

# Senior Stories

2023

Proudly presented by Able Australia



**This year's collection of short stories illustrates the remarkable lives and creative talents of senior clients.**

**Senior Stories started during the COVID-19 outbreak as a way of maintaining contact with seniors and reducing social isolation.**

**It continues to be a way for seniors to connect with others through their stories.**

## **Able Australia**

Able Australia is a leading provider of disability services for adults and community supports for Seniors. In Queensland, we support Seniors through transport, social support, Meals on Wheels, Emergency Relief, a Food Pantry and our Active Living Program 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.

Our **Values** underpin everything we do;

**Trust** – For more than 50 years we have been trusted to deliver high quality, reliable services 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 has contributed to this year's collection of Senior Stories. Thank you to all the 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 like to acknowledge the efforts of family, friends and carers who helped loved ones capture their story and put into words. For those who may not have been able to write their story themselves, you have allowed their story to be told.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services which funds our Active Living Program for Seniors. This allows us to deliver community initiatives such as Senior Stories and other activities, with the aim of reducing social isolation and to connect and inspire Seniors in our community.

## Message from the CEO

I am so proud to introduce Senior Stories 2023 our fourth edition of this fantastic publication.

Within this year's Senior Stories, you will discover a treasure trove of stories from mateship, migrating to the land down under, to Australia's oldest independent removalist enterprise. These stories are sure to get you nostalgic and they may even prompt reflection on your life journey.

For instance, Indrani Ganguly recalls savouring the sharp salty taste of her first try of vegemite whilst Lynn Chantler Cargill takes us back to the moment, she donned her first pair of high heel shoes on her sweet 16th birthday.



Noted horticulturist and conversationist of Ipswich Bruce Tinworth sheds light on the common misconception many people have that the Jacaranda is native to Australia when its true origins are in South America. He highlights that 80 exotic species are introduced into Queensland alone each year.

We delve into Ipswich's history through Royston Whybird's story who was inducted into the Road Transport Hall of Fame in Alice Springs. Royston says shifting furniture is a special and very personal skill and "you can teach a furniture remover to drive a truck, but it is very difficult to teach a truck driver to move furniture".

These stories are published, and this project continues to be funded by Able Australia's Active Living Program for Seniors, with thanks to the Queensland Government Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services Partnership. Thank you to the Able Community Project team who have made this publication possible.

Lastly, thank you to the authors of Senior Stories 2023 for generously sharing their stories. Many of these stories are deeply personal and offer glimpses into fond childhood memories and life experiences.

I hope you enjoy reading these stories as much as the authors enjoyed committing these personal accounts to paper.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynette McKeown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynette McKeown  
**Able Australia CEO**

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These stories are written by the authors, and any views expressed are those of the authors.

# Age is no barrier

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By Mocco Wollert

Age is no barrier when you know where you stand;  
age is no barrier when love holds your hand.  
To conquer a mountain one only needs heart,  
to live a full life, one needs to take part,  
wanting to know about all that goes on  
without any fear of what could go wrong.

Age is no barrier to start something new,  
age is no barrier to plan and to do.  
Time teaches wisdom and brings understanding,  
acceptance that there are days without happy ending –  
but to know that each day will bring new beginnings  
as long as you're eager to play a new innings.

Age is no barrier between young and the old  
if you're willing to praise and do not scold.  
Live every moment as if it were rare,  
regard each day as a challenge or dare.  
Age is no barrier and will never be  
if your mind is young and your heart is free.

# Accidents

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By Gordon Moore

The very first two accidents are beyond my memory, but my good mother often related them to guests at the manse. It seems I was keen to show off not just my English learning skills, but also having been lectured that this particular function was important, I would apparently approach the assembled guests with my soiled nappy on display, declaring, "What a big 'formance!". The family occasionally went to the seaside at Castlerock. There, still new from motherly lectures and struggling with the language, I was bowled over in the ocean by a sudden wave and am reported to have declared, "I'm thunk!". That event presaged a permanent fear of the water and a failure to swim.

Kicking a rugby ball with my two brothers in the street or the driveways between houses was not entirely a responsible activity. Once we broke the next-door neighbour's front window. Another time I decided to vault over the driveway fence line to get the ball back to our side. I placed one hand on a dividing fence post with the intention of vaulting over, but that hold slipped off the post, breaking a wrist by landing on Mrs Wheatly's concrete. The white alabaster the Royal Victoria hospital put on earned me a lot of attention.

Our Old Cavehill Road secondary school was an easy distance away on low

volume suburban roads, so I could ride there on my bicycle and sometimes pop home for lunch. Older brother John advised me that he had forgotten his rugby boots and requested me to get them for him. After lunch I duly put the boots in my handlebar basket and set off for the return to the school. I woke up in bed. It seemed that the long boot laces locked the front wheel, throwing me headfirst onto the gravel. It was just fortunate that this accident occurred conveniently outside a local doctor's house. I never got to meet or thank the doctor and am amazed how he knew where to dump my body.

Another bicycle catastrophe occurred when cycling home a few miles from Belfast High School rugby playing fields. It rained often in Ireland and so you always travelled on the bicycle with your tight bundle called a "Pack-A-Mac". As the weather was never hot there was no sweaty problem enveloping myself in this handy waterproof cape. I was speeding along with very little traffic on the flat main Shore Road and it was comfortable on a racing bike to keep the head well down out of the rain. Not noticing a car parked on my side of the road I crashed over the handlebars right into the back of it (I really should always watch where I am going). Amazingly, there was not a scratch on me, the bike or the car. Admonished, I continued home more cautiously and thankful.

I once tried to assist a trials motorcyclist stuck in the mud by giving him a push. Unfortunately, I burnt my right hand by mistakenly grasping his exhaust pipe and went home very quickly for medical help.

"Offsider" in Australian parlance means Tradesman Assistant. Preferring the overtime to the Irish celebrations on St Patrick's Day at Mary Kathleen Uranium mine, I was assigned to offside to the fitters doing mechanical maintenance on the electric shovels. I joined a team of men heaving downwards on a high huge steel bar to undo a bolt. I did not notice that the shovel driver had got into his cab. I was the only one still pulling down on the pole which suddenly dropped and cracked my left clavicle. The hospital in town was manned by two Australian Presbyterian Inland Mission nurses. There was no hanky-panky, but I had many a game of chess with nurse Miss Valda Peach from Ballina in New South Wales and regret being unsuccessful in trying by mail to thank her since.

One night shift at Weipa bauxite mine I thought all the electric power was off and stepped onto a steel spinning disc for rejecting boulders, jamming my foot against its rim of steel edging. Doctor Joe Czinege stitched my ankle up nicely, but I had to buy a new pair of boots. That town had no road access to anywhere else and my biggest mistake was shipping my car there when it should have remained 600 miles away in Cairns for holiday use only. The Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Limited firm had no material to make roads with other than the product, which was like laying down ball bearings. This was the very first drive from the port. At a modest curve just near the new township I lost the rear end three times. The car summersaulted, but landed nicely on all four wheels. It was lucky that I had not noticed my passenger had not put on his "Irvine" seat belt for this type go over both shoulders and, had his been on, he would not have landed on his convenient safe pile of sand when the car was upside down. Later the car fibreglass body and steel chassis were separated by removal of 16 Nylock bolts and found to be still in perfect

alignment.

Contractor Dudley McKay drove off while I was in the process of jumping out of the back of his utility vehicle. The resulting suspected wrist fracture necessitated air and sea travel to Thursday Island Hospital. Weipa workmates sometimes went there for the “umbrella” treatment, but I never needed that. “T I” was a fascinating tropical place with people of many nationalities.

The most providential accident I have ever had was turning up at just at the right time at Stewart and Olwyn White’s “Parkview” bed and breakfast establishment in Cairns. It just so happened that Miss Julia Bamford’s two English maiden pals had gone to Hong Kong and, with the proprietors off fishing, Julia was there to respond to any new arrivals. “It turned out so right for strangers in the night”.

## Camels ‘ships of the desert’

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**By Ellwynne Rutherford**

I decided that I would like to ride a camel after I read stories in the bible of how women like Rebekah, Rachel and Leah all rode camels. One day I got my opportunity when I went to a country show with my brother, he was not as keen for the adventure as I was, however I talked him into it. People believe that Mary probably rode a donkey for at least part of the way when she made the journey with Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, just before baby Jesus was born. It’s a different matter though when you are perched away up on a camel’s back. I’m pleased that we have pictures as proof of this camel experience we had.

Don’t you think that there’s something quite majestic about how camels walk along rocking from one side to the other? Perhaps the reason why they are sometimes called “ships of the desert” is because some people actually get sea-sick riding them, a second reason could be that they can carry heavy loads of 200 kilograms over a long distance.

Camels are stronger and able to endure harsh conditions longer than horses can, they were the usual riding animals of that part of the world because much of the bible world was either desert, or dry at certain times of the year. Sand storms are extremely uncomfortable and inconvenient, if camels are caught in a storm, their eyes and nostrils shut down in such a way that the sand is prevented from hurting them. The knees of a camel are also suitable for desert conditions with leathery pads of skin to protect them when they kneel in the hot sand. Have you ever wondered why a camel has a hump, fat is stored and used for food on a long journey, they can drink as much as 150 litres a day when they are thirsty. Did you know that a camel is unlike a horse in that it chews it’s cud like a cow does. No other animal has feet like a camel, they have two broad toes and flat padded soles that help them to walk on sand. I’ve been told that they can kick forward as well as backwards, often bad tempered and not willing to go sometimes a donkey was put in front to lead them.

The bible tells us that Job was a very wealthy man, he owned 3,000 camels, some were bred for work and others for speed---swift riding. I'm really looking forward to my next camel adventure that will be when I go to the camel races.

John the Baptist, you can read about him at the beginning of all 4 of the gospels, wore clothing made of camel's hair. I wonder how comfortable that fabric would be, in some parts of the world they still use camels hair for clothing.

"Camel caravans" were like our trains, when some left others joined, travelling that way as it was safer, they took news and supplies to the villages and were always welcome.

The Gospel of Matthew tells of wise men who came to worship the baby Jesus, they brought three gifts, and most people believe that they rode camels-----what privileged camels they were to make this journey to visit "The Saviour of The World."

Q. What do you call a camel with no hump?  
A. Humphrey.



## Kath

By Ann Jones

I met Kath when I was seven and made a friend for life. It was 1941 when Kath, with 11 other girls, arrived by stealth in an open boat, under cover of the dark, from Mornington Island mission through the dangerous waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. A possible invasion from Japanese submarines, reported to be present in the Gulf waters at the time, prompted the evacuation. The girls were placed in the care of various station owners in the Gulf, and Kath came to our family.

She and I became friends immediately. She was shy, and withdrew to her room during her leisure time, and I became her shadow listening to her stories about life on the mission. In those moments, I immersed myself in her life and absorbed the essence of her pilgrimage.

I saw her birthplace in the bush on Macaroni Station. I experienced the grief of her separation from her mother. I suffered her bewilderment when she was sent to the mission, and I sailed with her on the Morning Star as the Malaysian captain steered the small motor launch safely across the Gulf and, from that day, lost her identity as a member of the Kurtijar tribe, and any contact with her family.



Through those many stories, I knew the missionaries. I learned the strict daily rules of mission life, and those of their religious faith.

I did the chores with the children and felt the discipline of misdemeanours. I met Mrs Bonney, the famous aviator, who loved the mission girls, and often popped over to Mornington to teach them to crochet.

I sat with her and the other girls during those long hours spent crocheting doyleys and tablecloths for sale down south to support the mission.

I flew with Rev John Flynn, the founding member of the Australian Inland Mission who brought the miracle of medicine to Mornington Island.

I became a good friend of Alf Traeger, creator of the pedal wireless, and a frequent visitor to the island for the Flying Doctor.

I lived her life in fantasy through her stories, but I had nothing to offer in return except to give her a rude introduction into the ways of station life, as, on the first morning after she arrived from the mission, Mum said, 'Ann, get the milk bucket and go over to the yards and get the milk, please. Take Kath and show her where the cow yards are.'

Off I went, full of self-importance to show this innocent girl around, and I proceeded to demonstrate my competence and prowess in the adult masculine world of station hands with a psychedelic description of the cow bails, the mongrel dogs and the poddy calves. I continued with my exposition on any other subject that lent itself to the adjectival embellishments I'd learned from the station hands.

During the tirade, I glanced towards Kath to see if I should continue with the expletives or whether I had made enough of an impression to cease. Her reaction to this kaleidoscopic verbosity was in the essence of good taste. She did not comment on my descriptive eloquence, but if Dad had been within earshot, I could hear him saying, 'You'll be in the bathroom with the razor strop around your legs if I hear another swear word come out of your mouth, Ann.'

I had never heard an offensive word pass Mum's or Dad's lips, but I made up for their deficit in those few minutes while trying my utmost to educate Kath above and beyond her puritanical Presbyterian upbringing into the more colourful ways of station hands.

When we moved away from the Gulf, it was by mutual agreement that Kath came with us, as she was now an adopted part of the family. But Kath was Under the Act, the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld), deemed to provide better protection and care for the Aboriginal people. As such, it dictated where she would live, who she married, what she did with her money, and whether she could keep her children if she were to marry and have a family. With my parent's help, Kath wrote to the Director of Natives Affairs and was granted exemption. So, when we eventually left, one extra person was in our family- two parents, six kids and Kath.

In later years, when Kath applied for a passport to travel overseas with my sister, she found she only had an ID number, K85, granted by the Director of Native Affairs and bestowed when she landed on the mainland on that memorable night at the height of World War II, but she had no birth certificate. She did not exist.

But Kath did exist. And, despite her reserved personality, she held the office of Elder of the Presbyterian Church in our home town, and her charismatic presence attracted all who came in contact with her.

Kath and I shared confidences throughout my teenage years into adulthood and, although life often drew us apart geographically, we always kept in close contact. As I sat beside her during her last days, I thought about this wonderful lady who, through her many talents, had reached out to so many people, how she had lived out her life in service to them and how she was loved and respected by all who knew her.

In all our confidences, Kath never once denigrated those responsible for her 'orphaned' state as a child, always expressed gratitude for her education, and, by her integrity and quiet acceptance of life as it was, she successfully conquered the culture/colour challenge towards all, and deftly managed her Aboriginal persona in a white society.

## **Adventures of an Indian foodie in Oz**

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### **By Indrani Ganguly**

'You'll love this, Indrani.' Peter, my American host handed over a plate and knife with some crackers and a piece of something creamy white with blue lines running through it. 'Roquefort blue, it's my favourite.'

The cheese looked very different from the creamy yellow Amul cheese I had grown up with in India. 'What're the blue lines?' I asked.

Peter looked surprised. 'Mould of course. Don't worry, it's quite safe to eat.'

I took Peter at his word, spread a bit on a cracker, popped it into my mouth and almost gagged. 'What do you think?' Peter asked.

I didn't have the heart to tell him it tasted like Amul cheese that had gone off and had to be thrown away. I swallowed the mushy mess in my mouth and asked for some orange juice to wash down the rest of the cheese and cracker.

Janet, another Australian friend, came to see how I was faring. 'You're not actually making her eat that are you?' she asked Peter.

'What's wrong with that?' he bristled. 'I'll take Roquefort any day over Vegemite.'

'What's Vegemite?' I asked.

'A horrible, black spread.' Peter growled. 'You have to be born here to like it.'  
'You put too much on your toast,' Janet laughed.

Peter grinned. 'I thought it was like peanut butter, so I spread it nice and thick. Yecch.'

'It's called peanut paste in this country, mate,' Janet said. 'Indrani, would you like to try some?'

'Please don't.' Peter entreated.

'I'll try it,' I said. Janet had been so kind to me I couldn't refuse her offering.

'Don't say I didn't warn you,' Peter said. He didn't have any Vegemite so I focused on the other offerings. An apricot Danish, washed down with a cup of black coffee was the perfect counterfoil to the Roquefort.

Soon after this, Janet invited me to try out this fabled food from Oz. She offered some beautifully browned toast with lashings of butter and a thin layer of something that resembled a black version of Vicks VapoRub we used to clear stuffy noses. I took a small bite, mindful of Peter's warning. 'Well?' Janet asked.

The Vegemite tasted like nothing I'd had before but wasn't unpleasant. I nibbled at my toast, savouring the sharp salty taste. 'I like it,' I said, taking a bigger bite. I finished the toast without needing anything to wash down this new food. Janet was so pleased she gave me the jar to take home.

The encounters with blue cheese and Vegemite are some of the most memorable of my experiments with food in Australia. Over the thirty-plus years I've been in Australia, my culinary horizons have expanded to include sausage rolls, meat pies, ANZAC bikkies, Pavlova and Lamingtons. I staunchly defend Australian claims to have invented the last two sweets against the Kiwis.

I also love exploring the many cuisines of Australia's diverse communities. I find Australian Chinese rather bland compared to what was served in India but enjoy the other Asian cuisines especially Thai, Vietnamese, Malaysian and Indonesian. Of the European foods, Greek and Italian have become my favourites.

I am pleased to say I've been able to introduce my Australian friends to some of the diversity of Indian cuisines. 'There is more to Indian food than butter chicken and chicken tikka masala' I say, stressing that the typical Indian restaurant menus generally represent only two cuisines, Mughlai and Punjabi. Many of my friends had never heard of, let alone tried out Bengali delicacies like fish cooked in mustard and eggplant fritters. These unfortunately are not yet available in Indian restaurants.

I have also introduced my friends to goat curry. Their initial reaction was similar to mine to the blue cheese. People thought it would be smelly and tough and were pleasantly surprised that it was neither. While most of them don't cook,

it they are happy to eat it in Indian homes as well as in restaurants which have begun to incorporate it into their menus.

Another Indian delicacy my Aussie friends have happily embraced are the South Indian savoury pancakes called dosas. I don't make these at home but am happy to direct friends to restaurants which serve them.

Sometimes my attempts have had unintended consequences. Like the time I invited a newly-arrived colleague at the Australian National University to join my group for a Burmese dinner. He agreed readily. Unfortunately, the oil and spices in the food didn't agree with him and he spent much of the night on the toilet. Happily, this didn't stop us from becoming friends, and several years later we got married. We remain married thirty-three years later.

Another time, I served vermicelli pudding to my Anglo-Australian friends and their young son. The son screwed up his nose and said 'Eew! What's the stuff that looks like worms?' I automatically replied 'Vermicelli.' Suffice to say he didn't try it!

Today I can Roquefort without gagging though I prefer the harder cheeses. I've never stopped liking Vegemite, so much so, I took some to India for my family and friends in India. They loved it, so now it has become something I regularly carry as a gift. One of my friends who is a keen cook even invented a Vegemite-based gravy for Christmas turkey which was well received.

There are only two food items I still don't care for. The first is rare steak. Like most Indians, I like my meat to be well done. No amount of sauce can help me overcome the reluctance to eat this very pink meat with reddish liquid oozing out. The other is liquorice; I haven't been able to develop a liking for either the salty or sweet kinds.

Conversely, I still don't cook butter chicken or chicken tikka masala for family and friends. And I have never adapted to calling peanut butter peanut paste though I do now say bikkies instead of cookies.

## **Garden guru plants growing interest in native flora - The Bruce Tinworth story**

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**By Carinity Elim Estate**

If Carinity Elim Estate residents ever require sage advice about gardening, they only need to give Bruce Tinworth a holler. The noted horticulturist and conservationist is the native plants guru at the Ipswich retirement community.

Bruce has a passion for using local native flora to re-establish wildlife habitat in the urban environment. His interest stemmed from adventures in the bush with his grandfather, who was a logger and a conservationist.

He has written extensively on invasive weeds, releasing books such as *Garden Escapees Become Environmental Weeds* and *100+ Invasive Weeds of Ipswich*. He has also contributed regularly to *SubTropical Gardening Magazine*.

Bruce is a member of a growing community of green thumbs interested in planting native species and removing exotic invasive weeds.

“There were a number of people with much more expertise than me that were doing publications on local native plants,” Bruce said.

“Whilst people were spending their weekends trying to enrich areas of bushland, no one was really doing anything on introduced species that are environmental weeds.

“I wrote about the worst environmental weeds in the Ipswich area and offered three alternatives, so the house and garden people had some reference material they could work from.”

Bruce said there are misconceptions about which common plant species are native to Australia and which have been introduced from abroad.

“There is a huge amount of people who think that the jacaranda is native because it’s everywhere. Most of our environmental weeds are either originally from South America, central or southern Africa, or a little bit from Indonesia,” he said.

“Million and millions of taxpayers’ dollars are spent managing weeds. We are introducing around 80 exotic species to Queensland every year, and about 10 per cent of those become invasive.

“Invariably, a plant that is an environmental weed propagates really easily, almost every seed germinates, it will grow in a crack in concrete path, rarely needs to be watered, and escapes into other gardens and native bushland with little competition. Whereas all of our native plant species are in balance with nature.”

The retired TAFE teacher and Greenpeace member – he was on the deck of the *Rainbow Warrior* shortly before it was sunk – has consulted on numerous conservation projects and government environmental initiatives.

Bruce was heavily involved in the Society for Growing Australian Plants, Land for Wildlife, and is a Life Member of the Ipswich branch of Native Plants Queensland.

As well as his plant expertise, Bruce is also an award-winning artist, a photographer and author.

He has written an extensive history of the Kickbusch family, and an owner’s guide and maintenance manual for the very rare 1950-52 Model 77 Norton motorcycle.

# Mr Furban and Ivor

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By James Cooper

After my Mum died from a four year battle with breast cancer at the ripe old age of forty four, I was sixteen years old at the time and like my brothers I loved my Mum dearly, and my Dad certainly felt her loss very deeply.

So, as life goes on my Dad had re-married to a women I had no time for, she took over everything my Mum and Dad had ever owned, and also I believe, my father's right to be himself. There was no way I could live in a place under her rule, so I moved out, to where, I had no idea, I just had to go. I was seventeen at the time and I lived in my panel van for a while shifting places from time to time because the police would move me on calling me a vagrant. So then I lived with my aunty for a while which was great because I had a home to go to after work. But as time moved on I didn't want to over stay my welcome with my aunty.

I mentioned to a girlfriend at the time who lived in a caravan park with her mother and she said she knew a person in real estate and they might be able to help me find a place to rent.

I was a second year apprentice carpenter-joiner and I was earning \$25 a week. Well as luck would have it, I moved into this pre-war old weather board house [shack] and the rent was \$14 a week. Well can I tell you this place was a dive, it had no insect screens, not painted inside or out, an outside flush dunny that wasn't fun to use on cold and rainy nights, no shower just an old cracked enamel bath tub and lets not forget the COCKROACHES, hundreds of the blighters, very friendly, they would crawl across your face as you slept at night. So I bought gallons of Mortein insect killer and flooded the house out, what a stink, but what the hell, I had a house I could call my own. So I scrubbed and cleaned the house the best I could. The owner of this establishment, and many places like it was an old spinster called Ms Furban and her so called brother Ivor who lived with Ms Furban just up the road in an old dilapidated hi-set house.

Every Saturday Ms Furban and Ivor would spend the day collecting the rent from their many houses and if you weren't there when she arrived she would demand to know why. This silly old cow lived in the past. Her cloths were old and worn, her hair looked like a sparrows nest, droppings and all and her body odour reminded me of a blocked drain and car was brand new back in nineteen twenty four. Her brother, Ivor was her driver and bodyguard. Ivor was straight out of a Dracula movie or the Hunchback of Notre Dame. He was a big man and a bit lopped sided, he had a funny sort of swagger when he walked, he had a deep voice and he was hard to understand, he sounded a bit Russian. I have never seen such hairy fingers on a man before, when he shook your hand it felt like grabbing onto a hairy spider. I think old Ivor was harmless enough but I would not like to meet him in a dark ally at night, just quietly.

Now, talk about a tight person, Ms Furban was as tight as a fishes bottom. I have come across some tight people before, but Ms Furban leaves them all for dead. For example, some kids across the road threw rocks at my front window

and smashed the glass, I reported this incident to Ms Furban, who was busy ripping people off, sorry I mean collecting the rent, all she said was, make sure I keep all the pieces of broken glass so she could repair the window.

One afternoon I was returning home from work and I saw a very strange site at the front of my house, you won't believe it folks, what she did to repair my window was she collected the pieces of glass then fit all the pieces back together like a jigsaw puzzle using metal washers and screws, surely this goes beyond the realms of sanity. As I mention before Ms Furban and Ivor lived in an old rundown Queenslander type of house, one afternoon I had to call on them to pay my rent, walking through the front yard and tripping over bits of rubbish I knocked at the front door and called out I am here to pay my rent, Ms Furban yelled out. I am in the office, come in. Well I thought my place was a bit shabby, but her place had it all. Newspaper for the dinning room table cloth, pieces of timber over holes in the floor, sticky old fly strips hanging from the ceiling every two metres, a cat on the kitchen table eating a dead bird and then something caught my eye, a window in the office had the same repair job as my window and just then another couple appeared in the office to pay their rent. This couple lived in another section of this house.

As I left the house I thought to myself, Ms Furban has many renters on her books and she owns some businesses in town and also rents out her own house in which she lives and I heard that when she goes shopping she only picks the tin food that has a dent in it, and she demands a discount. She is the richest women in the district and just hoards her money, what a life. I went home to grab my grocery shopping list and as I left through the front door, when I closed the door that wonderful glass repair job fell out onto the ground and smashed into many pieces, I took one look and thought I don't need anymore stress from Misses Carfoops, so I headed down to the nearest real estate office to find another rental in another town. [true story just quietly]

## **A Darwin dinner**

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**By Moco Wollert**

The fleet was in Town! Well, maybe not the fleet but a Destroyer of the British Navy. A great event in the small town of Darwin - no more than 6000 inhabitants - a town where nothing much ever happened. The temperatures stayed around the hot 30 degrees celsius and the rain in the wet season came so regularly every afternoon that we could set our clocks by it.

So, a ship of the fleet in harbour was an 'event', excitement. The Rotary Club of Darwin was asked to entertain the crew of the ship. Niclas and Terry Irvine, the husband of my friend Annette was of course expected to do their bit and invite a number of the sailors. Annette and I planned a dinner together for about eight of the crew. We decided to have it at Annette's place as she had a big house and also could cook extremely well.' Shall we have a theme?' Annette asked me.

‘Yes lets. I know, let’s make it a Territory Dinner with a twinkle in the eye’, I replied. ‘ Shall we go way out?’ We both laughed, we had spoken at the same time. And why not, we had to celebrate this special occasion.

We grinned at each other and settled down with a cool glass of wine to work out the menu.

‘Ok, appetisers’ Annette mused ‘ how about we give them some prawns and call them TURTLE TESTICLES.’

‘ Soup! I said, we give them a clear soup and call it BILLABONG WATER FILTERED THROUGH buffalo horns.’

Annette refilled our glasses and we thought about ‘entrée.’ How about a small piece of barra, pickled in ginger served on leaves?’ Annette smirked. She poured another glass of wine. I had the giggles by then and came up with ‘ Jellyfish tentacle’.

Main course was easy: a choice of steak or chicken, easily disguised as CROCODILE TAIL STEAK or EMU THIGH.

‘Now for something really exotic for desert’ Annette said, slurring her words a bit. ‘How about BLACK SWAMP MOSQUOTOS DIPPED IN HONEY? We use blackberries for that.’

I only nodded YES, because I did not trust my voice to come out right and I knew it was time to hit bed. As soon as I got home, I fell asleep very satisfied with our effort of the menu.

The next evening all was ready. Annette had set her large table with her best lace tablecloth, lace serviettes, wonderful China and enough forks, spoons and knives to dazzle royalty. On each plate lay a hand-written small menu:

Turtle Testicles

Billabong water filtered through Buffalo horns

Jellyfish tentacle

Crocodile Tail Steak or Emu Thigh

Black Swamp Mosquitoes dipped in Wild Honey.

We had expected officers as our guests. I don’t know why we thought that, maybe because Rotary was a bit of an elite club and one could only become a Rotarian by invitation. So maybe we thought they would automatically send us officers, after all they were something of an ‘elite club’ too. However, seven enlisted sailors turned up with one officer who was obviously in charge. The sailors practically stood to attention the whole time and even after we gave them all a beer to loosen up the introductions, there was not much conversation. The officer kept a keen eye on the sailors who hardly dared to say a word. When they spoke, it was in the broadest cockney and we had trouble understanding them.

We sat down to dinner. We waited for the laughter. It did not come. Instead, we



saw seven distressed faces, eyes that looked in utter confusion at the rows of spoons, forks, crystal glasses, water glasses, port tumblers, which changed to sheer horror when the sailors started to read the menu.

When Annette brought out the prawns and explained what they were, a collective sigh of relief filled the room. Those sailors needed rescuing and I quickly picked up my menu and started to explain the joke and what we would really be eating. We got the first tentative smiles.

It was a fairly silent dinner even though we served enough drinks. The officer hovered like a headmaster over his charges who were battling with the silverware, watching Annette and me.

We retired to the lounge room for coffee. Thank God we had not invented something gruesome for the dark brew. The evening got long and longer, hardly anyone spoke. I could see Niclas and Terry thinking desperately of some topic to get a real conversation going. Finally, Niclas said 'What sort of ship are you serving on, I haven't got a clue about ships.'

That finally started a conversation, all about ships, their sizes, their tonnage, their guns. So, the evening dragged on and I could see that Annette was as bored as I was. We all sipped our coffee and waited for the officer to give the sign to leave. I don't know who was more relieved when the signal came, the sailors or us.

After everyone had left, Annette and I looked at each other sheepishly then we opened a bottle of champagne. If only we had had arranged a barbecue in the yard with sausages and steak and a dart board, we might have given those poor sailors a good time.

## Stories of cats

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### By Ellwynne Rutherford

I guess you've noticed on TV our country has been invaded by a plague of mice. In some places cats have lost their appetites for mice. Saw a cat with a mouse sitting on its' head. Oh! That mousy smell. You'll know what I mean. Mice plagues are not new, in 1 Samuel 5:6 we read that after the Philistines took the ark from the Israelites they were ravaged by a scourge of mice (I wonder what they had to combat them with in those days?) Anyhow, they moved very quickly to return the ark to its' rightful owners.

A family had two cats, one caught mouse and the other one, Fat Cat didn't, however, one morning there was a great commotion at the front door and when they went to investigate Fat Cat had caught a mouse alright—only trouble it could not be counted because it had already been caught in a trap.

One day my parents went away, and my little brother Bill was left home alone. So, he decided to play Barber's Shop with our old cat, just a trim and general

tidy up, you know. He took a bit off around his tail and ears and then a very big mistake, he clipped his whiskers as well. There was a bit to do when our father noticed those short whiskers. Novice barber Bill didn't know they were there for a reason!

It was about Christmas 1989 when we invited Eddie and Robyn to join us for Christmas lunch. Eddie had this beautiful little creamy, ginger kitten called Pasquale, perhaps Robyn had given it to him for a Christmas present. Well, he stroked it and patted it and just loved it all morning then in the afternoon it went outside for a while and under the house it came across a half drum with oil in it. He hopped in and of course the rest is history. Towels had to be brought and the kitten cleaned. It was such a shame, he was no longer the lovely, clean fluffy kitten he once was.

Another story that made the local newspaper where I grew up. Sox the cat was sunning herself out in the backyard, waiting for her new family to arrive, when she was startled by a snake. She jumped up and began playing with it, as cats do, and of course was bitten. After that she spent some time under the back steps, seemingly in a coma. When they checked on her, she looked dead, so the next step was a coffin and a burial. But hold on, when they lifted the lid on the box Sox blinked her eyes—so the burial was reconsidered. Instead, they put her back under the steps with a wet bag over her. Miraculously she recovered over the next two days and on the third morning she gave birth to five kittens.

Alex permitted their two Ragdoll cats, Ragna and Cleo to have some time outside in their little back yard. It wasn't long before the little female came upstairs crying and gave Alex no peace until he followed her back downstairs where he found Ragna had managed to get himself over the 6-foot fence into the next-door neighbours' yard and so had to be rescued.

My dad visited a railway house about 6 kilometres up the railway line from home as he was the only wireless technician in the district. There perched on the windowsill was a cat that looked a whole lot like our cat, so he said, "Is that your cat?" They said, "No, he comes and goes?" The only explanation was he went visiting, walking the line whenever he felt like it. Perhaps getting food at both houses. You know in those days' cats got table scraps most of the time.

Most of you will be aware that I've lost my dear little cat, Mattie, she had been my constant companion for sixteen years, so I've had some sad times especially when I arrive home, and she is not here to greet me. Someone wrote, "There are few things in life more heart-warming than to be welcomed by a cat". That was truly my experience, whenever I came home.



# Bushranger tales

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By Helen Kerr

Recollecting my childhood, what I remember vividly is my father's fascination with bushrangers. We lived in the country, in the south-west area of New South Wales, an area where bushrangers had roamed a hundred years before. I never knew why Dad had such a fascination for bushrangers until I did the family history. Then I discovered that his grandfather had a close encounter with one of Australia's most famous bushrangers.

I initially became aware of Dad's passion in 1956 when we got our first car. He was almost 40. He'd been a bicycle rider until then. It was all he needed to get around our small country town, and besides, he couldn't afford a car. He saved for a car with weekend work laying lino and as tally clerk with the local bookmaker when the races were on. He chose a 1934 Buick. It was a long sleek car, pale green duco, running boards each side with a deep, dark interior and soft leather seating. He was a man who loved to read, had an inquisitive mind and was a big picture man. It is easy to imagine the sense of freedom his car brought to him. Within a few weeks we set off on our first motoring adventure. We hit the bushranger trail, tracking down Ben Hall.

Ben Hall was Dad's favourite bushranger. Ben had a small holding of land near Forbes, NSW but when his wife, taking their infant son, left him in 1862, he began associating with Frank Gardiner, a charismatic bushranger. The former law-abiding citizen was a member of his gang when they held up the gold escort at Eugowra Rocks and made off with 14,000 Pounds worth of gold and cash, the largest amount ever taken in a robbery.

It was the middle of the gold rush and for three years they staged hundreds of robberies around the area. The Government brought in special legislation to 'outlaw the bushrangers' which meant they could be shot on sight without warning by anyone and a reward of 1,000 Pounds was put on each of their heads. Ben Hall was killed by thirty bullets from eight policemen on 5 May 1865 as he walked to collect his horse and was buried in Forbes Cemetery. He was 28 years of age.

On that trip, we visited his grave, the Eugowra Rocks and explored the towns he was associated with - Forbes, Bathurst, Orange, Collector - we also stayed at our first hotels. The purchase of the car opened up our lives to new experiences. All we had known previously was our town and train journeys to Tumut to our mother's family and to Sydney for a seaside holiday.

We also drove to Binalong in 1965 when the town re-enacted the shootout between police and the bushranger Johnny Gilbert one hundred years previously. The town's people dressed in period costume and a re-enactment saw Ben Hall's mate Johnny Gilbert fall in a hail of bullets.

Our biggest bushranger expedition was the Ned Kelly one when we drove to Northern Victoria in 1961. Before we went Dad supplied us with books and articles on the Kelly Gang so we would know the story of our country's

most famous outlaw and it was then that he told us that his grandfather had been shot in the leg by Ned Kelly. This ramped up our interest and we had a wonderful time exploring the area around the small town of Greta which is known as Kelly Country. We found the graves of Kelly family members, visited the site of the Glenrowan siege where Ned was captured, and Beechworth which has the historic courthouse and gaol where Ned was held on various charges throughout his criminal career.

Twenty five years after his death and researching the family history, I remembered Dad's bushranger story. Was it true? Who was his grandfather? Where did he live? Did his path cross with Ned Kelly? Well, the truth is, it wasn't Ned Kelly, it was perhaps the second most infamous criminal operating at that time, Captain Moonlite.

In November 1879 Captain Moonlite, recently released from a jail sentence of 10 years, with five companions, arrived at Wantabadgery Station, seeking food and work. They had been told that the owners were sympathetic to helping travellers but they were turned away, there now being new owners, who kept them waiting for several hours before refusing to help them. They returned the next day and took 39 hostages at the Homestead, taking possession of all the firearms and accessing the provisions.

The next day, Captain Moonlite and his gang decided to leave and, on the road, ran into a local landowner and several of his men who were kept prisoner for many hours and had their lives threatened. In the meantime, the Police from Wagga and Gundagai mounted a patrol to search for the bushrangers and they were confronted at a nearby farm. A shoot-out resulted in the death of two of the bushrangers and the capture of Moonlite and two others. One of the police was shot and died the following day. Captain Moonlite and one of this gang were hanged a few weeks later.

Dad's grandfather worked on Wantabadgery Station and was one of the men who confronted the bushrangers. Whilst they were certainly threatened with firearms and assaulted there is no evidence that his grandfather was shot. This may have been a story embellished down through the years.

The story was told to my father when he was a young boy and it seems his childhood imagination remained with him as an adult. Bushrangers had a heroic quality in the country areas where they operated and were often seen as wronged individuals who fought back against the system. My father certainly always had sympathy for the underdog.

Dad's fascination with bushrangers gave our dull lives some colour and resulted in our travelling out into the world from our small country town many times.

# Growing up in a small town

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By Wendy Svartz

“The nice part about living in a small town is that when you don’t know what you are doing someone else does”

Immanuel Kent

In the summer of 2011 I took a nostalgic trip with my family back to my roots, to Cootamundra affectionately known as “Coota” to the locals. The town lies between the rolling hills of the Southern slopes area of New South Wales. A popular Australian song, Cootamundra Wattle tells of the beautiful golden wattle which blankets the countryside in the spring.

The streets in most small towns of Australia are extremely wide. Cootamundra is no exception. My grandparents lived on one of the widest streets in town in a modest home which hugged the footpath, with a small front yard and an expansive back yard with room for a vegetable patch, flower garden and fruit trees backing up to the railway lines. After school, I visited my grandmother and helped her with the garden or to bring the washing in from the clothesline, the old-fashioned kind where the line was hoisted up by a long stick. Washing day, usually Mondays was a full-day event, cleaning the clothes in the copper and then rolling them through the heavy ringer manually.

On the other side of town my childhood home was still there. My parents built it in 1949 and updated it, extending the house as the family grew. A tree, which was planted in the front of the house when we moved had grown enormous and covered the front yard, overshadowing the house. No one was home when we were there. So many memories abound in that simple, non-descript house, now filled with another family cultivating their own memories. On hot, humid days, my family congregated in the hallway at the front door to catch the gentle breeze which flowed through the house. We listened to the football on the radio, read books. Mum knitted. My sisters and I played with cut-out dolls and my brother sorted his stamp album.

We drove around town, past the tennis courts where we played junior tournaments on weekends. We parked where Dad sat on his bike for hours, silently cheering us on. He wasn’t like other parents. He didn’t cheer loudly, nor did he get worked up about bad calls nor yell advice. Still, we knew he was there. We felt his love and support. He never missed a shot. We walked home reliving the game, ball by ball. Sport was a big part of our lives growing up. Children spent most of their time outdoors, even during school hours. We had a cricket pitch in our backyard and Dad set up a wall for practising our tennis shots.

My old school and the Sisters of Mercy Convent were still there. I took a stroll. It was devoid of students being winter school break. I looked in the window of my classroom, an old church building which had been converted. Today, it is an art room, next to the new high school building built the year before I graduated.

The classroom, where I spent my final school year, was barely bigger than a broom closet. There were seven of us. Good memories, a training ground for life.

We visited the historical museum beside the recently restored railway station. We struck up a conversation with an old-timer at the front desk. He remembered my Dad from when Dad was a manager at the local hardware store. I felt comforted and proud that my dear Dad, gone from town for over forty-five years who passed away in 1980, was still fondly remembered. The old-timer knew where we lived, even the number of the house. He had been the local postman for over fifty years, now retired.

Driving around town it appeared to have shrunk, so much smaller than I remembered. The library, the shops and the Roxy Theatre, sadly no longer there, seemed such a long walk from home but were no more than a brisk, ten-minute walk. The Town Hall and Post Office were imposing, impressive buildings dwarfed by modern shops. The local cafe where Dad bought fish and chips every Friday evening on his way home from work had gone, like so the old Coles department store where Mum and Dad worked when they first met. It had been replaced by a modern supermarket.

Some things remained the same. The four local hotels on the main street thrive. "Deeps" the menswear store is still open, run by current generation of the family. It is modernised and updated. No more wide, solid wooden shop counters, nor the glass cylinders that transported the cash upstairs to the boss, Mr Deep, who would validate the sale, write a detailed receipt and return change to the customer waiting below. Even back then it was unique, and we children marvelled at the speed of the cylinders. Mr. Deep, towering above in his domain appeared to be a very important person.

The local newspaper office where my brother did his cadetship was still in the same spot on the main street. The pharmacy, where I started working the same week I left school, was still in business but had changed ownership. The farm boys still drove up and down the main street wolf-whistling and trying to impress the local girls.

We stayed the night and the following morning looked for a McDonald's for breakfast. We asked a taxi driver, waiting for a fare at the taxi rank beside the Commonwealth Bank.

His reply, "No McDonald's here. Never will be! They wanted to put one in up the road at the new-fangled roundabout. We got a petition and protested at the local council meeting, and it was dumped. They decided to go elsewhere. We don't need McDonald's here."

Amen!

Small towns! How can you not love them. Sometimes, I find myself fantasising what it might be like to move back home again.

# Mum's story - the road from Rocky Ridge

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**By Heather Bottrell**

My name is Heather Bottrell. I was born in Streaky Bay, SA in December of 1946. I grew up in the tiny town of Penong, on the edge of the Nullarbor Plains. I remember sitting on the back steps when I was 10 years old and watching a large mushroom cloud appear out the back. I didn't know at the time, but the British detonated 7 atomic bombs between 1956 and 1963, one of which was twice the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. A lot of the people I grew up with have since died of various types of cancer and I believe it's because of the radioactivity from those bombs. I have a lot of skin cancers and I truly believe it's from that catastrophic event.

I met my husband Ted in 1963 and we went on to get married and have five children. Ted passed away August last year, and his passing has left a huge hole in our family.

In the early years together we lived in an old converted double decker bus and caravan setup on our farm outside of Penong, SA named Rocky Ridge. Our children roamed the farm building cubby houses, chasing kangaroos and playing tricks on each other. One morning, getting ready for the school bus run my eldest daughter Connie poured hot water onto the windscreen of my old XM Falcoln to clear the ice; the windscreen did not survive. I drove this car without the windscreen for years to come, not something you could do these days. The kids were so embarrassed. One day I drove from the farm into Ceduna for shopping, the old Falcon was backfiring as I drove down the hill past the fruit fly stop and the kids were hiding on the floor in the back screaming with laughter, wearing that they had never been so embarrassed in their entire lives.

We moved to Rosewood, Qld in 1981 to provide better opportunities for our children, as if we'd stayed in South Australia, the kids would have had to travel to Adelaide (some 850 kms away) for University and/or further education.

When we first moved to Rosewood, we were blessed to live on Ted's brothers farm at Mt. Forbes. Ted then gained employment and ran a farm for John Gleeson on Mt. Walker Road in Rosewood. Ted played a vital role in establishing the first horse feedlot in the southern hemisphere. His knowledge of farming, fencing and livestock management was key to the success of this project. Ted also worked as a diesel mechanic at Kiedges in Ipswich.

In 1988 we purchased our house in Railway Street, Rosewood, where I am still living today. Our house dates back to 1870 and was one of the first Railway Cottages in the Rosewood township, known as the Gate Keepers Cottage. We were told by the agent that sold us the house that it wasn't in a flood zone, however after three major floods impacting our home we know we were given incorrect information. We were able to raise our house in 2011 and now I don't worry as much about the water roaring down the hallway.

I had three siblings, Frank, Ted and Yvonne. Yvonne passed away as a baby,

she is buried in the Minnipa Cemetery in South Australia. My brother Frank died in 2011, and I still miss him greatly. Frank went to Vietnam, and he never spoke about his time over there. My last remaining sibling is Ted, and he lives in Strathalbyn, SA with his lovely wife Judy. Judy has been a beautiful sister-in-law, a key person in my life.

My husband Ted was one of 11 children, so going to a family function with the Bottrell's was a bit intimidating at first. So many people, so much food and so much laughter. Ted was very funny, he would often play pranks on me, like turning the mixmaster off when I left the room so I would run back in thinking it had broken. After doing this several times he couldn't help but roll around on the floor laughing. He used to say he was helping to keep my heart strong. When I moved into Rosewood I went up the street and asked if there was a Baptist Church in the town, as that's the church I had attended in South Australia. I was told there was no Baptist Church in Rosewood, so I joined the Uniting Church and I still attend there 35 years later. I have made good friends with the members of the Church, they are my second family. It was a memorable day for me when I was asked to 'Greet' newcomers, as they visited our Church for the first time, and to welcome our regular parishioners.

I worked as a Volunteer Committee member with the Queensland Ambulance Service for almost 20 years, based at the Rosewood Ambulance Station. I think our Ambo's do an incredible job.

I am not well enough to work anymore, but I do attend singing on Monday nights, Rosewood Women's Group on Tuesdays, Fellowship meetings at the Uniting Church and Church most Sundays.

I miss Ted. He was a smoker, and the cigarettes got him in the end. We didn't have long with him once his Stage 4 lung cancer was diagnosed. He wanted to die at home, with all of his family with him, and that's what we did. I have my four daughters and son around me and for that I am blessed.

## **Couple ties the knot in aged care**

### **Eddie Newman and Marina Rouicheq**

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#### **By Carinity Brookfield Green**

Wedding bells aren't often heard of in aged care communities, but two lovebirds tied the knot in a seniors' home in Brisbane.

Carinity Brookfield Green resident Eddie Newman married his fiancée Marina Rouicheq in the aged care community's on-site chapel.

"I asked the chaplain, 'How are you on for weddings?' She said she's only allowed to do funerals and I said, 'We don't need funerals yet'. So, she organised a pastor to do our wedding," Eddie said.



Eddie and Marina's grandchildren played parts in the wedding ceremony, which was attended by around 50 guests. Four granddaughters served as flower girls with five grandsons as page boys.

The couple's beloved dog, Hope, was there when Eddie and Marina said "I do", and one of Eddie's friends from his aged care home was in the wedding party.

A reception followed the exchanging of Eddie and Marina's wedding vows, held outdoors on the lawns of the scenic aged care location.

Carinity Brookfield Green staff provided live music, playing flute and saxophone. Other staff took photos and prepared Eddie for the big occasion, which was filmed and broadcast live into residents' lounge rooms.

Eddie, a former taxi driver and cotton factory worker, and Marina, who worked in aged care, met online and have been together for 11 years.

"The day we met she walked up to me, and she was dressed in red. I saw her and she was just beautiful. We got on so well, like a friend that you had met before. She's very easy to communicate with," Eddie said.

Marina said she and her new husband have been inseparable since the day they met.

"I always say he taught me to laugh; he taught me to live. He introduced me to new experiences like camping. But he can't convince me to swap footy teams and go for Geelong. That's never going to happen," she said.

"We've had a pretty good connection over the years. It was a very special day because this is Eddie's home.

"We've got a lot of memories here. The staff have been lovely. It's just marvellous the things that they do for you."

## My apple green high heeled shoes

By Lynn Chantler Cargill

Sixty years ago, it was 1962 and I turned 16. Now being 'fully grown up' I begged Mum to buy me high heeled shoes. The shoe shop was where Mum bought all our shoes and she was able to 'book' the shoes up and take them. I was so excited and tried on a few styles, but the pale apple green high heels were 'it'!

I just adored those shoes. I did a pencil drawing of them, with a black velvet ribbon



draped over them for a stylish effect.

Our family had become friends with another family; they had three girls the same ages as us. We had met on board the SS Orontes in 1958, when we were part of the large number of “Ten Pound Poms” migrating to sunny Australia the land of opportunity. The friendship endured, and although we lived on the Central Coast of NSW, and they lived in Sydney we had nice visits with them.

Dad had a big black Buick car (he loved cars), so going for drives was a frequent occurrence. One of our visits to our friends in Sydney I remember clearly. The parents were happy to sit and chat and have cups of tea, so we six girls decided to walk around the neighbourhood. I was sixteen and slightly older, so yes, I felt the most grown up.

I wore my new lovely high heels that day, I felt great. It was good to be in the company of those girls, as we each had a friend our own age. I found it hard to keep up with their light-footed pace. I hobbled and stumbled in those shoes. Obviously, I had not practised walking in them. I should have worn my sandals, like Mum suggested.

The visit was over, and we headed back up the Coast. My feet were killing me! Both heels were sore, and blisters were forming. Not to mention my sore ankles, due to going over on them. I did not moan as I couldn't admit that I wasn't fully grown up.

Mum must have realised my pain and gave me some Savlon and plasters to put on my heels. I learned a lesson that day.

## **‘Peas in a pod’ sisters together again**

### **The story of Norma and Audrey (Joy)**

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#### **By Carinity Kepnock Grove**

Norma Williamson and Audrey ‘Joy’ Huntly have always had a close connection. Now the sisters have been happily reunited and lived just a few rooms away from each other in the same Bundaberg aged care community.

It has been more than 70 years since Norma and Joy last lived together under the same roof. Joy, 91, was overjoyed when she found out she would be residing near her sibling at Carinity Kepnock Grove.

“I can't jump with both feet off the floor now, but I think I'd have jumped over the moon. I saw Norma living here and I wanted to be in the same place, and here we are,” Joy said.

“When Norm and I were young, we stuck together like two peas in a pod. We had a lovely life, a happy life. She looked after me well – and she made sure I knew she was the big sister!”

After Joy visited Norma at Carinity Kepnock Grove, Joy told her family it was time for her to move into aged care and that she wanted to be close to Norma.

“I thoroughly enjoy having my sister live with me and I enjoy my time with her,” said Norma, 93.

“She’s really good company and someone that understands our lives; what it was like and what it is now.”

Daughters of grocery store owners, Ogust and Nellie Soblusky, Norma and Joy are the youngest of six children. When Norma was born the family was living in a tent in her grandparents’ yard in Yandaran, near Bundaberg.

As was the case for many families, life was extremely hard during the Depression years. The Soblusky siblings didn’t receive much schooling and food may have been scarce, but their lives were full of love and laughter.

At the tender ages of 17 and 15, the sisters moved to Gatton where they worked at the local agricultural college. Joy later volunteered for the Red Cross for over 50 years, travelled overseas, twice drove around Australia by four-wheel drive with her late husband Alan, and danced overseas at square dance conventions.

Norma did domestic work in hotels and worked in Bundaberg Base Hospital laundry. Calling herself a “bushie from way back”, she enjoyed fishing and camping trips with her former husband, Merv, and later her partner of 40 years, Bill.

Between them Norma and Joy have had six children, a dozen grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren.

## **Queen Elizabeth II one of a kind**

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**By Ellwynne Rutherford**

When I started school back in 1946 people were very patriotic, British I mean. Every morning we saluted our flag and said something like this—I honour my God, I love my country and I salute my flag. Then we marched into school in an orderly fashion. In those years, Princess Elizabeth and Margaret were young women and it was every little girl’s dream to be a princess. We thought they had the perfect life. It happened that J went for a trip to Rockhampton and Yeppoon with my family.

I had a little bit of money to spend and bought two books with pictures of Elizabeth and Margaret playing with their friends, their dolls, prams, their ponies, and other girly things. I loved those books and read them over and over again.

Princess Elizabeth was only twenty-five years old when her father passed away and she became Queen. She was already married to her Prince charming

and rock, as she said, Philip and they had two little ones Charles and Anne. She took very seriously her role of service to her country and the countries of the Commonwealth. Two more sons were added to their family, Andrew, and Edward, and of course over the years they all grew up as kids do. I wonder whether Her Majesty ever looked at Prince Philip and said, "Where have we gone wrong bringing up these kids? They have caused us so much heart ache." Little Louis has his moments too. Have you noticed?

Often times at Christmas when she addressed the nation, she made mention of her strong Christian faith along with the salvation and hope she had in Jesus Christ. I believe that faith got her through many anxious nights.

I remember well the excitement when the royals visited Australia, people lined the streets waving little flags. In years past the yacht Britannia was sometimes used as a hotel, one time my husband had the privilege of transporting the royal luggage to the yacht, and on request was given a brooch, which I treasure to this day.

Very often when we see pictures of them in the garden, keeping them company are their corgis, obviously the Queen was very fond of them. She was a keen race goer and loved horses, some might have been surprised to see her canter down the Ascot track on her horse Surprise. The Brits are masters of pageantry, how fairy-tale like are the beautiful horse-drawn carriages and immaculately groomed horses used for weddings. Speaking of animals only recently we were amused at seeing Her Majesty have a cuppa with Paddington B. Bear and what a surprise, when she produced a marmalade jam sandwich out of her handbag, telling the bear it was for later.

One of the Queen's favourite events was the Chelsea Flower Show, many hours of work go into making such a spectacle and thousands of people come for a look. Recently I saw a lovely bit of footage, the Queen and Sir David Attenborough (both in their 90s) having a walk around all the trees that have been planted by other royals. Apparently another one of the Queen's passions was planting trees.

Our Queen certainly got people's attention with her immaculate dressing, over her seventy years reign her bold coloured ensembles and amazing hats were hard to miss in a crowd. Just about on every occasion she wore a three-row string of pearls and pearl earrings, her brooch was always applicable for the event. You rarely saw her without gloves. I guess her shoes and handbags were all made in Britain. Always smiling, never a hair out of place, never ever missing the mark, was our one-of-a-kind Elizabeth.

My husband and I visited England and Scotland in 1987, parked our campervan in a park near the Thames River, so I can say I've seen Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, The Tower Bridge, also the lakes District and Edinburgh Castle in Scotland. I loved the daffodils that grew wild, also the speckled ducks that were swimming on all the waterways. Growing up we had plenty of opportunities to sing, "God Save Our Queen" and so he did for all these 96 years.

# The dream catchers

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By Dieter Luske

The dream began at a friend's Christmas Day party. It was the usual coffee and cake gathering after the all-night festivities of Christmas Eve. I wore what the well-dressed young guys in Hamburg did, circa 1973. Skintight jeans, tee-shirt, and high-heeled half boots elevated me to a dizzying height of 1.9 meters.

Following a quick scan around the room, I parked myself next to the prettiest girl there. Just in time, I stopped myself from using the worn-out phrase, 'Where have you been all my life?' and simply introduced myself.

I had no intention of meeting anyone at this precarious time. My mind was set on going to Australia for a couple of years. I was selling my amusement machine business and changing my life to pursue art, photography, and writing.

Giselle, the girl next to me, listened, smiled gently and had a curious look in her eyes. Did I look back into her eyes with the same dreamy expression? Probably. It didn't stop there: one date followed another, and our fledging relationship deepened. But the big elephant was still in the room – Australia!

On a shopping walk in late March, we ended up at our favourite cafe. I can't remember what triggered my question, but it fitted the enticing atmosphere of the room.

"Why don't you come with me to Australia?" I asked, holding Giselle's hand. She stared at me and could tell I was being serious. "Let me think," she replied. It didn't take long before she answered, "Yes, I love to."

It felt like I had asked her to marry me. The impact of her decisive answer must have shown on my face.

"I think we need a brandy," Giselle said.

"We sure do!" I kissed Giselle and gestured to the waitress.

That night we brainstormed our future. Giselle suggested I move in with her after I had sold my unit and business. We planned to explore Sydney for a few months after arriving in Australia. We would buy a car and drive around for two years, taking pictures with the goal of writing a book about Australia for the German market.

A few weeks later, we received a letter from the Australian Embassy in Cologne. We were approved and even had our flight subsidised. We only paid DM 300 each but had to stay for 2 years; anything less meant repaying the flight cost. I sold everything except for a suitcase of clothes and my cameras. Giselle kept her unit but rented it out; it was our security blanket.

We left Germany in September, arrived in glorious Sydney, and the only question we were asked at Customs was if we had an address to go to. Yes, we

had friends who lived in Bondi. We were allowed to enter, "Thank you."

We found a unit soon after, one minute from Bondi Beach. Life couldn't get any better; we were in heaven. The following months, we explored Sydney and took way too many pictures, with story ideas popping up daily. We were convinced our dream book would be a bestseller.

Ready to go, we bought a yellow Ford panel van, a foam mattress, a guitar for me, and everything else needed for travelling. Our interests had expanded to include gem hunting which would be an excellent addition to our book.

We travelled up the east coast to Cairns and across to Darwin, which was closed for reconstruction due to cyclone Tracy.

Arriving in Alice Springs, it had rained, a rarity around Alice, as it is known to locals. The desert transformed into a carpet of flowers, with Uluru in the middle. A few weeks later, we arrived in Melbourne for another photo opportunity, the Melbourne Cup.

Back to Sydney to our beloved Bondi Beach, staying with friends, before taking off again for Darwin and back down the West coast from Broome to Perth, surviving the Nullabor, loving the Flinders Ranges, and later the Snowy Mountains, Canberra and back to Sydney.

We arrived in Sydney just before the post office closed, picked up our mail, and life changed instantly. A letter from my mother held devastating news, my brother had died. No time to waste. We sold our panel van, purchased air tickets and returned to Hamburg in February to embrace our family.

We married in March but didn't stay long in Germany. We were too much in love with Australia and had nightmares of not being allowed back into the country. We had to put our book on hold. Our new goal was to return to Australia to find our 'dreamhouse.'

Arriving back in Sydney in September 1977, we kissed the ground, literally; we were that happy. For over a year, we had visualised our dream house; we knew exactly what we wanted.

We bought an old car and drove up the east coast, looking at properties. Nothing matched our dream until we arrived on the Gold Coast. A friend knew about a property in the hinterland, close to Canungra.

It was an old farmhouse on top of a hill, 4 km outside Canungra, on 5 acres with a creek in walking distance, surrounded by mountains and rainforest and only 40 km to the most beautiful beaches.

That was it; we had found our dream house! We bought it and lived a self-sufficient lifestyle for a few years with the help of a large garden and taking pictures for the local newspaper.

Giselle, who had studied art and interior design, worked on her art projects, and

gave art classes. I opened a clinic for Naturopathy and Counselling. Life was exciting and busy, and became even busier when our son was born, another dream fulfilled.

But as they say, “That’s not all.” Forty-five years later, I finally found the time to write our dream book; we called it ‘It Happened in the Seventies.’ It is available on Amazon and other online bookstores.

And yes, we still live in our house on the hill, living our dream.

## The three Js

By Jeni Warburton

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In childhood, we were known as the three J’s, with me (Jeni) the youngest and only girl, Jamie two years older, and Jonny four years older. Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s in rural England, we had a lot of freedom. Our first home was on the Romney Marshes in Kent, in a farmhouse near the beach. Dad was farm manager and we had sheep, a sheepdog Connie, two cows Buttercup and Daisy, and a horse Trigger.

My early memories are exploring the beach – Jonny and I loved our I Spy book of the beach and scanned the tide as it ebbed, leaving little rock pools. We would collect bait for Dad to put on his fish lines, and splash in the water all year round. When Jonny first went to school, mum would pile all three of us into the huge old pram and wheel us all down to the primary school along the sea wall.

We soon moved from there to central England, and another farm. Here, we would roam the countryside, building camps in the woods. Jonny was very creative, and used to collect bits of wood and wheels to make go carts, on these we clung to each other as we hurtled down the farm road. Falling off in a pile of limbs, we always had scraped knees or elbows. In winter, it often snowed, and Jonny used the wood to make sledges. We all dressed in our duffle coats, woolly, pom-pommed hats and mittens and took off to the hills. Coming back frozen and wet to mugs of hot cocoa.

Jonny was quite an entrepreneur, and always had good money-making ideas. He sold manure from the farm to local gardeners; and collected coal from the railway track that he then sold to mum. He also collected bags of old pennies from the bank, which he carefully searched through for “bun pennies” – those with Queen Victoria on. Jonny used one of my Christmas presents (a toy sewing machine) to make clothes for our teddies. I had a teddy called Edward, Jamie had Monks (a monkey that he lost so Mum had to knit him another one), and Jonny had Jilly (known as Jilly the Rat due to its thin face!).

Out on the farm, I followed my brothers around, playing chase or climbing trees. We all dressed the same: khaki shorts, white polo shirts and Jesus sandals in summer, and woolly home knitted jumpers and wellies in winter. My

biggest dread was that my brothers would say “you’re just a girl!!” So, I hated dresses, dolls or anything vaguely girl-like. We had a black and white TV, and I remember the first program we watched – the Lone Ranger and Tonto. But mostly we were outside all day until dusk. We would play on the grass with our toy soldiers, or cowboys and Indians. Jamie and I would play tennis against the garage doors, his rebounds sometimes hitting me and making me see stars! We had a big rambling orchard at the front so always had apples to pick and eat! It was next to the road, so people would sometimes climb over the fence and scrump the fruit – but if we saw them first we would give chase! Ironically, anyone who asked was allowed to take windfalls. Mum cared for the tiered flower garden at the front, with its sweet-smelling cascading roses; and Dad had a large vegetable garden at the back, where he grew runner beans, cabbages and brussel sprouts. Lining the garden wall, we had raspberry canes – and I still think of how delicious it was to pick a handful at breakfast and have them on my Rice Crispies!

The days of being a free ranging gang of three were fast coming to an end. We all headed off to secondary school, me to the girl’s grammar school and the boys to college. Here, Jamie spectacularly failed every subject except art; and Jonny discovered the female sex. He was very popular with the girls due to his sweet personality and his long blonde hair. Dad was always trying to get Jonny to cut his hair, but he failed miserably, and Jonny still has long hair in his 70s!

Both the boys became quite trendy dressers, shrinking their jeans by wearing them in the bath. Jamie sewed some flowery curtain material into the flares of his bellbottom trousers. By the time I was 13, I gained some popularity at school when the girls discovered that I had two good-looking brothers! Girls were always ringing them at home, and I was always told to say that he couldn’t talk as he was in the bath!

Jonny was very cool (aged 17) and loved pop music. He even had a band called the Furans. They looked the part, but I don’t think any of them could play instruments or sing for that matter. My friend Susan and I were early groupies, and we went to see them at scouts’ halls, but mostly they were so loud that everyone danced outside. Our favourite song was Brian singing The Animals’ Land of the Rising Sun. It was his party piece, but that’s all he could sing!!

Jonny had a succession of girlfriends, especially one gorgeous blonde Swedish girl who wore thigh length boots and the briefest mini skirt we’d ever seen. Jamie, on the other hand, had one special girlfriend, Sally. He was very generous and gave her lots of presents. However, when they broke up, he took all his gifts back. I was very hopeful of getting the white boots he’d bought her – but mum made him take everything back!

Over my childhood, despite being one of the Three J’s, it was always up to me (the girl) to help in the house with Mum and fill in when she was out. Definitely not fair for someone who always tried so hard to be one of the boys!



# Together

By Kathy Tullett

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“I couldn’t do anything really, lying here unable to move,” said Ellen in a frail, wavering voice, vulnerable and helpless but still able to radiate compassion and care after her stroke. Her smile dissolved the slightest angry thought, and her wisdom transformed any mistake or insensitivity with understanding as she looked through kind clear blue eyes.

Even in her helplessness she found strength in her faith, hope and trust. Her visitor sat searching the room, the soft curtains blowing slightly in the breeze, memorabilia bought from home, a painting of her house, now sold, and torn apart for renovation by the new owners, family portraits, white perfumed flowers, her sacred books and women’s magazines. In the last couple of days, she had pushed the portrait of Owen to the background – somehow it was too hard to look at his face after 65 years of being there through thick and thin.

The couple had met during WWII in Egypt, both in the British air-force, serving their country with honour and dignity. Theirs’ had been a gentle friendship and Owen always erred on the side of caution, always be certain was his thinking. He came to Australia after peace was declared. The warm intuitive Ellen followed a year later, and within three months stood beside him in a side chapel in St. John’s Cathedral to take their wedding vows.

Their home, high on the cliffs overlooking the bay had seen many sea changes – in the lives of the countless folk who came to know them. Always empowering, encouraging, and sustaining, the couple grew to be loved by their whole community.

The visitor looked down upon the tired, now withered lady in bed. There wouldn’t be many folks in your community who hadn’t had a meal at your home, or known your kindness, she thought. Ellen coughed, and her visitor quickly poured a glass of water, standing to help her sip it.

“It was strange you know,” said Ellen starting haltingly again. “There was all the family sitting over there by the window, crying – crying for Owen, but I couldn’t cry, I couldn’t think.” The visitor patted her hand gently. There were no words just for the moment, just presence, listening and friendship.

“Then the nurse came in – she was always the one who suggested different things – and I was forever glad to see her. Leah had asked for her dad to be in the room, so we were all together. The next thing Owen was wheeled in. He’d never settled, always wanted to be with me. Even here they kept us apart in separate rooms.”

“Because you needed the rest?” the visitor asked.

“Oh yes,” replied Ellen, “since my stroke I couldn’t walk around with him or help him dress. I used to love brushing his hair, and Owen could only move very slowly, and get forgetful as anything. The nurses had to do everything, and sometimes he’d wander – they had to watch him. He often came to my door. He

wasn't supposed to come alone. When he tried, he couldn't open the door and he'd knock so loudly - causing such a racket." Ellen smiled.

"I'm sure the nurses didn't mind."

"No," replied Ellen, "not like the last place they took him, when I went into hospital with this stroke. They said he was disruptive. Could you imagine Owen being like that?"

"No" replied the visitor.

"They said he refused to co-operate and asked the family to find another home for him, so he came here when I did, but he really didn't like it. 'All I can see is a brick wall, there are no stars, no moon, no sun, and there's no sea or tide, I can't go for a walk' he said to me, but most of all he wanted to be in this room with me."

"He just seemed to go down-hill so quickly when he got pneumonia. 'I want to be with you' he kept saying. He had three lots of heart surgery last year, and managed so well, but he was unsettled here."

"Um" replied the visitor listening quietly, longing to give back some of the encouragement she had so often received from Ellen.

"Now where was I," said Ellen seeming to have forgotten the thread of her conversation.

"Oh yes, they wheeled Owen in and that very kind nurse said to me, 'do you want to be in his bed with him?' Everyone was crying and I was longing to be with Owen. I said, 'can I?' Well, the nurse came and picked me up out of my bed and put me in the bed next to him. I put my arms around him, gave him a big cuddle, and told him to rest, and that's when he left me. He'd been waiting for me to be with him before he could go."

The breeze ruffled the curtains. Ellen turned her face toward the visitor, an old friend and gave the faintest effort of a smile, then turned her face toward the vase of flowers beside Owen's portrait and fell into a deep emotionally exhausted slumber.

## **Ipswich family's history 'around the corner and around Australia'**

### **The Royston Whybird story**

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**By Carinity Elim Estate**

To quote the famous song, Royston Whybird "has been everywhere, man".

Before he retired, the Ipswich man saw a lot of Australia - and got paid to do it

- as a fourth-generation furniture removalist.

Royston, who lives at Carinity Elim Estate retirement village in Raceview, operated Whybirds Removals. One of Ipswich's longest running family businesses, it was owned by the Whybird family for 140 years until 1997.

Australia's oldest independent removalist enterprise was founded by Royston's great-great grandfather, John Whybird, in 1857 – although “not a lot of planning went into him going into the transport industry.”

“He worked for a produce merchant doing deliveries. When the boss went broke my great-great grandfather got the horse and cart in lieu of wages,” Royston said.

John's son, Henry, upgraded to a two horse-drawn lorry which he used from 1911 until the end of World War II. After Royston's father, Allan, returned from the war, he received a loan to purchase a 1946 Ford – the first truck in the fleet.

Royston was proud to continue the family tradition of delivering furniture “around the corner and around Australia” after he completed his motor mechanic apprenticeship.

“I started driving in the days when there was lots of dirt roads and no roadhouses. There were no refrigerators, no phones, no air conditioning, sleeping under the truck or in the back if there was room,” he said.

“I drove to Perth in the 1960s, when most of the Nullarbor Plain was still a dirt road. I've been across the top of Australia to Fitzroy Crossing and been to Tasmania a few times.”

One removal job saw Royston drive from Hermannsburg, west of Alice Springs, to Hopevale in far north Queensland. When Bill Hayden retired as Governor-General and moved from Canberra back to Queensland, Whybirds won the contract.

“We were quoting against national companies like Ridgeways and Grace Brothers. At our peak we had 35 employees and 13 trucks,” Royston said.

Royston, who was inducted into the Road Transport Hall of Fame in Alice Springs, explains that shifting furniture is a special and “very personal” skill.

“After a death in the family or a divorce, moving house is about the next most stressful thing. We met everyone at their worst; we had to be the smiling face,” Royston said.

“You can teach a furniture remover to drive a truck, but it is very difficult to teach a truck driver to move furniture”.

“The removal industry has changed a lot. I think back to my grandparents, what they had in their house bears little resemblance to what's in a house now. They

didn't have four TVs, a barbeque, an outdoor set of tables and chairs."

Royston is keeping the history of Whybirds Removals alive. He has published a book on the business and made several 1:12 scale models of its delivery vehicles from over the years including their horse-drawn transport.

"I'd always thought I would like a model of grandfather's lorry and I looked at all the model kits you could buy, but they were of a prairie wagon. So, I thought I'd better build myself one," Royston said.

Striving to keep his DIY project "as authentic as possible", Royston utilised everything from used pieces of exhaust pipe for the lorry's steel tyre, to his own leatherwork for horse reins.

## **Stuck in the mud at Muttaborra 1977**

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**By Ellwyn Rutherford**

In this new year of 2020 I've decided to vary my stories and sometimes write about our adventures with God, perhaps you could say writing our own chapter of Acts; not that I would compare our experiences with the miracles we read about Peter and Paul. It is however fairly miraculous when you see God working in your midst. A long time ago back in 1976 — 77 we lived and somewhat managed the Box Street Caravan Park at Barcaldine, Central Queensland. I must say we had our eyes opened to many things and learned a lot while we were there, although we were not strangers to caravan life.

We had a lady living at the park who was working as a cook at one of the hotels in town, however she found the work too heavy for her and decided to try for an easier job at Hughenden, which was a fair distance further North, so one weekend she drove up there and made arrangements to start the following week. When Mrs. Johnson drove to Hughenden the road was being worked on between Aramac and Muttaborra, however she thought nothing of it as the weather was fine.

Unfortunately for us, there was a big rain during the week which we knew nothing about. Now her little car was not powerful enough to tow her big caravan. We had a 4 wheel drive and so she asked us to do the trip to Hughenden with her 'van. Sunday morning came and we were all up early, it was still dark and pretty cold too. Well! What a surprise we were in for that day! Our son Neil travelled with Mrs. Johnson in her car, and everything started off okay. Then we noticed they were missing for a while, later we found out they had gotten a puncture. They must have been relieved when some nice young man came along and fixed it for them. How many decent young men would have been travelling that road that Sunday? Perhaps God sent an angel.

After we left Aramac, we came to the road works and a detour, normally our Jeep did these jobs with ease, but not this time. We drove along the detour stretch then when we tried to cross on to the new road there was a drain and

the mud packed up under the A frame of the caravan, this caused the brake line to tighten and pull the brakes on. Have you ever driven through there? There are no trees. My husband had a brainwave he decided to tie the winch rope around a telegraph pole, however we had to abandon that idea when the pole got a lean on it. What's next? As a last resort Mrs. Johnson's car was used as an anchor and 'the 'van was winched out. We were all covered with mud, our shoes had a generous amount of mud stuck to their soles. Is it any wonder we sighed a sigh of relief as we drove into Muttaborra, it was already lunch time.

In 1963 a grazier by the name of Doug Landon discovered the bones of a Muttaborrasaurus (as they were called) near Muttaborra. These animals grew to about 7 metres long. They weighed about as much as 2 small cars, had 2 sets of grinding teeth and it's thought they probably lived in herds. Winton is situated North-West of Muttaborra, lots of skeletons have been found there as well.

It was sundown when we drove into the caravan park at Hughenden. What a day! I'm so pleased we had enough money to drive back as we were paid with a long heavy— duty lead. Driving home we were escorted by about 20 kangaroos hopping along each side of our vehicle. We arrived home at midnight.

## **We are going to Australia tomorrow**

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**By Lynn Chantler Cargill**

Leaving the land of one's birth can be quite a wrench. I was eleven and could not comprehend the enormity of the step my parents were taking. This was a gamble on a new life in a new land. All I could understand or imagine was the excitement of new horizons and a future in a warm sunny land, Australia.

Dad had been to Australia during World War II when he was in the Royal Navy. His ship the 'HMS Indomitable' Fleet Aircraft Carrier came to Sydney for repairs after being torpedoed. Dad made friends with an Australian family, and he was able to see that this would be a wonderful place to live.

Our parents made the application to emigrate. Dad was working at a furniture factory in London, and almost every day he would go to Australia House to see if our application was being processed. There were so many hopeful families wanting to start a new life in a new land halfway across the world. The horrors of war had left deep scars, and the prospect of a fresh beginning was very enticing. So, our family, like thousands of others would become "Ten Pound Poms."

I remember that day in February 1958. Mum had just been to the opening of a new 'supermarket' (a very new concept then) and bought quite a good stock of opening specials. In the meantime, however, Dad had gone to Australia House and accepted the cancellation! Dad came home and announced the news "We are going to Australia tomorrow!"

Now looking back at that time as an adult, I can only try to comprehend the

great faith and courage my parents had in making, this possibly the biggest decision ever to face them. The madcap hustle and bustle of accepting a twenty-four cancellation to go on a thirteen-thousand-mile sea voyage is out of the ordinary to say the very least. Yes, Dad was a bit 'impulsive'.

Our house was a buzz: neighbours came in to help with the final packing. I remember Mum giving away the last few possessions to friends and all that food she had bought. Emotions were high, with chatter, tears, laughter and the excitement of adventure. But amidst all this frantic, busy activity, my dear grandparents were helping us. They had sorrow in their eyes, but I did not see it then. Now I feel a tremendous sadness, for those dearly loved ones, who were never to see us again. How my heart aches for them as they faced losing their family. I think the pace at which everything raced from when Dad announced the news gave little time for focusing on gloomy thoughts and heart-wrenching farewells. My Grandparents were spared a little, or they did not have time to dwell on the final separation that was imminent.

The day we left the docks at Tilbury, England was cold, grey and raining. The feeling of excitement filled the air. We were one little family, among hundreds of others who shared the same hopes and dreams – the start of a better life in Australia. Even as a child, I remember the atmosphere of exhilaration paired with tears and smiles, as the grand old steam ship SS Orontes slowly pulled away from the dock and the people waving on shore became small dots.

The voyage to Australia was fantastic. Six weeks full of fun, friendship, and the shared excitement of the unknown. For many families this journey represented the only 'holiday' they had ever had.

The smell of diesel fuel and the sultry heat of the Port of Aden brought an inkling of the mystery of foreign places. Our stop over at Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) provokes memories too. We had a whole day on the island. Dad hired a taxi to drive us about. We called into a temple where a baby was being baptized. The people were so lovely, and even asked my very blonde Mum to hold the baby. Such a beautiful vision: seeing two little families from different cultures, happily smiling for the photo. I remember the hundreds of frangipani blossoms scattered on the cool marble floor, and the exquisite perfume, even today, takes me back to that time.

Shipboard life was great fun. We made a lot of friends and enjoyed activities for the children. My little sisters, aged eight and five and I went to the fancy dress party. Mum made me a sailor's suit out of white crepe paper and my sisters as hula dancers. With all the fun activities, we also attended church and school. I remember as an 'end of school' treat, we were allowed to visit the ship's bridge. My youngest sister had her fifth birthday on board, so there was a special birthday party for all the children – her name is printed on a list inside the menu.

Every day we were given ice cream cones, this was a very special treat. We all enjoyed the swimming pools. I got a certificate as an honorary member of the Ancient Order of Salt Water Pollywogs because I learnt to swim on board.

Perth was the first port to see migrants leave Orontes. Then, more people left at Adelaide and Melbourne. Our final stage of our wonderful voyage was Sydney. Entering the harbour, I can still vividly remember seeing all the little, red-tiled roofs of the houses and the leafy green trees. The sun was shining brightly on a warm March day; overhead the brilliant wide blue sky and sparkling water below as the ship made its way to the pier. The Sydney Harbour Bridge with its imposing magnificence welcomed us. This was our new homeland, Australia.

## Childhood memories 1940s

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By Ellwyn Rutherford

I love to see a little boy or girl riding a pony. Recently I saw on TV a three-year-old riding his white pony, he was quite proud of the ribbons around his pony's neck. One of my great grandsons has a pony, but I haven't seen him ride yet. I've been told that it's difficult to find a quiet pony suitable for a little one to ride. When I was young the only horse, I rode was named Albert and we rode him to round up the cows. This may be confusing for some as such horses were called cow horses.

One day after it had been raining and the gateway was all muddy, I remember how he propped and there was no way I could get him to walk through the mud and get his hooves wet and dirty. When my brother and I were really little we rode sticks from trees as horses, sometimes with string attached for reins. If mum burnt them in the stove, we would simply go out into the paddock and get new ones.

Perhaps you've seen the more upmarket models called hobby horses. They were painted and had a proper horses head. Usually, they had one or two wheels to drag along the ground. Children have more sophisticated toys these days. Most people had horses when I was young, even riding them to school. Horse racing was common, there were horse-drawn sulkies and wagons to carry people and food and all other goods.

There were very few cars. Can you imagine that? Transport was very slow, and people walked for miles. My earliest memory was when we needed to go to the closest township. I had a pair of shoes on, and I could walk along alright, however my little brother had no shoes, so dad took mine and put them on him- and in my mind this was the first of many times he was put before me.

I grew up always feeling I had to be responsible for my other siblings. The day came when dad and mum had to vote. Now this was an important occasion when you saw all the home bodies and recluses come out. Dad decided we would have to yoke Clancy up in the sulky so we could all go. Well! For about a week Dad teased mum saying, "Clancy hasn't been yoked to the sulky for a long time, he might bolt." Any way the day came, my brother and I had to sit on the floor and off we went, of course Clancy was perfectly behaved, and we got home safely.

My grandparents often came out from town to visit us on Sunday afternoon, they owned an old dark green car. Cars were a fairly new thing, and my grandfather didn't know a lot about them. Lots of the roads were no more than tracks, no bitumen back then. There were two creek crossings between Ubobo township and where we lived on the farm. One Sunday grandfather managed to get bogged in the creek when he took a wrong track. Unfortunately, Dad was not home that day. What a nuisance! After we had some lunch, we had to ask a neighbour to bring his plough horses down to the creek and pull the car out of the sand. You know our Dad was always the answer for us, he could fix anything!

An exciting day came when there was no more shanks pony or sulky as Dad got a car, nothing too flash, but better than walking! It was a beige coloured whippet utility. It's always been a mystery to me how Dad learned to drive a car because there were not driving lessons in those days. I can clearly remember that the driving ability of some left a lot to be desired. We had to drive through those creek crossings and the whippet never failed to cough and splutter, then Dad would stop to dry the motor. How I hated it. I must say I was sad to hear that Prince Phillip left us. Thinking back to my school days we were raised very patriotic and British. I know a man who worked at Buckingham Palace caring for the beautiful horses that belonged to the establishment. This might surprise you, however he had a tier of Charles and Diana's wedding cake and brought it back to Australia.

He formed me from the womb to be his servant- Isaiah 49:5

## The leaving of Ireland

By Colette Kinsella

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### The Spark of an Idea

*We are thinking about going to Australia, so your Dad and I want to discuss it with you*

*What?*

*When?*

*Why?*

*For a holiday to stay with Uncle Peter\* and Aunt Barb\*?*

*Super! But I'll need new jeans!*

It was late 1979 and the past few years had been difficult financially which consequently had put a strain on our marriage. Ireland was on the brink of recession. Companies were closing down, and some overseas-based companies were pulling out of Ireland altogether. Due to this, my husband had lost his job as Sales Manager. He had quickly taken a job driving a delivery van, in order to keep a cash-flow into the family finances. I had a secure job, but it alone could not pay the mortgage, school fees, electricity and all the other household bills.

Paul\* and I had already discussed our options for the future. Most of our ideas were not viable in the current economic climate. Paul eventually got around to



suggesting emigrating to Australia.

*Australia? At the other end of the earth from Ireland?*

*Yes, but my brother and his wife are living there and would help us to get settled.*

*No! Definitely NO! End of conversation!*

### **The Research**

However, the seed was sown, and I began to think about it more seriously as an option. Remember that those were the days before emails, Facebook and Mr. Google for research. Overseas phone calls cost an arm and a leg; so, it meant writing long letters by hand to Barb in Australia, plying her with questions about the economy, availability of suitable jobs, price of houses, the education system and even how the political/government system worked there. Poor Barb! However, she was very helpful, sending us packages of newspaper pages, booklets, brochures etc. along with her long letters.

I approached the Australian Embassy in Dublin. Sad to say, they were less than helpful. I found the staff there to be rather rude, brusque and uninformative. They made me feel as if they were doing us a big favour. On one occasion I was so annoyed that I pointed out to them that we were the ones doing them a favour – bringing two well-educated and skilled adults, plus two teenage children who would also contribute to the Australian economy for the rest of their lives! That didn't go down too well; but I didn't care about their hurt egos! Hopefully these few people did not epitomize most Aussies.

Despite all these hurdles, we had gathered enough basic information to get a feeling for what life in Australia might bring.

### **The Worries**

In the meantime, our two children (Brian\* aged 15 and Orla\* aged 13) were getting very excited and enthusiastic about going to Australia. It was like one big adventure for them! we had to sit them down to discuss how they would miss their school and local friends.

No, that's okay – we can come back to visit them whenever we want to. Besides we'll make new friends over there anyway.

Well, my daughter did return on visits to Ireland as an adult. Sadly, my son didn't return until his lovely partner, my daughter and grandsons took his ashes back to scatter in a lovely place up the Dublin mountains this year.

We were concerned about Paul's ability to get a suitable job, because all of his business contacts were in Ireland. Who would want a Sales Manager in Australia who had no local contacts? My skills in clerical and staff management areas were much more transferable.

Would the children adapt easily to their new life experiences, and how much would they miss their friends in Dublin?

I tried not to think too much about just how much I would miss my girlfriends – we had been through school together and remained good friends into adulthood, through marriage and having children.

How accepting of us would be the Australian people?

What would happen if we all hated living in Australia?

### **The Preparations**

Once we had been granted Resident status by the Australian Government (which had taken many months of paperwork, interviews, health checks etc.), we put our house up for sale. Selling or just giving away most of our household goods was rather sad. We arranged to have six tea-chests of ‘treasures’ shipped out – one chest for each of us and two for household treasures. Of course, ‘treasures’ to Brian and Orla meant, mainly, all their records, portable record-player, selected books, etc.

We bought six new travel cases on wheels (quite a new invention!) – one each and two for all the odds and sods of ‘leftover’ things we might need. This limited the amount of clothes each of us could take with us, so we discarded most of our ‘winter gear’ assuming that it would be hot all year round in Queensland.

### **The Farewells**

Now came the hard part! All the farewells.

Irish people love parties, so farewelling us was a great excuse for them! Parties with workmates; neighbours; close friends; extended family members! The last few weeks were a whirlwind of happy and sad moments. Eventually, the day before leaving, I had to say farewell to my very favourite aunt who had been like a second mother to me all my life. She was devastated that we were going so far away – she might never see us again – how could she live without me? It was heartbreaking.

### **The Leaving**

At last, we were on our way. We took the train from Dublin to Limerick and stayed overnight in a ‘posh’ hotel for our last night. Next morning, we took a flight from Shannon to New York. As the plane lifted into the air, I cried my eyes out. Would I ever get back to Ireland again?

### **Postscript**

Despite our concerns, we all settled down happily in Australia in our own individual ways. The Australian people were wonderful, accepting us into their lives!

However,... our first impressions of life in Australia will fill another story some time.

## Three Aussie mates

By Gordon Moore

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Mateship in Australia is very traditional. Being of European extraction myself it is not surprising that my mate's three families also originated there.

Hans Hoven is the son of Dutch parents, and they all had a rough time in his youth. His parents operated a tea plantation near Bandung in Indonesia. Hans fled that country in just his shorts and shirt after the Japanese troops took over. Years later he and his jolly Australian wife were friendly neighbours when we all lived in the rather remote village of Weipa. Later again my family moved to the central Queensland town of Blackwater and we invited Mr. and Mrs. Hoven, then in Brisbane, to share Christmas with us at a house we made use of in the seaside town of Emu Park. Having to do some job or other at Blackwater, I planned to join the family later at the Sunshine Coast using a 250 cc Yamaha motorcycle I had just bought from Blackwater's Paymaster. I had a lot of bother trying to use the kick starter on this unfamiliar machine and sought permission from the BP fuel attendant to fill up the fuel tank without stopping the engine. He declined. With a full tank but a bit of a sore right calf, I pushed it home and got the Paymaster to come to start it for me the next morning. On successfully negotiating the 200 kms trip to the seaside the good wife, inspected my leg and wisely insisted on taking me to the Nambour hospital. The female doctor there put me on treatment designed to counter the risk of that swelling causing a blood clot. I felt a right idiot. When Hans came to the hospital sympathizing at my missing out on the family get togethers at the Emu Park Christmas holiday house, he said not a word of his intentions then. When I got out of hospital, I was overjoyed to discover that Hans, a bit of an expert on motorcycles and other things, had driven the wretched Yamaha all the way to Brisbane and brought back a lovely electric start, belt drive CM 250 Honda motorcycle. Now that is what I call a real mate. I am happy to say Hans is doing just fine at 93 years of age.

On to the next one. You can easily guess from the name that Leo Van de Vorst is also of Dutch origins. He was a tall muscular tradesman specializing in intricate carpentry work for a firm in the nearby town of Forest Glen. He lives above the town of Palmwoods at the end of a muddy track through the trees. He made his own dark unpainted wooden house halfway up the mountain almost as far as Montville. The place has lots of old bits and pieces thereabout partly buried in dead leaves. Aside from his workmanship skills Leo was once a trials motorbike champion, so there were at least three old motorbikes there under canvas. Leo was a great tennis player and we both wished, contrary to the existing Tennis Committee, to improve the quality of the courts. It was thanks to Leo's efforts and great technical advice over quite a period that we elected a new committee and implemented the improvements. Just at that time my wife said that the motorbike was too dangerous to keep. Leo had often admired my nice quiet Honda, so in consideration of all the help he had given me, I sold it to him for twenty cents.

I do not know Steve's surname, but he is definitely of Danish origin not Dutch. This assiduous engineer lives just across the road from my present Brisbane

dwelling. He might be retired, but he is always industrious. He fixes his own house garden retaining walls, replaces the interior flooring, maintains his boat, their caravan, his wife Lindy's Mazda, his son's old Holden, mixes cement for his paths and removes a fully grown tree that was threatening to fall right across the road. He even takes his son's two yappy dogs in his big utility for their daily walk in the park. Three times I have asked Steve to help me with very minor repairs which frustrated me. One was a corner support for a big laundry drawer, another was how to fit the new rollers to fix a sliding wardrobe door and the third one was a plastic broken toilet roll holder. Each job took the magical Steve no longer than three minutes. The new rollers went back to Bunnings for a credit and the toilet holder, nicely saving me buying some new fitting and making undesirable new drill holes in the bathroom woodwork, seems so strongly repaired that it will never need fixing ever again. Steve once showed me a terribly ancient rusty motorcycle at his shed and that gave me a new idea of how to pay him back.

On hearing that Leo Van de Vorst he was not well, I succeeded in finding him in his forest hideaway on my second investigation there. Unfortunately, just as Leo was about to retire, he sadly had a debilitating neurological visual and balance impairment that restricted him to a walker for two years. The medical people shunted Leo from one hospital to another trying to know how to treat this nearly unique problem. The prognosis is not good, and it is likely that Leo will never drive again and will be dependent upon his son or daughter. I suggested I could collect the lovely CM 250 Honda and donate it to Steve for his occupational repair therapy instead of Steve trying to fix that rusty relic in his shed. Leo liked that idea, but Steve's wife Lindy, in view of the busy city traffic, wisely declared that she did not want her good husband to risk his life on any motorcycle. That is OK.

I have been so lucky to have such good Aussie mates.

## The ravages of age

By Frank Reid

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As a young soldier I always thought that, if I was to be killed during my army service, my obituary would read something like this, "He lived fast, died young and had a good-looking corpse!

Sadly, as I am an under tall, slightly rotund, short sighted, hair challenged person of the male gender, who has now long past the compulsory age of senility, aspects of this, my youthful statement, can no longer be achieved. As I race, (the only thing I do fast anymore), towards my 'use by' date, I wonder how I can impact on the remaining aspects.

Firstly, I am no longer a Serviceperson, so, perhaps, I need to learn to tell lies – at least to myself! If my past, very mundane service life was really transparent, then no-one in their right mind could possibly consider that it has been lived in the 'fast lane'. If the truth was known, I am still in the first gear of my Morris

Minor pace of life. The trouble is the motor now keeps breaking down. While some might consider me, 'past it', I do believe I could still learn to embellish some of the things I have done. 'Done' being the operative word, rather than 'achieved'. As I dig into the depths of my memory, which is fading rapidly, to find words that are suitable descriptive, I realise that words such as 'talented', and 'skilled' are not words that accurately describe me. I guess I will have to keep searching through my Thesaurus, which my wife is having to hold further and further away from me as I try to read it.

So, having failed miserably in the first two principles of having lived fast and died young, I can but scrape the last vestiges of my un-used matter, loosely called a brain. I do this in a vain search of memories of what I have actually done in my life. Perhaps it is time to just give in and see if I can find anyone who can advise me on achieving the last principle, that is "..... have a good looking corpse".

Ah well, so how do I improve on the exercise in horror that I go through every morning when I front the mirror in my bathroom, as I try to straighten the wrinkles so I can have a safe shave? I am not into plastic surgery, and I have tried pulling my skin down below my collar and holding it there with a peg. But, once again, that is something else I have failed at. If I digress slightly, I think most of us will acknowledge that we are kidding ourselves when we buy 'anti-wrinkle cream'. In my case, I have so many wrinkles that flies even have difficulty landing on my body without tripping! So what is the answer? I think it is time that scientists started to work harder, and more rapidly, on matters that are important to the few of us who belong to the same era. Amongst the subjects these scientists could centre their attention on are tablets that will give us eternal youth. Oh, alright, at least give us a guaranteed life span! And, of course, the anti-wrinkle cream that will allow us to maintain the looks of our yesteryears.

You might well be asking, "What about your waistline and weight?" Well, I have to admit, it has been difficult trying to maintain a set size and weight. Using an elastic tape measure and standing with only one foot on the scales have not worked. Talking about work I can honestly say I have tried almost everything that has been recommended...that hasn't involved hard physical work!

Being told to try and 'manage my shape' sounded much better than dieting, which, I am sure, is an untranslatable Japanese word. Sadly, I envisage images of myself as a balloon filled with water; you squeeze in one place, and it bulges in another. I think the simple answer is to keep wearing clothes two sizes too big!

The other important matter is that of my cranium, a complete lack of hair. I have suffered all of the known jibes and jokes about baldness, and I have met them head on, (pun intended). Oh, for a full head of hair, instead of a head full of air! Ah, to be able to spend a few hours in front of a mirror grooming my head of hair, planning and deciding styles, colours and length, instead of wasting time searching for the last vestiges of things long gone. I have long put the thoughts of hair transplants into the same basket as plastic surgery. The very thought of having to put a 'rug' on my head each morning is even more frightening. The

only youthful aspect of all of these matters that I have retained seems to be my imagination. Come on scientists.

Having recently spent time with friends, who we haven't seen for some time, I couldn't help thinking, "doesn't he look old?" Then I found I had tickled my honesty bone and realised that my own skin has been transformed what can only be described as 'blotched tissue paper'. The only good thing about this is that the size and colour of the blotches change daily, providing me with some entertainment. I used to claim these as 'Battle scars' when I was constantly being outdone by others with the same problems.

The more thought I give these problems, the more despondent I become. I guess the easy answer is to make sure that I note in my will is that my coffin lid remains firmly closed and nailed, so no-one will see me and be frightened.

## Traveller down under

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By Moco Wollert

I never settled where-ever I went till I came to this vast South Land;  
my heart took roots, my senses sang, I had reached my journey's end.  
I love this country, land of the sea, of skies embroidered with light,  
burning sunsets, melon moons, rainbows fanned out in flight.

Tropical forests where orchids dream, green paddocks, lush from rain,  
ghost gums standing forlorn in the night, the smell of burning cane.  
Cool carpets of sand, patterned by tides, rivers that die without sound,  
anthills with shadows tall and strange, blanketing blood-red ground.

Bright autumn trees, yellow and red, snow-covered slopes and pines,  
billabongs dotting sacred grounds in mud coloured, fading designs.  
Blue painted turrets of ancient stone, holding jewelled, ice-covered lakes;  
sun burning down on exhausted soil, heat breeding opal-eyed snakes.

Land of my dreams, land of my heart, your vastness dwarfs the sky,  
your ancient stories still float on the wind, tales that will never die.  
So, I am singing this old-fashioned song, like a troubadour of the past  
for the land is eternal, captured in songs that will forever last.

Thank you to everyone who submitted stories in this year's Senior Stories book.

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