

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY PRESENTS

# DOWN MEMORY LANE

## Book II

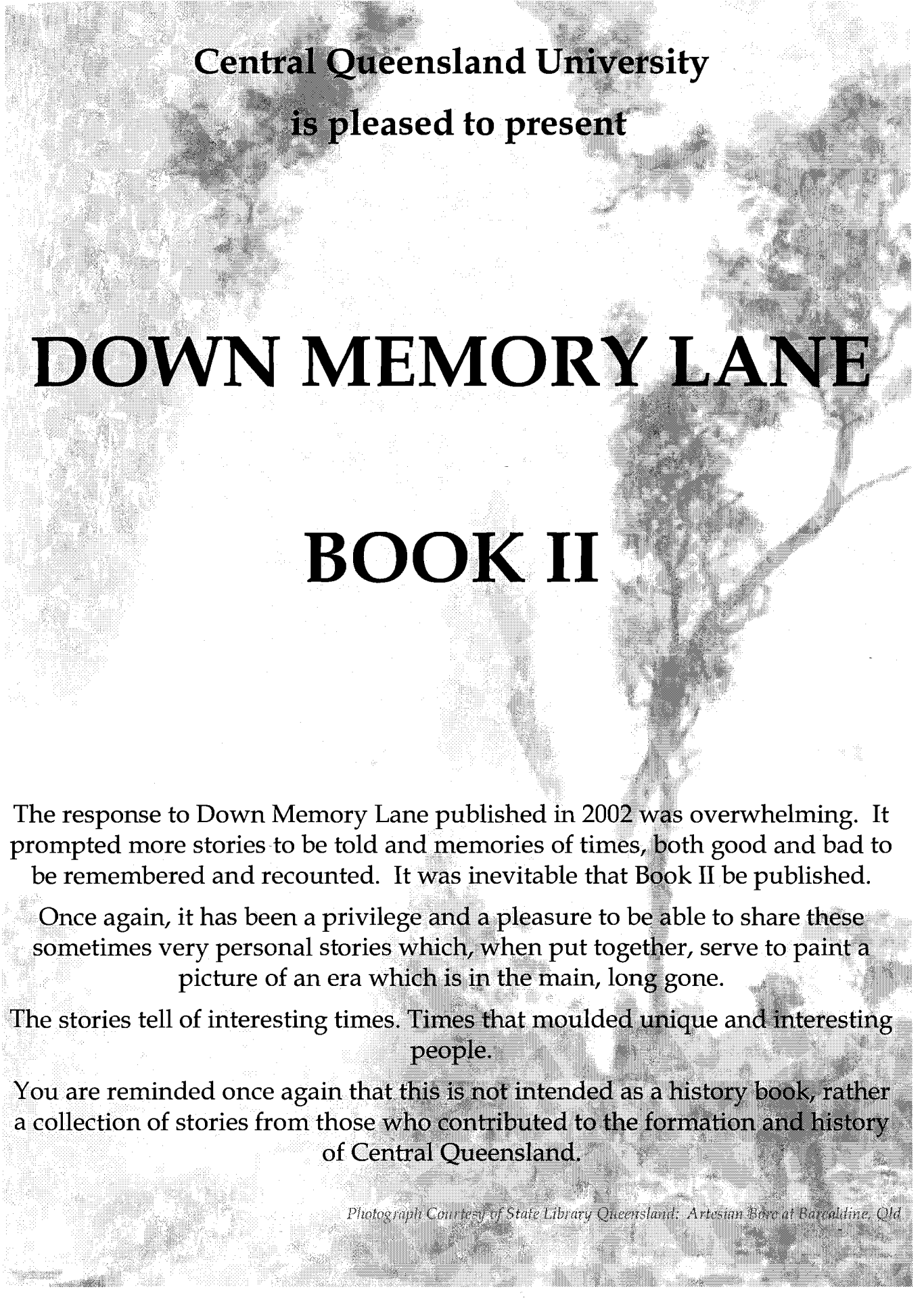
A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES CAPTURING SOME OF THE  
EARLY DAYS OF THE CENTRAL QUEENSLAND DISTRICT

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Central Queensland University  
is pleased to present

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## BOOK II

The response to Down Memory Lane published in 2002 was overwhelming. It prompted more stories to be told and memories of times, both good and bad to be remembered and recounted. It was inevitable that Book II be published.

Once again, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to be able to share these sometimes very personal stories which, when put together, serve to paint a picture of an era which is in the main, long gone.

The stories tell of interesting times. Times that moulded unique and interesting people.

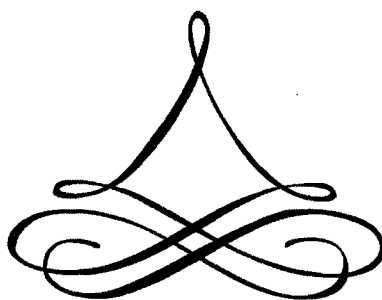
You are reminded once again that this is not intended as a history book, rather a collection of stories from those who contributed to the formation and history of Central Queensland.

*Photograph Courtesy of State Library Queensland: Artesian Bore at Barcaldine, Qld*



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## GROWING UP IN THE GOLDEN ERA OF LOCAL RADIO

Charles Paterson



*Charles - 1950's*

It happened one Saturday morning on stage at Rockhampton's Palais Royale Theatre. The compere, a well-known 4RO announcer at the time, asked one of the show's young guests to name his favourite ice cream. Imagine the poor man's embarrassment when the answer, which came loud and clear, was PAULS. It was the Peters' Pals Club, sponsored by PETERS ice-cream – the popular monthly variety show and talent quest, broadcast live on 4RO – just one of several programmes for children.

Another was the weekly Sunday School of the Air, featuring hymn singing to the accompaniment of the studio piano. One Sunday, the announcer as usual introduced the programme and gave the pianist her cue to play the theme. Down came her hands on the keyboard – but horror! – there was no sound. The previous Friday, the piano-tuner who couldn't work on the instrument in the on-air studio, had removed the action and taken it to his workshop. That weekend the children had to make do with recorded music.

These incidents took place some time before 1951 when I joined the announcing staff of 4RO at the original studio on the corner of East and

William Streets. The building was not air-conditioned and the windows opened directly above the street. On an open microphone, the post office clock could be heard striking the hours and, in the early years while the Purrey steam trams were running, they could be heard grinding their way round the corner. On-air time was given from the studio clock, supplied and maintained by Withers the Jewellers.

I came to 4RO with some studio microphone experience. The drama department of the A.B.C. then directed by Dion Wheeler, made periodic visits to regional centres such as Rockhampton producing one hour plays, using professional actors for the principal parts and amateur players like me for the supporting roles. After several rehearsals the play was recorded on disc in the Rockhampton studio of the A.B.C. on the ground floor of the Town Hall building. It was my good fortune to be cast in several of these plays that used a very sensitive double-sided ribbon microphone, the same type that I later encountered at 4RO.

For a start, I was rostered mainly in the afternoons, but was soon doing morning shifts as well. Nights came later. Night time was the peak listening time when the whole family gathered around the one and only big radio set in the house to enjoy the many programmes.

Before the seven o'clock news there were shows like When a Girl Marries, Martins Corner and Dad and Dave. After the news came programmes featuring the like of Jack Davey, Bob Dyer, Roy (Mo) Rene and many more. There were also variety shows such as Australia's Amateur Hour and the Lux Radio Theatre.

Weekday mornings featured what came to be known as "Soap Operas" so called because manufacturers of washday products like Lever and Kitchen and Colgate Palmolive sponsored many. Two of the most popular and long running shows of this kind were Dr. Paul and Mary Livingstone M.D.

The afternoon programming included serialisations of popular novels. 4pm to 5pm Monday to Friday was dedicated to the children, with music and stories for boys and girls of all ages. Popular serials included First-light Frazer, Biggles and the Smokey Dawson Show.

On Friday afternoons children took part in a one-hour live talent quest. This was the Redleaf Revellers presented by Denham Brothers with lots of the sponsor's soft drinks for all participants.

The studio piano was used on air for the last time for Redleaf Revellers. It had survived the shift from the original studios to new premises in East Street, opposite the Commonwealth Bank. That was in 1955. Then in 1970 4RO moved again, this time to its own building in Victoria Parade. The move was made minus the piano and the remaining stocks of 78 standard records.

By this time I was the station's senior announcer and my duties were many and varied. Most of my time was spent in the studio, but there were lots of promotional activities that often included outside broadcasts, such as the launch of new shopping centres and other businesses.

Before the employment of radio journalists, it was also my job to attend press conferences and record news interviews, usually at the Rockhampton airport. Here I can remember speaking with Prime ministers Whitlam, Frazer and Gorton.

The social calendar also made its demands on my time. For many years 4RO broadcast live from balls, such as the Railway, the Post Office, the Military and the various debutante balls. On these occasions the late Doreen MacPherson who gave descriptions of the ladies frocking accompanied me.

For a number of years I acted as compere for the Miss Capricornia section of the Miss Australia Quest. This involved a direct broadcast from the stage of the Rockhampton Municipal Theatre plus T.V. coverage on the then RTQ 7.

Rockhampton Show Week was always a busy time for me when I spent many hours in the broadcast box at the showgrounds, making occasional announcements on the public address system, reading commercials and assisting the ring announcer who, for most of my time, was the talented John Nash.

From the thirties to the eighties, 4RO broadcast Saturday three-state and local racing plus T.A.B. dividends and for a number of years I did the coordination of these to air in the studio.

Each Saturday morning a Sport star of the Week was announced and presented with an attractive Coca-Cola sports bag. An independent committee that met weekly chose the Sport star. The same committee also selected the Sport star of the Year, who received an Australian Airlines return trip for two to any of that company's flight destinations.

A programme that I recorded every week was the *Charlie Bellert Country Music Show* sponsored by Heilbronns the drapers and outfitters of William Street. It was a quarter hour show that went to air on 4RO each Sunday lunchtime and was also broadcast on 4LG Longreach. It ran for a record thirteen years.



Charity appeals were conducted annually. Long time listeners will recall the Legacy Appeal, the Spastic (cerebral palsy) Appeal and the one for children of Rockhampton's two orphanages.

*Bill Crane, the late Les Hardman & myself*

Regular on-mike personalities for the appeals included Bill Crane, the late Les Hardman and myself. Many other announcers gave generously of their time on radio and later on Television.

Over my 45 years association with 4RO I witnessed many technological developments. The hard and brittle standard 78 records were replaced by light flexible, vinyl microgroove discs – first the multi-track long-playing albums, followed by 45 singles. Much later came compact discs.

In the early fifties, radio received a tremendous boost with the development of tape recording using reel-to-reel tapes. Cassettes came next, and then cartridges with endless tape, used mainly for recording produced commercials and other short announcements.

Talk back radio was another big step forward in broadcasting, allowing the listener to pick up the phone and speak directly with the announcer on air.

But I believe that the most significant development as far as radio was concerned was way back in 1956 when the humble transistor made its appearance. It was fortunate that this coincided with the start of television in Australia. Radio sets which until then had been large, cumbersome and expensive, became small, portable and a whole lot less costly. This meant that everyone could afford his or her own radio and listen to it just about anywhere.

Programme changes involving more music throughout the day, more frequent news bulletins, weather and other essential service information, enabled radio to compete successfully with television.

In 1988, 4RO entered the space age with satellite reception of news and other relayed programmes. Computers were progressively introduced over a number of years, first in the office area and ultimately in the production department and on-air studio that became fully digitalised, making obsolete the playing of records on turntables.

After an announcing career of some thirty-five years, I made the switch to radio copywriting that kept me busy for my remaining years at 4RO until my retirement in July 1996.

In the year 2000, I returned to the microphone as a volunteer announcer on F.M Community Radio 4YOU.





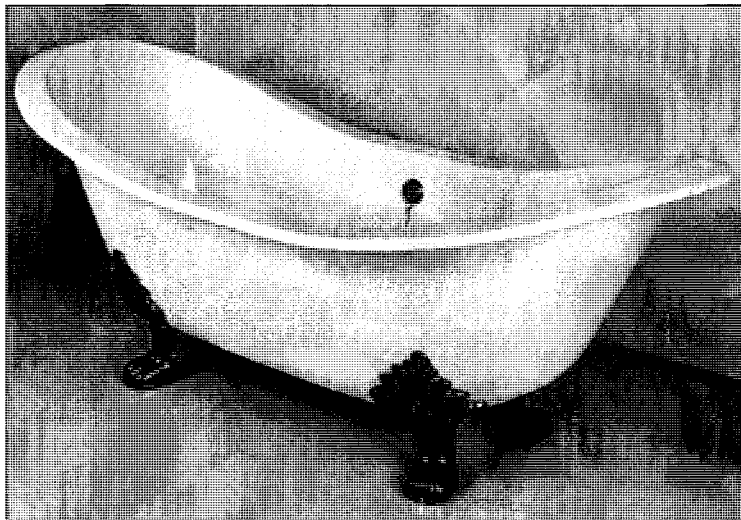
## GRANNY'S HOUSE

Lorna Smith

The quaint little old fashioned house stood on the edge of the friendly country town. A shady bower of thickly entwined ivy led from the footpath to three wide steps and the open veranda with its white painted, round banisters.

The tiny sitting room with two sash windows held a round centre table and chairs fashioned from oak timber; a corner sideboard which held an assortment of marvellous nic nacs – a delight to be observed but never touched; and an old battery radio set, the voice of which was always drowned out by static and required a 12 volt car battery to operate it. When we wanted to listen to a special programme the battery was often 'flat' and was taken off to the local garage to have it recharged. The well-worn lino on the floor covered an Oregon pine timber, which today would be greatly prized with high polish and maybe a rug or two.

Into the kitchen, furnished with homemade table and chairs carved from saplings cut from the nearby bush. The mantle shelf above the black Saxon stove held goodies like sweet biscuits and delicacies for those days like dried fruit pieces.



Onto the bathroom where the galvanised iron bath with its intriguing feet took precedence. The washstand with its assortment of home made soaps and clean linen held the painted china hand basin and jug of clean water freshly filled from the rainwater tank at the rear of the house.

Outside, the laundry was a fascinating place. Its large round tubs, washboard, mangle and bar soap, along with the tank from which the copper, boiler and tubs were filled by the use of a heavy iron bucket, took care of the weekly washday.

Best of all was the bedroom with its large decorated iron bed and patchwork quilt. Standing along the wall were cupboards made from '4 gallon' pine kerosene cases each placed on top of one another and covered with cretonne fabric – a brightly coloured floral cotton, altogether a kaleidoscope of colour.

The happy memories of lying in bed beside Gran with the candle flickering, smelling the box gum trees outside the window, seeing the beautiful cactus in bloom on moonlight nights, and listening to the stories of Gran's life when she was a little girl, filled me with wonder.

## WATTO'S WORLD

Gordon Watson

The address I was born at has disappeared. My birth year was in 1926 when the north side of the Fitzroy was a Borough with its business conducted from the Borough Chambers. The building that housed the Chambers still sits in Stapleton Park and, after a renovation a few years ago, still looks much the same as it did then. So, in 1926 even though there was an Alma Street in the main city of Rockhampton, there was also an Alma Street in the Borough. It was in the days when midwives and home births were the norm and so I was born in my family home on the corner of Waterloo and Alma Streets. I was one of 5 children and all of our birth certificates show that address.

I don't know when Alma was changed to Robinson Street but that name is the only one I remember when growing up. I only discovered the Alma Street anomaly when I needed to get a copy of my birth certificate. Obviously the name was changed when the decision was made that the City of Rockhampton should cover both sides of the Fitzroy River. Perhaps it was at this time the Borough Chambers became the Main Roads office, which it was for many years.

Robinson Street now runs from Balaclava Street to Dean Street, but in the early days we knew that section between Berserker and Dean Streets which runs past the high school on the right and the bowling club and swimming pool on the left as Norman Road. Now of course Norman Road is over the creek, so over the years there must have been a deal of renaming of streets for one reason or another.

The area around Waterloo and Robinson wasn't built up when we were kids in fact our ¼ acre block was pretty isolated. From High Street heading north was all Brigalow country, black soil country with big melon holes. From High Street up to Robinson Street was dense Brigalow but after the war, the Housing Commission resumed the land and built a lot of Housing Commission homes on it, especially in the area through from where Frenchville Sports Club now is.

I was the 4<sup>th</sup> child in the family. My Dad worked at Thomas Browns, big merchants like Denham Brothers, supplying groceries etc. to Rockhampton and out west. The stock came in on big boats that unloaded at the wharf in town, first on to horse lorries and then later on to motorised lorries.

Dad came from England as a lad of about 14. He emigrated with his family who settled up here and then dispersed throughout the country. My bloodlines are pure British as my maternal Grandmother was also English and she came out with her family. My Mother was born in the Rockhampton area. My parents met when Dad was bus driving for a time.

Dad drove lorries at Thomas Browns and when the motor vehicle started to become popular, he and another chap who worked there too, saw the opportunities that cars could provide and decided to become motor mechanics.

He took an International Correspondence School course. These courses were very popular then (similar ICS courses are still advertised in magazines today). He became accredited and became the mechanic for Thomas Brown and Sons as well as his services being in demand privately. He was a pretty enterprising man and made use of opportunities presented to him. Perhaps it had something to do with the depression as we were raised through the depression. All families had it tough but everyone I knew was on the same level. As a kid I wasn't hugely aware of how much neighbours assisted each other or of just how difficult times must have been.

I went to the Frenchville School, which was a two-teacher two-room school. We walked from the corner of Waterloo and Robinson Streets through scrub until we got on to Dean Street and then walked up Dean to Frenchville Road. Many a time we couldn't continue because of the herds of bullocks they drove along that way to get to Lakes Creek meatworks. We had to stand back behind fences while mobs came past. They'd unload them at Parkhurst from lorries and trains and then walk them down Norman Road; up into Dean Street then Kerrigan Street to the top end of Thozet Road and into Rockonia Road and up to the bull yards at Cooper Street.

After heavy rain, the road was a disaster and would dry into rutted tracks imprinted with hard dried bullock hooves. George James was the Headmaster at Frenchville School and he had an old grey car with a dicky seat on it. He wanted an all weather road so he lobbied a good friend in Parliament – Jimmy Larcombe, and it seemed to work and we got a sealed road from Dean Street to Frenchville School. There was a quarry in Frenchville Road and relief workers built that road by hand with horse and dray carting the hand quarried stone on to Dean St. and Frenchville Road where they broke the rock by hand with big sledgehammers and gads. No dynamite was ever used because the Quarry was too close to homes.

They were big blocks all around there with a lot of market gardens on  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre lots. There was also poultry and some fruit-trees. The Frenchville area was a popular market garden area and supplied a lot of local produce to the town. The Park Avenue area was dairy farms. Where Shopping Fair is now was also a dairy farm owned by people by the name of Kerr. The earliest suburbs were Lakes Creek, Koongal, Kalka and Park Avenue and for many years the piece of land that now houses the cycle track and the Police station was put aside to build the University on.

So my stamping grounds were all around the area where North Rocky High now stands. That was all open country. There was a house down in Musgrave Street around where Centrelink is now. The chap who lived there had cattle and he used to drive them up on to the (North Rocky High) flats to graze during the day and then take them back at night. We had cattle on our block too. Mum and Dad had it split and we had cows and chooks in one section and I'd take the cows on the way to school and leave them up in the scrub up around where the cycling track is now and then try and pick them up on the way home from school. Of course, cows being cows, they weren't always where they were supposed to be.

Some afternoons when I couldn't find the cows, I used to say, "I'll go down and look for the cows Mum". I used to go to a house on the diagonal corner and there was a family there and they had a big Ju Ju tree and a few of us young fellas used to meet and put the boxing gloves on. I'm supposed to be looking for cows, I'd be gone a long time and when I came home, Mum would say, "Where have you been". "I can't find those cows Mum". "Have you looked everywhere?" "Yes". "Well your Father will have to come and help you find them".

Stretching all the way from 'Norman Road' (now Robinson St.) right down to in front of Bauhinia House there used to be string of waterholes and they took up a lot of our school holiday time with a bit of meat and a bit of cotton and a scoop catching crawchies. It was great fun. We did eat them. We'd boil them up but they were pretty muddy and not that good.

Frenchville School was mixed age classes. You stayed in one room until grade 4 with a lady teacher - Miss McCabe and then you'd go through the partition into the next room and the head teacher George James would take you right through to Scholarship. You had to pass Scholarship before you could go to High/Secondary School. Everybody didn't automatically get to sit the Scholarship. George James would pick out those he thought had the mental ability to cope with the exam and those who passed were then accepted into High School.

Mr. James had a thing about boys having neat hair so the boy, who had the neatest hair for the week, would get threepence and he was allowed to get a pie when the pie man came up. The trouble was, a lot of us boys didn't have much hair. Lice were very prevalent and the trend was to get 'bobbed'. This meant virtually all your hair was cut off except for a small fringe or tuft at the front. We had a nurse come to the school and do inspections. You'd be sent home to be treated with kerosene if lice were discovered.

Mr. James was a very protective sort of father figure and he kept us pretty isolated because he didn't believe in participating in activities with other schools. We were so isolated that when I went to High School and they started talking about Algebra and Geometry I had never even heard the words. I battled with those two subject right through until I left High School which I didn't quite finish. The war started and I was offered a job. Apprentices went off to serve and jobs became available so I didn't get my junior pass (year 10) because of that.

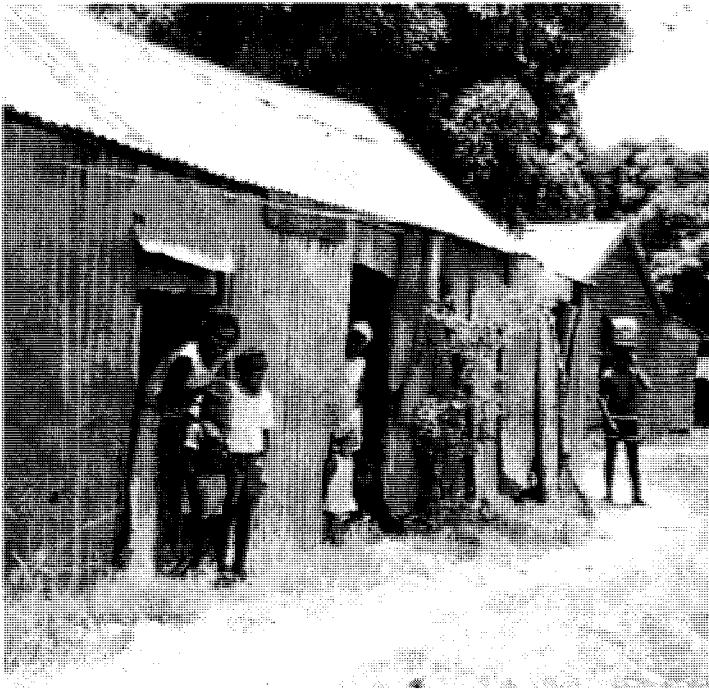
To get to town we came right through the area then known as Kanaka Town. This was where the Islanders had settled together. It wasn't a very large area but it was populated with little corrugated iron sheds and huts with Hessian for walls and with dirt floors. They had their own St. Johns Church that is still there and I believe is now heritage listed.

There were families with names like Wesser, Upkett, Ve a Ve a, Tatow and Warrie and those names are still well known and well respected throughout Rockhampton today. Most of the kids went to Berserker School.

They were great families and as a kid, I used to go and play cricket with them under a big tree that I think is still there.

They'd get out at nighttimes and sing and sing and the melody would just waft across with wonderful harmony. They were such warm and friendly families and I had some great mates among them. Even after I left school, many a time on my way home from work on my bike, I would call in and spend time with them.

When I was at Frenchville school a South Sea Islander called Ruben Tatow and another chap by the name of Pat Messenger came to work there as sort of Gardeners and Pat Messenger taught all the boys at Frenchville how to play the mouth organ.



*Kanaka Town*

During the war a lot of them got jobs in the meatworks and other places and after the war they dispersed throughout the community. When war was declared, the owner of a shop near there panicked and wanted out immediately. My Dad bought the shop.

The Kanaka kids used to come up there with their spending money for lollies. They'd wait outside in a group giggling until one had plucked up enough

courage to come in and if they wanted three things

they'd buy one and then go out and giggle some more then come back in to buy the second and then the third item.

Our family was very close knit and we were not encouraged to either bring other kids home, or go visiting, but with 5 kids (2 boys and 3 girls) we never lacked for company. We got on pretty well even with the usual squabbles. The girls always reckoned I was the pet, but I don't believe I was. In the back yard we had a little tennis court for daylight hours and at nighttimes we regularly played Bobs. It was a game a little like Billiards, played with a cue and you would sit the frame with little mouse holes in it and leaders coming from it, on the Dining Room table and try and hit the balls into the holes.

Enduring best memories of my childhood are the warmth and comfort of the wood stove in cold weather and rainy Saturdays when Mum would churn out puftaloons (like fried scones) for us kids and we'd sit there and slather them with Golden Syrup. By far the pet hate was the Saturday morning ritual of



the senna pods being steeped in hot water in a saucer to make senna tea and having to drink it down – ugh!

Of course we had to do homework and bedtime was 8 o'clock and don't dare show your nose out 'til morning! You daren't go to bed at night until you had the morning wood for the wood fire stove up. We'd buy in loads of big blocks for around 10/- a load and it had to be split. Dad used to bring home the pine cases from Thomas Browns and we'd use that for kindling.

Radio was in its infancy. We had crystal sets and plenty of time we got into trouble because we shook the floor and upset the crystal. Then when the electric came, Dad became obsessed with it especially if he could get short wave. It was "Come and listen to this" and "Come and listen to that". He was amazed by it. I can remember the original Dad and Dave and there were other serials we wouldn't miss.

I didn't really enjoy my teenaged years because American Servicemen overran us. They were an unknown quantity and we had to be wary of them. Through my teenage years, I had persuaded my Dad to let me have a horse and so I tethered it out in a paddock, now bounded by Kerrigan/Stewart/Berserker Streets and Moore Creek. I'd bring it home and ride it and I used to go out on weekends with a mate.

I was in the Boy Scouts as well and a lot of my teenage years were spent with scouting with lots of outings, hikes and camping etc. We'd go to places like the Caves and hike through to Yeppoon over a weekend. Scouting was very popular with large numbers of boys taking part. I belonged to 7<sup>th</sup> North Rockhampton, which had a little hut just over the road from where Bauhinia House is. It's still there I think. I became an assistant Scout Master. There are a lot of prominent men in the City, some now deceased, other still alive, who came up through the disciplined ranks of Scouting.

Our church, the Church of Christ on the corner of William and George Streets, also featured largely as our family was very involved in Church activities. From around 15 or 16 my social life revolved around our Church with bike rides or organised activities. Sunday School Anniversaries and Sunday School Picnics featured large on the calendar and one of the girls out of that group eventually became my wife.

We went to Kalka Shades for Sunday School picnics and they were so popular, you had to book a site. Kalka Shades was a slightly neglected reserve belonging to the Council then. It had a big swimming hole that we called the bogey hole and we'd swing into it in on a rope. There were the usual hotly contested egg and spoon, three legged and sack races.

The picnic was always held on May Day and everyone was up early to cut the sandwiches and prepare for the picnic. A bus used to take a lot of the people, but as there were a lot of cars around by then, many people found their own way. Once there, drivers had to be very wary of the mimosa thorns which caused punctures.

Another major highlight of the year was Show time and Circuses were always a big deal. Dad had a very sympathetic boss and at Show time he used to give Dad an extra amount of money. Grandmother lived across the road, she was on a pension and us kids always knew where to go for treats especially on a Saturday afternoon after the Cake man had been past. He was just one of the many vendors of vegies, ice etc who used to call. Sometimes when she'd given me threepence, I couldn't wait for Dad to get home so I could get his bike and rip down to Moss's shop on the corner of Musgrave Street and Blanchard Street where the suit hire shop is now, to spend my threepence on either a Have a Heart or a Cream Between.

My secondary school was Rockhampton High School in Bolsover Street in the building that is now TAFE. It housed a trade drawing room at the front and right in the middle was the woodworking and the metal machine shop and across the lane into the Science block where we did Physics and Chemistry. During the war, the government took over the metal machine shop and ammunitions were made there. As well as manual skills RHS covered arts, commercial courses, everything really and with both male and female teachers. I took what was called the Industrial Course, which was very popular with the boys. I didn't have too much problem with most of the schoolwork except for Algebra and Geometry - I just never did get them.

One of my guilty secrets is because of Algebra and Geometry. I hated it so much I used to wag those classes. As did most kids, I used to ride my bike to school. I palled up with Archie Barr who obviously hated Algebra as much as I did and we used to take off to what we called coconut island. It was in Victoria Park where the Brothers Club is. It had a built up area with stones all around it and these coconut trees on it and we'd head there and then out to Parkhurst and then ride back to school in time for lunch and other classes in the afternoon. I still wonder to this day how I got away with it. I was very conscious of being bad because I knew my parents expectations and I'm not proud of it. It's one of my skeletons and I don't ever remember confessing to Mum and Dad in later years.

We had family holidays at Yeppoon although I don't remember us all being there at the one time. Dad had bought a little Austin motorcar, a little matchbox. It had a hood on it and two little dicky seats in the front and a bench seat at the back and Mum would drive us to Yeppoon.

My Mother would have been one of the first lady drivers in Rocky, I suppose because of Dad's involvement with cars and at Xmas we would drive down to a house right on the beach front. It's no longer there as it was taken over when the Strand expanded. Somebody Dad knew in the workforce owned it. Because of his ability with cars, these business people who had cars but knew nothing about them, considered Dad a special man and that produced wheels within wheels. Anyway, Mum would take us down there in this little matchbox and Dad used to travel up and down by train each morning and night and the big event of the day was to walk to the Railway Station and wait for the train to come in to meet Dad.

Another special trip I remember was when we left Rockhampton on 2<sup>nd</sup> September in 1939 – the day war was declared – heading for Melbourne for 3 weeks. I was 12. There was Mum, Dad, a family friend and myself in a 1937 Chev and we left here not knowing if we'd get back because of petrol rationing and any other unknown factor. Dad had converted the car into a sort of camper and we had a tent and we stayed in caravan parks or showgrounds along the way. We left Rocky around 4am and got to Brisbane around 9.30 pm. on our first leg.

I remember crossing a lot of the northern rivers of NSW and the Hawkesbury by punt as there were no bridges then, and when we were in Melbourne we camped at St. Kilda, right on the waterfront. They must have been having naval exercises in Port Phillip Bay because you'd see this flash and hear the boom, out in the bay. In the 'war' climate, it was very exciting.

The thing I remember most about the trip though, was when we were coming out of Sydney and I was very quiet and Mum said "What's wrong with you, are you sick?" "No" I said, "I've got a toothache". So when we got to Albury showgrounds to camp for the night and my tooth was no better Mum said, "Pull it out" and it must have been really bad because I remember saying yes. I can still see Dad with this little pair of multigrips he had in his tool kit and he took me into one of the stables and pulled out one of my double teeth. The Albury showgrounds and 1939, I remember them well!

As I've mentioned I left school at 16, halfway through my term exam in my last year of Junior because I was offered a job. Our Industrial Instructor came to me first and offered me a woodwork job and I said no, but then a few days later he offered me a metalwork job in a little jobbing shop in Dennison street with a chap named Bennet who had lost his only staff member to the army. Dad said, "Its up to you, I know the man and he's OK" so I accepted the job at around 10/- per week.

He had been used to an experienced hand and I was a raw young 'un and I found it difficult to please him on many occasions. I did everything including looking after his retriever dog. About 6 to 8 weeks later, Dad came home one night and said he thought I could get a job at W.E Tozer and Sons, who were general engineers like a jobbing shop, so I signed up there for a 5 year course as an apprentice Fitter and Turner at 12/6 a week and we were offered additional work every Saturday morning for an extra 2/- for 4 hours. We had to do all our high school training out of hours.

The Americans gave Tozers a lot of work because the Civil Construction Corp. (CCC) was building all their army barracks and amenities at the campsites. I did everything from striking for the blacksmith to making spikes and general rouseabout work. Good all round training. Tozers supplied the spikes to hold the decking down on the Alexandra (train) bridge that had been installed to take the heavy army trucks that had to cross the river. In the blacksmiths shop, the blacksmith used to jump the head up on these spikes about 3/8" round and about 6 inches long and the apprentices were given a forge of their own and day in day out, we put the points on these spikes which they used for the decking. I think they're still there.

The Americans were camped from Red Hill (the Crematorium site was a hospital station), out toward the Caves and down along the Yeppoon Road especially around Seonee Park. They were brought into town at nights and on weekends in big open busses. The busses weren't allowed over the original Fitzroy Bridge because it had a cracked pylon and it was restricted to light traffic. There was a policeman continuously on duty on the Criterion end of the bridge. The busses would unload their passengers at a big flat area where the North Rockhampton Bowling Club now is. The Yanks were absolutely crazy about bikes and there were a lot of hire bike businesses in town; and horses, they were horse mad.

They haunted the cafes in town and a lot of the American drinks and fads caught on here. There were a lot of cafes – Bluebird, Busy Bee, Golden Café and the Majestic to name just a few. The old Purrey tram had gone by then and we had the Council Leyland and Albion diesel busses for transport.

Money was no object to the Americans and the girls loved their company especially because a lot of our men were away on duty. I was about 16/17 and was never comfortable with them and still have very reserved feelings toward Americans.

As an apprentice, I had to go in to High School after hours and I'd get a council bus. I had to wait at the Union Hotel or Stewarts corner and waiting there was a bit scary because of the Americans. The streets were continually patrolled by the MP's but my impression was that they had no regard for human life, especially Negroes and on two occasions I can remember hearing a gunshot in a nearby laneway and a Negro was shot. Their lives seemed to be regarded as worthless. Once the shots rang out, there were yanks running everywhere.

The Americans were certainly a godsend to businesses in this town and they left a lot of money here. As the war tapered off, they left in droves and some businesses felt it. When our men came back, they had to be given the jobs they had before they left.

The troop trains were running through Rocky coming from both North and South. My Brother saw service in New Guinea and we'd wait at the station for him to come and you just had to wait and wait because no one knew which train he would be on. You'd see people coming back on the hospital train too. I certainly felt those years because a lot of people I knew just didn't come back.

Although I enjoyed my training at Tozers, I waited for the day when my 5 years of 'prison' was over. I was always thinking about what I would do when I was free. When the time came in 1947, I could have got a job from Darwin to anywhere. I'd get the Sydney morning Herald and look at available jobs because I was serious about seeing the world.

I was making 4 pounds a week which was very good money and I settled into the fact that I was now a tradesman and instead of doing the flit, I stayed for about 18 months when I got fed up and gave notice. My bosses Henry and Nev said they were sad to see me go and said I was welcome back any time. I

went from there to Lakes Creek Meatworks the day after I left Tozers and was given a job, starting immediately. I was a bit keen to work in the tin shop where they made the cans. It was a 4-story building more or less self-contained and separate from everything else.

I was in the can making shed working back getting equipment ready for the start of the season the next morning when the '49 cyclone hit. It ripped through the place – tin plate flying, doors ripped off – it was shocking but, being the conscientious person I am, I stayed and made certain the plant could operate the next morning. I rode my bike home through the cyclone. Despite my good intentions, production didn't start the next day.



*Gordon & Estelle*

A few months after starting there I got itchy feet and although it was in the very early days of my relationship with my future wife Estelle and although I was making really good money with overtime, I threw in my job and took off to Charters Towers with a couple of other fellows from my church. We flatted together – with me paying the rent – for around 3 months when I ran out of money and I came back home. I went down to the

Creek and asked for my job back. I started back on the Monday at exactly the same job I had before I left.

I seemed to have my wanderlust out of my system as I settled down, my relationship with Estelle developed and I stayed at the meatworks for a total of 43 years. It was at the Meatworks I was given the nickname of Watto.

Estelle and I were married in 1951 and I'd bought a bit of land on the corner of Berserker and Stewart Streets. I took Estelle out there one day to have a look at it and she cried because we were out in the sticks with no road and no water to start off with but we built our house there and spent our wedding night in our own home, which was pretty special to us. The house cost 1,200 pounds and we had it paid off by '58 thanks to the good money I was earning at the Creek. From memory I think the award was around 8 pound per week but I was earning around 12 – 15 pound with overtime. We were well set up when we moved in. Estelle worked at the CREB and through them she was able to pay off, through a percentage of her wages, a refrigerator, washer, stove and hot water system. We had a bedroom suite and Estelle's father made the kitchen cabinets for us. I did a lot of the painting myself. We had two daughters, Jennifer in '53 and Narelle in '58.



I retired from the Creek in December 1991 having been well rewarded for a job that gave me great satisfaction. My grand plan was to go fishing and then go fishing some more. I did get in a bit of fishing with a buddy, until my volunteer involvement with Capricorn Community Radio Station 4YOU took



*Kirsten Livermore MLA & Gordon*

up more and more time. I am an on air announcer, but most of my time is taken up with the production studio which is now computerised. It is a system I have taught myself to use. My wife says the station has made a new man of me, forcing me to be more relaxed, sociable and confident. I have always been a bit of a loner, hard on myself and comfortable with my own company but 4YOU has certainly given me confidence in dealing with others.

I was completely amazed, when in 2001; I was presented with a

medal and certificate for "Commonwealth Recognition of Seniors for Significant Contribution To The Community of Capricornia". Kirsten Livermore, the Federal Member for Capricornia, presented it to me. I was in attendance at this occasion only, I thought, to do an outside broadcast, so I was really surprised when I was called to the front.

I have seen many changes in my time with 4YOU and I am confident it is now well accepted by the public and performs a valuable service to our community.

I have also seen enormous changes in our City, particularly North Rockhampton. As a child, I could never have imagined the development and growth that have occurred during my lifetime.

*Edited from an oral tape.*



## GROWING UP IN HOMEBUSH

### Lois Crane

When I was 5 years old and in my 1<sup>st</sup> year of school, my parents moved to Homebush south west of Mackay where they ran the general store which is now the Homebush Pottery and Craft Gallery.

The road from Rosella to Homebush was rough gravel. Dad travelled to Mackay once or twice each week in his Ute for the groceries for the shop and we had a petrol bowser at the front of the shop where the petrol was pumped, by gallons then.

One of the highlights of my younger days was when a commercial traveller would visit Dad and give me a penny. It seemed like a fortune.

One of my favourite jobs was selling the lollies from a glass case on the wall – counting them into small brown paper bags, some 1 a penny, some 2 a penny or some 4 a penny etc. If we wanted lollies we would give our mum our penny and she would serve us the same as customers.

One of our jobs was to sort through the benches of potatoes and onions and pick out the rotten ones – a horribly smelly job and those days sugar came in large bags and had to be weighed as customers bought it.

Another one of my jobs was to clean the brass taps and doorknobs every Saturday morning. Of course we always set the table and helped with the dishes.



The school at Homebush had only one teacher most of the time. We enjoyed our school days. I can still remember one little boy who sat on the end of the long forms with desks. He used to fall asleep and fall to the floor almost everyday when he first started school. To play team games almost the whole school took part. Sometimes the enrolment was as high as 40, but it fluctuated.

My older sister stayed with our grandparents near Mackay and went to the Mackay Central School, which was where the Entertainment Centre is now. She came home at the weekend. She was an expert dressmaker at 11 or 12 and would make beautiful dolls clothes for me.

We visited friends whose parents were farmers and we learned to ride horses and fill their feed boxes. We also helped round up the cows when it was time for milking. We eventually had a horse of our own that my older brother and I rode together, with me always at the back. On more than one occasion I went over the horses head when it stumbled but I was lucky and only my pride was hurt.

We once had a cat that brought snakes inside and dropped them in the kitchen. It inevitably sent Mum into a panic, especially if Dad was away. The

cat eventually died of a snakebite. One day I went to the shed after school to see some new kittens and I found a big fat snake in the box and no kittens.

We bathed in a big tub in front of the stove in winter and had a shower in the downstairs bathroom in summer.



We played tennis and cricket in the backyard and hopscotch and marbles in the front.

My brother and I made kites from two pieces of wood with brown paper glued on the frame. The tail was made from string with rolled up newspaper tied along it. The kites flew well.

There was no electricity then, so we had carbide lights, kerosene lamps, Aladdin lanterns and petrol irons. Despite hardships such as these, we had a happy childhood. Many hours were spent fishing or swimming in the Sandy creek, climbing mango trees on the creek banks and enjoying the mangoes.

We lived for 12 years at Homebush and then moved back to Mackay. All in all we had a very happy, carefree childhood.



## REMINISCENCES OF VINCE COWLRICK

Edna Brown

I was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1920. I was educated at the Central Boys School and at 14 years of age went to work for my father H.A. Cowlrick. The first job I assisted Dad with was installing motor driven pumps at McLaughlin's Brewery. After we installed the pumps I was loaned to the electrician to wire all the motors. This led to several months work with the electrician, which helped me a lot in later years.

The first country job I helped Dad with, was to install Cold Room equipment and engine for a Butcher in Baralaba, approximately 100miles from Rockhampton. The thing I remember most about this job was the fact that I had to drive the utility home from Baralaba. This was quite an experience as the roads were mostly tracks through the bush. We eventually made it home after approximately 6 hours driving. Today the same trip would take about an hour and a half.

The next trip I did with Dad was to a butcher shop at Aramac owned by Mr Harry Williams. We had to remove the old Crosley Suction Gas engine and install a Hornsby Suction Gas engine and equipment (not new). The flywheel on this engine - being about 7ft. in diameter, ten to twelve inches across the face and about 3 inches thick with four large spokes to boss of flywheel - was quite a big piece of steel. With limited tools available, (bars, jacks and ropes), it was quite a feat to get this flywheel into the building and on to the crankshaft of the engine. All of Aramac turned out to watch us as they thought we'd never do it.

I remember the first commercial Refrigeration I installed was at Muttaborra, north east of Longreach. It was 1936, I was only 16 years old and I had to install an Engine, Refrigeration equipment, (ice-cream compartment and bottle and food storage) and a 32-volt Generator for lights, into the local café and general store. The manager of the firm I was installing the equipment for made me wear long trousers so I would look older. Everything went well with the installation, me getting along well with the storekeeper and family. I had them a bit puzzled about my age. They had me a few years older because of the work I did and how it was done. They were quite surprised to learn I was only sixteen. The good report I got from the Storekeeper ensured that the Manager of Buzacotts got Dad to send me on more installations, because he was getting a cheap job -16/- (sixteen shillings) a day for a 12 hour work day.

When I was 17 years old I remember having to go to Barcaldine Men's Club to install the first refrigeration cabinet at the club. I arrived at Barcaldine and presented myself to the Club Manager and stated I had come to install the cabinet. He looked at me, (17 years old), and he didn't know what to say. Eventually he asked me to wait in the foyer of the club. I could hear him doing a lot of telephoning while I waited for some time. I realised he was ringing the club members to tell them there was a boy here to install the new refrigerator. I looked like being put on the next train back to Rockhampton.

Luck was with me that day however, as a Mr Max Scott, who was a traveller for Walter Reid, came into the club. I knew Mr Scott and he enquired what I was doing. I explained to him what was going on. Mr Scott was a very big man and much liked by everyone in the West. He later went on to become manager of Walter Reid's who had stores from Bundaberg to Mackay all through the west.

Mr Scott said "Don't worry son, I'll fix everything up," and he disappeared into the office where the members were having a meeting to decide what to do with me. After about ten minutes, Mr Scott came back and said everything was all right, but he had to be the one to say how it was to go in the new bar. I realised their concern when I saw the Bar with the new floor coverings and new counter, and to make matters worse the cabinet had to go over the new bar counter.

Anyhow this wasn't a problem as I had the experience to do the job, and one thing we were taught by Dad was to have respect for everyone's property and to take all steps not to damage them. Everything worked out well. I would explain to Mr Scott what was required and he would give instructions to the people we had helping. It turned out quite a job getting the cabinet over the counter, but with a little bit of patience and time we soon had the cabinet in position with no harm done. The next job was to connect the cabinet and unit and get cold drinks. After the job was complete the Manager apologised to me and said I could work there anytime, and he would recommend me to anyone.

I had many funny stories during the early years, (1938-1940), as I think people thought refrigeration being a fairly new industry, they expected to see older people doing this work. When I went to Anakie on the western line to install a cold room and equipment for the local butcher shop I was eighteen years old. Anakie only consisted of a Butcher Shop, Hotel and store, and a few houses.

When I presented myself to the Butcher, a port in one hand and a tool box in the other, he just laughed at me. He said he had been to the rail and seen the cold room, and I would need a least six men to handle the cold room. I asked if there was a carrier I could get and said I assumed he would be able to get a man to help him, and he said yes there was. I said all I wanted was one more person to be able to install the cold room. The Butcher volunteered his services as he said he wouldn't miss this for quids!

Handling and assembling the cold room sections isn't heavy work if you know what you're doing. After assembling the cold room, the butcher still assisted me in mixing concrete for installing the engine and equipment. He had been sold a kerosene engine to drive the refrigeration equipment and I advised him not to accept the kerosene engine but wait until he could get a diesel engine. The kerosene engine, I felt, would be worn out in six months. He managed to get a diesel engine but was told to use the kerosene engine until the Diesel became available.

When the job was completed the butcher said he appreciated what I had done for him and offered me a set of cuff links, studs and a tie pin mounted in gold with sapphires for Five Pounds, with a tin of uncut sapphires to go with it. As sapphires had no value then and I didn't have Five Pounds, I couldn't accept.



After the war sapphires became very valuable and Anakie and districts became famous for the good quality stones found there.

Another job worth mentioning would be the time I went to the Jericho Hotel to repair the bar refrigeration equipment. Arriving in Jericho by train Saturday morning, I checked the refrigerator and I found I didn't have the necessary parts to do the job. To get the parts from Rockhampton meant a wait until Wednesday morning. Knowing a 'refrig man' called Carb in Blackall, I rang to see if he would have the part and could I get it if I came across to Blackall. He was only too happy to help out. The road across from Jericho to Blackall was very rough and just a track. I arrived in Blackall Saturday afternoon and by the time I got the necessary parts it was too late to return to Jericho. I was keeping company with a Blackall girl whose family had moved to Rockhampton. Her married sister still lived in Blackall so I looked them up and stayed the night with them.

Carb asked me to have a look at an Ice-Cream refrigerator at the Picture Show Café with him. He had been having trouble with it for several weeks and they hadn't been able to keep stock for weeks. After checking the refrigerator



*Working on the Purrey Trams*

I told Carb, the plant was short of refrigerant. He didn't agree with me, so I said the only way to prove it to him was to add more refrigerant. He agreed and after adding the refrigerant the pressure reading on the gauges soon altered and I convinced him that the machine would be OK after several hours running. All the time I was there the owner of the Picture Show was in the background listening to what went on. He must have been impressed - I got free tickets to the movies for the night.

Early next morning I got a phone call from the local Doctor asking me to have a look at a refrigerator with water plant at the Hospital. This plant had not

been working now for several months. I agreed to check the plant if he could get Carb to take me to the job, as he would be looking after this equipment after I left. I asked him how they knew I was in Blackall, and he told me the Picture Show owner had told him. When we arrived at the Hospital the Doctor was waiting for us and was there watching all the time.

Fortunately on checking the plant I soon had an idea what was wrong. It appears a valve was closed off on the water cooler in the winter months. This valve was installed the wrong way, so the first thing I checked was this valve which I found to be stuck shut.

A few minutes later the plant was working OK. I did not seek any payment for my assistance to Carb, but a few years later when the Hospital went to install a Cold Room, the Doctor would not have anyone but me do the work.

## HOW FAR IS THE OUTBACK?

Daphne Clews

This small community, only a few hours drive today on built-up roads to the coast; during the thirties, could well have been on the moon. Consequently, the people created their own lives and leisure. Wednesday was the big night of the week when the train came through delivering mail and goods.

Everyone arrived at the siding at least half an hour early to socialize and exchange news. The children would put their ears on the railway line to catch the first rumbling of the approaching train, long before the big light became visible.



Most homes had a sitting room, and callers were invited to 'come in and sit awhile' or perhaps asked if they had 'time for a sit'? If it was evening, cards

or a game of Monopoly or Chinese checkers might be played. It was not uncommon to own a piano, organ or Pianola, so music and singing played an important part of leisure time.

Dances were held in the railway goods shed. The women brought food that was deposited on the huge scales used to weigh bales of wool. Tea water was boiled outside in kerosene tins. Carbide lamps and kerosene lanterns were lit and boracic acid was sprinkled on the floor to make it slippery – ideal for children to slide on between the dances!

Long benches were set along the walls for seating. Folded rugs and cushions were placed beneath the benches and as the small children became tired they were popped onto these makeshift beds behind the legs of seated adults. Accordions, mouth organs, gum leaves and spoons provided music for old time and square dances. Tennis, cricket and horse riding were enjoyed, with lots of picnics and swimming in the creeks and dams. ‘Togs’ were non-essential and bathers whooped it up, splashing in old clothes. Life was simple but good.



## **JURY SERVICE IN THE ‘60s**

**Keith Brown**

I was selected for jury service in the early sixties for an arson case that had taken place in a small CQ country town. After much legal discussion, jury selection was begun. The Judge began by asking “Is there anyone who wishes to be excused from jury service” and there were a few who thought their jobs were too important for their firms to operate without them. The judge asked them “If you were to die would your firm have to close?” and as the answer had to be ‘no’, the Judge told them to return to their seats. They were not excused.

The selection of the Panel was going very slowly, with a lot of names already called and discarded, and then came my name, no problem - I was first in. The remaining Jurors were selected after some considerable time. We were then retired to the Jury Room to select our Foreman, I was nominated but suggested the one sitting closest to the Judge be the person.

When we were adjourned for lunch, a Police Officer escorted us down East Street to the Oxford Hotel, with our first drink on the Queen. After lunch we were escorted back to the Court House. We were not allowed to speak to anyone. When we got back we were asked for our addresses and phone numbers so that a change of clothes, pyjamas and shaving gear could be obtained for us. We were not permitted contact with our families.

The Jury Room had a large table with twelve wooden chairs around it and twelve glasses and a water jug on it. There were twelve hat and coat hooks on

the wall near a brick fireplace. Wooden louvres fixed outside the windows restricted the view. The amenities consisted of a pull chain toilet, a bath with claw feet placed away from the wall, on a lead covered floor with an overhead shower. When twelve men had finished showering, water was everywhere!

Then we got a surprise, we were each given an old army stretcher with sheets and blankets. The first night we set up our stretchers along the side walkway and in the Jury Room, but after that we got organised, with some sleeping in the Court Room and some sleeping in the Jury Room. This was a good idea because they could rest when we were all locked in when the Court was in session. We had turns at using the shower and toilet that was for the Judge's personal use.

At night we had nothing to do and no entertainment, so we asked the Bailiff if we could go to the movies at Earls Court or Winter Garden, but we were told that it was not possible to book three rows of seats together for our security. This didn't stop our entertainment - the movies came to us. A projector was obtained from Dolph Symons along with films and a screen and this was set up in the Court Room so, as you can see, where there's a will there's a way! Another problem - we had nothing to drink, so our escort was used to run a shuttle service to the Scariff Hotel on the corner of Bolsover and Fitzroy Streets.

On Saturday the man that liked his bet had to be looked after. The racing pages were supplied for anyone that required them, form was studied and the bets were arranged and if there were winnings they were collected. On the Sunday we were taken in a council bus to the Pine Beach Hotel for the day, what a rough road it was in those days. Of course we had to be kept by ourselves, but there was a chap I worked with who had been at the Hotel for some time and he came over to me like a long lost brother and claimed me. I had to be sociable to him so we talked for a while before he left, our escort didn't say anything. The return trip back to Rocky was back along the same bumpy road we had come.

We were back to our old routine - breakfast, lunch and dinner at the Golden Gate with our drink on the Queen at the Oxford. After our meal at night we would go for our walk around a couple of blocks and along the riverbank and back 'home'. It was during these walks that I would see my wife and family. We couldn't talk but they had come down specially so the children could wave to me. My brother-in-law told the kids that Daddy was in gaol so they wanted to see that I was all right!

On Friday of the second week we retired to come to a verdict, which was 'not guilty'. The Judge told us it was honour to be on the Jury, he then said we would be exempt from any future Jury service, because of the length of time we had been locked up.

We slept in the Supreme Court House for eleven nights and had no problem with any of the 'GHOSTS'.

## OLD SHOES FOR GOOD LUCK

Isobel Hoch

Alan and I met on Good Friday 1949. I had gone to my home on a sheep property for an Easter break and he was in charge of the shearing team there. During my ten days of holiday we became instant friends and decided to marry.

In those few days we shared many laughs at the antics of various members of the shearing team. In particular Dougal amused us. He was devoted to economy of effort. Apart from meal times and the periods when he mooched across to the board and shore a minimum number of sheep very badly, he simply lay on his bunk. Labour was hard to get in 1949 and inefficient men were often all that could be employed.

When the upper of Dougal's ancient boot parted company with the sole, he wasted no time in careful mending. He pushed a piece of fencing wire through both parts and twitched the ends together leaving them sticking heavenwards over his toes like an ant antenna.

When my holiday ended and the shed cut out Alan and I gave notice at our jobs and set a wedding date for three months hence. Weddings in those days were not the lavish affairs they are now but we had all the traditional trimmings with thirty guests at what was called our 'wedding breakfast' despite being an afternoon function.



All the same, when we drove away in our newly acquired seventeen-year-old car we were a little bothered that no old shoes were tied to the rear – an important symbol of future good luck according to superstition.

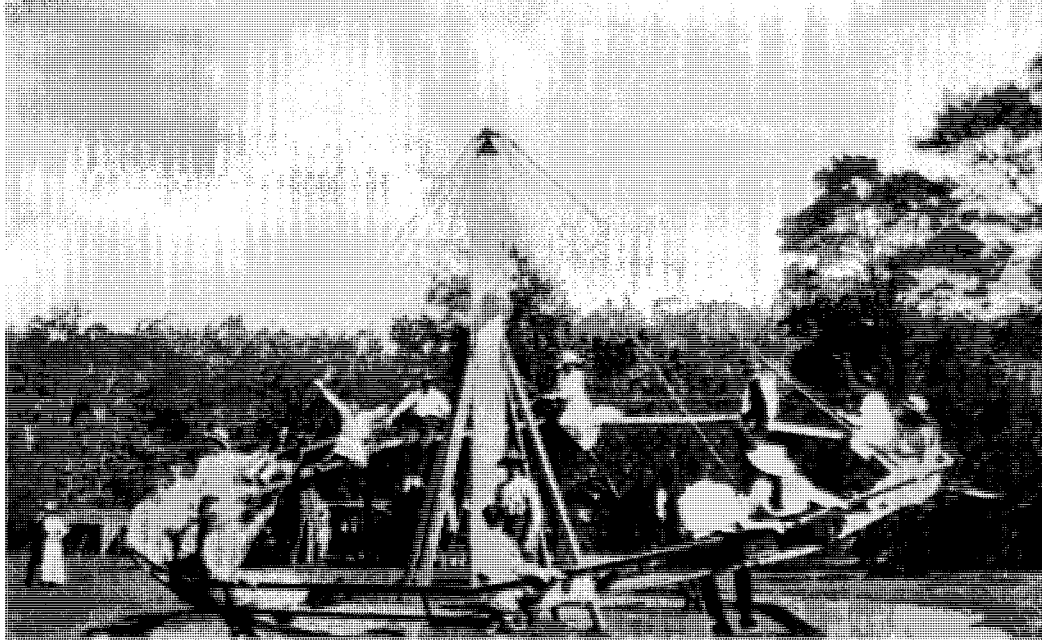
We need not have feared. When we opened the back at our destination, there, resting on our luggage lay Dougal's boot, its antenna pointing jauntily upwards. My father had rescued it from the dump when the team left and carefully saved it for our benefit. We had a long marriage and Easter was always a special time for us, so that old boot did bring us luck.



## THE BUNDY SHOW

By Barry Hough

"ROLL UP, SEE THE DAREDEVILS ON THE WALL OF DEATH,"  
YELLED THE SHOWMAN.



Yes that's the way it was at the Bundaberg Show. The year was 1947 or thereabouts, I was 12 years old and the days of the sideshows at the Bundy Show were still with us. As you jostled your way through the ever increasing People's Day crowd in Side Show Alley, the continual voices of the side show barkers urged you to come and see what was on the inside of the big marquee.

A crowd had gathered outside the biggest tent, where on a raised up platform over the doorway stood a boxer, complete with gloves, beating 'hell' colloquially, out of an old bass drum. Beside him stood the Showie waving a handful of notes in the air.

'I've got fifty pounds for anyone who can go three rounds with Masher McGurk,' he yelled. Boom, boom, boom, went the bass drum. "Come on you young blokes, give it a go," he urged. "I'll have him on," came a voice that moved through the crowd. Soon the apparent local was on the dais claiming he could do him easily. "See the local lad fight Masher! Get your tickets at the box! Go straight inside!" Boom, boom, boom. That's the way it went at the boxing tent and it was in this style that the various attractions drew a crowd.

In the days before "freak shows" were outlawed, many of these types of shows toured on the show circuit, with Zanadu The Quarter Boy, The Half Man /Half Woman, The Five Legged Calf and similar, all drawing the curious to the bizarre. For those seeking a little bit of flesh, a "girlie show" or two were always well patronised, with Paulette, The Fan Dancer a regular side show performer who just never seemed to put a fan wrong. Nudity of course was banned, and I am sure that the local police would have stepped in and stopped the show if anything unseemly happened.

For thrill seekers, the aforementioned Wall of Death, or its counterpart the Globe of Death seemed to appear regularly on the grounds, with motor bike riders performing a series of stunts inside their various cauldrons. The Wall of Death really gave the spectators a thrill of a lifetime, as the bike riders roared round and round the cylindrically shaped wall, with their wheels travelling only eighteen inches or so from your waist, the whole wall with you outside it, moving as they roared by.

Carnival rides were comparatively tame, compared with the lavish and futuristic rides now on offer. The Tilt-A-Whirl, still seen on show grounds to this day, gave those young ones the ride of their life, and along with the Chair-O-Plane was the big winner.

With the arrival of the first Ferris Wheel, and a chance to get a look at the Bundaberg Show from the air, the Ferris Wheel took the grounds by storm to become number one, with the ticket queues at this ride, literally stretching a mile.

The ever-faithful Dodgem Cars gave young drivers a chance to show their skills or otherwise while small merry-go-rounds and similar rides catered for the tiny tots and a little older. Now and then a huge carousel, complete with pipe organ and drums, numerous horses, unicorns and large sleighs visited the show and was an immediate hit with riders of all ages.

The usual knock-em, hit-em, bowl-em and shoot-em stalls were always there with the enticing phrase, 'every player wins a prize'. Even to this day, that catch phrase is used to lure prospective players.

Sample bags were really what they said, with most containing little samples of various products to entice the buyer into using a particular item. I remember clearly the miniature bottles of Vegemite and other similar samples found in the bags, along with the mandatory goodies. Most seniors will recall the Lifesaver Trucks, which were made of metal in the shape of a tanker, with the tank filled with all the different types of Lifesavers. Once emptied of lollies, you had a metal toy with which to play. My sandpit under the back stairs sported a couple of these trucks for many years.

The Bundaberg Show, years ago, was really a showcase of the city and surrounding district and what the area had to offer. Farmers gathered to examine the huge sugarcane display where competitive stools of cane seemed to reach for the sky, with the highest c.c.s. winner the centre of attraction.

Car salesmen rubbed their hands with glee as the show-goers clamoured to view the latest model cars, trucks and machinery on display on machinery hill, which was located on the southern side of the then much smaller ring. Many a new car or tractor was bought at the show where you could make good comparisons and indeed do a really good deal.

The pavilion was always a hive of activity with major furniture, music and electrical retailers displaying their best on stands throughout the building. Nielson's and Anderson's Music store's displays were always crowded with aspiring musicians. Old Doug Anderson knocking out a tune on the latest piano or pedalling like heck to keep the roll going on the latest pianola. We all

stood and listened, while fairy floss melted in our mouths. Hot dogs were still in bread rolls and not on sticks in those days.

We all remember the Gadget man with his new fangled potato peelers, Mr Ross the silhouette artist with his magical scissors shaping your profile and the numerous other demonstrators showing their wares throughout the pavilion.

Trotting was always part of the ring program with a good number of races spread throughout the day and night programs, while other horse events featured continually over the show period. The Grand Parade was just that, with virtually every type of horse at the show, being ridden and every animal in the cattle sections, being led around the ring. Along with every piece of movable machinery, motorcars and trucks, the ring was filled to capacity with circling colour - a really Grand Parade in the tradition of the early Agricultural Shows.

Show time was always cold weather time and going to the show 'meant wrapping up well, and for this reason alone most men chose to wear a suit, a jumper, a hat and their best shoes during the day, and topped this with an overcoat to keep out the wintry blasts during the evening sessions. For the women it was fashionable and imperative, to wear a new outfit to the show. Your peers and the well-dressed woman judged you, teenage lass or girl, had to have that new dress or suit with matching shoes, hat and gloves, to keep up with hundreds of other new show outfits that graced the showgrounds.

For the showmen and their families, life was hard. Many just lived in tents and if they were prosperous enough to have a caravan it was very small and basic, fifty to sixty years ago. The exception, I think, was the owner of several amusement rides, whose semi mounted trailer caravan appeared on the scene at the end of the war and was often parked near the miniature steam train, which I presumed he owned.

Travel was certainly different in the late thirties and forties with many of the amusement rides and their related trucks and caravans arriving by train from Maryborough, and being unloaded in Burrum Street to be driven to the showgrounds. Gradually this trend ceased as the road network improved and larger trucks, caravans and semi-mounted equipment became the way of life.

Showtime not only related to the showgrounds, for the arrival of Show Week often heralded the arrival of several "tent shows" in town. Large tents appeared on vacant lots in the heart of the city as a vaudeville show or two set up their theatres. Often a circus pitched its even larger big top on the eastern side of Targo Street near the Melbourne Hotel.

The Gaieties Revue did it the easy way and booked the Wintergarden Theatre for the week, while Sorlies Revue often used an empty block next to the Club Hotel on which to pitch their tent. As a member of the Municipal Band, I can still hear the band playing outside the tent, before the show, with free admission our reward. The Great Levant, Magician and Illusionist, pitched his tent show either on the Toonburra/Bourbong corner or the Maryborough/Quay corner, as these were also empty lots in those days.

The Bundy Show and Show Week entertainment in our city saw Bundaberg come alive, with people celebrating that special time of the year. That was Show Week and the Bundy Show. Memories, how good they are.

## MEMOIRS OF J.K. DEMPSEY

*Edited excerpts are printed here with the kind permission of J.K. Dempsey's daughter,*

Estelle Watson

*Taken from an oral tape of an interview with Ray Boyle of Central Queensland University, prior to J.K. Dempsey entering the Freemasons Homes in Sandgate and recorded in 1987. The complete tapes now form part of the Central Queensland Collection, housed at the CQU Library.*

John Kirwin Dempsey known variously to his friends as Jack or JK and to his family as Kirwin, was born on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1907.

He had a career as an electrician spanning over 50 years.

He passed away in Brisbane at the age of 85 on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1993.

My Dad was born in Rockhampton diagonally opposite the Peoples Palace in 1870. Both his parents were Irish and came out as immigrants. They were married here and Dad was born here and then, as a young lad of about 11 he left Rockhampton and went to Mt. Morgan with a travelling hawker and finished up staying there and working for the grandfather of Tom Kirby, a businessman still in Rockhampton.

He later worked for Kelly's big grocery store up there and he delivered groceries as a young fellow all around the outskirts of the Mount and I remember Snigger Findlay's father in Yeppoon telling me how, when he was a young fellow, Dad gave him a lift in one of the saddle bags on this horse on which he was delivering groceries.

But prior to that, when he was at Kirby's, because there was no bank at Mount Morgan, one of his jobs was to bring the takings of the business down to Rockhampton each week by horse.

To get to Rockhampton he had to ride over the old Razorback, not the Razorback that I knew, but far over towards where Joneses had their slaughter yard and he'd come in a direct line across and come out at Egan's Hill. When he got to Egan's Hill he had to stand up in the stirrups and reach up on the head frame of the gateway to get a key to get through and ride through into Rocky. That was quite a feat for a young fellow, just a lad, to be doing that.

Afterwards he had his own carrying business and when he was married and I was about 2 years old, we moved to Rockhampton and he worked for various firms such as Denham's, driving a two-horse lorry. Dad was a tall man about 14 ½ stone and he had a nice big moustache he kept waxed and at carnival time Dads tabletop lorry was always entered for Denham's and many a time he got first prize for the best turn out. He had a beautiful pair of dapple-grey horses, so when he went along with his kit and with his waxed moustache he certainly looked the part.

We moved around a bit, we were in Emu Park when the Gallipoli campaign was on but we were in Rockhampton in 1910 because I remember well the coronation of King Edward the 7<sup>th</sup> and we went into Edgar's Treasure House during the week and received a card which we presented on the Friday night shopping and we were given a medal to wear around – a coronation medal. Edgar's was over the road from Stewarts in East Street next to that bank. Later, after I came back to Rockhampton, Clarrie Baxter was there as a watchmaker, jeweller and optometrist.

In 1915 we were back in Mount Morgan. I remember reading years ago that a chap said he'd been to Mt. Morgan and he said the people were more clannish than the Scots and thinking about it, I'd say that's the reason we went back there. The Mount was predominantly Irish and Scottish in those days; Australians were definitely in the minority.

It was a big town but it had no water supply, only a few houses had gas on and the streetlights were gas. Early evening, one of the gas employees would ride round on a horse with a little ladder, to light all the street lamps on the poles on the corners of the streets. There was one opposite our place, on the corner of what was then the girl's school, which took up the complete block.

Of course there were no radios and I don't know if it was done in other towns but up there when a person died, the undertaker would have a notice printed – it would be about 12 or 15 inches square, and on a lot of strategic corners throughout the town, there were these 10-inch square posts and the notices were put on them so everyone knew who had passed away. They were called funeral posts and as small kids the superstition was that if you counted the number of tacks used to put them up, you'd be the next one to die!

In 1915 the town would have been at its peak in population and that was because of the First World War when the demand for copper was so great. I believe it was up around 200 pounds a ton in those days and while that was so, Mt. Morgan prospered. I think there were around 15000 people there in those times.

All those hills around Chandon Hill and all those other hills around the place were filled with houses. Pictures were the main form of entertainment in those days and on a Saturday night, people would have stuck a hurricane lamp somewhere along the way and on the way home they would pick it up and light it so they wouldn't run into snakes or prickly pears or trip on stones and it looked like glow-worms or fireflies going all around the hills of the Mount.

I was 4 ½ when I started school and I was lucky enough to win the medal and a scholarship given for the highest Scholarship examination pass of the school. I attended the high school in Mt. Morgan in 1921. That was the year the mine shut down for what was known as the 'big shutdown'.

The men were locked out for 12 months and I'd say 90% or more of the Mount people were living on police rations and men were going away looking for work and then sending for their families. You could buy a good house for 20 pounds and they were shifted to Bundaberg and Longreach and Mackay and Rockhampton.

A few years ago before all the trees grew so tall, if you could get up a bit high here and look over the houses, you could pick the Mount Morgan houses moved down to Rockhampton in 1921, by the rusty galvanised roofs. They were rusted out from the sulphur fumes coming over the town from the mine.

So the mine went into decline and the price of copper dropped to only 50 pounds a ton. The story was that the gold that was recovered paid the entire overhead, the wages and everything else and the copper paid the dividends, so when there was no profit, the men were asked to take a cut in wages and the militant ones carried the day so it closed again. Every now and again they would have some sort of enquiry but I don't remember the details.

After 12 months, the government were paying out all this money in sustenance through police rations, so they provided 5,000 pounds a week to subsidise the company to start work again which they did in 1922. I started work in the general office as an office boy and another chap and I used to walk right round that mine four times a day on the hour delivering mail and picking it up. At the end of 12 months in 1923, I started a five-year course as an apprentice electrical fitter and turner.

I worked on some very interesting and amazing equipment in my years at the mine and learned to solve problems because parts and equipment were hard to get so we had to often either make do or invent something ourselves. We did things with equipment that it was said, couldn't be done.

I built my own radio - it would have been 1925 or 1926. They were the very early days and there would only have been about 6 sets up there then. The nearest station was 4QG Brisbane and 5CL Adelaide. You could only get Brisbane if there were no storm activity between Brisbane and Rockhampton and they only broadcast 'til 10 o'clock. Adelaide being ½ an hour behind, you would get it for a bit longer. The stations we could tune into occasionally were 2BL and 2FC from NSW, 3LO and 3AR in Melbourne and 5CL. Sometimes we could pick up Manilla on a Saturday night.

Later on, Mr. Boyd the mine manager had a big set and he told us about an idea from Sydney radio where they put on a dance night with a big orchestra and they suggested people hold functions for charities. We got all these radios together and got special permission to do it in the soldiers' rooms and ran a very successful function.

During this time the floatation at the mine was done with Eucalyptus oil, which came from around Struck Oil and around Cawarral. It came up in big 44-gallon drums. Afterwards it was replaced with something I think was called Xanthate. It smelt like rotten onions

*J.K's tapes tell in great detail, the men who worked there, the equipment used in the mines, how ingenuity was used to get around lack of spare parts or new equipment.*

*He recounts the turbulent times where the miners went on strike in sympathy with elsewhere but were left "holding the baby" when the others went back.*

Later on, we got word about this big march that was on from the union rooms pretty near opposite the soldier's rooms and they were going to march up to the mines. We all lined out on the dump, out near the office and we saw this march come up with big banners and they demanded to see Mr. Boyd who came out and stood on the top of the steps at the general office and answered all their questions and they made all their different demands and when they were finished he said "Is that all you want?" and they said "Yes" and turned to go. And old Mr. Boyd said, "Wait a minute boys there's only one thing you haven't got," and they said "What's that?" and he said "You haven't got a job" He was a dour old Scotsman that chap.

We were eventually sent home that day because the decision was made to shut the mine completely. I think it was Saturday and we went up to the big dam fishing late in the afternoon because that's when you caught good fish. We came home round midnight and Mother woke up and said I had to go to work because the mine was on fire. We were all around everywhere, running cables to put in pumps wherever there was water. That's what we were doing for about week and they eventually filled the mine up with water to the Lindy level. That was in 1925 and I was in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of apprenticeship. I was kept on to finish my apprenticeship. The men went back to work but it was never the same.

A couple of highlights during this period: We put in a new telephone switchboard down under the general office and I got pretty interested in telephones and signals down in the shaft and I ended up maintaining the switchboard and looking after the 3 operators on duty. In 1927 the first Miss Australia was a Miss Beryl Mills and she came to Mount Morgan on her tour around Australia. She was a University student and when she walked through our shop I was winding an armature and she came over and asked some quite pertinent questions bout it. She must have known a bit about engineering or science or something. She was a very nice person.

I passed my final exam as an electrical fitter and an electrical mechanic and got my certificate. It is Number 166 and is written on oiled parchment.

*The Mount Morgan Mine closed, so JK worked in Brisbane but it was the beginning of the depression and through ex Mount contacts he went to Port Kembla at the steel works. In 1930, he took holidays to come back to Rockhampton to be married, but the day before the wedding, the mines closed and 6 thousand men were out of work. It was 'a wonderful wedding present.' Once again, through Mount Morgan contacts, JK was offered a job in Mount Isa. Leaving his wife in Rockhampton he travelled by train to Mt. Isa.*

It was an eye opener. There weren't 6 guns on the hips or anything, but it was a real old western mining town. The streets were just bullock tracks and it was not uncommon to see camel trains coming in there with ore and one thing and another. Anyway, after a medical, I started work that afternoon.

I started in the main haulage shaft. The way to go down there was for four of you to stand on the edge of a bucket about 2 or 3 feet in diameter and about 3 feet high, on a big steel cable that went straight down 500 feet. It was pretty hairy but I did it.

*There were to be some near misses on that system and some other occasions when mines filled with water that used up some luck. JK talks about how well the Mt. Isa staff were looked after, how you were always paid for work done and you had three good, two-story dormitories with your own room, fly proofed and furnished with a bed, mattress and pillow and a combination dressing table and wardrobe. They had shower rooms on each floor and the meals were quite good. Eventually his wife and 4 month old baby daughter came up and: I managed to get what was known as a tin hut, it was a concrete slab down for a floor and the framework was angle iron and the roof was bent iron like a tank. It was 3 rooms, a dining, kitchen and bedroom. No water lay on and no power but I supplied power with my carbide lamp from the mine. I'd make sure I filled it before I came home. It was very handy because the place was alive with redback spiders and before you could go to bed at night you used to have to go around looking for the redbacks. Before we could put the baby in her cot, I used to lay down on the floor, lift the fibre mattress off and if I saw a redback, I'd put extra water in the carbide lamp and it became nearly an oxy welder - it would squirt a flame out about 6 inches long and exit the redback. They were really bad.*

It was handy for the crickets too. Afterwards we got a house at North End, which was about a mile out on the Camooweal Road. That's where the crickets were bad, not so many redbacks but plagues of crickets. At North End, we had septic tank, bore water and a tank and electric light so we were quite comfortable but the crickets would get inside the ripple iron around the kitchen and they were real ventriloquists. You'd go looking for them in one place but they were always somewhere else! In those days the women wore petticoats made from Milanese. The crickets loved Milanese and would eat it so we'd chase these crickets with boiling water or the carbide lamp.

The house at North End was the forerunner of prefabricated homes I suppose. They were made in Brisbane and were Campbell's ready cut homes and they sent them all up to the Isa and erected them there. There were a lot of them there around 1931-32.

Insects were all so much bigger up there than down here. I've seen redback spiders up there with bodies as big as marbles and they say that centipedes only grow to 6 inches. Well I've seen them between 9 and 12 inches long and at one stage they found a scorpion on the top of the cage in a shaft and it was nearly 9 inches overall. But the funniest things up there were the lizards commonly known at 'ta-ta' lizards. They were like a water lizard, like those long green fellows you see round here in the creeks and they'd be around 8 or 9 inches long and slim. If you stirred them, they'd run along a few inches and then stop and put one hand up and wave it at you just as if they were waving ta-ta.

There was a hospital there when I first went, but they eventually built a new one near the mine. The Doctors and nurses quarters were at North End. Our second child was born up there and every baby that was born in that Mt. Isa hospital, the Managers wife gave them a little silver mug and my son got one from Mrs. Krutchnit. In 1931 I helped to install the X Ray plant in the



hospital, I did repairs there too. I can truthfully say I worked in every part of the mines operation.

In 1981, I had been planning a trip back to the Isa when I received a letter inviting us back for a 50-year celebration since they started lead production. Everything was laid on, they paid for the trip from Brisbane in a DC9, picked us up in busses, organised tours and functions, everything. Looking along the plane all I could see was either grey heads or baldheads with all us old codgers going back. We went to a luncheon with the Governor General and everyone received a little jewel box containing a little ingot of silver. Nothing had changed, when they did a thing, they did it properly.

*At the end of 1932, JK was offered job back at Mount Morgan Mines, which was starting up again. He was concerned for the well being of his children particularly with sandy blight prevalent at the Isa so he made the decision to come back. He worked from 8am to 8pm; seven days a week for around 3 months repairing and servicing old equipment - back breaking work that left him exhausted and he took some time off.*

*He tells how Mt. Isa was possibly the first place outside Brisbane that had automatic telephones and Mount Morgan would have been the next place to get them. I was involved in installing an automatic board soon after I came back. It was in the little brick shed out on the dump. It was a 50-line board and badly overloaded.*

In the 30's, through the influence of my wife's uncle, I became a Freemason. Since 1933 I have been a member and Freemasonry has been my hobby, even attending meetings in England and Scotland as well as all over Australia. I am a firm believer that you must have a hobby away from work so your conversation doesn't become boring.

We had bought an electric sewing machine in Mt Isa, but had to convert it back to a treadle machine for my wife when we returned to Mt. Morgan. In 1939, we had just got the power on in our Mt. Morgan home when I made the decision to return to Rockhampton. I could see that they would eventually reach the end of the mine value and I chose to move before I became too old to compete for a decent position.

Sewerage was about to be laid throughout Rockhampton. I had admired Mr. Pennycuik the Council Engineer of the time and a man with a keen sense of humour. He was a local man and all of his schooling had been done on scholarship even University. He was a full member of the Institute of Engineers. You could ask him anything and he would explain it to you in your language. He was great chap and a great diplomat with people. I knew I'd be happy working with him.

So I obtained a job with the Council. I learnt very quickly on the job because initially all I knew about sewerage was that water went down the sink! Before too long I was in charge of the treatment works and pumping station and when the war was on we had those 5,700 Americans here and we had to supply them with water. We had to put pumps in, out along the Yeppoon Road to pump water out of the Yaamba main which came down Yaamba road and we pumped the water out of that main down as far as Jim Crow. That's where the headquarters of the artillery were. V8 Ford motors drove the pumps.

Because of my work I got a pass, which I still have, which entitled me to go into any American installation in this district. I could have sold that many a time. I went into all those camps every week, all the way out along Yaamba Road from where the Crematorium is.

Another additional job I had while the Americans were here - because they knew they would be going to New Guinea and would be unloading troops and equipment under less than perfect conditions, they needed the troops to be able to swim. Very few of them had even seen water before they joined the army it seems. So they commandeered the old baths, which were opposite the Town Hall, to teach them. They had a constant stream of men in there from 8 in the morning to 5 in the afternoon when it was given back over to the locals. I had to be very conscientious about chlorination and water testing to cope with the number of people in there daily.



*JK with the "hand-me down" Ute*

Just as a matter of interest - we did have a family car; I was the only one who drove it; so with all the restrictions and with the petrol shortages during the war, I couldn't see the sense in keeping it so I sold it and just used a pushbike to get to and from work. Unfortunately, the council didn't supply transport for a very long time so all of my work, all over Rockhampton including the pumping stations for the American camps was done by bike. Eventually, Council supplied me with a second hand Ute that had been passed down the line from someone higher up in the Council and I had that for a long time. It made life a lot easier.

*JK stayed with the council 'till retiring age. He was involved in the new water supply at the barrage and the new powerhouse and the lighting on the (now) old bridge.*

I did all the electrical work on that and it's still there and working. The

fluorescent lights came out from England. They were the early days of fluorescents and we had to work out ways of mounting them and getting them up on the bridge. The foreman fitter and I went into a huddle and came up with the scheme of how they're suspended now. An apprentice and I did all the wiring in our spare time in between sewerage work. The main cables are all run in 1-inch water pipe underneath. I had to design big junction boxes that were cast and machined by Burns and Twigg and we mounted those up on the girders on the side and ran the water pipe through into those. We made little switchboards for each of those boxes, which was a junction box, and a fuse box with a fuse on every lamp there, so that if there was any trouble we weren't going to lose all the lights.

Another job I did was the coloured fountain. It was a tricky job because that fountain was built in Germany. All the instruction books were German. So I got hold of a Polish chap I knew and asked him to read me the bits he could understand. He couldn't understand the technical stuff but he read the other bits and I just tried to fill in the blanks. The apprentice and I did the wiring on the submersible pumps and got it going.

My last job was the water supply up Mount Archer. They were putting in 4 or 5 pumping stations all built from culverts so I designed all the wiring needed and then, because of a very bad back was unable to physically complete the work. I retired a month or two after my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday having been working for 51 years from 14 ½ to 65 ½.

*In retirement JK built a couple of Grandfather clocks, maintained his handyman abilities and joined in with his wife's love of gardening. The tapes he has recorded for the Central Queensland Collection are gems, full of information that has already been lost to most of us, except for the generosity of sharing demonstrated by his willingness to spend so much time recording his memories.*

Edited from the original tapes by Glenys Kirkwood



## BARCALTINE BORN

Patrick Maloney Snr

My parents were living in Barcaldine when I was born. My parents were actually working on Myrall station at the time but I suppose Mum came into town for my birth.



*John T Wilcox mounted between two wagons*

My Mother Lucy had been born in Blackall. Her young life had been spent mostly on the road as her Father, John Thomas Wilcox, had been a Contractor using horse drawn wagon trains to cart goods between Springsure and Mansion Downs, a large property between Springsure and Tambo.

The family was based at Blackall and mum was born December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1921.

Her mother, my Grandmother, died from septicaemia a week or two after giving birth to Mums youngest brother when Mum was around 2 years old. The baby was sent to be reared by an Aunt and Grandfather re-married a Mrs. O'Dell, a widow with 11 children quite soon afterwards and so mostly her Stepmother raised Mum.

My Father had been born in Barcaldine September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1916. He was Kevin George Maloney. His father was a shearer's cook. He had the reputation of being a good cook as well as a stubborn fellow that nobody ever crossed and he also enjoyed an ale or two. His wife was born in Scariffe County Clare in Ireland but he was Australian born of Irish parents.

My Dad was a ringer at first and then, for the last 35 odd years of his working life, he was a cost clerk for the Main Roads Department based in Barcaldine.

When my Grandfather Wilcox had outgrown his wagon train, he did jobs on stations and the last job I can remember him doing was with Clydesdale

draught horses pulling equipment that looked a bit like a plough that actually rolled and cleaned out the bore drains so the water kept running clear. Feral pigs and other things used to get into the drains and foul them up.

That whole area is covered by the artesian system, it's all bore water. The first artesian bore in Australia was put down near a siding, east of Barcaldine by about 30 kms. The first bore put down for town use at Barcaldine had high mineral deposits and the water wasn't recommended for drinking or washing because of the mineral stains on the clothes. The second bore however, was noted as being one of the best bores ever. Anyway, my Grandfather worked on keeping the bore drains clear while my Step-Grandmother stayed in Barcaldine working as a cook at a Hotel and Mum offside for her. Perhaps that's where Mum met Dad, I don't know, but they met and married on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1941 and moved to a station called Myrall up near Winton.

Dad was a ringer on the station and Mum was the station cook. My older brother Terry was born while they were at Myrall and it was just after I was born that they moved back down to Barcaldine and then went to work on an outstation called Knockaninny, near Barcaldine, which is no longer there. The main station was halfway to Blackall. Outstations were part of much larger stations in places where the owners needed somebody for one reason or another. They'd build a small house or hut on the property. They were pretty basic buildings with a kitchen-cum-living room and a bedroom, lowset, usually with corrugated iron walls and no water laid on. You'd have a tank and sometimes a bore. I was about 2 or 3 then and I can still remember the place we were in, perhaps because it didn't even have a verandah or front steps and I went running out chasing something and fell off and broke my leg.

I must have been just before school age when we came back into town when Dad got a job on the local Council. Mum and Dad bought a house in Plane Street and I started at the Catholic School – something I wasn't very impressed about. Then Dad and a friend set up a farm out from Barcaldine at a place called the Six Mile and we moved out there. It was a corrugated iron hut, dirt floor and there was a bore drain that ran from a property opposite the river where they got access to water through a windmill and they tried to grow crops. They had taken a loan on the house in Barcaldine to fund the project at Six Mile and then rented the house out.

I was around 5 or 6 and my older brother Terry would have been 7 or 8 and we had our chores. We helped in the general running of the place. We pulled weeds from among whatever crops they were growing and we had to help with watering, as there was no watering system. The water was pumped into a drain and we'd splash a bit around the plants they were trying to grow.

The firewood was always a task - it was needed for the copper boiler as well as the wood stove. We collected deadwood from across the Alice River because where we lived it was sandy country, and there was no good Gidgee or Boree wood. We had an old T Model and we used that to cross the dry river and the wood was all hand cut by axe.



We kept chooks and ducks although there was a problem with foxes and big and aggressive feral cats. There were reportedly dingoes but I never seen one. We only had an old shower and we had to be very careful with water. We didn't have a constantly flowing shower, we mainly had a little round galvanised tub and we'd just have a splash in that.

I suppose it was a hard life but as children we weren't aware of it. We often talk about the good times and the bad times while we were there. The good times – I remember coming in to town for special occasions. The old T Model Ford we had wasn't registered and it had no headlights. To see where we were going, Mum used to sit there and hold a spotlight out the window while Dad drove. The car was always driven just to the outskirts of town where it would be parked at a friends place and then we'd walk to wherever we were going. Sometimes it might be a circus, sometimes the movies, but we didn't go to those things often, because money was a bit of a problem. The bad times, well they were probably getting into trouble for not doing the chores like cutting enough wood for the morning stove.

This T Model was a bit of a job to start. Because the transmission in a T Model had a dragging sensation on the car when they were cold, as you cranked them up, the car would actually move away. So Dad used to lift the side up, put a 4 gallon tin under the wheel to prop it up so it could sit there spinning and when it warmed up a bit, my older brother would get in and hold his foot on the brake while Dad lifted the car up again; I pulled out the chock and then we'd hop in and take off for town.

The Six Mile failed after only a couple of years and my parents almost lost everything. They were lucky to be able to keep the house they had rented out. So in the early 1950's, they moved back to the Plane Street house and Dad got a job with Main Roads as a cost clerk and he stayed there until he retired. We had done correspondence school on the farm and when we came back into town we went to the State School.

About a fortnight after we moved back to town, there was a flood and the whole Six Mile went under and a lot of it got washed away, so we were thankful we had moved when we did.

Moving into town we had electricity and running water and a bathroom. It was a separate building and had a chip heater to warm the water to bath in.

It took a long period to get back on our feet. Mum took in washing and ironing for people. She washed in the old wood fired copper boiler and used blue bags and starch. She used a flat iron on the wood fire stove to start with and then a kerosene fired iron before acquiring an electric iron. I always remember, when we went to school; for some reason we didn't wear underpants in those days and she had to starch the shorts we wore and all the frayed edges in the starched seams turned into something resembling a saw blade! It was painful.

We didn't have a car for many years and then a relative gave us a 27/28 model Chev Four Ute that we had for many years until it just stopped going. After that, we didn't have a car again for years, because the choice was made

to buy an electric stove. Even with the new stove, Mum kept the old wood stove to light up occasionally, especially in winter.

Mum had three miscarriages after having me and my youngest brother Danny wasn't born until 13 years later. By the time he was at school Terry and I were both working.

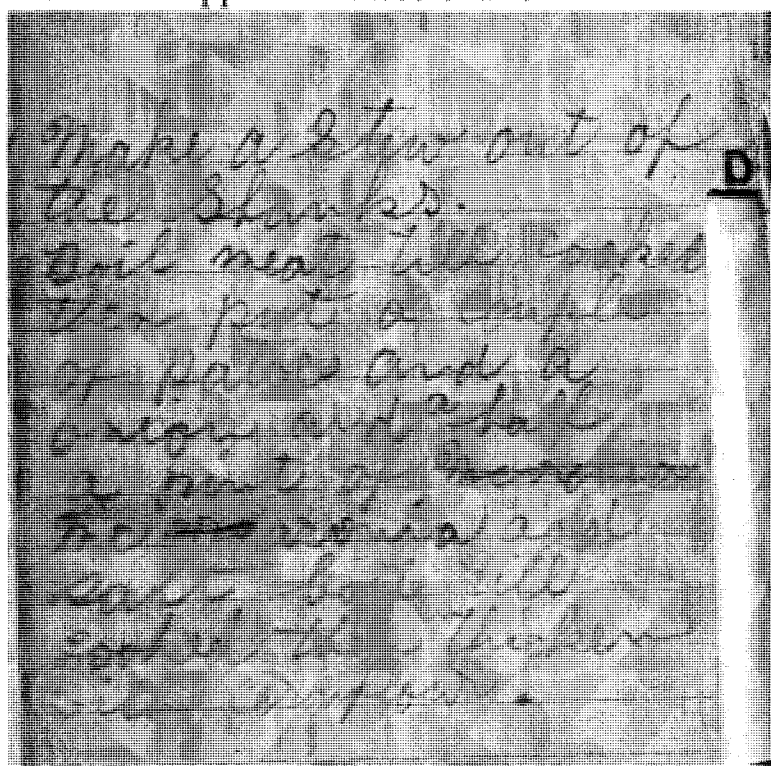
The State School was substantial, with a class for each grade. I think I had around 13 - 17 in my grade. The teachers of the day were strict; I got the cuts once for getting

6 x 7 wrong when reciting the 6 times table. The year I left school, they were building the Secondary school. Up until that time, secondary schooling meant going to Rockhampton. Dad wanted me to go on to high school, but I was pig headed and went mustering instead.

Terry left school and worked for the railway workshops in Alpha when he was about 14. I left when I was 14 and went working as a drovers cook. You would presume I could cook but even though Mum wrote me out all these recipes, I have to tell you that not only the men wouldn't eat some of my cooking, when we fed it to the dogs, they wouldn't touch it either.

There were four of us altogether and this fellow I was working for was Mums stepbrother, one of the original O'Dells. The deal was - I was to go out and learn to ride and muster and take my turn at cooking, but when I got out there, he used his two sons and himself to do all the mustering because they were experienced, and I was left doing all the cooking. We were mustering on an outstation, part of a bigger station and we were camping. When we moved camp, I got to drive the truck with the supplies. We would kill a sheep and salt it down and then we had flour and other basics.

I learned a lot very fast. Every mess up I made I can still remember clearly to this day. I particularly remember the meal the dogs wouldn't eat. Probably in desperation, the fellow I was working for, wrote down a recipe in the book Mum had given me, for making stew out of the sheep shanks and I maintain it was really his fault that no-one would eat it. I did everything there by the book until it said 'add salt' so I just got a cup full of coarse salt and put it into the stew! It's probably just as well that the droving contract was only for about 3 weeks to a month.



*The original Lamb Shank Stew recipe included macaroni*

Later on when I was fencing I learned how to make beautiful salted meat. You'd kill the sheep, roll it in coarse salt and put the odd little nick in the legs or shoulders or whatever part you were salting. Rub the salt in to the nicks and then put it into a bag. At night while you were camped, you took the meat out of the bag and let it hang from a tree branch or something and the juices would drip out and it would dry a bit and you would just keep salting it. During the day you had to put it back in the bag to keep the flies from it but you just repeated the process until it was thoroughly dry. Then, you could do anything you liked with it and it wouldn't go off. To cook it you'd soak it overnight and lightly boil it until cooked. It was beautiful and extra tender.

After my stint at cooking, I worked for the Council when they took over the laying of sewerage after two contractors had gone bust trying to do it in Barcaldine's sandy soil and then I got the opportunity to go fencing.

I lived away from home Monday to Friday and home on weekends. I didn't stay with the first fellow long but I stayed with the second Fencer until after I was 17. We were building plain wire fences – a chain wire in 6-inch square sections to keep sheep in the paddock with a barbed wire top. This second fencer pushed us pretty hard. If he could get 9 hours out of an 8-hour day he would!

We'd be sitting waiting for light to see each morning and he told us he expected ½ mile each day which equated to 8 strain (40 strain a week), but if we did 10 strain a day, we could have ½ day off on Friday. But he was canny, because if we could do 40 strain in 4 days, he could still get another 5 or 6 strain out of us on Friday so we never quite got our half day off because we got into the habit of doing 10 strain a day and 8 on Friday and rarely finished until around 4 o'clock.

I worked at a petrol depot in town and then did some more fencing and worked for a contractor putting in dams on properties after that.

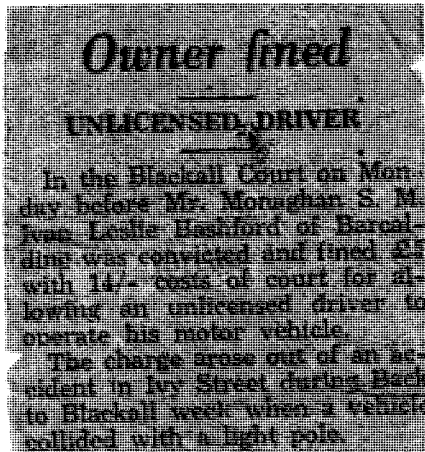
I have always loved cars. I first drove at around 8 or 10 when I was allowed to steer the old T Model and then a relative of ours gave us an old 34 truck - it didn't have any seats in it, you just sat on the back of the tray. The cab was cut off and you drove the truck from the tray. I was around 12 or 13 then and I had that until I got my first V8. I was 17 when I got my first legitimate registered car.

While I was with Council, I shouldn't have, but I drove cars and there was one particular vehicle – an old Blitz truck with a crash gearbox that nobody else wanted to drive. The Engineer had seen me with it and asked if I would take over as driver and I said yes. A couple of days later he said "I meant to check that you do have a truck licence?" and when I said no, he said "We'd better fix that right now, park it and we'll go up to the police station" When I told him I was underage at 16, he couldn't believe it. I also had all my hours up operating the dragline as a result of the driver drinking his pay packet and being unable to work. I couldn't get my ticket because I was underage.

As young men, the entertainment in town was the local dance or the pub life from 18 on if you enjoyed a drink. I didn't enjoy drinking, I didn't like the



taste much and I enjoyed the loss of control even less. One time I remember clearly I was about 16 and I had gone to Blackall with a couple of mates in their FJ Holden Ute. They'd gone to have a few drinks and I'd gone to the movies.



*From the 'Longreach Leader' when 'someone' crashed the car.*

After the movies I spotted a girl I was a bit sweet on – we'll call her Marilyn – heading home, and as I was at the age where the hormones were starting to make themselves felt, decided I would go and borrow the FJ and catch up with her.

I raced back to my mate who gave me the keys and I jumped in and there were two of the boys drunk in the back and they wouldn't get out. I wasn't sure what was going to happen when I caught up with 'Marilyn' but I knew I didn't want two drunks there with me.

I raced up to the local park in the Ute, grabbed one bloke, hauled him right over to the middle of the park, rushed back for the other one and dragged him over to the middle and passed

the first one coming back. I had no hope of shaking them, so I told them to get down and be quiet. I knew I was running out of time by then, so I'm flying down to where I was pretty sure she lived, with my head hanging out of the window peering through the dark looking for her, and I forgot about this light pole right in the middle of the street and I hit it head on. I came to in the hospital the next morning, looking at one of my mates in the bed opposite. The other one was sitting outside. They were both still pretty drunk and I had absolutely no recollection of what had happened. It cost 205 pounds to repair the car! The incident made it into the local papers and my mate was fined 5 pounds and 14/- costs. 5 pounds in those days was at least half a week's wages.

I was working putting down dams on a property when I married at age 20 in 1963. While out on the properties, we'd service our own equipment - WW2 dozer and an old 'Blitz truck and an International 6x6. We'd do all our own work and then we'd service equipment on the properties as well.

I can remember doing up Land rovers and work like that, in between doing shifts with the dozers to put down the dams. When I got married and moved out of home, I had a 34, 36, 37 and 39 V8; a Chev truck and a Singer 9 car, all in various conditions. I agreed to them going in a Council clean up because I had nowhere to put them, but I've regretted it ever since. I wish I had them now.

Because Jackie my wife didn't want to live in the bush, after a stint back fencing where at least I came home on weekends, I was offered a job in a garage in Barcaldine. This fellow told me later he had his eye on me as a motor mechanic and had always wanted to give me a chance but he wouldn't give me a job earlier because he thought I was a bit of a terror. Now I was

married, he expected me to settle down. That's when I started training as a Motor Mechanic.

While I was at the Garage, my daughter Joanne was born in 1964 and then my son Patrick in 1966. I was an auxiliary fireman as well.

The police force had always beckoned, as I had always had thoughts of joining their traffic branch, so I applied. I failed the entrance exam twice because I couldn't spell but eventually made it on my third attempt. There was then a 3 month training period at Petrie Terrace and I went down to commence it.

My acceptance letter told me to report to duty at 8am on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1968 and gave me the following instructions :

During your training period, apart from your ordinary clothing, you are expected to have the following items of clothing, viz.,

*Two (2) pairs of Khaki Drill Trousers.*

*Two (2) Khaki Shirts. (Military Pockets).*

*Two (2) Pairs of Navy Blue Gym Shorts.*

*Two (2) White Athletic Singlets.*

*Two (2) pairs Black Socks.*

*One (1) pair of White Sandshoes.*

*One (1) mid-grey felt hat with 2 ½" brim.*

*One (1) Note book.*

*One (1) Ballpoint pen.*

*One (1) Ruler*

*On reporting at the Depot at the time mentioned, the above items are to be brought with you, and it is desired that you be appropriately dressed in a suit or other similar clothing, and be wearing a tie. A coat is essential.*

Once there, I had second thoughts for a number of reasons, not the least of which was - that I had split the bone in my thumb a few days before I went down there; plus being away from my young family; the fact I was only about 6 months off my A grade motor mechanics certificate, and I was trying to pay off a house on what would be a very low starting wage - I asked for, and was given a deferral. When I had done all I needed to do and at 28 reapplied, the rules had changed and you had to have junior education (at least another 2 years schooling) and you had to be between the ages of 19 ½ and 29 ½ to be accepted.

So I looked for the next option of a stable job and thought I'd try the fire brigade. I was offered a few jobs - in Mt. Gravatt, Tenterfield and then Rockhampton at Ford dealerships and I worked in the Rockhampton dealership for the 2 years it took to get into the Fire Brigade. I went in, in 1973. The fact that I had 5 years Auxiliary training including a certificate to drive Fire Engines, plus being a motor mechanic, eventually helped get me in.

When I did get in and looked around, I was pretty amazed I had made it because there were Fathers and sons and brothers and uncles and nephews etc. It was shocking. It's not like that now, people are chosen for their ability.

It was all local training then. Working day shifts only, we did a week of drills with all the shifts and then a week Breathing Apparatus (BA) course and then we were put on to turn out. We had to be able to carry our own weight around the drill yard, get up this old Metz ladder 105 feet high. The BA course was a pretty heavy dose of smoke through a tunnel affair, with bags of sawdust you had to pass back to your mate. When my son Patrick started with the Brigade in 1990, he had to go to Brisbane for 3 months of rigorous physical and theory training.

When I started, I walked into industrial unrest that had started back somewhere in '68 or '69. There was a dispute between the registered union - the AWU, and the UFU, which was operating in other states, but not Queensland. The day I started, I went into my first smoko and there was this one fellow sitting at a table by himself and I sat down and talked to him but he didn't talk back. After smoko, another fellow got hold of me and said, "Don't talk to him, he's UFU" and I had to ask, "What's that" "United Firemen's Union" I was told. I walked into some pretty strong feelings.

The troubles lasted over a period of years from around '69 to '73 or '74 would be my guess. There were strikes and sackings, court cases and re-instatements finishing with everyone being kept on and the UFU now being the registered Union.



*Patrick 'the fireman'*

No major fire stands out, they are all an adrenalin rush where your training just kicks in and takes over. Road Accident and Rescue was added to our job in the mid '80s and the bad accidents are the ones that stay with you. On my first accident call out there were 3 out of 4 dead all in two vehicles. They are Nowadays we have composite vehicles that have sophisticated rescue and fire equipment but I remember that first accident call out. We had been told there were trapped people and we were asked for any suggestions. The oxy plant at work was too big, so we went via my home to get my small oxy gear and a small pinch bar I had. The accident was on Archer flats. The difference between my oxy gear mixed with the possibility of leaking fuel and the sophisticated gear we use now, is remarkable.

Up until the early 90's when the state

government took over services and set up a workshop to do all the mechanical services, I was pretty much always in the workshop unless there was a turnout for a fire and I enjoyed that.

The Fire Brigade has been tops – working with good mates and feeling you are doing some good in the community. I'll probably retire in the next year or two but I've been pleased to be a part of the Brigade for so long. I can't help but look back at the difference between my lifestyle now and that of my parents and their parents before them and be amazed by the changes over what is really only a small period of time.

*Edited from oral tape.*

## **STRATHBLANE – HOME IN THE FOOTHILLS**

Lorna Smith

My "Strathblane" stood in the shadow of the beautiful Berserker Mountain Range! I do not remember at time when I was not in awe of the mountain's majesty, its changing colours, the light and shade, and the shadows that created visions in my imagination. I was very young.



*Mount Sleipner- part of the Berserker Ranges*

My home faced east, with the magnificent mountains in view. I would sit on the front steps of my house pondering what may have been on the other side of the mountains. My world was restricted and I could not imagine a bigger one than that, which my family had created for me, nestled in the Fitzroy River Valley where I was born. From my front steps I could see a house set high on a hill and I daydreamed of the story of that house.

My school life was secure and protected at the little rural school situated over a hill. My excitement knew no bounds when I realised that on top of the hill on the way to school stood the "house in the mountains" I had longed to visit. In my tiny mind I thought my mystery house was high up on the mountains so far beyond reach. On rainy days I trudged to the top of the hill knowing I would see the mist hanging low, hiding the mountains from view. The fresh morning air, the scent of the bushland with its eucalypt and lantana, and the water trickling over the stones in the little creek which ran beside the road excited my senses, giving me precious memories. They were happy years spent in the shadow of my mystical mountains.

Teenage brought different activities, hiking, swimming and exploring the sparkling waterfalls in the special places my mountain provided, and one day I climbed the steep and stony track to the top. At last my childhood curiosity was satisfied as I gazed in wonder across the vista on the other side.

Years passed - my girlhood and teenage were no more - I was now a mother with children of my own. I revelled in opportunities to teach the magic I experienced, so began afresh the wonderings of little minds, the enjoyment of splashing in the creek, the campfires among the stones when the creek was dry to sizzle sausages and bake potatoes in the coals. My children learned to smell the eucalypt and lantana and were wide eyed watching the spiders as they spun their perfect webs in the glistening sunlight.

The children grew, the track up the mountain became less used and a road was built. Now my family could picnic atop the mountain and it became our special place. Across a generation nothing has changed. The magic with which I regarded my mountain from "Strathblane" repeats itself in my family. The timelessness of nature remains, and will weave its magic as long as civilisation continues.



## MY TWO LIVES

Edna Connolly

When I look back over my life, I see two very distinct and different lives. The first part of my life was not an easy road; I had a very poor life. The second part has been so different to the first; it is really quite hard to imagine that the same person lived them both.

My parents were Stanley Elliott and Martha Scott. Mum had come from Scotland with her parents in 1909 when she was 9 years old. Her father was a miner and he was sent direct to Blair Athol. It must have been a culture shock for all of them, with the climate if nothing else. My father was Australian born.

My earliest recollection as a child is of living in a tent city on the banks of a creek. It was a railway workers camp where we followed our father's work building the Kyogle rail line, down near Beaudesert. He used a jackhammer at work and then something was wrong with his hand and he was in the Beaudesert Hospital for a long time, seriously ill. It might have been septicaemia, I'm not sure, but whatever it was, we moved on.

We came up as far as Monto where we camped on the banks of the Three Moon Creek. It was around 1928 and as I was born (in Rockhampton) in 1921, I must have been 7 when we all went cotton picking around the Monto area, while we stayed camped on the creek. The whole family went picking, including the children. Our family consisted of Mother, Father and four children, all girls - myself, Eileen, Lily and Shirley.

Land then became available for selection and Mum and Dad selected a block of 160 acres just south of Mulgildie near Monto, and we moved down there. We had a T Model Ford that we'd bought up from Kyogle. The back was built in and we lived in that and in tents on this block that was part scrub and part forest. Eventually they chose a place on the hill in the forest country and built a bag hut. It had a dirt floor and the walls were made of bags that Mum whitewashed with lime to seal them off a bit. The roof was made from some iron they must have scouted from somewhere. It was just one room.

We were a long way from civilisation even with the T Model and so Mum would set wallaby snares and we had wallaby stew as our main meal very frequently. Mum would watch the leg to make sure there were no worms in it and she'd bake it for a baked dinner. We had water safes to keep the food and you'd hang things up in a cool place to keep them. The nearest neighbours were quite a few miles way. There were the Hotzes and the Golbys, the Stewarts and the Tanzers they were all our neighbours.

Water was always scarce and on washday, before we got tanks, my sister Eileen and Mum and I would put the clothes in a big bag and cut across country to the Tanzers place, where there was a spring. We'd do the washing in the spring and hang everything out on the rocks to dry and then come home again.



You had to be really sick before going to a doctor. I recall chasing a new ball into a roll of barbed wire and putting a very deep gash about 3 or 4 inches long in my knee but it was just bandaged. My grandmother was a great believer in cobwebs. If anybody got a cut or anything, she'd get a handful of sticky cobwebs and put them over the cut, under the bandage. They were supposed to draw the skin together. Saturday mornings were not liked at all - on one Saturday you'd get Senna tea made from the leaves steeped in hot water; the next Saturday it would be a dose of castor oil from the blue bottle.

Once we had the bag hut, Mum and Dad set about felling the scrub. Mum would do the brush cutting and Dad cut the scrub until they had some cleared and burnt off.

Then fencing was done and cotton was planted by hand planters through the burnt off scrub.

A suitable area was selected for building a larger place, built from hand cut slabs, with a slab floor. Yards were built in preparation for dairying. Jersey cows were purchased as Dad thought they were the best breeds for cream. We soon learnt to milk cows and use the separator to separate the cream from the milk. Cream cans were filled with the cream and sent off to the factory at Monto, picked up by the cream carrier. We made our own butter by shaking the cream in a 7lb syrup tin until the butter formed.

The slab hut had tanks and then a 6-foot fence to keep out the animals and we grew our own vegetables. Mum planted these 'poor mans' beans and they grew all over the fence. They looked a bit like snow peas but they were thicker and had fat seeds in them. They tasted pretty good which was lucky because they gave us a good supply of beans.

It was good alluvial soil; good for growing vegetable and so we became pretty self-sufficient. When we did venture in to Mulgildie to get some groceries, we always got a bag of lollies thrown in - every time you shopped for groceries. They were a real treat.

When I became old enough, I began my schooling by correspondence and then a school was built at Tellybang about 3 miles away. We were amongst the first pupils to go there; about 20 kids attended. We walked there and back, along with a number of others, envious of the kids up on the plateau because they had horses to ride. When one of their mares foaled, the foal followed the mare to school and the kids said their Dad was going to shoot the foal, because they couldn't afford to feed the mare to keep enough condition on her to both work and feed the foal.

I ran home to Mum and Dad and pleaded and pleaded to be allowed to have the foal. At first it was a flat NO, but after a lot of pleading I was given the ultimatum - "If you rear it and you break it in, you can have it". Well, I shot off up the road and got the foal. I reared it, I fed it and I looked after it and when it got old enough, I broke it in and I was the only one that could ride it. My sister would get on and it would buck her off. I was the only one. That was one of the really nice things that happened to me in my life.

Another quite short-lived delight was a purebred jersey bull calf. Things were looking up a bit then and the bull was bought to be shown. I don't know why, probably because I was the oldest and they didn't have a son, but I was the only one that could lead the bull around the showgrounds. Then one day it chased Dad and he put the dog on it and the dog bit it. Once it had those marks on it, it couldn't be shown again, so I lost that little pleasure of going round the show ring with my lovely bull.

The school became the focal point for the area because they started having dances. There was an old chap who played the accordion for music. Our parents enjoyed the dances as much as we did and we all thought we were pretty good. Apart from the dances there wasn't much other entertainment, just work and then more work. That's why the dances were so memorable.

For some unknown reason, just after my grandmother died in 1934 Mum and Dad sold the farm and came back to Rockhampton where they bought a house. Dad bought a truck and went out road building, out Bauhinia Downs way, and we actually went to real school at Berserker. It was short lived though, because the road building contract finished and we all had to go back picking cotton. The family would go out around the Biloela area for the cotton-picking season and the other crops. So we were back to tents and camp ovens and correspondence again. My schooling at best, was disjointed.

When we were in town we'd go to Sunday school and we had these little verses on cards we had to learn and I used to love those little verses. Even when we lived down at Monto we'd go down to a house about once a month and they'd have a Sunday school and we'd learn these verses from the little cards. I really loved those little cards.

After coming back from one of our trips, I turned 13 and I refused to go back to school and be in grades with little kids where I felt too old and too big, so I left school and did dressmaking by correspondence. From then until I turned 17, things seemed to settle down and we stayed in town. It wasn't to last - we moved back out to Black Mountain outside Kalapa on a property of about 100 acres again.

Then came the hard work again - dairy farming, milking cows by hand, hauling the separated milk up to feed the pigs plus feeding calves from buckets.

Men employed for the job had felled this time the scrub, but there was still the hand planting of cotton, thinning out and weeding and then the picking season began again. The cotton was placed into large bags and we would all get in and jump up and down to press the cotton down into the bales, Dad did the most because he was the heaviest. If we were in disgrace for any reason, we would be sent outside for the night and we would sneak into one of these large bale bags and sleep there on top of the cotton.



Time went by and we graduated to cultivation. Eileen and I being the eldest, learnt to drive the machinery. Lily and Shirley rode their horses to school at Kalapa but they did their share of work milking cows and cotton picking etc.

For entertainment, when Mum and Dad went to town, Eileen and I would drive the tractors and ploughs straight up the hills to see how far they would go. We nearly capsized a few times!

I remember one particularly awful period through the drought, when the cattle ate poisonous berries from a cedar tree. We would have to get these sick animals up to the barn and prop them up, because they'd get so poor that if they lay down, they would have to be shot. I couldn't do the shooting, so poor old Eileen got the job of shooting them and then we'd have to haul the carcasses out and get rid of them.

Dad would always promise that at the end of the year, if we had a good crop of cotton, we'd get paid and get some money. It never happened, because he never came out on top.

As a family, we looked forward to going to the dances around the district and it was there I met my boyfriend Chester Littleboy. We became engaged when I was 20. Even though we were engaged, my parents would not allow us to go anywhere and an atmosphere of tension and mistrust developed, so, at 21 I decided I'd had enough. Chester and I were married in 1942. We had nothing but we ventured out by ourselves.



*Taken 3 months before Chester went to hospital.*

*L to R: Faye, Edna, Jocelyn, Chester and Evelyn*

Chester worked for the brickworks at Kacoma and to start with, we moved to his parents' farm at Malchi. The other boys in the family wanted to take over there so we went out the Caves where Chester went paw paw picking. We went backwards and forwards to the farm over the next few years and we were there when I had my daughter Faye in 1943. I came into Lady Goodwin for the birth of Fay and had a very bad time, so bad in fact the Doctor told me I wouldn't have any more children. Then unforeseen family circumstances

took me away for six weeks and when I returned, I fell pregnant with Jocelyn; she was born in 1947.

Chester hated driving in town, so I always did the driving. After it became obvious that staying on the farm was not going to work, Chester applied for a job delivering groceries for Riemans in Williams Street, driving a delivery van, and he got the job! So we moved into town and he had to get used to driving there.

We purchased a little house down in Quay Street, which we did up. We were there when our third daughter Evelyn was born. Then, I think it was early 1950, there were floods and the water came into our yard. The following year, another flood and the water came up higher and Chester said "Righto, this is it, put it on the market" We had moved in with Mum in Wandal while it was flooded and would you believe, people came down, wading through knee deep water and bought the house!

We went out to Millman for a time, then built a house in Patterson Street, Emu Park in 1951. We didn't have electricity or water laid on so we sunk a well. We were there for a few years and Chester would catch the Bulletin car up to work in Rockhampton each morning to work at Wieses Batteries and come home by train each night at around 7.30pm. The girls went to the convent school down there and Chester did a lot of work for the convent.

Then, for various reasons, we decided we wanted to establish ourselves in Rockhampton so put the girls into Boarding School at Emu Park for 12 months, came back and built this house I live in now in Joiner Street. That was in 1954 and we didn't have the house quite finished when Chester got cancer. Even though the Doctors told me he would have 5 years, he lived for only 2. He was 42 when he died.

So at 39 I was widowed after 19 years of marriage with the three girls, Fay 17 who was working, Jocelyn 13 and Evelyn 10, both still at school.

While Chester had been sick, there was no money because there weren't any sickness benefits or anything like that, no support at all. We had to have money to support ourselves and my sister in law got me a job waitressing in the dining room of the Palace Hotel run by Mrs. Malloy. I had never had a job other than labouring on the farm and I was really petrified at the thought of a Hotel dining room. In those days the dining rooms were very busy and very 'proper', with starched white tablecloths and starched serviettes, and lots of cutlery laid out precisely. When I confessed my terror to Mrs. Malloy she seemed unperturbed and just said, "You'll be right dear". So in I go on Monday morning in my starched apron and headgear and I just about froze from terror when I looked in and saw all the people sitting there. I settled down and I managed, just as Mrs. Malloy had said I would.

I stayed in that line of work for a long time because after Chester died, the pension I had expected never happened because of a chain of events. We had taken our loan on the house with the Darling Downs Building Society, luckily, just in Chester's name. The built in insurance policy said that if the policy owner passed away, the loan was automatically paid in full. That meant I

could keep the house. As well, we owned a 1959 Holden. When I went to enquire about the pension at State Aid to be able to educate the girls, I was told because I now owned both a house and a car, I was too wealthy. I had to pay my husbands funeral off because I didn't have any money.

Sunday nights had always been fun nights in the house with friends around the Pianola. For a very long time after Chester died, we could never have tea in the house on a Sunday night. We'd pack up and go and have a picnic tea along the creek banks out Parkhurst way. It was a big struggle in more ways than one.

Life moved on and we were surviving with me working 7 days a week, and Faye working also. Then, I developed an ingrown toenail and had to go to hospital for 4 days. I finished up in there for 12 weeks because of infection. That meant no income and the girls at 18, 15 and 13 were all at home by themselves, fending for themselves. Jocelyn was about to start secondary school, but had to leave and get a job.

Even after I came home from hospital, my foot was not properly healed and I couldn't wear a shoe so, Lacys - furnishing and curtain people - were advertising for a seamstress and I applied, wearing only one shoe. We were given a sewing test and, thanks to the sewing I had already done, I was successful. As well as this full time job, I still did additional work at the Embassy Hotel on Saturday mornings and the Strand at Yeppoon for the rest of the weekend.

I met up with my second husband Jim Connolly through the hotel work although I had known Jims wife. There were 4 or 5 couples that, over the space of about 5 years had lost their partners tragically. Jim and I were married in 1966 when I was 46. Jim's children Terry and Carmel and my girls were all very happy for us. Jim was a solicitor with Watt, Connolly and Co in William Street although he had his first practice at Theodore.

I promised my boss I would continue work for two years after I was married so they could train somebody but after that, I stopped work for good. I got great pleasure from working with Meals on Wheels for many years after I stopped work. I had told Jim I had never had a proper holiday. Chester and I would plan things when we were young, we'd plan to go here and there but it never ever happened. Every year, Jim and I went on a lovely trip somewhere. Jim was a very serious man at work, but away from work, especially on holidays he was a different person.

This then was the beginning of the second phase of my life. We had a lovely life and we had been married for about 14 years, when tragedy struck again. Jim was diagnosed with cancer of the jaw. He had surgery in 1981 and we nursed him for 7 years before he died in 1988.

When Jim and I married, Jocelyn was about to be married to Arthur and, as I didn't want the house to go out of the family, I was thrilled when they bought it. After Jim died, Jocelyn and Arthur, now with 3 teenagers, were looking for something bigger, so I bought my house back. So I've come full circle back to a house that holds so many memories - memories of coming home from work

and putting down a few more floorboards and of a house that when we built it, was the nicest house I had ever owned.

We enjoy our bowls and travel around quite a bit. I began bowling in 1970 and it has been a big part of my life. I have been President of Athelstane Ladies Bowls Club for two years and Patroness for 5 years. I belong to Victoria Park and Brothers Social Bowls Club. I really enjoy going to the country clubs and mixing with the country people. I still like my holidays - I took myself off to England last year.

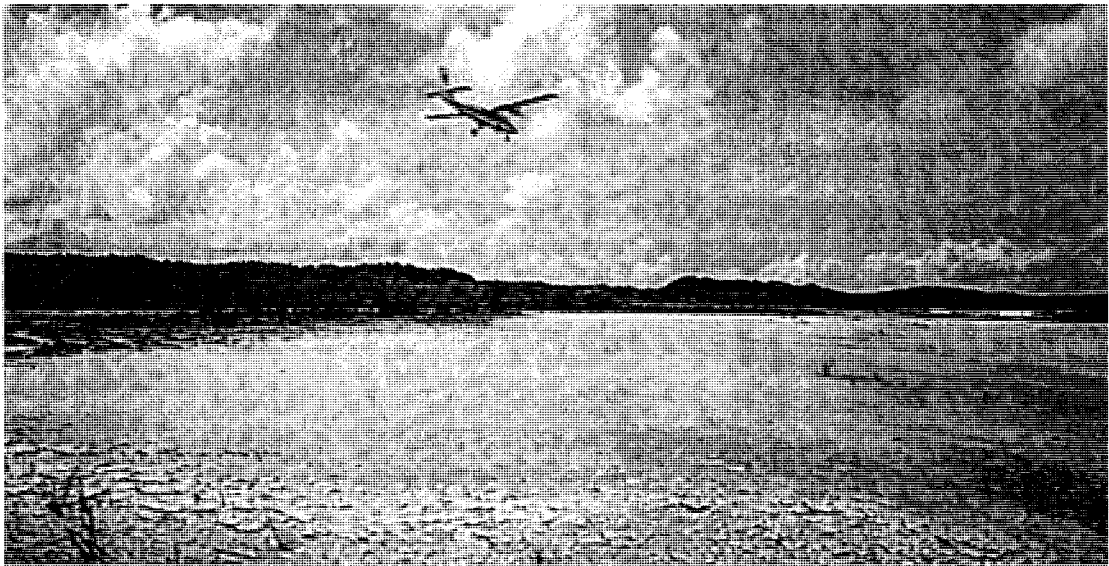
It's almost impossible to equate the way I live now to my earlier life where we worked like men and endured such a hard life.

*Edited from an oral tape.*

## **TRADE WINDS, TEARS AND MORNING TEAS**

**Elizabeth Muston**

"The plane's delayed," my husband said. "So he's going to wait here, and would like a cup of tea." "He" was an Archbishop I'd never met.



*Plane over Horn Island*

As the only member of his Grace's flock at the airport settlement, the men folk had decided I should play hostess.

Barely an hour before, two workmen had pulled out my ancient stove and were still unpacking the new one. There had never been electricity here, so I couldn't switch on a jug, and the primus was on the "way out".

What could I do...the only thing a Christian wife would...I prayed for a miracle.

My prayers were answered. Shortly after the archbishop and party (two priests) arrived, my only neighbour, the Officer In Charge's wife appeared with her daughter. They brought freshly brewed tea and mouth-watering scones

In May 1966, I flew to Horn Island in the Torres Strait to join my husband. With me on that journey, were our three children, 5 years, 14 months and six weeks.

I have two vivid recollections of that flight – the sight of Cape York pointing a gnarled finger towards the islands, and the incredible blue of tropic seas.

That afternoon I stepped out of the plane into another life. For a young city woman like myself, if time had not stopped here, then it had certainly paused.

We were to live here at the airport. Administered by a Commonwealth Department, two permanent employees, (the officer in charge and a groundsman) were provided with residences for their families.

Our home was a low set building and had been used as quarters for various aircrews over some years. It appeared the skill and expertise those daring young men displayed in the air had not extended to housekeeping duties on terra firma.

There was no electricity, but we did have carbide lights. At night, we were able to see the lights of Thursday Island, and during daylight, Cape York was visible from our veranda.

Our 'Mod.cons' were: an ancient wood stove, a wash copper and stick, and a kerosene refrigerator. A bonus was the indoor septic toilet, plus we had ample fresh water from the island dam.

The arrival, that first morning, of the OIC's wife with a pot of tea, home made cake, and a list of services available, is still fresh in my memory.



As her sons attended school on Thursday Island, our little girl would catch the school launch, along with the village children. I found the days barely long enough. Both little sons were on bottles, so each morning 30 or more nappies went into the copper. How snow white they were, and dried by the trade winds, were so soft and smelled wonderful. Before long, I halved the laundry load, when my toddler drank from a cup and wore pants.

The men were at work at 7.30 am, smoko was at 10.30 am, lunch at 12 noon, afternoon smoko was at 3.00 pm. Daughter home at 4.00 pm.

If Friday was shopping day on Thursday Island, then Saturday was certainly 'crying' day in our family.

The baby – because he was full of wind from the previous day's sea trips and our toddler was overtired and couldn't settle.

Our schoolgirl – who only wanted 'grandma, and her cousins in Cairns to play with. Me – well some days I choked back the tears, and wished for a plane to take us all back home. But my husband coped admirably – he went fishing. Our social life was somewhat limited, the odd visit to Thursday Island for a cabaret. One evening we attended the school fete.

A maintenance crew working on the island, sent an invitation to share their morning smoko, we were treated to damper and fruit loaf baked in a camp oven (delicious), and drank tea from enamel mugs. Brewed in a large Billycan, tea had never tasted so good.

Scrambling on and off launches (and other sea going crafts), climbing up and down ladders, or waiting on jetties, soon became a way of life and our skippers, Kit and Elton, and their crew were wonderful, always helping with the little boys.

Walking a plank from a coastal vessel to the Horn Island jetty, one day, was something I'd sooner forget.

For some months, a former world champion motorcyclist, Lionel Von Pragh, rode all over the island on an ancient motorbike, complete with a sidecar. Lionel, a member of an air charter company, was a constant source of entertainment during his stay.

We were fortunate to have two plane services a week from Cairns on Mondays and Thursdays. Other women, whose husbands were lighthouse keepers, teachers or other officials and lived far out on some the islands were limited to travel first by sea, to Thursday Island. How resilient they were caring for families, including babies, and teaching their other children their school lessons.

Towards the end of our first year, we farewelled the OIC and his family. That Christmas was a quiet, lonely one for us. I was fortunate to have a former school friend living on Thursday Island where her family owned the Federal Hotel. How I treasured support and assistance when I visited there.

The next year brought changes in our lives. The emergency flight to Cairns with our seriously ill baby. After his recovery, I returned to the island and the following day, our toddler went down with measles.

The night before our departure from Horn Island the electricity was switched on for the first time. How dazzling the airstrip seemed, and the residences? They were lit up like Christmas trees. I thought of my first time on Horn Island, when the smell of carbide had almost overwhelmed me. Now the

women who were to live there would have modern amenities. What a blessing.

Before the year ended, we had settled for a rural lifestyle in the Callide Valley. Milking cows was a far cry from life on a tropical island.

Today, as a resident of Rockhampton, I feel my life has turned full circle.... From city to island to the country, and now back to a city.

*Postscript:*

*Although my story is not set in Central Queensland, I do have a link with the early history of Gladstone. My great Grandfather, John Rhodes opened the first public swimming baths in Gladstone in the 1800's; he added a boarding house adjacent to the baths and was appointed Bailiff for a short time. After holding the licence of the Metropolitan Hotel for a time, he travelled north to Cairns where he was the owner of three Hotels – The Newmarket, The Crown and the Court House.*

*My late husband's great Grandfather, Dr. A.C. Robertson was the first Medico in Rockhampton.*

## **FINE MANNERS**

Emily Duthie

I was born in Toowoomba and when you reach my age one is no longer coy about ones birth-date; it was 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1916, which makes me 87 years old. I'm very pleased to have come this far, considering I have had a couple of heart attacks, angina and a stroke which left me severely restricted. I had to work hard at rehabilitation to be able to get back to being as active as I now am. When I had my very bad heart attack at the Gold Coast four years ago and had to go up to Brisbane, Dr. Jeffrey Holt put a stent in for me and then told me I would be as good as new and live to be 100.

Shortly after I was born, my parents moved to Byron Bay in N.S.W. to live and then later came back to Brisbane. I had my education in Brisbane; first at Dutton Park State School then Junction Park State School. After that I went to the Brisbane Girls Grammar School. When I attended Junction Park, the headmaster had me read to all the other classes because he said my elocution was excellent, so my Mother and Father had me taught by the two leading elocutionists in Brisbane – Sir Harry Borradale and Barbara Sisely. I've thought since, that although we were comfortably off we were not a wealthy family, and it must have taken a lot of their money to do that for me.

My father John Gordon King began as a carpenter but then trained to become a Civil Engineer. My Mother was Mary Elizabeth Rolfe before marriage. I was the eldest in the family, and then came my brother Leslie Gordon, sister Aileen Margaret and sister Stella Rita, called Rita.

When I finished my education at around 17, my father didn't believe in his daughter working and it was only because our minister, The Reverend Alexander Duff from St. Johns Presbyterian Church in King Street, Annerley, prevailed upon him to allow me to work, that my Father finally relented. Reverend Duff found me a position with Jenyns Corsetry in George Street.

The Jenyns – Captain John Jenyns and Mr. Herb Jenyns had a beautiful big home called Huntingtower which was later turned into a Motel I believe.

I was put in charge of the worktable first of all and the girls there were very wary of me until they got to know me, when they all became my friends.

I met my husband Les when he was the representative for Prudential Assurance Company in Central Queensland and after we married we established a home in Bundaberg, where he represented that area also.

Approximately two years later when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and Darwin, Les joined the RAAF and served as a Radar Operator in Darwin, New Guinea and Biak until the cessation of hostilities in 1945. While he was in Darwin son John was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1943, and Meredith arrived approximately 5 years later, on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1948. During the war I continued to live in Bundaberg. My Mother came to join me as my Father, because of his Engineering skills, was seconded to the US Army Construction Corp.

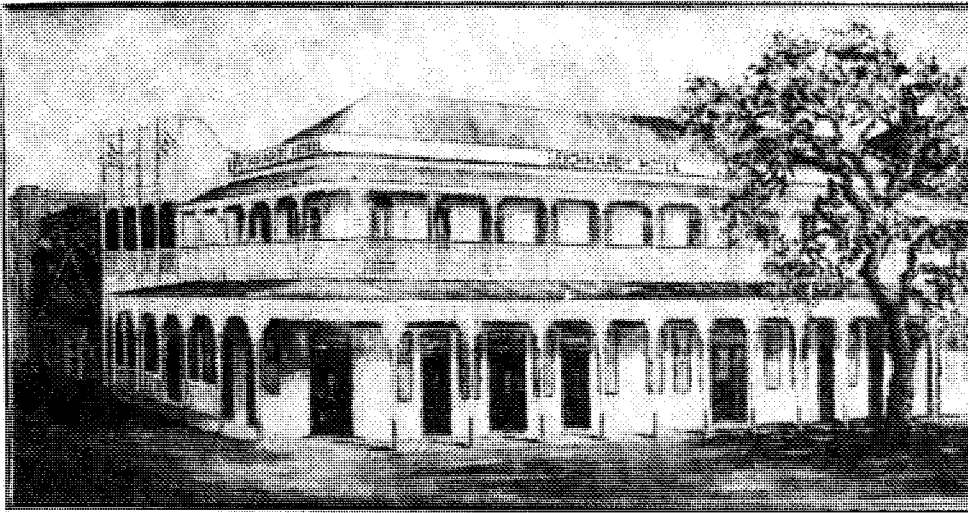


*Emily stands far right  
with her sisters and  
her brother*

When Les was discharged we elected to live in Rockhampton and established a home on the McDonald Estate on the Range, in an area which had been reserved for returned soldiers, where we have lived ever since.

One day, after we had owned the Duthie Building for some time, we were standing in the street outside it and Les said to me "How would you like to buy the Leichhardt?" and my reply was "The Leichhardt what?" When he told me the Hotel I said "But Les, you know I don't like going in to Hotels" and he assured me that I would not need to go anywhere near that area, I would just need to ring down from home to tell them when I was ready to come down to luncheon or dinner.





*Sketch of the 'original' Leichhardt*

The Hotel was already almost 100 years old and had played a prominent part in Rockhampton history. It was about to be sold to an oil company for a service station site and we didn't think it should be, so we took it over. That was in 1960.

One day, shortly after we had bought it, we had been to Callaghan Park to a race meeting and we had come back and were sitting in the lounge room and I looked around me and it was like the black hole of Calcutta, it was so dark and dingy and I knew I would have to be involved and do something about it.

If I was going to be involved, it was going to have to be different. My Father, Australian born of English parents and my Mother, Australian born of Scottish heritage, had taught me fine manners and I wanted to pass that on somehow. My parents were very great sticklers for table etiquette; I'll never forget first seeing people eating in the dining room of the old hotel, it staggered me.

Les had a truckload of inner spring mattresses waiting the day we took over the hotel as it only had old fibre mattresses in its 34 rooms and it was pretty shocking. There were stains down the walls from water damage. The Hotel had never had a cold room so we bought one from a butcher and put it in. With a lot of hard work we absolutely transformed it.

Just after we had taken over, the manageress Mrs. Mackie set up for a Range College function we had attracted to the hotel. She called me to check her work and I said, "Where did you get these chairs from!" and she said "This is all we've got, we had to take them from the kitchen, the bedrooms and everywhere." There were cane chairs beside kitchen ones etc. It was a hodgepodge. The old dining room hadn't altered much in the 100 years the Hotel had been operating.

There was a big centre area, the site of a previously demolished building and it was big enough to build a convention centre. We designed and developed it and it was opened in 1963. It had an acoustic ceiling, ceiling fans and it was beautifully arranged with white linen napery and I had planned the

furnishings and decorations to be perfect and the finished product was something Rockhampton had not seen until then.

In anticipation of the type of functions we were now able to offer, we brought in brandy balloons, cocktail glasses and liqueur glasses etc. People souvenired them in substantial numbers and it cost us a fortune to keep replacing them. I re-designed the waitress uniforms taking away the big white aprons and cumbersome headgear the waitresses wore and replaced them with small scalloped edge headwear and smaller scalloped edge aprons.

In about the early 1950's Les had become President of Legacy and I became a member of the Ladies Committee of The Torchbearers for Legacy, a committee formed by the wives of legatee husbands; as well, I had become involved with the Children's Bush Nursing Homes. I was also part of the first Heart Campaign committee which consisted of Mrs. Hasker, Isobel deKretschmer, Maureen Chick and Polly Orr. Their first function was held at Darby Godwin's Park Avenue Motel. Now, we were able to run Balls and fund raising events to benefit these and other organizations.

All of these functions that could now be held on a grand scale, lifted the expectations of what could be done and also gave many local people their first lessons in social graces. It was something many people had never imagined before, a whole new way of life. We had some beautiful Debutante balls at the Leichhardt and amongst many really wonderful occasions, one that stands out in my mind as being beautifully organised and run was one held for and by the Aboriginal Community. Those girls were just lovely that night.

The timing of this addition to the old Hotel coincided with the beginning of Television so we were able to provide for all the conferences leading up to that. Mac's new brewery was launched at the Leichhardt and there was one function, a German Beer festival, where hundreds of beer steins were flown out for the occasion, when we had 600 people in the building. I was very happy to see the end of that night because we were stretched to the limit and if anything had gone wrong we might not have been able to handle it.

One function we were particularly proud of was the Centenary of the Lakes Creek meat works. Mark Hinchcliffe was the manager and he asked us to cater for 420 male guests. Using the convention room and a room beside it we called the garden room, we seated them all at beautifully set tables with starched white linen napery, silver candlesticks on all the tables along with red roses in silver vases. We had excellent cooks in those early days, not chefs. They certainly knew how to cook.

From hors d'oeuvres to cigars, we served them all in an hour and a half. A month later at a big Melbourne hotel at a similar function for lunch, there were the same number of people and it was a shambles, with half the people not getting dessert or coffee. We didn't do too badly for a country town. Mark Hinchcliffe flew back from New Zealand to be at our farewell function when we left the hotel.

The centre went on of course, to become the showplace of the city and then, 10 years later, we added the high-rise building.

The new building had the ground floor, and then on the next floor was dining and a lounge and the next floor up was the ballroom. I designed the ballroom with blue carpet, blue and black, and the ground and first floor had red carpet. The wall paper in the ground and first floors, although different designs were red and gold. They told me they were English designs and would never go out of fashion. When I told the suppliers I wanted a blue regency stripe wallpaper for the ballroom they were horrified and said it would not blend but after they saw it finished, they said they wished they'd thought of it themselves.

I designed all the furnishings in the rooms. There were hand carved surrounds around the mirrors with hand carved dressing tables and bed heads. They're all gone now; I think it's sad but my granddaughter tells me I have to accept it with a hotel that is part of a chain. All the suites had a bidet in them. I first saw them when I went with Les to Rome and then to Paris. We had someone from a newspaper ring us to ask if we really had bidets in all our suites because they had just installed the first one in Canberra and didn't really know what to do with it.

It was a rush to get ready for opening and we had students from the University in at night times cleaning baths and washbasins etc. in the 120 rooms. I said to them one night "You'll be pleased when this is all over" but they said no, they were loving the extra money.

The first weekend we had a Toastmasters Conference, a Building Society Conference and a big wedding and we really had to accelerate to be ready for them. When the organisers came in a little early to put flowers and sweets around the tables, they found me sweeping the carpets because the people we had bought it from had told us that with brand new carpets you shouldn't vacuum straight away. So I think they were a bit amazed to find me sweeping, but someone had to do it.

Once again, Rockhampton had never seen anything like the new facilities and the people almost had to be educated to respond to the possibilities available to them. The Leichhardt became the place to have wedding receptions and I had great pleasure looking after wedding parties and making sure that everything was colour coordinated and just perfect for their day. Balls were special occasions and many balls raised many thousands of dollars for local charities. The Cattlemen's Union held their Formation event at the Hotel the year after we built it. On that occasion, there were 1153 people on the ballroom floor. Old friends Graham and Shirley McCamley were a big part of that day.

When we first opened the hotel, I would always wear long dresses for dinner, always evening dress, and later on they went out of fashion and I began to wear a suit. I was brought up to always dress with the classics and when you wear the classics, your clothes never date and you can wear them any time.

I'm a great believer in suits. A suit you can wear in the morning, for lunch, afternoon tea and dinner and afterwards, providing you pick a suitable one.

When Les became involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and in response to a need in the city, I began to give classes at the Girls and Boys Grammar Schools, Rockhampton High School and at the Methodist Church. These classes included Social Graces, Good Grooming – teaching which outfits were appropriate for certain functions – and Etiquette. They were very well attended and very well received. I would take along my own dinner service, napery, cutlery and glassware to show how to set a table correctly. I preferred the English rather than the American style with the cutlery all in a row. I like my dessert cutlery crossed above the dinner plate.

The Mother Superior from the Range Convent would bring the girls down to the Hotel to see how the tables were set out so they could gain instruction on etiquette.

I seemed to become the local expert on protocol and people from the Council would often ring to check a point in relation to protocol for visiting dignitaries. In fact when Princess Alexandra came to open the Capricorn Institute of Advance Education Library, now Central Queensland University Library, a ball was held in her honour at the Municipal Hall. The Mayor of the time Rex Pilbeam, asked me to join him in greeting her when she arrived at the ball. It was a wonderful night. We all expected her to be wearing something full and frothy and she surprised us by attending in the most beautiful gold slimline frock. She had such a good time at the ball and wanted to stay on, but her advisers said no, because she had a busy day the next day.

Many notable people stayed with us, some of whom went on to become close friends. When I was being introduced to Sir Colin and Lady Hanna by Sir Colin's aide de camp, he said "Mrs. Duthie, I believe you have a very big interest in the Bush Nursing Homes, would you be good enough to drive me



*John, Meredith, Les & I in Canberra at OBE presentation.*

down to see them?" So I did. I was a very good driver in those days.

Sir James and Lady Ramsay stayed and became friends and although Les could have gone to Buckingham Palace to receive his OBE he chose to have Sir James present it in Canberra.

Sir Walter and Lady Campbell also became friends and when we were in Canberra again for Duke of Edinburgh presentations shortly after Les received his OBE, Sir Walter said "It's my turn now, Jimmy's given you so many." We knew them all so well.

Sir Lew and Lady Edwards stayed, he was the Deputy Premier of Queensland and the person who turned the first sod for the opening of the Iwasaki project; and Sir James and Lady Walker. He was the Chairman of the Capricorn Electricity Board.

Sir Henry Able-Smith, the Governor of Queensland, opened the original Bush Nursing Home in the early 1950's. The Duchess of Kent, who had been Catherine Worsley, opened the second two smaller homes. When she visited there was a buffet luncheon for which I supplied crockery and some of the food. Instead of us serving the Duchess, she insisted on mixing with the children and serving them.

We had a very good personal relationship with all the Governors of Queensland and all the Australian Prime Ministers with the exception of Gough Whitlam.

Along with these and many more dignitaries, we regularly welcomed visitors from surrounding properties. The whole development of Central Queensland initially was associated with the west and Rockhampton was it's major city. We made many friends of guests who used the Leichhardt as their base when they came to town and we were associated heavily with the early Kangaroo exercises when the Hotel was almost overrun with servicemen.

There were some amusing times when things did not always go exactly to plan and we survived a failed attempt and subsequent black ban to force compulsory unionism on our staff in 1981. At times we employed anything up to 100 staff, a number of whom showed us great loyalty.

Our greatest pleasure in life has come from our family, son John, his wife Lorraine and their daughter Elizabeth Anne Louise now aged 30 and our daughter Meredith, her husband Peter Mooney and their two daughters Annabelle Emily now aged 22 and Kathleen Marigold aged 15.

When we sold the Hotel in 1997, we were overwhelmed by the kindness and recognition shown by so many people and that occasion just added to the wonderful happy memories I have of a full and rewarding life.



*Taken on the occasion of our Diamond (60<sup>th</sup>) Anniversary*

Edited from an oral tape and conversations with Mr Les and Mrs Emily Duthie.

Footnote :

On February 25th 1997 just before control of the Leichhardt was handed to Fortland Hotels and Resorts, the Morning Bulletin Newspaper lauded the contribution Emily had made to the city thus far:

- Queensland Board of Trustees of the Cancer Fund
- Life member Royal Queensland Bush Children's Scheme
- Highest civilian award from the RSSAILA for 20 years of assistance and judging of the Girl In A Million Quest.
- Past President of the Inner Wheel of Rockhampton, Womens Forum Club and Torchbearers for Legacy.
- President of the Ladies Guild of the John Knox Memorial Church.
- Past president of the Parents and Friends of the Hall State School and Patroness of the school.
- Trained students involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award in social graces and good grooming.
- An excellent public speaker, she is also well-know as a discerning judge for numerous community activities.

## LEGENDS OF THE VALLEY

Elizabeth Muston

*With kind permission from Kath Moller*

*"Where the Queensland sun is streaming and the brigalows are tall there's a pub with photos gleaming all along the bar-room wall...."Horseman's Country, Lex McLennan*

On a winter's day, July 2, 1930, Miss Kathleen (Kitty) Shean opened the doors to her hotel at Thangool for the first day of business. The Criterion (later The Hotel Thangool) had been moved from Banana, home of the Sheans.

The Sheans were a close-knit family long associated with racing; indeed Fred Shean Kitty's brother was Australia's premier Jockey in 1938 when he rode the winners of the Melbourne, Caulfield and Williamstown Cups.

For over 40 years at Thangool, Kitty Shean ruled her establishment with a firm hand and a generous heart. She was the ultimate 'Mine Host'. During her lifetime, Kitty and her pub became known far and wide, well beyond the boundaries of the Callide and Dawson Valleys.



*Kitty's Pub, 'The Criterion, Thangool 1936*

When country racing was at its zenith, before modern transportation and horse trailers, Kitty's pub was the venue for a coterie of racing identities. Owners, trainers and jockeys stabled their horses at the rear of the pub in Thangool.

Far into the night and often until morning, card games were played for high stakes. Business was brisk as patrons stood four and five deep around the bar. Guests seeking accommodation were accorded the warmest of

welcomes, and superb cuisine was the order of the day. Dining room tables were adorned with starched white linen tablecloths, and only the finest silver was used.

In the original hotel building, a coffee room was separated by sliding doors from the dining room, but this area was later altered.

Kitty expected honesty and a fair day's work from her staff of girls who lived in quarters attached to the main building.

Kitty is quoted as saying, "If you want to marry, come to work for me", a fact that would appear to be true, given the high percentage of marriages which resulted from romantic attachments originating in her pub.

During the depression, no-one destitute or hungry was turned away from the hotel without at least a bowl of soup and some bread and her Christmas dinners are still talked about because every year, a free dinner was provided to those without family, or nowhere to go.

When the local C.W.A. ladies sought their own rooms, it was through Kitty's efforts and negotiations that the premises in Ramsay Street were secured. In the 1970's, a venue was provided for the first girl guides company in Thangool.

Her moral support and right hand, was her sister Emmie. After Emmie's marriage to Ernie Ford, they remained in residence at the hotel. Another brother Paddy was also there during Kitty's lifetime.

In her twilight years, despite failing eyesight, she still identified her 'regulars'. She was always the boss in her bar, a fact no one questioned.

A legend in her lifetime, Kitty Shean held the licence of the hotel for 45 years until her death in May 1975. It was the end of an era.

The hotel remained in the family for several years afterwards, with her nieces, Mrs Kath Moller, licensee and Mrs Pat Parker.

Today, all who were fortunate to have known this remarkable lady remember Kitty Shean with respect.

*Footnote: Lex McLennan wrote bush ballads and had poems published in Australian Newspapers. In 1943 he published his book of ballads, "The Spirit Of The West".*

*When reviewing his book, he wrote, "The Pub Of Horsemen's Country (A ballad about the jockey Fred Shean) is here in Thangool, three miles from my place.*



## AN ENDURING PASSION

Norma Davies

I lived in Rockhampton a long time ago and although I was born in



Townsville, I did my secondary school and teachers training when I was living here. I began teaching firstly in Bundaberg and then Rockhampton North and was subsequently transferred to Farnborough, which was a one-teacher school. Farnborough now, is a very different place from when I rode my bicycle to and from Yeppoon each day from the Club Hotel where I boarded.

Then, during the war, schools on the coast closed because of the possibility of invasion. I found another job with New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency who were big wool brokers on Quay Street. That was very interesting.

I had always been interested in speech and drama and I became a radio announcer for 4RO where I did general announcing in the studio. Part of my job was to go with well-known announcer Bill Crane, to do outside broadcasts from social functions, usually balls.

It was my job to describe the gowns people wore and so, going live to air, we would broadcast something like "Miss Jones looks marvellous in her blue taffeta". Then Bill and I would make some comment about the decorations or the venue and then they would play some dance music. When that was finished I'd start all over again with some more frocks. The broadcasts usually lasted a couple of hours.

Then Charles Beck recruited me as an 'on-call' announcer for the ABC. 4RK was a relay station so timing was of the utmost importance. Early mornings required a very early start because weather forecasts were sent by telegram. This meant that the duty announcer had to go to the Post Office and collect the telegram from a Post Office box before going to the studio.

These telegrams were sent with just line after line of information without stops in the bulletin. I can tell you that some very funny and interesting weather forecasts resulted.

In 1945, I became a foundation member of the Rockhampton Little Theatre. The Director who was instrumental in starting the Little Theatre was Graham MacDonald, ably assisted by Tom Bencke. Chairman of the Committee responsible for the administration of funds was Maurice South.

There were two categories of members. Firstly there were those who actually took part in the production of plays by acting or by being backstage crew. Secondly there were members who took out subscriptions and supported the

Theatre financially in this way. They received discounted tickets to all the productions.

Initially, the building where the Little Theatre now shows, was a single story 'Club-house' where casting and rehearsals were held; sometimes one-act plays were staged there. As well, this was where the celebrations were held after a successful run.

Full-length plays were staged in the magnificent School of Arts and we did all sorts of plays – comedy, drama, satire and Children's Pantomimes supported by the Musical Union Orchestra. These plays ran for a four-night season of Wednesday to Saturday, followed by the previously mentioned celebrations. On Sunday, cast and crew would strike the set, often very slowly, depending on the state of ones health from the night before.

4 or 5 three-act plays would be staged during the year, interspersed by one-act plays which were considered training grounds for the actors. There was a big membership of active people and although everyone worked in a voluntary capacity, the organisation was financially viable in so far as financing the next production with the ability to purchase whatever was needed for scenery or sets or costumes and to pay the royalties for the plays.

My role was firstly in acting and subsequently in directing and eventually I became the Director of the Theatre.

When we staged 'The Barrett's of Wimpole Street', I used my own little pug dog as Elizabeth Barrett's dog. I accept that he was perhaps slightly miscast, but he was the only dog I was on first name terms with. He had star treatment as one of the crew would collect the dog from my house, bring him down for his little part and when his appearance was over, take him home. None of the other cast members were looked after like that. I must say he behaved impeccably.

We were the first group in Australia to produce a particular Australian play, set in the hinterlands of the Gold Coast on a Banana Plantation. The name of the play was 'We Have Our Dreams', written by Dulcie Dunlop Ladds and, as director; in this production I used my own small child in a walk-on role.

My child and dog were just some of the personal possessions we used including household articles, our furniture, glassware, cups and saucers and clothes. Clo Slack was our wonderful wardrobe mistress and she outfitted our cast always with appropriate attire, even for a period play or whatever. Her husband Bill was a talented and innovative Stage Manager. It was a family atmosphere with everyone pitching in to help.

I left Rockhampton in 1958 but still retained an interest in the Little Theatre. While living in Brisbane I did some radio and television work with bit parts and advertisements.

I returned to Rockhampton in 1995 for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the "Little Theatre" when I had the honour of being made a Life Member of the organization.

The Theatre still flourishes, albeit in a different format. When the Theatre was first established, there was not a great deal of theatrical entertainment in Rockhampton so it filled a great need in the City. Today, even with wonderful visiting theatrical productions and television to entertain the public, the theatre still has a committed following and fills a great need in the City.

I live back in Rockhampton now and have a number of interests, in particular my connection with the Australian Country Hospitals Heritage Association that currently has a small museum at the Heritage Village. We are attempting to raise funds to bring the old nurses quarters from Mount Morgan Hospital down the mountain, to be set up as a proper country hospital museum. Although the building has been donated to us, the costs to bring our dream to fruition will be high.

Although this and other interests take up much of my time, I can genuinely say that after 58 years of involvement with the Little Theatre, it is my 'enduring passion'.

*Edited from an oral tape.*



## REMEMBERING TEACHING

Nina Higgins

Written by Deirdre Fagan-Pagliano

Bundaberg's Nina Higgins, a local identity and vivid historian has many fond memories of her days at school, whether as a primary school student, a high schooler, a teacher or deputy principal.

Nina was born in 1932 and didn't start her schooling in Bundaberg. Her father was an engineer working in the sugar industry and as such Nina lived in many different towns. She was born in Bundaberg and then spent time in Marian outside Mackay, then Chillagoe during the war years until 1942 when Australia's world famous sugar town, the home of Bundaberg sugar, became the family's home for the rest of her childhood.

Having begun her school life in Proserpine, Nina arrived at Bundaberg State High School as a ten-year-old, ready for grade 6. Nina remembers the building where she fronted up as an intermediate student on a bright summer morning, push bike safely parked alongside hundreds more. It's lucky that memory is there because the building has gone, making way for new building projects completed in 2002 - despite objections from residents and past students.

She remembers the early 6 o'clock start, riding her push bike to and from school as well as a lunch time break, home for a bite to eat, no tuckshop for Nina and her brothers and sisters. Nothing much has changed on Nina's breakfast menu, she still has rolled oats in winter and on the not so cold mornings a big bowl of none other than weetbix, a product Nina believes was and still is, a staple in many households.

But one thing that has definitely changed is the ease of keeping the milk cold to have with the breakfast cereal. It was not quite as simple as going to the electric fridge back in the 1940's. One of Nina's many household chores before she rode her bike to school was to go and collect ice for the household icebox, so off she would trek with her sugar bag under her arm down from her home in Quay Street across the railway line to the butter factory, which still stands to this day.

Bike riding to school was the most popular mode of transport and is one of Nina's fondest memories. Luckily for her there were not many hills in Bundaberg because, like many a child before her, the tried and true methods for learning to ride a bike was just to be put on the bike and pushed, despite much screaming of "How will I get off!" the reply being, "You'll get off and of course we always did" she says.

No one thought twice about riding to school because with little traffic, the road hazards were reduced. She certainly did not walk to school in her bare feet (as verbal history often retells), however she does remember a fellow student who was caned for not wearing shoes, even though this was not the student's fault.

Maryborough Street, nine o'clock, the school's hand bell would ring thanks to a grade seven student, followed by parade then the Queen's national anthem.

For every happy memory perhaps there is a sad one. For Nina, although not necessarily a sad memory it is a memory which provokes fear to this very day - teachers Dynamite Dixon and Bexxie, the most fearful teachers at Bundaberg State High School..

Bexxie the English teacher, so called because he was always taking Bex, and Dynamite Dixon, the maths teacher. At home he was supposed to be a gentle man but with stories such as apparently dangling kids out of the window, you didn't do anything wrong in his class.

"Dynamite would start the day with maths and anyone in Bundaberg who went to the intermediate up to 1960 will remember Dynamite Dixon. Even his name followed him from Brisbane where it was made because children shook in their boots", Nina says.

The school day just as in 2003, finished at 3pm. It was after school and during lunch that proactive sporting activities happened. There was no sometimes turning up, if you didn't turn up - that was it, you were not in the team. Any time in the playground during breaks was also spent training for interschool sport in summer and spring. Nina remembers heading off on the train sometimes as early as 3 o'clock in the morning to compete and she will never forget the 'high tea' which was for her, a crucial part of the netball expedition.

At home after school as a youngster there were always chores to be done, for example - rubbish to put out, wood to pick up, other chores for parents or time to do homework.

"The boys always did the outside stuff and the girls always did the girl jobs. I would never have expected to be asked to gather wood or similarly I would never dream of seeing a boy sweeping the floor. You would never have seen a man pushing a pram 50 years ago, it wasn't the done thing, you just didn't do it. I am just amazed that men today do as much as they do today; it is not because we have taught them that way.

Right across the board the fathers are involved now. Compare that to my day when my father actually stated that he really didn't want to hear anything about the kids until they were 12 or 13. He would say that quite openly and we still had lots of love and respect for him."

An important time for the family was after all the chores were completed and dinner had been eaten. Everyone would gather around the radio to listen to *'When a girl marries'* or *'Search for the golden boomerang'*, and according to Nina "The family were always within coo-ee, you never went off to your room by yourself or anything like that."

It was not too long before Nina was at high school where subjects were not as defined as they are nowadays. Teachers would choose subjects for student with clear groupings such as academic, industrial, commercial or domestic.

"The academic people were the ones that went off to Uni, the commercials were those who would go on to be the secretaries, the industrial boys got their apprenticeships and the domestic girls were often those who went onto home economics teaching etc. I always wanted to be a teacher from the day I started school, I never wanted to be anything else. My father was really disappointed when it came to senior and I told him I had signed up to be a teacher. He wanted me to be a physiotherapist. But I said no, no, I would be a teacher and of course I did."

"It was exciting going away from home to study. My first time in Brisbane was going there to study, I had never been there before. It was scary, I had to catch trams, oh golly. You had to have your money out - sometimes there were nice conductors, sometimes not, and we actually had to walk a long way from the accommodation I stayed in at New Farm to the Valley and up to Spring Hill."

"It was all right in a group of girls, but on my own it was a long way. There was no coming back on weekends, we were not transient at all, we would only come home at holidays. For entertainment it was dancing or maybe sailing at Manly or Wynnum with my cousin. There was often a ball on a Friday night and dancing every Saturday."

Life at teaching college as a tertiary student studying Domestic Science was pretty tough for Nina. "As a student I will always remember thinking how lucky the students at St Lucia were to be just studying maths or english compared to us. We had to buy fabric and make meals, we never seemed to have any money because of these expenses."

After qualifying as a teacher Nina's first placement was at Bundaberg State High School, but only for 6 months before being transferred to Rockhampton. This was an unhappy time, but the smile was back on her dial not long after when she met her husband to be. One year later it was off to Toowoomba then Harvey Bay with her husband.

Fast forward to 1968 and Nina is back in Bundaberg and back at her old school, this time as a teacher.

"Totally different, the number of students; Bundaberg State High had just reached its peak with 1500 students. I walked in and just looked around and thought gosh! Kepnock was just beginning and North had not even been thought of.

So I went to visit a teacher who had taught me and had since retired, a Mr Mike Burke I went to him and he said you just front up there and you tell the principal and the deputy, that he knew well, that Mike Burke said look after her. I remember the principle Clarrie Murray saying 'Oh she want last long, she has got 6 kids, she wont be organised enough."

"The baby was just a year old, they didn't think I would last but I did. I taught Home Economics, became subject master then became senior mistress then deputy."

It was not until 1983 that she put down the chalk and duster.

"When I left there were definite differences, mainly a change in attitudes although not in the good students. There were changed values, obvious lack of respect, increased subjects and at the same time the elimination of certain subjects such as physiology which I would have liked to stay."

Nina might have left the Education Department behind, but she is a definite Life Long Learner and is currently president of the Bundaberg branch of the University of the Third Age.



*Deirdre Fagan-Pagliano & Nina Higgins 2003*





## THE CLERMONT KID

Les Fowler

Carting wool from Longreach to Bowen with a horse team kept my Dad away from home for anything from three to six months at a time. Most of the raising of the kids fell to Mum. The kids were Addie, Bob, Stan, Ellen, Kathleen, Arthur, John, myself, Sylvia and Donny although Donny passed away at 6 months old from Asthma. Mum had a bit of a break after having me in 1925, because there was a 9-year gap to Sylvia and then it was another 2 years before she had Donny.

My parents, Ellen Elizabeth and Francis Michael Fowler with the 10 kids, lived in a house with 3 rooms and a verandah all round, on a property at a place called Bathampton about 5 miles away from Clermont.

My Father had come up from down south somewhere, and he was heading toward Mackay to settle, but wet weather stopped him and he always said he "got caught up in Clermont". His father and mother came out from Scotland and Mum was Irish.

Bathampton was a half way stopover point in the old wagon days when they carted coal between Blair Athol mines and Clermont. They would unload in Clermont and turn right around and come back to Bathampton, camp over night again and head back to Blair Athol. I'm not aware of any staging houses or coaching stations or anything ever being erected there. I think it just acquired a name because people camped there for the night, so it was just a name to mark a point on a map.

Clermont was the place we went if we shopped. We had an old two in hand buggy to go to town and there were about 4 or 5 pubs, 2 or 3 stores, a couple of grocery stores, a toy shop and a bakery that I can remember. An old lady made the saddles in the saddlery. A township had built up around the Blair Athol mine in the early days too. Blair Athol was only underground then.

We grew our own vegies, but there was an old joker around the place with a sort of market garden and anything we didn't have, we'd buy from him very cheaply. That kept us going. There was a bush that grew around home that had these beans about a foot long. We really liked them and we would bust them open and eat the seeds, they were a little bit tart like a tamarin. If Mum found out we'd eaten them, the first thing we'd cop was a dose of castor oil. We copped that every Saturday anyway whether we needed it or not. It came out of a blue bottle and we would line up every Saturday.

You only went to the doctors for serious stuff. If you had a toothache, you would put coarse salt into the cavity, or pull the tooth out yourself. For a sore throat, glycerine and tannin were mixed and painted on your throat and warts were painted with spirits of salts that they used for soldering. Essence of heenzo mixed up with boiling water was our cough medicine. We all survived.



*My last year at Bathampton School 1939 – Les, back row 4<sup>th</sup> from right*

There was a Bathampton State School about 4 miles away and that's where we all walked Monday to Friday. Apart from Donny who didn't survive, I was the youngest boy, so by the time it was my turn for school, the daily routines were well established and we all had our jobs allotted to us.

We had over 200 goats and about 6 or 7 cows on the property and before we left for school, some of us had to milk the goats and some had to milk the cows. As well, we had a 500-gallon water tank for the house and with little rain; it would need filling from the creek that was about 5-600 yards away.

We had an old Chinese yoke we'd put across our shoulders and then hang a couple of full buckets on either end, and waddle up with that to fill the tank. Then we bought ourselves a billygoat cart and we'd yoke up about 6 billygoats with a 44 gallon drum on the back of the cart and make the billygoats do the work for us. I was around 8 or 9 years old when we got that cart and boy did it make life easier.

The goats were kept just for our own use. We lived on goat's milk and cows milk and made butter by shaking the cream in syrup tins. The goat's milk butter was beautiful white butter. We'd kill a goat every Friday for fresh meat. Times were tough and with a family of ten to feed there was never any spare change around. All around us, the people we knew were all on a similar footing as far as their circumstances so we didn't feel we were different to anyone else.

There were up to 30 – 40 pupils at Bathampton School with only one teacher. Always a man, we never saw a woman teacher. The bigger kids would teach

the smaller kids. I went to school there until I was 14. The Priest came out every third Friday to give us some religious instruction. He was a Church of England priest, which was the denomination most of the kids were. I think there were about half a dozen Catholic kids there.

With 10 kids, we were pretty well behaved. Mum was the one who walloped us if we did anything wrong, but she really couldn't hit hard enough to make us really cry. We did wag school occasionally. We'd start off for school but somehow never make it – we'd go swimming in the creek. That didn't ever last long because the teacher would be asking Mum why we weren't there. Something Mum didn't know was that the shoes she insisted we wear to school would be stuffed into a hollow log along the way and we'd run barefoot all day and collect the shoes on the way back home. We had to cross two creeks to get to school and we would often pray for enough rain to bring up the creeks so we couldn't cross them.

The Church didn't play a big part in our lives although there was a church built just across the creek from where we were and we went to church. Mum would give us 3 pennies to put in the plate but we'd hide two of them, so the church didn't do too well out of us financially. We'd hoard the pennies until we went to town that we only did about every three months.

My Father had apparently been a Catholic before he married Mum but when his mother died and the Priest wouldn't bury her because she hadn't been to church for 6 or 8 months, the old fella said "That's it" and he changed his religion and became Church of England.

Mum used to tell us a story about my Father before they were married. She reckons she eventually got him to go to church and the old priest was there talking and going on and waving his arm in the air, he said "I've got Jesus on my right arm" and the old fella who was an old plain-speaking drover, apparently called out "Roll your sleeve up a bit further mate so we can see him." She reckoned that was the most embarrassing time she ever had with him.

My first job after leaving school was with an old market gardener getting 10/- a week. I rode my bike to his place about 8 – 10 miles away, stopped there in a little humpy shed during the week and came home again at weekends. I stayed there about 8 months or so and then got a droving job for a couple of weeks.

I'd find myself nodding off in the saddle it was so tiring. You had to watch the cattle of a night time on 2 or 3-hour shifts. You were supplied with plant – the horses, saddles and everything, I just had to turn up. We went from Highland Plains outside Clermont to Capella and there were 4 drovers and a cook, mostly older people. I was used to riding so I didn't get saddle sore, just tired. The Boss bloke looked after me very well though; I remember one night I was that flaming tired when I got to camp, I unsaddled my horse alright but I forgot to take the bridle off him and no one gave me a hard time about it.

After that I got a job cowboying on New Twin Hills, a station property about 100 mile from Clermont up the Charters Towers road and I worked there for around 12 months, then Olbro Station for 2 ½ years, then to Lestry Downs for almost 3 years. Working on the properties, you lived in a bunkhouse. Some of them were much more than a shed with beds. They were nice little places. The accommodation was generally good. You had your own swag of course but they had a cook there to cook your meals and we were pretty well looked after. Most of the work I did was mustering with a bit of horse breaking. It was a hard life for a boy in his teens but I coped. You'd move on for a change or perhaps because more money was on offer. Wages were around 1 pound a week with your keep thrown in.

I was about 19 at that point and I joined the Forestry in Clermont cutting timber and thinning it out; it paid much better than being on the properties. I stayed there about 4 years and went on to a sawmill the other side of Springsure, then sleeper cutting with a mate from Clermont, then I spent another 3 or 4 years with a Forestry survey mob. That was a good job. We travelled around estimating the amount of timber in an area. Sometimes you'd walk up to 20 mile a day writing down the type of timber on either side of you and estimating how much was there. Then I went down around Rolleston for about 4 – 5 years cutting timber for a mill.

Around 1957 or '58, I joined the Bellyando Shire and stayed working with them for the next 32 ½ years. I worked as a labourer for about 12 months and then I went on to a kerosene dozer and after that I got a little grader we christened "The Flying Flea". It was a tiny little 4-cylinder job and if you hit a heap of dirt that was too big, it would just sit there and spin around. After about 18 months of that, I got onto a Cat Grader. From there on, I just kept going from Grader to Grader, ending up with an air-conditioned one about 4 years before I retired. I worked all around Clermont area and was able to live back at home. I was loaned from the Shire to the Main Roads Department for a time.

Mum and Dad had moved into Clermont as all the boys had moved away from home and most of the girls had too. They weren't getting any younger, but their move was prompted by an accident when, walking down the hill to feed the chooks with a glass bowl full of scraps in her hand, Mum fell over, and the bowl broke and cut an artery near her thumb. By the time they got her the 5 miles to Hospital she was very close to death from loss of blood. They eventually got her going, but it was a close shave.

In all my travels, I've met some interesting people, I remember the old lady that used to have the old Terminus Hotel in Clermont – she was quite a lady. She'd go to church every Sunday, wear her rosary beads all the time and when she stepped behind the bar, she would talk to you using language an old bushy would be proud of. She had a beautiful daughter who was quite a lady and she wouldn't let us hicks anywhere near her. She went on to Brisbane and I struck her years after and she said, "I wish I'd let her get to know the Clermont boys, because the fellow she's with now is a proper mongrel." She was a real old bushie!

And when we're talking bushies – We used to go out to the old Springs Hotel with just a pair of shorts and a Jackie Howe Singlet on. A mate and I called in there one day and this woman walks out with just a bra and pair of knickers on and we went to take off, hiding our faces; but she yelled out "Come back, come back – if it's alright for you blokes to come in looking like that, I should be allowed to come out like this!"

This next one was before my time but it was a favourite tale often retold around Clermont. There were some old people who sold butter around town. To make it, they'd set the milk in big dishes and put the dish up on a shelf. Next morning they'd get up, pull out about 5 or 6 mice, wring them out and then mix the butter to take to town to sell!

I moved into Rockhampton in 1992 and I enjoy my life in town, but my strong connection with the Clermont area for so long, will make sure that I'll always be a bit of a boy from the bush.

*Edited from an oral tape.*





## OLD GOLD

Dr Mervyn Gold

I was born in the bush in South Australia and graduated in medicine from the University of Adelaide in 1939 at the age of 23. Along with most of my generation the war took over and, after serving as a resident medical officer in surgical and medical terms at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, I enlisted in the A.I.F. in a field ambulance unit of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division.

We sailed for the Middle East in 1940 serving in Palestine and then Tobruk, and El Alamein. After returning from North Africa I served in New Guinea, Borneo, and subsequently as an attachment to General Macarthur's staff in the Philippines.



*In retirement 2003*

During part of the siege of Tobruk I was attached to the Free Polish Brigade who had literally walked or hitchhiked all the way from Poland to Egypt. They were tremendous fellows and I had great regard for them. Polish was an impossible language but we both spoke enough French for me to get by as a liaison officer. Some of them spoke a little English, in fact one of the Sergeants spoke excellent English but he refused to talk to any Australians because he feared he might spoil his accent!

They had staged through Cairo and I do not think that the British quite knew what to do with them, so they sent the poor beggars to Tobruk. They all wanted me to teach them English but one colleague in particular said he had bought this book in a bookstall in Cairo and it was called "Polish Up Your English" and he was furious because there was "not a word of Polish in it"!

After the desert campaign I was posted to a staff college in Sarafand in Palestine (now called Israel) and this led to the administrative postings in the Pacific theatre, landing in the assault on Leyte, an island in the more southerly part of the Philippines, moving on to Manilla as the campaign progressed. This is a beautiful city but was shockingly smashed by the Japanese as they retreated, inflicting atrocities on the civil population who are largely lovable people, a pleasure to deal with.

With the war over and the repatriation of prisoners of war in this theatre (those that remained alive) completed, a permanent army career was

abandoned for civilian life. A mate in Tobruk had been Abe Fryberg who, through his efforts in preventive medicine and hygiene, had contributed more than any other single person to the success of the siege. He returned as Director General of Health for Queensland and offered me the job of Medical Superintendent to the Rockhampton Hospital Board that controlled the Rockhampton Base Hospital, the Yeppoon Hospital, and the Westwood Tuberculosis Sanatorium.

The first few months were in residence at Westwood to reorganise the Sanatorium. It was about that time that tuberculosis became a treatable disease and not a death sentence. Years later the "San" became an aged care facility and subsequently disappeared altogether. In those days infectious diseases institutions were traditionally sited as far away from any town as practicable, usually on the top of a hill, presumably to discourage the germs from spreading.

In 1946 we moved into the Rockhampton Hospital residence and John Ross who had been the Medical Superintendent for 13 years went into private practice as a surgeon, skilled in orthopaedics particularly. They say that once you have been in Queensland for three months you never leave. I came for 3 years and am still here after 58.

When my wife and I arrived with daughters Lyn aged 4 and Jill aged 2, we were taken to the Leichhardt Hotel that was a small wooden pub where the present high rise stands. It had wooden swinging doors and any tick of the clock one expected a cowboy to burst through firing his six guns.

The Americans had controlled the pests with regular aerial spraying of the whole city with DDT from DC3 aircraft, but when they left the mozzies returned, consequently we slept under mosquito nets. Jill had to doss in with her mother who woke me in the small hours shouting, "Jill's gone!" There was panic and much searching until we discovered she had rolled over the side of the bed and was hanging like a cocoon in the mosquito net, about 6 inches off the floor under the bed, fast asleep. My wife swore she was returning to Adelaide in the morning. It was a relief for all of us to settle in to the comfortable Hospital residence.

Four years later I left the Hospital to enter General Practice, initially in East Street opposite the old Post Office, and subsequently to custom-built rooms in Tobruk House where the general practice is still going. In 1966 it was decided to specialise in dermatology because the face of general practice was changing, there was a serious lack of dermatology with no consultant specialist for skin diseases north of Brisbane, and I was aware of personal lack of skill in that important specialty.

At the age of 50 I had been in practice for 27 years and the next 3 years were spent in post-graduate study, including a posting at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. I was probably the only registrar in the world who was a grandfather. This necessitated virtually doing the whole medical course over again because it had changed so much. The younger blokes were incredibly helpful in this difficult task



So after three years I came back to Rockhampton as a consultant specialist to an area the size of Victoria. The present population in this territory is around 600,000. Continuous efforts to get another dermatologist into the area have been unavailing over 30 years although I am still trying. It was professionally lonely being the only specialist in my field with no other consultant handy to discuss a difficult case.

The standard of medical practice in Rockhampton even in those days was high despite the lack of specialists. Much general surgery and all emergency work were handled by G.P's. Various general practitioners concentrated on different specialties such as obstetrics, surgery, ear, nose and throat, and only the more complicated cases had to be sent to Brisbane. The road was atrocious, the train trip fairly uncomfortable, and the aeroplane rather expensive. There was no Flying Doctor Service.

In 1948 Dr. Jack Gillogly came as full time radiologist and worked like a slave on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for urgent X Rays for many years until his practice expanded with additional specialist radiologists.

When I took over at the Rockhampton Hospital I had only 2 resident medical officers; today the full time resident medical staff numbers 56 plus 26 staff specialists, this does not include about 30 visiting medical officers who are part time only. In private practice, in addition to the resident specialists, there are visiting specialists who come from Brisbane on a monthly or fortnightly basis. These include a cardiologist, a neurologist, a plastic surgeon, and others. It has always been difficult to get enough permanent specialists in the country. It is hard to persuade them, or their wives, to leave the capital cities because they think this is the bush. The facilities are really good, and this needs to be emphasised nation wide.

Rockhampton is a great place to live and needs better publicity. The exaggerated warnings about cyclones do not help, damaging the tourist trade by millions of dollars. In all my time here I have experienced only one big cyclone in 1949. When it started I stupidly went out because my wife was playing cards and I did not want her to attempt to come home in it. Suddenly the car pulled up as if a giant hand had grabbed it. There was a mesh of wire all over the windscreen and it was caught like a fly in a spider web. Luckily they were telephone wires and not electricity, so a barbeque was avoided.

Back at the hospital, the night was spent in the wards in case things got worse. Sheets of iron were blowing from the roof of the hospital, whirling through the air like knife blades and crashing into the houses. It was pretty grim. Nobody was injured at the hospital but a poliomyelitis patient was on the mechanical respirator – the "iron lung" used for polio in those days. The power was out for probably 24 hours and we had to pump this thing by hand in relays, but the girl survived. Damage was fairly severe and I will never forget the screaming of the wind. Not like wind at all, it was more like a wild animal.

When the centre of the storm passed over Emu Park, it was said you could hold a lighted match in the street without it flickering, until the aerial

whirlpool moved on and the wind went back the other way so they copped the same thing all over again.

There was a lot of local community activity. In one year I became President of Legacy, President of the local AMA and Senior Military Officer for CQ. It was all too much and I had to shed the lot.

I relaxed fishing; I used to go out on to the reef every year. I sold my boat some years ago when I could no longer sail it single-handedly. I was once a duck shooter but I wouldn't do it now. They stopped me playing squash when I was 77; in the early days there were visiting concert parties, and the ABC Orchestra would come up once a year along with visiting artists who would perform at the old School of Arts. I always found there was plenty to do here.

When I turned 86, I decided enough was enough and gave up my practice, sadly without someone to take it over. I used to feel old when people said, "You delivered me." Now people are coming up to me and saying, "You delivered my mother!"

I don't miss being on call 24 hours a day and I do enjoy being able to indulge myself with various activities I enjoy such as the theatre and reading a good book.

My current determination is mastery of my computer.

*Taken from an oral tape.*



## PAINTING THE TOWN

Arthur (Skip) Hannon

I've just retired at age 63 after working as a painter with Q. Build for just under 50 years. I was born here in Rockhampton where my folks lived all their lives. My Father worked at the Post Office in East Street. I was one of 6 kids; we were Johnny, myself, Beatrice, Eileen, Myrtle and Mary. We were 'swampies' because we lived in Depot Hill. It had a good number of houses in it when I was a small kid, but not as many as there are now.

I went to Depot Hill School and Central Boys School. I lived at home until I was married at age 27 in 1967. I was very close to a man by the name of Arthur Tangey who lived across the road from us in Depot Hill. He was my father figure and he looked after me and gave me advice and it was he who found me a job.

I was a pretty average kid, getting up to the average pranks that kids got up to like pinching the girls bikes and hiding them. Once, on a dare, I threw ink well at a kid and he ducked and it got the Priest. The Priest wanted to know who'd done it. No one said anything, so he said everyone had to stay in til 6 o'clock. Speedway was on that night and I wanted to go, so at around 5 o'clock I owned up telling him I hadn't meant to hit him and could we please go now because Speedway was on. "You're still staying till 6 o'clock and I don't care about Speedway" was the reply.

Sometimes even as young as 8 or 9 we'd ride our bikes down to the beach. There was a wooden skating rink built over the sand at Yeppoon and we'd often sleep underneath it and stay for the weekend. My family didn't miss me. We used to hop the trains without paying and I got caught doing that once. I was caught by a Police Sargent we'd christened 'Waxy Mo' in honour of his large, curly waxed moustache.

There were a number of us, maybe 10 or 15, and we'd jumped the trains before, but this time someone must have told him we were in this spot and he arranged for the train to go really slow. We looked around and didn't see anyone watching; so on we jumped and hid in the toilet for a while just to be safe. Waxy Mo started knocking on the toilet door and eventually we had to come out. We showed him our tickets that we had craftily picked up off the platform some time earlier but apparently they changed colours each day, or had special daily stamps or something and these were obviously not the right ones. We were made to pay and were literally given a kick up the rear end for our troubles.

After spending the day at the beach, we walked home from Yeppoon with a detour at the Half Way House, the big blue café that was at the Cawarral/Kepple Sands turn off. We stopped there to listen to Elvis Presley and rock and roll records on the jukebox until about 1 o'clock in the morning when we were chucked out. We arrived home at around 6.30 in the morning. It all sounds pretty bad, but it was innocent stuff really.

Q Build was called the Public Works Department when I started work with them as an Indentured Apprentice in 1954 at the age of 14. It was a five-year apprenticeship. Because I was so young, my Father had to sign for me as my legal guardian.

The Public Works offices were in East Street then. It was a small office with only 5 employees; as well, they had approximately 67 painters and well over 100 carpenters and plumbers. It was much bigger then, than now. All the towns around Central Queensland were covered from here and this workforce was responsible for building or painting or repairing all government properties in these towns.

The first year of my apprenticeship was in town and at the end of that year my boss Tommy Wehmier said I had to go bush. I said I didn't want to and he said, "Righto, you finish up on Friday". I went home and talked to Arthur Tangey about it and he advised me to go.

So I went bush and pretty much stayed there for most of the next forty something years. I worked round Yaraka, Birdsville, Bedourie, and Longreach and spent a lot of time around Biloela and every town in the Dawson Valley. You name a town in this region and I've probably been inside its police station, its school and any other public building it might have. The furthest away from Rockhampton that I went was Birdsville where we went when I was around 22 years old. I did quite a bit in and around Rockhampton and the coast as well. My first job was the government building in Bolsover Street, my last was at Etna Creek Prison, and so I've been inside some interesting places. That first 'bush' job was at Theodore then we moved on to Cracow.

When you went 'bush' you'd mostly stay away Monday to Friday and make your way back home at the weekends. We had to find our own way out to whatever town we were working at so, because there were very few cars in those days, we'd often hitchhike out carrying our ports. Sometimes we would catch a train but often if there was a train service, the train only went out once a week. Q Build would arrange all our equipment out there in advance either by train or carrier but we'd have to get ourselves out there. There were usually about 5 painters together and sometimes, if you were out far west, you'd just stay because it was too hard to get back in. Sometimes we'd stay in Hotels but often we'd camp under the schools. We had to arrange somewhere to stay, Q Build didn't do that either.

Sometimes we'd get out of town with Burkie, the Bulletin bloke. He'd go out nearly every day delivering papers all round. He still lives out at Port Curtis. He'd leave about 3 o'clock in the morning and we'd pay him petrol money and hitch a ride. He went out round Cracow way and everywhere. I suppose I didn't really learn a lesson from Waxy Mo because often we'd jump a train. There were a number of us and there was a place just out around Port Curtis where the trains slowed to go through signals and the train would go out Sunday nights and we'd spread out and as it was going past, chuck our ports on and then jump on. Getting off at the other end was easy, the carriages had little steps that went right down and you'd climb down and wait for the train

to go slow before the station and just jump. A lot of the workers did it this way. It was more a way of getting to where you had to go than saving money.

Working round Emerald, you'd finish work around 2pm on a Friday and if you couldn't hitch a ride back home, the Midlander went through around midnight and we'd just jump on.

When you got to a new town, you had to go and see the schoolteacher to see if you could camp underneath the school for the period you were going to be in town. Often they said "No, but you can camp right down the back", so we had these old tents we could put up. We had to find our own food too; often you had to walk a couple of miles to a shop.

We were paid 7 pounds a week wages and then were given a Country allowance of an additional 4 pounds in those early days. It was considered pretty good money and if you were careful, you could save money. Even though we were all fairly young fellows together we didn't kick up our heels. I was a non-drinker in those days and we pretty much all just went out and did the work we had to do. The tradesmen I worked with were a good bunch of blokes and they taught me well and I appreciate that now because I don't think young fellows coming through now get the care I was given.

In the early days, Q Build didn't supply you with uniforms or clothes or anything but at the end of your first year of apprenticeship you might be given a putty knife and at the end of the second perhaps a hammer and so on, so it was a bit of help in gathering your equipment.

You'd move into a town, spend a couple of months cleaning up all the public buildings like schools, police stations, school house, baby clinics, hospitals etc, and then you would move on to the next town, so you certainly got to know a few of the locals in that time. In my 50 years, I've been back to many towns again.

I met some pretty interesting people along the way. The policemen were often some of the best. It wasn't unusual for them to throw a party for the whole lot of us when we'd finished all our jobs in town and I have had many offers of beds to sleep in if ever I'm passing through. I particularly remember a fellow by the name of Brian Smart in Jundah. I spent 3 months on transfer to Bundaberg before I got married, following a cyclone that went through there. There was a lot of damage done. I didn't come home during that time. Some of the other fellows went to Mount Isa.

When we went to Birdsville we stayed 4 months. We stayed at the Birdsville Pub that was made out of mud bricks. One of the jobs there was to pull down and rebuild a new Police Station. All the equipment and supplies had been trucked in advance from Longreach. There were about 20 of us, carpenters, plumbers, electricians and painters and we all helped each other so we were jack-of-all-trades. After the police station we had to go down to the school and build a new school. Then the hospital was the next job. While we were there, the Birdsville races were on with planes coming in from everywhere. We thought it was pretty good timing.

On the way to Birdsville we went via Yataka, which is out from Blackall, and we had to make an overnight stop and the bloke at the pub wasn't very friendly and told us to camp outside. We camped at the school instead and in the morning we packed up and hitched to Bedourie where we were stuck for 2 days waiting for transport of some kind.

Q Build gave us vouchers that we could use on trains or on busses and we were told the school bus between Bedourie and Birdsville would be along soon so we started walking intending to pick up the bus as it came past. We walked and walked and finally this bloke with a full cattle truck came by and said he'd take us the distance. A couple of miles further on we came across these two girls hitch hiking to Birdsville so, as we were gentlemen, we had to let them in the cabin where we'd been sitting and Ray, Clarry and I went and sat on top of the truck. When we got to Birdsville, the publican there told us we looked like red Indians because we were covered in red dust. It turned out that the school bus we were waiting for had broken down.

One week end while we were there, the policeman suggested we go and have a look at a local aboriginal rock art site at Square Top Hill about 4 mile away. So we took a bit of lunch and some water and about 20 of us set off to walk to this site. The policeman told us that there was a two-way phone at the rock and gave us the code to use it to check in with him when we got there. When we tried, the code didn't get through. We weren't too worried though, so around mid day we turned around to come back only to discover the track had disappeared. It's just flat sandy country out there with very few trees and the wind had come up and blown all signs of the track away.

We did a lot of walking that day and got totally bushed, actually crossing the border into South Australia some 6 km. away before they sent up a helicopter and found us around 7pm that night.

When we finished there we got back by truck from Birdsville to Longreach and then caught the Midlander to get home. Then I went off to Biloela. I worked out of Biloela then for 7 years straight. This was still all before I got married so I lived in Biloela mostly and went out from there. If I was working at Banana, I'd come back in to Biloela but if I was at Theodore, I'd stop in the pub at Theodore. It depended on the distance. We stopped in little Government workers huts down in the state farm at Biloela. They were good enough. We did our own cooking most of the time. I got to know a lot of people round that area and used to go to dances at Biloela on the weekends.

If I was working in Rockhampton I lived at the family home and I'd go dancing 7 nights a week. There were dances every night somewhere around town in those days. I used to go Monday night to St Patrick's, Tuesday night to St. Barnabus, Wednesday night to a Wandal church dance, Thursday the Railway Rec. Hall; Friday the Cathedral and Saturday night be St. Pats again and Sunday there was one down near the squash courts. There was never alcohol at any of the dances and you were expected to be well dressed. You

didn't have to wear a collar and tie or suit although I usually wore a long sleeve shirt and tie.

On Saturday mornings we'd go down to East Street and stop opposite the Post Office and perve on the sheilas and watch the motorbike gang. They were called the McKenzie boys and were a real gang. Sometimes on a Sunday Night we'd go back to the Post Office area and listen to the Salvation Army Band. East Street was the place to be seen then.

I met Jocelyn at the Cathedral dance when I was around 24 and she was 17. Her parents would drop her off with her friend Cathy and then come and pick her up again. She wasn't allowed to go home with a boy. I would follow her home and although we weren't allowed to talk to each other when she got there, she got the message I planned to be persistent.

She made her debut at the Catholic Deb Ball, the first one to be held in the new Municipal Theatre. She looked very glamorous and I was pleased to be her partner for the night. I was working out at Biloela when I met her and, once we were officially courting, I'd not only come home at weekends, I thought nothing of coming home each Wednesday to take her to a dance and then driving back to Biloela in time to start work Thursday morning. We went out for a couple of years before we got married. We borrowed a caravan from a policeman friend and went to Harvey Bay for our honeymoon where it rained and rained. It put Jocelyn off caravans for life.

Once we were courting, on my weekends home we would go to a dance on the Friday night and to the pictures on Saturday night. Sunday was usually the beach as a foursome with Cathy and her partner and Sunday night the drive in. There were a couple of ladies we knew from the dances, working in the canteen at the drive in and they made special chicken meals for us.



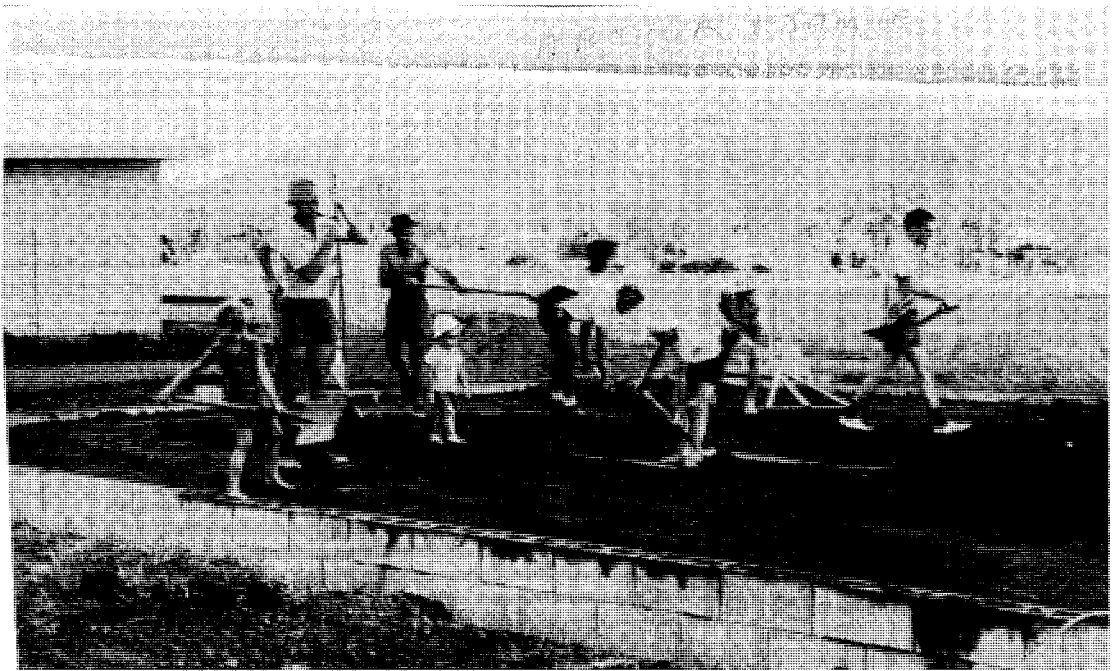
*My Mark 1 Zephyr after going under the truck.*

Before I met Jocelyn I was into speedway for a couple of years. I was about 18 or 19 when I bought my first car - a Mark One Zephyr. I'd drive it down to Lakeside speedway just outside Brisbane every weekend. Go down Friday, back Sunday and race in between. On one of those trips, with a friend on



board, I had come right back into town early in the morning and was taking him home on Lakes Creek road before coming back to Depot Hill when I fell asleep. I hit a semi coming out of a side street. The semi rolled and my car went straight underneath. The policeman said we were probably lucky we didn't have our seat belts on because we were thrown straight out through the front windscreen. If we'd been strapped in, we probably would have been dead. I woke up in hospital with 49 stitches in my face.

I don't know why I became interested in hockey, but I started playing after I started work and played for many years as Goalie. My three children Jamie, Danny and Louise all played for the Hornets club at Kalka Shades too. Hornets Hockey Club was the oldest club in Rockhampton actually starting the year before the RHA began in Rockhampton. Jocelyn and I spent a lot of time fundraising and in 1972 when Jamie was 2 years old; the foundations for the new clubrooms were laid. Jocelyn used to make toffee apples and anything else she could think of to raise money for the rep teams and we were always billeting ½ a dozen or more kids for carnivals.



*Laying the foundation's for Hornets Hockey Club.*

*Photo includes: Gordon Tomkins, Cec, C ol, and Bradley Russell, Arthur (obsured) & Jamie, smallest child with hat.*

The Hornets raffles held each Friday in the old Commonwealth Hotel and each Sunday in the old Victoria Tavern when Mrs. Vivash had it were the biggest in Rockhampton. There weren't rosters or anything - if you were on holiday at the beach, you just came back to town to run the raffles. They made both of us life members of the club.

I was out of town for the birth of each of my children and Jocelyn was pretty tough coping with 3 small babies all by herself. We used to go down to Emu Park every Xmas and Easter and I always seemed to be able to swing some

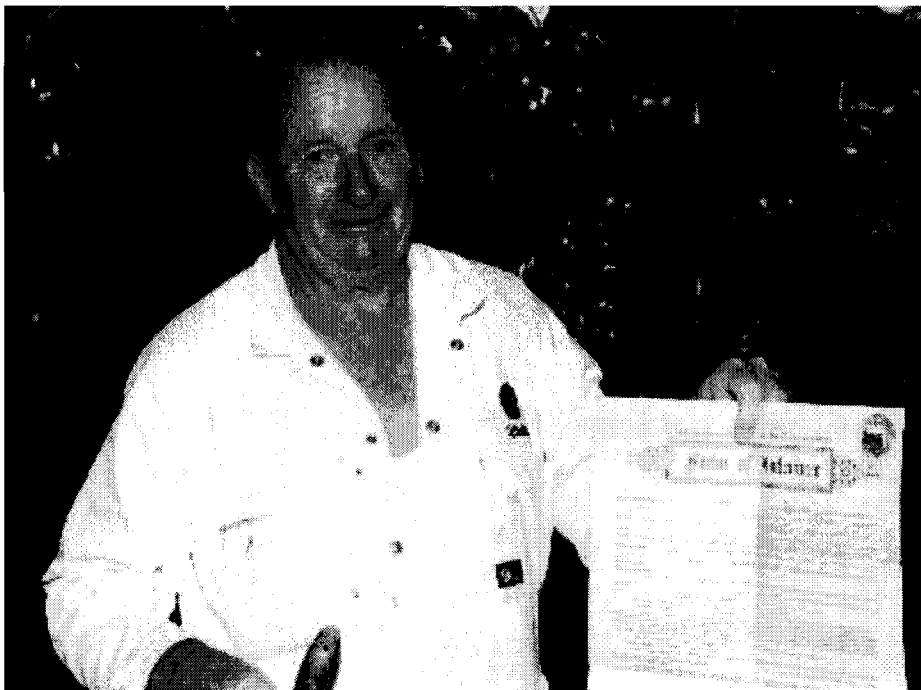
work down there painting the Emu Park or Yeppoon school or something so I could spend more time with the family.

One time I remember, Jocelyn really wanted to take the children down to Hervey Bay for a weeks holiday, so I decided I'd just chuck a week's sickie rather than bother with all the paperwork in applying for holidays. My boss would give me a list of jobs in various places on a bit of paper and just send me out, so he only ever had a very vague idea of exactly where I was at any time. I'd worded up the schoolteacher in the town I was supposed to be working about my planned 'sickie' and off I went. Of all times, the boss decided to send me out an offsider. This poor bloke went first to Wowan then to Ridgeland and then gave up because he couldn't find me. When I came back, I just said we must have missed each other, the schoolteacher backed me up, and I was never 'sprung'. The offsider – Cliff Neil now knows the story and is still my mate.

I was married when my Father in Law bought me my first beer in the Three Crowns Hotel. I've made up a bit of ground since then. The Three Crowns used to stand where the Qld. Health Building now is. It was a lovely old pub in Bolsover Street with big baskets of ferns hanging around the outside of it. I sometimes see the old bloke that used to own the Three Crowns on Friday nights over at Southside United Sports Club where I'm a member. I'm also a member at the Frenchville Sports Club and occasionally I visit the Berserker Tavern. They shouted me a few beers there when I retired.

I don't remember who gave me the nickname of Skip, but it came from the very early days at Q Build and it's just stuck. I've enjoyed the travels my work provided and I've certainly seen a lot of Queensland because of it.

*Edited from an oral tape.*

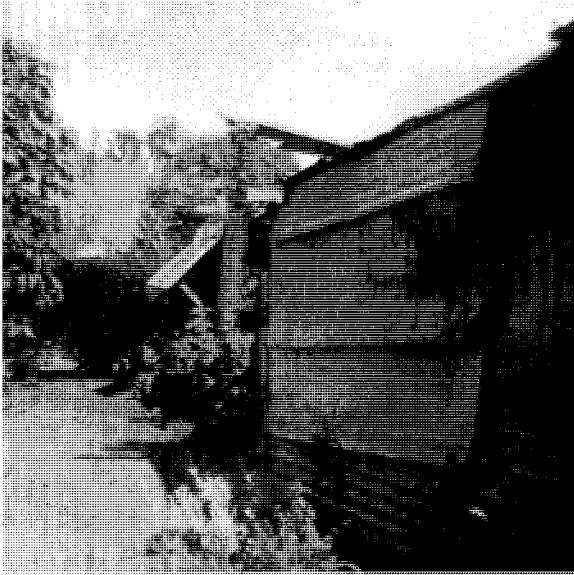


*'Skip' on retirement day showing his original indenture papers.*

## MEMORIES

Kim Warkill

I am an Australian South Sea Islander, descended from the slave trade known as Blackbirding.



*'The Flats'*

My mother lived in Rockhampton at Kanaka Town; my father was from the Sandhills (Joskeleigh). When my parents were first married, they lived in Kanaka Town which my generation called the "Flats" Mum and Dad often shared their stories about how they lived and their life growing up, but I didn't relate to their stories as a child because my days of growing up on the Flats were so different. As an adult and a parent myself, I now realise that each generation attempts to raise their family to a lifestyle better than they had.

When I think of my childhood, the following memories immediately come to mind:

**Food:** Cooking was a specialty on both sides of my parents' families as well as my Mum and meals were always a delicacy. My Mum's specialty was Chocolate Cake and Snow Balls, which were small cakes, wrapped in cream and coconut.

My Aunties from both my Mother and Father's sides of family would welcome anyone who walked through their door with food and I remember Sunday dinner at the Flat was either a roast dinner or boiled corn meat with vegetables and desserts. Dessert was plum pudding, custard and tarts. Apricot tart was my favourite.

My Aunty from Dad's family at Joskeleigh would have crabs, periwinkles, plum pudding, and custard and lemon sago.

My pet hate was eating dripping on my toast, which we had to do every time we ran out of margarine.

**Games:** Bedlam was one of my favourite games. It was a two-team game. A circle was drawn in the dirt as home base. The 'free' team would go out of the circle while the second team counted to 500 by fives then they would try to capture all the free team one by one and bring them back to stand in the circle at home base.

Loose free team members had to try and free those caught, by running through the circle singing out "Bedlam". The second team would set traps, like hiding and waiting, and try and catch the liberators as well. When all the team was caught, the other team would have its turn.

We loved it when there was long grass growing nearby because even though we were really frightened of snakes, it made a great place to hide. It was a very energetic game and good because it didn't matter how many kids wanted to play.

**Clothes:** I absolutely hated wearing bloomers for undies but apart from that, my Mum made most of our clothes and she made sure we were dressed in the latest fashion.

I remember especially, a dress she made me for the Rockhampton Show. It was burnt orange in colour and had two straps that crisscrossed at the back, held by two big fabric covered orange buttons. White daisies went around the bodice from front to back and around the hemline. To go with it I had a white coat with wide sleeves, fabric covered buttons and pockets on both sides. To complete the outfit I wore white fishnet stocking and white fitted shoes.

I just knew I looked like the models you saw in books when Mum made my clothes.

Oh, how each generation changes through making a lifestyle for their family. I have happy and sad, but wonderful memories of my growing years.



## A CENTURY OF MEMORIES

from Helen (Nell) Thompson

My parents may never have met but for an accident. My father George Frazer came to Australia from Scotland as a young man with his parents and settled in Rockhampton. My mother Mary was an immigrant, also from Scotland and she came out by herself at the age of 19. She was meant to disembark at Bundaberg but there was some sort of mix up and she came on to Rockhampton. She was met from the Ship by the Church of England Bishop of the day which was not uncommon and she went to work for him and even though she had been raised a Roman Catholic, she was taken by him to Presbyterian church services and church activities. It was through the church that my parents met.

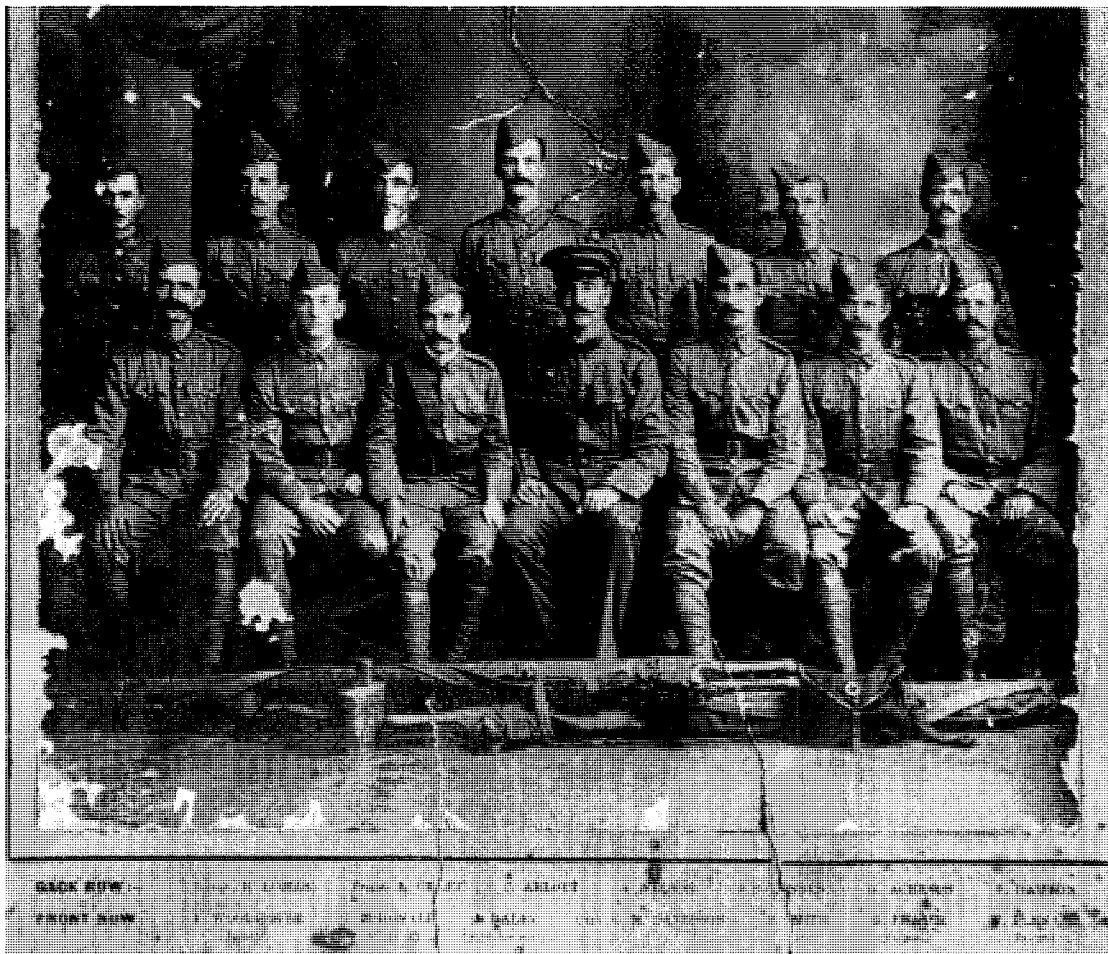
They married and had 9 children - Lawrence, Maggie, myself, Tina, William, Beatrice, Kate, Isobel and George. I was born in 1900 and am now 103 and apart from my youngest sister Belle, I've outlived them all. I was still happily living in the family home in Stack Street until 2001 when I broke first one hip and then the other and moved to the Norman Road Nursing Home. I was sad to see the sale of the old family home just a couple of months ago (May 2003) after so many years of it belonging to our family, but look forward to a new family being just as happy there as our family was.

Lawrence was killed in the First World War. He made it all the way through the fighting and was shot in the last month before it finished. I can still remember my Mother, tears streaming down her face, planting the two big fig trees that still stand outside our home in Stack Street, in his memory.

Margaret or Maggie as we called her started off as a schoolteacher but switched to nursing and ended up the Matron at the Base Hospital here in Rockhampton. Beatrice was the mother of George Baxter who with his wife Marion, visit me every week. Kate's daughter Margaret Gill and her husband Barry have been wonderful to me and Bill's (William) sons Graham and Lawrence Fraser are also regular visitors. Not having had my own children it is nice to have that contact.

I keep telling people that life's OK 'till you get to 100 but after that the rot sets in and you could probably give it away then; although when I go to my weekly exercise classes here, everyone looks much older than I feel so I suppose I must be doing alright.

I have nothing but happy memories of growing up around the Lakes Creek area. My father was a carpenter at the Meatworks; as well, he must have been the first aid/ambulance man too, because I remember they had a wheeled gurney and if ever anyone were badly hurt, they'd put them on this gurney and push them from the meatworks all the way to the hospital. When the trains began, they'd get them by train to Archer Park and then push them from there. Father gained his first aid training when he obtained a certificate of some sort during the first war. He became a Corporal in some sort of local Australian Army Corp. Ambulance. I must have been formed to take care of any local disasters. Father taught first aid later on as a result of his training.



*Cpl. George Fraser, Australian Army Medical Corp, seated 2<sup>nd</sup> from the right*

I used to take my Dads lunch down to him each day and walk back again and as a lot of the workers lived in humpies or huts around the works, they had a very large dining room for them to eat in. I had such fun in there, it was so big. My Mother would sometimes walk down to Dad and cut through the big holding paddocks near Rockonia Road when they were full of bulls and I thought she was so brave to do that.

Our home in Stack Street was very big and although it was unusual, we each had our own bedroom. As kids we all had our jobs to do like making the bed, tidying the room, cutting the kindling etc. and we would be paid 6pence a week. 3pence of this had to be banked and the other 3pence was ours to spend. Mostly we saved it up to spend at the Annual Show which was a big occasion each year with new clothes made by Mum on her treadle sewing machine. New clothes were the order of the day for Sunday School Anniversaries too. Mum was very good at sewing.

I attended Lakes Creek School for 9 years. I started when I was 4 and as you had to be a certain age to sit the Scholarship exam, I was first too young and then too old so I never got the opportunity to attend High School. My Mother then took me away from Lakes Creek School and enrolled me in the Rockhampton Girls School which was situated down beside the Fitzroy Bridge. Of course I remember the first Fitzroy Bridge then I remember the next one being built. Now it's the old bridge and there is another one up further.

At Lakes Creek School, we wrote on slates and sat at desks that were big long benches holding around 9 children.

We had no running water to the house, instead water was collected in big tanks out the back and if the tanks ran dry, we would bucket water from the Lakes Creek. Lighting was with carbide and other lamps and I clearly remember how beautiful it was when electricity came. My father had made sure that we had lights installed everywhere throughout the house and it just looked beautiful.

We rode horses and then all had bikes but we thought nothing of walking long distances. My brother and I had a good little enterprise going at one stage. We'd walk down to the Koongal railway siding which was somewhere near the end of Stack Street, in time for the 6am train to come through on its way to the coast. We would collect the Morning Bulletin paper and sell it around the local area and make an extra bit of money for ourselves.

There were a number of shops around the Lakes Creek area and we mostly bought all our food and supplies from there. There were vendors and hawkers who came around that we'd buy from as well. One essential was the iceman who came every day. We had a very big ice chest, the size of a small table. Some of the shops delivered their produce direct to your home.

I was 14 when I got my first job as an office girl at Stewarts Department Store. My job was to run messages and make cups of tea initially, then I learned Pitmans shorthand and worked for Mr. Stewart as well as doing letters for Mrs. Stewart and eventually I did my first bosses job. I stayed there for around 20 years.

The Stewarts had a grand house in Bolsover Street next to the Rockhampton High School. The house is gone now but the High School building still stands. Stewarts was a large and prosperous business, by far the largest in Rockhampton. It had flying fox money returns which would zoom off up to the office and then shoot back down with change. As there were no phones then, there was a trumpet type of system all through the store and if Mr. Stewart wanted me to take dictation, he'd call for me through this trumpet system. I sometimes had trouble reading my shorthand back and had to sheepishly go in and ask him to remember what he said. He never became cross with me.

In the flood of 1918, I still managed to get to work at Stewarts; I'd walk down to the Koongal siding and get on a boat which would go right across the top of the commonage to the end of the old original Fitzroy bridge where I'd get off and then walk the rest of the way.

Stewarts had a very large work force because as well as the retail store, they had a workroom which manufactured clothes; another for hats and another manufactured furniture. They were in Bolsover Street.

I met my husband Edward through the church. He was a Presbyterian Minister and we were married in 1942. We had a grand wedding with two bridesmaids and a flower girl. We had beautiful dresses - the bridesmaids

wore big picture hats and aqua muslin dresses which were sprigged with white flowers; they carried big bouquets of pink and white flowers. The flower girl was in pink. It was truly a day to remember. Edward was called to Atherton to serve and while we were there, war broke out and he enlisted and became an Army Padre. He saw service somewhere up in North Queensland. While he was away, I returned to Rockhampton and stayed with the family.

When he returned, he was called to Wynnum in Brisbane and then to Karlanie. It was there, after a Sunday service, I had gone home to put the lunch on and when he had not come home, I went back to find him hunched over, trying to get home. I remember jumping a fence to get to him, but he suffered a heart attack and died. We only had about 8 or 9 years together.

So back to Rockhampton I came. I stayed for a while and then took off for Brisbane where I had a number of years working in an orphanage for girls in Brisbane. I really enjoyed my work there but, when I came home for my Father's funeral, could see I was needed back here to care for Mother, so I returned and have been here ever since.

I have very happy memories of times spent going visiting in the buggy. It had two horses pulling it, a bench seat up in the middle and two little seats in front and back of that. Public transport was by way of horse busses and then the Purrey steam tram came but it was very noisy. My parents had strict views on dancing so although there were many dances and balls on the social calendar, we were not part of them.

My Father was instrumental in building the Lakes Creek Church in Pattison Street and we were very involved in Church activities. Consequently, although we did go to the movies, our social life centred on the church and Dad's work with picnics with a 100 or more people doing all the popular races of the time such as 3 legged and sack races. We played tennis and rounders and we'd go to the beach in the buggy with a picnic packed up.

My mother was a very good cook. One of my favourites was when she'd buy soup bones and boil them up for soup stock and then use the meat to make a curry. The soup was always delicious and so was the curry. She made a lot of our own bread in the wood fire stove and it smelt wonderful.

I had a wonderful 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party with over 100 guests there and I got my letter from the Queen and the Governor General and the Prime Minister. I can't really believe I'm still going three years later; it must be those good Scottish genes.

It's been said by someone else, but I consider I've had a fortunate life, a life I've really enjoyed and although I'm a little fed up with it now, you have to stay positive and happy don't you. I'll just keep going to my exercise classes until I see what's around the corner..

*Edited from an oral tape recorded June 2003*





FROM HER MAJESTY  
THE QUEEN

*Mrs Helen Thompson*  
*143 Stack Street*  
*NORTH ROCKHAMPTON QLD 4701*

*I am pleased to hear that you are  
celebrating your One-Hundredth Birthday.  
My sincere congratulations and best wishes  
for a happy day on Thursday the 7th of  
December 2000.*

*ELIZABETH R*

*The Queen's letter.*

## SOME CHILDHOOD MEMORIES IN QUEENSLAND

Doris Peacock

I was brought up on a cane farm at Septimus about 40 miles from Mackay. My father and a friend bought some land and lived in a shack made of some sheets of iron until they could afford a house. They had to clear the land and plant cane on it. Dad cut cane at another area until his cane was ready to cut.



Dad married Mum in 1914 and I was born in 1916 – the eldest of five children – three girls and two boys. Mum and Dad worked very hard. Dad got up at 4.00 am and in the crushing time (harvesting) he would go out and cut cane. Mum milked the cows.

I started school in 1924. , I lived with a neighbour because two of her teenaged children were still at school and they used to take me to school. I lived with them during the week and Dad came and got me on Friday afternoons to take me home for the weekend.

I had a horse called Tuppy that I used to ride to school. I had lots of busters but the worst was when I fell and my foot caught in the stirrups. I was dragged quite a distance. A man carting cane caught the horse and rescued me. I lost a good bit of skin and was badly bruised.

We had two and a half miles to go to school and I had to take the other children on the back of my horse until they could ride themselves.

In the crushing time, Mum often had six men to cook for. She used to milk the cows and get breakfast for the men and us kids and then she'd do the washing by boiling up sheets etc. in a kerosene tine. Later we had a boiler that was a bit easier. After milking, she'd separate the milk and keep the cream to make butter.

In 1927 Dad built a new house. It had verandahs on three sides and we had lots of parties there. Dad played the accordion and my brother Frank played the piano by ear. We had parties!! – Especially for birthdays!

The school was the centre for entertainment. Dad played the accordion and another chap played the violin. We all learned to dance because about every fourth dance was a school children's dance and the adults used to dance with the kids.

We had a tennis court and all the family used to play. We had tennis matches at the school too and played against teams from other places and we went for picnics to various beaches. Mostly we travelled on somebody's truck. Sometimes with seats on the back, or we just sat on the floor.

In the early days, we had a buggy drawn by two horses. We would travel twelve miles to Mirani to go to church on Sundays. Most of the relations used to go there to church also and there would be a family meeting afterwards where we got together with our Aunts and Uncles and cousins. Eventually, Dad owned one of the first cars in the area – a Willys Knight.

We would go into Mackay for the Annual Show or if a circus came to town. Before we had the car, we'd drive the buggy over to Dunwold siding and catch the train.

Dad and his neighbour sometimes killed a bullock between them. We had fresh meat for a few days – tripe, kidneys, liver, brains and steak. The rest of the meat was corned and kept in casks of brine. We grew most of our own vegetables and Mum made jams and chutneys.

When Dad dipped the cattle we'd take them to a neighbour's dip about four miles away and we kids had to help him out. Later on, it got easier because we built a dip at home. One of the other jobs we had when it was very dry would be to cart water to the cattle who would get down into the creek beds and not be able to get out. It wasn't always successful and they would often die.

It was quite a hard life in many ways but we had lots of fun too.

*Doris Peacock passed away in July this year. Her story was submitted by her daughter, Mavis Peacock.*



## REFRIGERATION PIONEERS

Edna Brown

My father Herbert Albert Cowrick was born in Napier, New Zealand in 1895. He was educated at Kings College, Auckland and came to Mount Chalmers, Australia in 1910 with his mother and younger brother.

He did his apprenticeship as a Fitter and Turner at Mount Chalmers Mine. During the First World War 1914 to 1918 he worked in the Railway workshops making parts to assist the war.



*Herbert Cowrick driving Rockhampton Council Steam Foden Wagon when foreman for Thozers.*

When the Purry Steam trams became available to the council they had a lot of trouble making them work. They could not get enough steam to get the trams up Dawson Road to the Gardens. They were eventually given to W.E. Tozer for a time to see if he could make them work. Dad was involved in this and he used to drive the trams on Saturday nights after the pictures. The trams had a very small boiler and the idea was to conserve steam, so you would go as fast as you could for a half a block, close off steam and coast the tram to a stop, which gave the boiler a chance to get a full head of steam for the next section. While foreman for W.E. Tozer, he drove the City Council Steam Foden Wagon, and also installed equipment at the Ulam Marble Quarry.



*Ullam Marble Quarry*

Dad held a steam ticket, which enabled him to work on steam equipment. He became interested in refrigeration after repairing engines. He would watch the engine driver open valves and then close to start the ammonia compressor. Dad, having a very inquisitive mind, would ask why this was done and why the piping would be warm to a certain valve and be cold (frosting) on the other side of the valve.

The engine driver explained that he had to adjust the valve to a certain gauge pressure and keep adjusting the valve to get the desired result.

When discussing this with Mr Bill Tozer he learnt the simple principle of refrigeration. The reduction of pressure gives a reduction of temperature. The refrigerant absorbed heat as it expanded and boiled to a gas in the system. The compressor was used to pump the gas to a higher pressure so it could be condensed to a liquid and used in the refrigeration cycle again.

Dad then did the necessary hours driving refrigeration plants to get a refrigeration drivers ticket. Having acquired this knowledge he then started to do repairs and service to ammonia plants.

The only refrigeration plants around then were ice-making plants, butter factories and large butcher shops. The smaller ammonia plants, Lipman Automatic plants from America, were becoming available to butcher shops and later hotels and cafes. Kirby's Café in East Street, Carlton Hotel, William Street and The Rockhampton Men's Club, Quay Street also had small plants.

Dad did the entire local brewery engineering work, which involved engineering, refrigeration and steam. As there was no local electricity at the brewery then, everything was steam driven and DC Motor driven, the DC power coming from a steam driven generator. It wasn't until 1934 that dad and my brother Vince worked to install motor driven pumps to take the place of steam pumps at Macs Brewery.

In 1928 Dad decided to start his own business trading as H.A. Cowlrick. It was depression years and Dad wanted to make sure my three brothers, Harry known as Bill, Sidney Vincent known as Vince and Thomas William known as Tom, had

a job when they left school. Dad's decision was made easier for him as Mr Thomas McLaughlin assured Dad he would always have work at the brewery.

Apprenticeships for refrigeration mechanics did not exist at this time, but my brothers all helped Dad after school. He worked from under our house in Quay Street then later built a workshop in the back yard. Mr three brothers all worked for Dad after they left school.

I can remember at mealtime sitting around a large dining room table. At breakfast time Dad would outline the days work and make sure the boys knew what had to be done. At lunch time the jobs were discussed and any problems sorted out. Dad was very precise in what had to be done and everything had to be done correctly, otherwise you did it again. I can remember watching him move match boxes around to show my brothers how to move large sections of cold rooms and equipment and get them into confined spaces.

By the mid 1930's commercial and domestic refrigerators were going into small shops in Rockhampton and country towns. Dad and my brothers worked for any Brisbane refrigeration firm who sold equipment in Rockhampton and district on a contract price or hourly rate and they travelled to the far west of Rockhampton to Winton and all towns between; the Dawson and Callide Valleys; as far south to Bundaberg and north to Mackay and districts. A lot of small towns did not have power so a stationery engine would have to be installed to drive the refrigeration equipment and a small generator for lights.

My brothers were sent out West installing refrigeration equipment from when they were sixteen years old. Brisbane firms would pay 16/- (sixteen shillings) a day, and they had to work up to 12 hours a day. The location of the jobs dictated the number of hours worked a day, because of the need to catch trains or mail trucks which only ran on certain days. During this period 1936 - 1940, because refrigeration was a fairly new industry, most people expected to see older people doing this work, not young boys. One firm asked if my brother could wear long trousers to make him look older than his 16 years, when he was working in the country by himself.

Then came the war. A cousin Brian Usher started working for Dad in February 1942. My eldest brother Bill enlisted in the army in 1942 when Darwin was first bombed and he was sent to Darwin. Vince joined the R.A.A.F. and was stationed at Queanbeyan and then Amberley. Tom joined the army and was stationed at Charters Towers as a fitter and turner in the workshops.

During these years 70,000 American servicemen invaded Rockhampton and Dad was commissioned to install all the refrigeration at the army hospital and the army kitchens in the Rockhampton area. Dad had Brian and another mechanic Bill Allen to help him. Dad also asked the U.S. army for someone to help him and it was understandable why he chose Elwood Nelson. Elwood told the truth, he said he knew nothing about refrigeration but would do whatever Dad wanted and do all the heavy work for him, just to get out of that footslogging. He also wanted some copper pipe to make a still. Dad told Elwin, you're the one, but I'll never remember your name, I'll call you Bill. This was a good choice as Bill really looked after Dad and did work as promised.

In 1943 my youngest brother Tom died suddenly in Charters Towers. Mum and Dad were devastated and Dad felt he needed some time out. The U.S. army really had to have all the refrigeration working before the hot summer months, so they decided to fly Mum and Dad to Charters Towers for Tom's funeral. This was really something, especially when travel was limited and petrol and everything else at the time was rationed.

When Elwood's unit moved out to New Guinea, my brother Vince was discharged from his duties in the Air Force to assist Dad service the refrigeration at the U.S. Army camps.

After the war when Bill returned home, Dad decided it was time my brothers were made partners in the business and they traded as H.A. Cowlrick & Sons. They opened a small office in William Street off East Street Lane, part of the Hetherington's building and later moved to a bigger office and showroom in Duthies building in Denham Street, but the workshop still remained open in Quay Street.

Les Klinger from Henry Berry & Co, Brisbane, to install all their refrigeration equipment in the Cental Queensland region, then contracted H.A Cowlrick and Sons. This was a very busy time and refrigeration installations were increasing and Tom Schuh a bench electrician who had worked at the Mount Morgan mines started and another cousin George Willadsen.

Over many years refrigeration apprentices were trained. Cecil Funch and Bob Handley stand out in my memory. I worked in the office from December 1950 to December 1954. In early 1954 we installed the first refrigeration equipment into a fishing boat owned by the Hansen family.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1946, Herbert Albert Cowlrick was admitted as a Full Member of the Australian Institute of Refrigeration. My brothers Bill and Vince were made Associate Members of the Australian Institute of refrigeration and Air Conditioning on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1962.

In the 1960's they moved the office, showroom, workshop and spare parts division to Buzacotts building, which was in East Street near Derby Street. In about 1970 the business was sold to Burns Philp, who traded under B.P. Cowlrick. Burns Philp then sold part to Mauri Brothers and the name was changed to Mauri refrigeration and let to B.P.M Cowlrick. Bill worked with the new company until he retired, and Vince until 1975.

In 1976 Vince and Cecil Funch formed a partnership and traded under the name of Cowlrick & Funch. After Vince retired Cecil continued the business and now trades as Cec Funch Refrigeration and Air Conditioning.

My Dad H.A Cowlrick died in 1971, and my brothers Bill and Vince died in 1993. Geoff Murphy and his family companies now own the business and it trades under the name of B.P.M Cowlrick Pty Ltd.

My father Herbert Albert Cowlrick and brothers Harry (Bill), Sidney Vincent (Vince) and Thomas William (Tom) were pioneers of the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Industry in the Central Queensland region.

## MY JOURNEY HOME

Dick Hudson



This is an account of a trip I made in 1949 by motorcycle, down the Bruce Highway, from Home Hill to Bundaberg.

After working on a cane farm at Home Hill for the crushing season, I decided to ride my new ES2 spring frame Norton that I had brought up by train, back to Bundaberg.

Setting out early in the morning, I found the road reasonably well travelled with local traffic as far as Inkerman. After that, it began to deteriorate rapidly into a bush track, following for the most part, the same route as it does today. It wasn't too bad as bush tracks go, just giving a hint of what was to come. It continued in a similar manner to Bowen where, after getting something to eat and doing a quick circuit of the town, Mackay beckoned.

The road continued with improved sections near the places of settlement like Proserpine, Bloomsberry and Kuttatbul. Approaching Mackay there were even short stretches of bitumen. I stayed the night in Mackay at a hotel



whose name I don't recall. I didn't go out, I must have been tired because I went to bed early.

Next morning after an early start, I went through Sarina to Koumala where I had breakfast at the Pub. Then the rot set in. The track quickly deteriorated and the wheel tracks became a drain that in places, were eroded into deep gutters.

You think that was bad! Going past Clareview where the 'road' ran between the railway line and the beach, it seemed just a matter of jumping from one rock to another trying to avoid the sharp pointed ones as much as possible.

I thought I'd get something to eat at St. Lawrence, so I went to the Pub where I was advised to try the Railway Refreshment Rooms but they were closed so I carried on hungry.

There was nothing really significant about this next section, just slowing to walking pace to jump over gutters and then trying to work up a bit of speed. At one stage, the track branched to the left and seemed to have had more traffic on it, so I followed it and finished up at Kooltandra railway station. A quick turn around and back to the rough stuff.

After passing Marlborough the road improved as there were signs of more traffic on it although I didn't see any. Along by Etna Creek where the Detention Centre is now, there was a strip of bitumen; the first encountered since leaving Mackay, so I increased speed only to find the road took a sharp turn to the left over the railway line. My journey almost came to an end there and then as I crossed the bridge on the wrong side right beside the guide rail.

However I arrived safely in Rockhampton. Another anonymous hotel where I spent a quiet night before setting out on the last leg to Bundaberg.

The road to Mount Larcom wasn't too bad but was pretty ordinary from there to near Gladstone. I came to a sign, which read Gladstone to the left 15 miles, Bruce Highway straight ahead 15 miles. Good I thought, save 15 miles. What a shock! It was the worst 15 miles of the whole trip. The track went up and down through gullies, which were washed out in the bottom, leaving rough gutters to cross. Coming out near Benaraby, the road wasn't too bad to Miriam Vale where it almost became a Highway.

From Miriam Vale to Gin Gin there was a formed gravel road – not bitumen mind – but quite good to travel on. Mostly just two wheel tracks with a row of gravel down the middle. It must have carried a deal of traffic but the only thing I encountered was another fellow on a motorbike so we stopped for a yarn.

The rest of the trip was uneventful and I arrived in Bundaberg mid afternoon of the third day since leaving Home Hill.

In retrospect, it was probably foolhardy to undertake such a trip alone. Nobody knew where I was and no one in Bundaberg was expecting me. A disabling accident or break down could have been serious seeing I encountered no other traffic. But, one didn't think of those things then, you just went out and did it!

## **CHRISTMAS AT BARGARA**

### **– Camping will never be the same**

**Barry Hough**

While caravans, flats or units might be the way many now holiday at Bargara during the Christmas School Vacation, camping was the way many Bundaberg families spent their six-week holiday break at Bundy's favourite beach, fifty years ago.

Tent sites needed to be booked months ahead if you wanted a good spot, while regulars, of which there were many, had permanent bookings from Christmas to Christmas and could always be found in the same spot, year after year after year.

Tents were large and heavy with centre poles and lots of guy ropes all secured to stout pegs driven into the sandy soil to enable the tents to withstand the ever-blowing coastal winds. Made of canvas with birkmire tops, the tents formed a community within a community that swelled from a dozen or so, to around one hundred and fifty or more units, at the holiday season peak.

A week before school broke up many families arrived at Bargara with a truckload of gear ready to set up their holiday home. Floor boards, ice chests, tables, chairs, poles, ropes and camp stretchers, you name it, it arrived on the truck, along with all those small necessities like linen, cutlery, lanterns etc.

I remember several families who even brought a wood stove and a corrugated iron stove recess to stand outside their tent. Perhaps the phrase "everything but the kitchen sink" applied to some camps which were definitely a home away from home. The trees behind the camping area soon rang with the noise of hammers as the tent city began to grow. A familiar sight was the men swinging axes, not to chop wood, but to drive tent pegs in, using the back of the axe head.



Come the following weekend families arrived en masse and the camping area came alive with Dads tightening ropes, Mums putting away groceries, while the children chafed at the bit to be allowed over the road onto the beach for their first swim of the holidays. Friendships were renewed and zinc cream was applied, as tin buckets and the

younger fry ready to build that sandcastle to end all sandcastles gathered up wooden spades. A camping holiday at Bargara was never dull or boring as there was always lots to do, during the day or night. The children were probably the ones best catered for with the large number of coastal activities available for them in the water or on the beach and rocks. Games of cricket and rounders were always on, while treasure hunts were often organised by different parents. Hikes to Mon Repos and turtle egg hunting were common

place, for the latter had not become a conservation issue, even though on many occasions we hopefully rescued eggs and moved them to higher up the dunes.

While the beach at Bargara itself was not as long in those days, its surface was very sandy and not shell and rock strewn, as it now often is, since large rocks were moved at the ends of the beach some years ago. The skating rink, although quite small in its hey-day, was well patronised at afternoon and evening sessions as the new chums grimly held onto the learner's rail while the experts skated by. As a child I envied Mr. Spence, the rink's owner, as he and his partners danced on skates to the various types of music. A tall man, he looked so elegant dressed in white from head to toe like a fairy book hero.

At its peak a special bus used to run from Bundaberg to Bargara, one evening a week to take skaters to their favourite venue. After remaining popular for so many years it was a sad day when the rink came to the end of its life a few years ago. Both my wife and I as teenagers, learnt to skate there, while our five now grown up children did the same, some thirty years later. Such is life.

The Bargara Kiosk played an important role in camp life nighttime activities, with its spacious restaurant area being used for a range of entertaining evenings. Weekly camp concerts were always packed, while on other nights, dances, card evenings and even 16mm movies drew excellent crowds. If my memory serves me correctly the lifesavers and ambulance benefited financially from these evenings. The Woongarra Shire Council demolished the Kiosk due to severe white ant infestation and the high cost of possible restoration.

Interestingly in the years just before the train line to Bargara was ripped up (1948) several Thursday night dances were held at this self same Kiosk, with dance devotees travelling to the coast on a summer moonlight train trip through the cane fields. Certainly unique in the history of any city.

When I look at Bargara Beach and its surrounding park area today, it is hard to recognise anything that reminds me of the Bargara of the forties. The railway line through the park has been taken up and the Q.C.W.A. Hall now stands roughly where the line ran. The old Lifesavers Club House was removed years ago and relocated to the Hummock, while the impressive Kiosk was demolished. Assorted bathing houses at the northern end of the park have gone, as have the beach tents that were readily hired to protect you from the sun, while the skating rink is closed.

Perhaps all that remains to remind us of those relaxed holidays are the beautiful she-oaks and towering coconut palms that dot the park. Man made things of years ago has gone, while nature lives on forever.

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