could be discharged at the lowest possible point on the surface.

For transporting men into and out of the mine, a similar system was used. This involved two vertical timber beams next to each other, one fixed and one moving up and down 12 feet (~3.6m) at a time. On the fixed column, there were platforms every 12 feet. There were also platforms on the moving beams, positioned such that at the end of each stroke the platforms were in line with each other. A miner would stand on a fixed beam platform and when the moving beam reached its lower position he would step across onto the elevating beam. At the top of the up stroke, he would then hop over to the next fixed platform, and await the next elevating one. In that way he could leapfrog his way to surface – and the reverse applied when going down the mine.

In 1919, there was a major disaster when the beam engine collapsed and many men on the ladder were killed and injured. It eventually led to the closure of the mine.

This is where the two aspects come together. With the closure of the mine, water built up in the workings until it overflowed into the drainage adit. However, there was then enough pressure in the mine for it to burst upwards into the seabed. That was fine until it was decided to re-open the mine in the 1960's. One could hardly expect to drain the Atlantic Ocean in order to do so! It required the plugging of the hole in the sea bed before de-watering could begin.

Another interesting aspect of mining in Cornwall was the reworking of what is called 'tailings' or refuse from the original processing operations. In the early days, these tailings were simply discharged into what was to become known as the Red River for the rather obvious reason that it ran red with the pollution it discharged into idyllic St Ives Bay.

Over the years, nature did what the processing plants couldn't – it concentrated the ore component on the sea floor. In the late 1960's an attempt was made to dredge the sea bed, retreat the material on board the dredge and recover the tin. It didn't really work out because the separating methodology relied on gravity and was adversely affected by the constant motion of the dredge at sea.



This year's collection of short stories illustrates the remarkable lives of senior residents. It will take you on a journey and be sure to warm your heart as you read about the triumphs and challenges of the lives lived by our remarkable unsung heroes in our community.

## Together We Are Able



Gordon Jamieson turned 100 Years Old in 2021

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