

IT ALL BEGAN AT THE BEACH

Reminiscences of Geoff Senior



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Introduction by an ~~un~~-biased editor

These random reminisces by Geoff have been written over quite a long period of time, as a record of his life for his family.

Growing up in the nineteen forties and fifties, they paint a picture of a very different time from today and may surprise the younger members of the family. The freedom to travel and be independent from a very early age, the jobs taken on by a young boy still at school, and the starting of a working life as an apprentice at the age of fourteen, all these may be hard for some to believe.

This little booklet certainly doesn't cover all periods of Geoff's life and he has already mentioned his musical adventures – with mouth organ and banjo – that have been left out, as well as details about his travels around the world and around Australia but he says he's had enough of working on his memories and so it was decided it was time to print it.

We hope you enjoy these reminiscences.

Gillian

The Early Days

I was born on the nineteenth day of April 1942 at the Altona Community Hospital in Sargood Street Altona. My parents were Marjorie, or Joe as she was called, and my father, Lewis or Lew. They lived in a new rental property in Beach Street Seaholme; it was owned by the Wise family who lived next door. The house was situated on a small strip of bitumen which was wide enough for the local tradespeople and their horses and carts, going in one direction only. It was impossible to pass another vehicle without either running off the road or getting bogged. It was a great place to be brought up; the beach was not too far away and was reached by following tracks between the salt bush – which was okay when it was dry but almost impassable after the rain.

My mother was a good person and really looked after me, for I was born with a hare lip and a cleft palate which required a lot of operations and hospital visits. I think by the time I was four I had endured around six operations, which gave me an inbuilt distrust of medical staff and hospitals. I developed a fear of heights due to the constant time in hospital and being shifted around in lifts. The lifts of those days did not move slowly when either going up or down – they lurched causing your stomach to remain either three feet below or above depending on which way the lift was heading. It was not crash-hot being on a hospital trolley when this occurred – there were no seat belts in those days. Although I have overcome most of my fear of heights it seems to come and go.

However, my mother would look after me, taking me to and from the Children's Hospital in Carlton on a regular basis, which was quite a feat as it was all done on public transport: the train from Seaholme and the bus or the tram from Flinders Street station in the city.

Some days after the hospital visits, she would visit her mother in East Coburg. Nanna Atyeo was always ill, and my mother always seemed to

blame herself for the illnesses. However, she worked hard and supported her until she died late in the forties.

My Grandfather, Alf Atyeo, was a great bloke and used to treat me like I was a son not a grandson; he used to tell me stories about the “old days” when he would knock off from work, hop on the push bike and ride to Tooradin which was roughly sixty miles from Melbourne, arrive there, have a breather and then play the piano in the local hall for the weekly dances. Then on Sunday afternoon he would hop on the treadly and head back to Melbourne.

After completing her chores at Nanna Atyeo’s, my mother and I would board the tram and go back to Flinders Street to catch the train and then home.

The train to and from Altona in those times ran every hour from Newport during off peak times and half hourly during peak hours. When leaving from the city the correct train had to be boarded or you had a long wait on the freezing cold or boiling hot Newport Station. The right train was called the “connector”; it went to Williamstown and you were told “to change trains at Newport for Altona”. Providing everything ran on time the Altona train, the “seaweed express” as it was affectionately known, would slide in behind the Williamstown train. On today’s standards it was a quaint little train, little being the operative word. Some days it would run with one carriage during off peak and Sundays, and the other days it would have two or four carriages. They were officially called “swing door” trains and consisted of first and second class carriages, first class was luxury with heavily upholstered comfortable bench seats that were as wide as the train, second class had wooden slatted seats. They were comfortable but not as luxurious as the ones in first. This was our mode of transport and you had to put up with it as there was no choice.

My father never seemed happy around small children and it did not improve even as I got older. It did not help much that he was away from

home a lot of the time because he was in the air force. He was stationed at Laverton for most of the time and during the war he spent some time up in Darwin at a place called Berry Springs, which was not that far from the havoc of the bombings in Darwin itself.

I do not remember much of his influence in my up-bringing in the early years. As I got older, he never played any outside games like kicking a football out in the street, he did not like the beach that much so I hardly saw him there. But he did make some things for me, like the electric train he made from a wind-up locomotive; he even built the tracks. It was great, it had three or four carriages and it would go around in circles and keep me occupied for hours. He had a foul temper and if things did not go the way things should, he would become morose and moody and would not talk. My mother had to cajole him to bring him back to normality.

Every year the RAAF would hold a Christmas party at the Laverton air base and Father Christmas would arrive in a Tiger Moth, and on landing would taxi up and down along the lines of kids and then come to a stop. He would leave the plane and yo-ho-ho his way across to the gift giving area where each of the kids from air force families would receive a gift, all handed out by the great old man himself. I don't know how he did it, but he always picked the right gift. It did not matter then. I found out later how it worked. The RAAF personnel who worked at the base put aside some of their wages each fortnight towards the Christmas fund.

We used to visit my father's parents out in Thornbury; their house was in Watt Street which was right opposite the quarry for the brickworks. Nanna Senior, Laura, was a tall upright woman who could snap a piece of wood by just looking at it. My mother and she did not get on that well together but I did.

My mother was constantly harassed about everything she did toward the welfare of my father and me. My father was a protected species as far

as his mother was concerned and he never had to do anything for himself and as such, did not venture far from the house when he was a kid.

However, Pa Senior was a different kettle of fish; he was president of the Storeman and Packers' union and was involved in the usual union activity after work in the pubs where a lot of deals were made.

Every year there was a parade for Eight Hours Day, where every union official and worker marched beneath their union banners. Some unions had horses and carts decorated with their union colours and I was lucky enough to get to ride on my grandfather's one.

Another highlight of the year was the annual Storemen and Packers' picnic to Mordialloc in reserve next to the river. Each year the picnic coincided with the carnival which had various rides and attractions. One of these was the dodgem cars where we had a lot of fun. That is where I probably learned to drive. Another of my favourites was the dancing pavilion, where after lunch they would stage a dance, this was compered by my grandfather and I was allowed to sit on the front of the bandstand. The band was the usual piano sax and drums and occasionally a trumpet; I loved every minute of this and still reckon that type of band puts atmosphere into a venue.

My grandfather, Lew Senior, was small of stature, had a glass eye, was a smoker, a drinker and an all-round good bloke; I was very lucky with both my grandfathers.

I used to stay at Thornbury occasionally and I would watch the trams going down St. Georges Road, they used to fascinate me, and I used to pretend I was a tram driver on the front veranda. I spent lots of happy hours doing that. Pa Senior had many powerful friends – politicians, union officials and the workers whom he always supported.

To get to Thornbury we would go by train from Seaholme to the city and catch a tram, or we would catch a double decker bus which went along High Street. We always travelled on the top deck at the front and this gave a great view of the second floors of the residences and shops

along the route. I loved the tramway buses; their diesel engines had a unique sound and an interesting exhaust smell. The thing that intrigued me more than anything was the smell of the roan leather upholstery, it was a very rich smell.

The railway line from Newport to Altona was very interesting as it passed the railways workshops at Newport where there was always something going on, whether it was steam engines plying their trade or steam cranes lifting heavy loads, there was always something to see. Further along the track not far from where the refinery is today, there was the Williamstown racecourse platforms, still with their railway lines and power lines intact. In the early days racegoers would arrive at these platforms by train and either walk to the racecourse or be carried in a horse-drawn cab or wagon. Some people came from Williamstown by horse-drawn conveyances of some sort or another.

The line continued on to Altona station which was then the terminus for that line for passenger services. Occasionally a passenger train turned into a mixed goods train which consisted of the normal two carriages plus a couple of four-wheel goods trucks, usually carrying general goods or briquettes, and firewood for the wood yard which was not far past the station. The procedure was to empty the passengers out then take the train along the tracks to the wood yard, unhook the wagons, run further along the line and run the train around on the other track and proceed back to the station ready for the next trip back to Newport. Very rarely we were treated to the sight of a steam train coming down the line with a small number of goods trucks bound for the pickup point near the wood yard. From our house we could see the Seaholme and Altona railway stations from our kitchen window, which was good, as you could see who was coming off the train at Seaholme. It is impossible to do that now seeing that most of the new houses are double storey.

Pier Street was the main shopping street in Altona; it consisted of the usual businesses. There was the Commonwealth Bank, the State Savings

Bank, two garages – one in Altona and one in Seaholme – Grant’s newsagency, “Pies” Noonan’s bakery, Bob Fraser’s chemist shop, a post office, greengrocer, grocery shop, Harvey’s shoe shop, Bunkers hardware a few cafes and Harry Edwards also known as the “Count”. Harry operated “Harry the hacker’s” hairdressing shop, which included a billiard hall and S.P. betting facilities, both behind the shop. Harry was a colourful character; he looked like a real spiv, very smooth and topped off with a narrow moustache which made him even more shifty looking. He regularly got sprung in raids by the police, but nevertheless he kept persisting; they could not close him down. It did not matter what type of hair cut you wanted he would do a short back and sides. The discussion would go along these lines when I was a teen-ager and wanted to look my best:

“G’day son how’s it going? What can I do for you?”

“College cut please Mr. Edwards” (you always called adults by their correct names until you were eighteen) then he would go to work with the hand clippers which took slightly longer than the electric ones of today, and you’d end up with short back and sides. It was no use arguing as he was the only barber in town.

Harry continued to work in the same shop until the T.A.B. came to town and offered him the position of running the enterprise; he took up the offer and ran it for a number of years. Being legal was not the same as his beloved S.P. set up. One minute he was driving a big Chrysler Royal then next minute he was on a motor bike and side car; the T.A.B. apparently did him no good whatsoever.

Another character around the town was Bill, or “Pies” Noonan, the baker who was a solid citizen; he was St Jack’s first aid chief in Altona and would attend all the sporting events that occurred in the vicinity, always dressed in the official uniform. He was also head of the local fire brigade, which was situated not far from his shop, the fire engine was a very early model Bedford or Morris Commercial, it was open to the

elements and when the fire alarm rang, it was all hands on deck. The volunteers would drop tools if they were in earshot of the alarm and race to the fire station and jump on the truck dressed in their fire fighting gear and polished brass helmets which gleamed in the sun. They would then proceed to the fire with the hand bell ringing to alert the public of what was going on. Bill continued in that position until the M.F.B. took over.

Another claim to fame for “Pies” were his meat pies which is where he got his nickname. The pies started off with a crisp crust and by the time you came to eat them they were so soggy you could almost drink them, they were horrible, but known far and wide. Mr. Grant was the typical newsagent, sour faced and bad tempered at any time of day – this must be a pre-requisite to become successful in that field.

There was a bus service that ran between Altona and Williamstown; the buses were fairly basic rough-riding, especially when they hit the Miller’s Road bridge. The road always seemed to subside on the Altona side thus leaving a drop of about eighteen inches to two feet similar to a ramp. If you were in the bus and hit the ramp all the passengers would be thrown from their seats; I think the bus drivers loved to do this, they were sadists. Sometimes we would go to and from school at Williamstown on the bus. If you as much as burped you were thrown off and had to walk home. It usually happened in the afternoons; we were too tired to do anything in the mornings.

Living in Seaholme.

Our house was at number 23 Beach Street Seaholme; it wasn't a flash house, it was fairly basic – two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen and lounge room. The toilet was a pan serviced unit which felt as if it was ½ a mile away, especially in the middle of the night. There was a wash-house, and this was built on the outside of the house and contained the copper and a lot of junk that could not live inside the house. The washing was boiled up in the copper then put through a hand mangle and then hung out on the clothes line, things were primitive in those days. The Wises who lived next door were professional fishermen, they would put their nets and long lines out in the evening, and then pick them up in the morning, usually there was a heap of fish ranging from snapper, flathead, banjo sharks, gummy sharks, the occasional stingaree and many more. I was lucky enough to be allowed to help them sort the fish, and help pack them for the market, I learned a lot about fish, seamanship and boat-craft from them as they had a wide range of vessels from 16 feet up to 38 feet. Some they would hire out, but the bigger ones were for taking out fishing “parties” and putting down and picking up nets. If there were a small number of people in the group they would be rowed out to the bigger boat by dinghy; if the fishing “party” consisted of a lot more than the dinghy could handle, they had to be picked up at the Altona Pier. In the late 1950s the Wises sold off most of their hire fleet and replaced them with fibre glass boats made from a mould purchased from Savage Boats in Newport. The boats were excellent “bay boats” and could withstand really rough Port Phillip Bay weather, nothing flash in the engine department just a single cylinder, belt started Chapman Pup, very reliable. They would be hired from the beach at Seaholme on an eight-hour basis, and then returned at the end of their shift. On occasions there were tragedies whereby the persons who hired the boats drowned whilst at sea or suffered heart attacks and died, all of which required police investigations. The boats usually ended up near Altona pier and had to be

brought back to Seaholme, I did this several times and loved the rough weather, the rougher the better.

Holidays

Colac

In the days when we did not have a car available, some holidays were undertaken by train. I can remember leaving Spencer Street station on the “Geelong Flier” bound for Colac where my uncle Bun and Aunty Marj. lived. It was a magic trip, the magnificent “R” class steam engine on the front of the old wooden corridor carriages with very comfortable seating, the upholstery superb. The train would leave the station at Spencer Street and weave its way through the system of points and cross overs until it hit its own dedicated track, then it would slowly build up steam and glide through the suburbs. In those days it used to stop at Footscray and Newport to pick up passengers. There were and still are passengers needing to board the train for Geelong or all points west; now they have to travel to Spencer Street.

After leaving Newport the train would then build up speed and hurl its way towards Geelong sometimes reaching sixty miles per hour, that is over 120 kph. And this was with steam! Ah the bliss! Hurling along at that speed and opening the window to look out then copping a face full of soot! They certainly were the good old days. Coming into Colac Station we would pass the narrow gauge line that went to Beech Forest and see the N Class and the Garratt steam engines waiting for their next engagement. These steam engines were the same as the ones at Puffing Billy in the Dandenongs.

It was great staying with my family. Uncle Bun, or Les as he was officially known, was a returned serviceman from the Second World War and was manager of Bilson’s store in Colac. Bilsons was one of those stores that sold everything except food; it had the smell of a big department store of those times and for a small boy to roam around in was a great adventure. Aunty Marj. was an ex-army nurse and was well in command. She was very kind and gentle.

Uncle Bun knew just about everyone in Colac and organised a trip for me to Beech Forest and Laver's Hill on a fuel tanker with a Mr. Gellie. The truck was a single drive Leyland Comet with a big fuel tank on the tray. We had to deliver fuel to various places on the way and the roads over the Otways were not very wide or smooth, but it was great day out.

After our visit to Colac, the great trip home began, waiting on the station for the train from Port Fairy to arrive. The trains only go as far as Warrnambool now, the rest of the tracks have been ripped up; stupid thinking reigned then as it does now.

Seaholme to Monbulk

I was very lucky to have an unofficial aunt and uncle, Tib and Dick Wigmore, who lived in Monbulk in the Dandenong Ranges. To get there by train we would leave Seaholme, change trains at Newport and change trains at Flinders Street for Upper Ferntree Gully. Upper Ferntree Gully was then the terminus for the Puffing Billy railway which travelled through to Emerald and Gembrook and return. On arrival at UFG we would then catch a bus bound for Monbulk. I can remember the bus vividly, it was black with a white roof, was operated by US Motors from Belgrave and had doors all the way along each side, and I think they were called charabancs. The seating was from one side to the other and I may say, very comfortable.

Being in the mountains in the winter it was not uncommon to encounter snow along the way which was wonderful to see and even better to play in.

The Wigmores, Aunty Tib and Uncle Dick, lived on the corner of crossroads. One road went to The Patch, the next went to Belgrave, then the next down the hill to Monbulk and finally, up the hill behind the house to Camm's Jam Factory. The whole town knew the crossroads as "Wigmore's Corner".

Uncle Dick worked for the jam factory driving a 3-cylinder Commer prime mover with trailer. The noise from this machine was music to your ears; it could be heard from miles away.

Tooradin

Tooradin featured a lot in our holiday plans but was not normally reached by train. It was reached by our car which was a 1928 model Nash which used to belong to my grandfather; it was a great machine, very comfortable with beautiful leather upholstered seats. It was one of the old square type vehicles with an island roof which meant that the majority of the roof was made of a water-proof material; this one was water-proof.

From our house in Seaholme it was exactly 60 miles to our house in Tooradin. When I say house, it was really a shack, and it was built in the early days by my grandfather, ably assisted by my mother when she was a young girl. The house consisted of two rooms and a verandah. There was no running water but there was a water tank, no sewerage but there was an outside wooden toilet with removable pan. Another feature was the number of different bitey things that could be encountered when in the toilet. Things such as bull ants, spiders, mosquitos and sometimes the occasional snake whose tail could be seen disappearing around the corner.

Tooradin was an important place for the Atyeo family as my great grandfather used to run the general store and post office there. There was a story about their white cockatoo that frequented the store and the outside grounds. This particular day concerned a group of cyclists who pedalled their way from Melbourne and left their bikes near a tree in the car park. When they returned, all the valves had been carefully removed by the white phantom, I bet he was called a lot more than that!

The trip to Tooradin usually took around one hour, due to the lack of traffic that would be around today. There were no freeways, just narrow

two lane country highways. We used to have a competition to guess how many cars we would pass; some days there were no more than twenty.

The house was situated on one quarter of an acre on the Foreshore Road which overlooked Sawtell's inlet. When the tide came in it rose about 6 to 8 feet and covered the sand bars (mud flats) which were left exposed when the tide went out. We were told not to walk in the mud for we might get polio – kids are told a lot of things that are not really true. The Scott family, who ran the little shop that sold everything from pies and ice creams to fishing bait and tackle, had a son Laurie who had polio and spent his time in an iron lung in Melbourne and occasionally came to visit Tooradin. It was said that he caught polio from playing in the mud flats; we still did not believe them. Next door to us was a block of land owned by the Gartside food company who also had a farm on French Island which was several hours from Tooradin by boat or barge. Ken Gartside was a good bloke and let me go to sea with him and his crew once in a while. They could only leave on the high tide which always seemed to be about 3.30am when you were sleeping. First of all, you'd hear the noise of their truck laden with general goods, cows mooing, sheep bleating, pigs grunting and blokes yelling out giving instructions; the truck was not quiet either. Everything would be quiet for a short while, and then the barge would cough into life I think the engine came from an army tank judging by the noise it made, it could be heard far out to sea. The barge was a weird contraption. It was all metal, its cabin and engine room were all at the stern, and its loading deck had a ramp which lowered to allow the load on board whether it be animals or trucks or farm machinery. When the loading was complete the ramp would be lifted, the engine thrown into reverse and to port, then straightened up and then off to French Island and the farm. French Island could only be reached by sea. It had a prison farm and the Gartside company provided the know-how to the prison authorities on how to run the farm, then shipping the crops back to their factory near Dandenong. The factory

mainly processed peas, beans, carrots and other vegetables for sale in cans. Riding on the barge was great fun.

My grandfather owned a sixteen-foot carvel-built fishing boat which had a small “putt putt” engine that propelled it along at about 5 knots; it was a ripper. I loved going out in it, especially when Pa Atyeo would tell stories about the “old days” – he was a good storyteller. When we went out into Westernport Bay the channel markers had to be followed, for if you navigated away from the channel the boat would be left high and dry when the tide went out.

One day my Grandfather drove the boat onto the sand to wait for the tide to go out so the prop could be replaced. This was the only time I can remember my father being anywhere near the water, or the boat. He and my grandfather never really hit it off together; they were civil but cool toward each other. My father supposedly having the technical knowledge, had the job of replacing the prop. He went about his work to install the new one and at last it was all done and ready to go. The tide came in and the engine was started; the boat was pushed into the channel, the gear stick put into forward and lo and behold, the boat ran backwards. Guess who copped a right bollocking from my grandfather!

Adelaide

We had a few trips to Adelaide in the 1953 Morris Minor where we stayed with my father’s relatives, Aunty Madge and Uncle Bert Cobb. They had a house in Lower Mitcham next to the butcher’s shop where Uncle Bert worked as a butcher for many years. The highlight of the trips there was driving to Wallaroo or Victor Harbour in Uncle Bert’s 1938 Dodge sedan; it was beautiful with plush leather seating and heaps of room. Another good feature about their location was the Melbourne-Adelaide railway line which is where I would go and watch the Overland pass morning and night.

Ocean Grove

For a number of years the school holidays were spent at Ocean Grove at a camping site in our caravan and annexe which was towed by our new car, a 1955 Vauxhall Wyvern which had a four cylinder engine. Talk about “glory without power”, there was a six-cylinder version called the Velox which was slightly dearer which may have influenced the choice.

The car and caravan came about because my father being in the air force was posted from Laverton to East Sale in Gippsland about two years previous and it was decided to move there. It was decided that the family would live in the caravan for the duration of his posting. Everything was ready to go, the caravan packed and the car loaded to the gunwales, we were ready to roll. I had officially resigned from school; I was in Form 3 at the time and ready to enrol at the school near the air force base. Then the unthinkable happened; he was posted back to Melbourne, all bets were off. The worst part was having to front back at my old school on the Monday following the holidays. I was not looking forward to that. The good part about it was that we had the caravan.

We seemed to always end up at Ocean Grove for the school holidays and always had a great time, after all this was the place where I first learned to surf. Surfing was very basic, the board was a piece of five ply wood about five feet long with the front having a curve upward. The system was to walk into the water to the place where the wave started to break then as the selected wave arrived launch off in front of it and be swept onto the beach. After a while it became easier, the easier it became the braver we became, venturing out further to the next break; the board was now held with the bottom section up to the waist with the hands held three quarters of the of the way along toward the front; the rest was the same.

My first surfboard was an “okanui” bought from Myers in the city, it was a beauty, this was a whole new world. This type of board was fairly heavy compared with the lightweight things of today; it was nine foot six

long and about two foot wide and very hard to paddle. The new method was to either lie on the board and paddle or kneel and paddle; it was a lot easier to kneel as you did not tire as quickly. The beauty of having this type of board meant that you could pick up the big waves “out the back” which put on added pressure trying to reach them. You could not go around them like they do in Hawaii, you had to go through them. It was great, almost a third of the way out a big wave would arrive, if you were quick enough you could roll over through the wave and hopefully start paddling again towards the desired spot, but if it did not work your board got swept right back to the beach and it had to be retrieved and then do it all again. It could be very frustrating.

Caravanning

One year we went to the nation’s capital Canberra with the caravan – the three of us, one small dog and one canary and two budgies in cages. We arrived there set up camp, had a look around and arrived back and found that one of the budgies had let himself out and went exploring on his own. After a few hours we managed to entice him back to his nice warm cage, after all Canberra is a very cold place. While we were there we saw the war memorial, parliament house the shopping centre and a few other boring places. We left Canberra and headed to Bateman’s Bay on the coast via Queenbeyan and Braidwood, the trip was very mountainous and very steep in places. My mother hated it and was glad when we arrived. We stayed in Bateman’s Bay a few nights and headed along to Twofold Bay in Eden and camped there a few nights before heading to Lakes Entrance for three nights and then home.

Uncle Sam the artist.

Samuel Lawrence Atyeo was born in Melbourne on the 7/1/1910 and died in the south of France in June 1990. He was a rebel, a successful artist, a diplomat, a rose grower and finally retired in the town of Vence in the south of France not far from Nice.

My recollections of him when I was young were at our home in Seaholme where he stayed prior to going overseas in 1947 or 1948. He was heading off to France and he was still associated with the Australian political scene having served as personal secretary to Dr. Bert Evatt during the second world war. The day I remember best is the day he was leaving. He came out of the bathroom with shaving lather on his face and chased me around the house flicking me with a rolled up towel. After all that frivolity it was time to set off to Port Melbourne for him to board the Orion a rather large passenger liner for its day. Two big black government Buick eights arrived and whisked us away to the ship. I cannot remember whether Dr. Evatt and his wife travelled with us. We were ushered aboard the ship and given a quick tour which included the bridge where I met the captain and promptly asked him to take for a tour around the bay, he politely declined and said he was busy or something trivial like that.

I did not see Uncle Sam again until the 1980s when he was out here flogging paintings for an art show. He was too famous by then to stay with us in Beach St. The next time I met him was at his property in France six weeks prior to his death. He still thought he was famous although many people in Australia had never heard of him. He does have a painting hanging in the National Gallery in Canberra called 'Organised Line to Yellow'. He was an interesting bloke with a very colourful past.

My Mother, Gillian, Mon and myself visited Sam and Anne in Vence in France in 1990, a great trip. Sam was his up-himself best, giving orders left right and centre to anyone who happened to be near.

He and Anne were a great double, he opinionated and she equally so. We stayed there a few weeks and enjoyed ourselves.

Several weeks after we arrived back, we received news that Sam had died. My Mother got her wish, to see him before he died.

School and Early Jobs

My school days were great. Primary school was great, we learned to read, to write, to put into use tables and we also learned to mix with people from different cultures and play sport of all types.

Moving to Footscray Technical School was an eye opener, it was almost like an education factory; you went in with a little bit of knowledge and came out along the conveyor belt at the other end stamped with the word “educated”. I was fortunate, after having missed 16 weeks of school in two separate bouts of so-called rheumatic fever, I was lucky to be able to start at a new technical school in Williamstown which was closer to home. The new school buildings had not been built so we started at an existing primary school, not far away. The primary school had been upgraded overnight, or so it seemed, into a working technical school, with some trade facilities and the usual, english, maths and science departments.

Life was good, a new school, new inmates and new teachers a great way to gain an education.

After the school moved into the new site there was still construction going on and the inmates were occasionally required to go and assist the builders, removing rocks. The site of the new school was the now disused Williamstown Rifle Range and there were gun emplacements set up during the course of World War 2. Now all of this rock and concrete had to be to be removed and who better to remove it than the troops of the new Tech. School. The detail was formed into several different sections to load several tip trucks that arrived to be replenished. Now students being what they are, they built an effigy of the Principal of the school and placed it at the front of the tipper on the truck, the idea was to belt the living daylight out of the effigy with any rocks or debris that came to hand. This was a great set up until one of the detail picked up a boulder and with all his force heaved it at the truck. It hit the truck bounced off the tray and spun right over the front and clobbered the driver who was

sitting on the running board, having a smoke. He was completely laid out, unconscious. Help was called for and the teaching staff sprang to the rescue to save the stricken driver. Questions were asked, but no one knew anything. But then the teaching staff was elsewhere, what can you expect? Boys will be boys.

My first taste of the commercial world began at the age of 13 at a chemist shop in my home-town, Altona. My main duties were to deliver prescriptions to the residents of the town when required, on a bicycle. The task of filling the required hours of work when not delivering prescriptions was filling bottles with methylated spirits, this involved syphoning the contents of a 44-gallon drum of the aforesaid liquid into small bottles.

The method was to insert a piece of rubber hose into the 44-gallon drum and then sucking on the hose until the liquid appeared and burned my mouth and then direct the foul tasting brew into several dozen bottles. How people can drink metho is beyond my imagination.

The next foray into the wide world of commercialism, was in the petrol retailing industry. Yes, you guessed it! Pumping petrol at a service station after school several nights a week and on Saturday mornings. This was a very hands-on type of employment; the customers did not leave their vehicles at any time and everything had to be done by the driveway attendant as we were called. These tasks included, pumping petrol, cleaning windscreens, checking oil levels, checking the air pressures in the tyres and trying to pass on any of the latest deals from the oil companies.

Working in a service station was a great way to meet people and become accustomed to the varying temperaments of the customers, both extremely bad and exceptionally good.

One of our customers lived on a farm not far from the service station and he had several horses; he suggested that I call in after work one Saturday and select a horse to ride.

This was great because I loved horses. I turned up after work having walked several miles, to be introduced to an animal that was nameless and had the attitude to match. There was no saddle, but I was fortunate to have some reins and a bridle to complete the steering mechanism. Moving off down the paddock was a very slow procedure. The steed did not want to participate in any forward voluntary movement whatsoever, but on reaching the furthest boundary of the property, the horse suddenly developed a desire to return home at a greater rate of speed that had been encountered thus far. The speed increased from a slow half trot to a full gallop and nothing I could do would slow the animal down, until it reached its home fence, then all was wonderful, for the horse. Not so good for me as I had to hold on like grim death to prevent myself from becoming a riding statistic.

My last year at school was a good one, I passed Maths for the first time in my Tech. School education! I wanted to continue on to college and study commercial art, but I did not pass the Intermediate Diploma entrance certificate – not many of my colleagues passed it either.

So there I was, faced with the proposition of having to work for a living, what was I going to do?

My Father came to the rescue and suggested that I become an apprentice electrician. His reasoning was: that electricians would always be required and therefore that was the way I should go.

He was a sharp thinker.

The Bottle Works or the Bottle House
or its correct name,
The Australian Glass Manufacturers

Employment in the fifties was relatively easy to get – all you had to be was luke-warm and vertical, with some education, and you had a job. If everything worked out, it was a job for life.

I went for the interview, passed with flying colours and had a job. So it was agreed, January 20th 1957 was set for me to start work at the glass manufacturing plant a couple of suburbs away. Of course, I could not have started earlier, I told them, my Mother had booked holiday accommodation and we could not cancel it. It worked. Why start work early? You have to work for a lot of years.

An Apprentice Electrician

Day one at the “Bottle House” as it was called was an eye opener. The site was made up of a number of companies all spread out on this vast tract of land. There was the bottle making factory, a plastics factory, an engineering factory, a factory that turns coils of steel into various shapes and lengths, to name just a few. Throughout Australia at that time there were 92 different companies under the name of ACI, Australian Consolidated Industries.

The Electrical Department was situated in great open building with chain wire partitions to separate it from the Fitting section and the Riggers. I don't know whether it was to protect the property of each department or whether it was to keep the workers apart. Most of the workers enjoyed a bit of a chat, it seemed to help them toil more efficiently.

The staff of my new department consisted of: an electrical engineer and his assistant who had come up through the ranks. He was a decent fellow and they were upstairs so they could watch the staff at all times,

at least that was the feeling of most of the “watchees” on the ground floor. The rest of the crew were an interesting lot and most of them had spent most of their working lives there. There was the foreman, who was vertically challenged, the leading hand who used to be an excellent tradesman but mentally challenged, then the workers: 4 electrical fitters, 6 electricians 2 labourers and me at the bottom of the heap.

The word was “that an apprentice was the lowest form of animal life to exist in workshop” and some of the tradesmen made certain that the apprentice was made to keep feeling that way.

Another electrical department existed over the road in the plastics department; the staff consisted of a chain smoking cantankerous Scottish foreman and his electrician assistant who was Serbian – a first class mixture of cultures.

My first day on the job was to be assigned to a leading hand who was in charge of refurbishing the underground cable supply to number 1 Tank.

Number 1 Tank was one of three that took in the raw materials and transformed them into bottles. Periodically one of the tanks would be shut down for maintenance. The tanks were divided up into the hot end and the cold end. The hot end consisted of the furnace area which was made up of fire proof slabs of masonry. These were hand formed by expert tradesmen who used chisels and hammers to achieve their mastery and precision.

From the furnace end the molten glass flowed through to the moulding machines that received the exact amount of molten material to form the bottle required. After the bottle was formed it was moved out onto a conveyor belt which was called a Lehr, this took the newly formed bottle through a gentle series of cooling until it reached normal air temperature. Then it was packed into cartons and boxes.

Starting off with underground cables was a nasty way to start work. The Leading Hand was a foul mouthed individual who was pissed off

with life. His attitude was one of superiority, he was the boss and that was it. He was a complete and utter arsehole. Prior to my commencing employment he had lost his Driving Licence for being drunk behind the wheel. For the first few months of my employment he remained on the straight and narrow, but I think it got too much for him. Another member of the crew used to go out for a counter meal at lunchtime and it was not long before our hero went with him and it was not long and he was back to where he was. First thing in the morning 7.30 am there was a Gladstone bag full with large bottles of beer. Lunchtime he would go out for a counter lunch and return with another bag full of bottles. By the end of the day all the bottles were empty. Then he would head down to the Pub. When he was pissed you could talk to him, but when he was sober he was a dead set bastard.

He was an excellent tradesman, but a bit past it when I came to know him. He had no sense of humour.

Working with different tradesmen

The true apprenticeship system is to work with different tradesmen and learn from them all the different ways problems can be overcome and ways things can be done. Each tradesman has different expertise in different areas, such as bending conduit, fault finding, doing circuit diagrams, analysing circuit diagrams, carrying out wiring work and maintenance techniques and schedules.

I enjoyed working with people like Bill who had a sense of humour a happy way of approaching the day, but unfortunately he was only on day shift once every four weeks for a week. He was a happy go lucky kind of person that made it great to work and learn from him. Unlike some of the tradesmen he enjoyed passing on his knowledge to us apprentices.

Bill came in one day looking a bit downcast, when I asked what was bothering him, he explained that he had just seen his doctor and was told to give up smoking. He then said, "If I have to give up sex and drinking

I might as well be dead”. He died that night whilst on night shift. A sad loss.

Jock was another shift worker and as his name suggests, a Scotsman, a very dour Scotsman. He also was easy going and did not have any problems with passing on his knowledge. He too died on night shift only weeks after Bill. Another sad loss.

Another shift worker was one Bill Milden; he was a pom with a typical English red face. On day shift his first words were “I wish I were going home”, great encouragement if you were assigned to work with him. He was also very liberal with his advice and was not afraid to introduce new ideas. He used to tell great stories about his previous jobs and the previous apprentices, all of whom were far better than us. He did not die on night shift; he went on to retiring age and eventually went back to England.

The rest of the electrical department consisted of Greeks, the occasional Australian, one Russian and us apprentices. Chris was the elder statesman of the Greek electricians, he was very wise and clever, an expert armature winder who was in charge of motor maintenance and repair and an excellent teacher. He even taught me to count in Greek and learn the Greek alphabet. The Greek lessons always happened at lunchtimes. It was a pleasure to work with him and have him as a friend.

Theo was an armature winder and spent most of his time fixing generating sets and motors in the workshop. We got on well together and he passed on his knowledge of electric motors, how to dismantle, repair, maintain, re assemble and test them. I was informed that some years ago, Theo went a bit troppo after provocation from the foreman; he actually threatened him with a rather large carving knife. Eventually everything calmed down, but we were told not to upset him at any price.

Terry was another Greek tradesman from Egypt; he was sometimes called “the camel driver” because of his ‘ten to two’ walk and his dark Arab like complexion. He was a wonderful warm person.

Snowy was an electrician whose expertise was in the metal stamping and spinning section which was just over the road from the Bottle House. This section actually made the machinery to seal bottles and jars with bottle tops and lids. Of course wouldn't you know the bottles and jars were made in the Bottle House. The sealing machinery was leased out to the sealing and packaging companies.

Snowy had a nice little set up there, no one else wanted to be there, that is they could not, because he had been there for years and it was his territory. Imagine what happens when an apprentice arrives to work with him and has the temerity to ask questions? You are in the shit straight away; it is very hard to learn from a person like that.

George was a Russian who smelt very much of Russia: schnapps and vodka; he was a very friendly man who had a great sense of humour and would help you at any time.

Angelos was a trade's assistant whose main job was to assist the leading hand. He was called many derogatory names because he was seen to be a "yes man". In actual fact he was a pragmatist, life was much better for him while he had this job.

Frank was in the last weeks of his apprenticeship when I got to know him. His advice was to keep your nose clean and not get involved with anything. This was my first year at the Bottle House, but as with any enterprise new staff are often recruited sometimes with disastrous consequences.

About midway through this year there was the arrival of a new apprentice, Pat Davis. Pat was a country lad from a place called Streatham on the road to Hamilton. He was not very "city wise" so we had to acclimatise him. A starting point for this was attending trade school together.

Making the Bottles

The building of AGM, Australian Glass Manufacturers, was situated in Booker Street, Spotswood, Victoria. The front section comprised the administration area and the pay office.

Nearby is a gigantic high building with an overhead crane this was called the cullet pit, which received broken glass from outside the factory. The crane was used to replenish the furnaces with cullet. This all happened when we passed through the way to our workshops. The first door was the entrance to the Instrument shop where repairs and maintenance to instruments and equipment were carried out. The next section was the electrical shop which consisted of several working areas and a lot of storage for motors and equipment. The work benches were situated down the centre, six butted together on one side and six on the other side butted together, and they were butted up to the original ones. The Foreman was situated in a corner out of the way whilst the engineers were upstairs overlooking the workshop. The leading hand was stuck away on his own back from the other benches, a good place for him.

The next department was the fitting shop, the Fitters did the repairs on the glass machinery and associated machinery in the bottle making areas.

Just across the way from the Fitters in the same building were the Riggers with all their ropes and equipment hanging on the chain wire fence/wall.

A quick walk through the fitters' back door to the entry of the Plating shop which did the different type of plating for the bottle making moulds and the occasional rocker boxes, air cleaner tops and various other engine parts.

Out the back door of the Plating shop and into the plumbing and sheet metal department. The Carpentry shop was on the other side of Hudson Road. Looking North down the shed were storage pits for cullet

(crushed glass) which was picked up by the overhead crane and dumped into the batch house and mixed with soda ash and sand. The mixture was then deposited into the furnace and melted and then directed to the moulds to form the bottles.

Trade School

During my first year, as part of the apprenticeship requirement I had to attend trade school once a week. This was at the Footscray Technical College in Nicholson Street Footscray. It was magic, to meet other apprentices from all walks of life and to encounter the different teaching strategies from the teaching staff. The head of department was one Mr. Edward Walker also known as Ted or Teddy, behind his back of course. He was a gentleman, a credit to teaching and the electrical industry. He had the rare ability settle disputes without bloodshed. The SECV, State Electricity Commission of Victoria, would bring out a new book of regulations, called the reg book, roughly every six years, so just as you got used to the old book, out came the new one, and then new amendments. Ted would have the new book sussed out during the weekend and would be ready for school on Monday, word perfect even down to the reg. numbers and clauses. Apart from a few regs. We could never remember them, even with the help of the book. But with the aid of the teachers, we learned how to use the book properly.

Charlie O'Mearer was our electricity and magnetism (elec & mag) teacher and really enjoyed his work, enjoyed having fun with most of his students.

For some strange reason he seemed to dislike 'up-themselves Poms'. Of course we had a ready-made one in the class who this particular day was not paying attention and was hit by a flying blackboard duster, soiling his black jumper. All hell broke loose, the student was going to take Charlie to the Supreme Court for damages. It all settled down, nothing happened and life continued on.

Another teacher was Laurie Smith who obviously did not like being there, at Footscray. I heard he left and went to Collingwood Technical College. John Membrey was a great teacher and a great person, he got on well with everyone. We had a terrific time in his classes. Unfortunately during preparation for education week he fell through the fibro cement roof at the Footscray Tech. junior school and tragically died. This was not only a sad loss to the teaching profession and the electrical industry but to the community as a whole. He was a true gentleman.

The highlight of the week was doing practical work or “prac” in the “prac” shop. This area I reckon reached back to the origins of the electrical industry, you could almost feel the aura of the early pioneers doing their experiments. I am convinced that some of the machinery had been salvaged from the Ark, it was that ancient, but it all worked. At the end of each year it was dusted off, painted and tested, ready for the next influx of students. The storeroom was controlled over the years by seemingly psychopathic , devious personnel who took delight in being pedantic. If your material list was short of one component or screw you were not told, it was only when you realised you were a component short that you virtually had to go and beg for it, much to the delight of the storeman.

Storemen were in the same category as caretakers and librarians, each of them was at the top of their dung heaps and thought they were invincible. They were not.

The apprenticeship system

In those days the apprenticeship system was made up of the work component and the trade’s school component. The theory was that you worked four days on the job and the equivalent one day a week at school in the first and second year, and one day a fortnight in the third and fourth years, and one night a week in the fifth year. If you decided to study for an electrical technician’s certificate that was an extra one night a week.

The school worked in conjunction with the employer and the Apprenticeship commission. If you were absent or late for classes a report or “rocket” was sent to both parties, If the offence was severe enough you could lose a full day’s pay or even a visit from Dick Anderson who was the officer from the Apprenticeship Commission, which was not that flash – your job was at stake. Dick Anderson used to do a lightning visit once in a while, it generally went like this: On the way to a job you would be met by Dick and he would walk with you, “how’s it going son? are you getting on alright at work? Are you getting on alright at school?” If you answered yes to all the questions, he would say “see you later, if you have any problems give me a call”. All this was carried out whilst walking. He was a good bloke. I sailed through that year with good marks in all subjects, best of all 95% in electrical maths. This was a miracle – a distinction in maths, of all subjects. It was the second time I had passed maths in all my years at secondary school. The amazing thing was that being applied to electrical problems it all made sense. I think the teachers had a lot to do with it as well. There was a system in those days which allowed you to go straight from school into the second year of the course. I rightly decided not to, mainly because of my lack of expertise in maths, thankfully my decision paid off.

The second year of my apprenticeship drifted by without any great dramas, a few new people joined us at work, one was another apprentice Jimmy McEwan who was from Footscray, and an ex school mate Charlie Miezi from Newport. I finished my apprenticeship without much drama, passed my B grade and A grade exams and became a fully-fledged electrician, and I still hold my A class license today Sept. 2022 after 62 years. The rest they say is history.

How Bottles Were Made At The Bottlehouse

The start of this process begins with the raw materials, which included, soda ash, broken glass which is called cullet, and sand which

came from Lang Lang (by train). This was from the Glassworks own sand pit which looked like a snow field. There was sure to be other stuff that went into the mix but I don't remember.

The raw materials ended up in the place known as the Batch House that had very tall vertical conveyor, everything was weighed and arrived at the top of the conveyor and directed into a mixing tank and mixed together.

The next stage was the furnace stage. The furnaces took weeks to get up to the correct temperature. If it was done too quickly the bricks would crack and the furnace would be shut down causing long delays. At the Bottlehouse there were three furnaces. The complete bottle making process from furnace, glass blowing machines, curing conveyor and packing were called Number 1 Tank, Number 2 Tank, and Number 3 Tank. My first job at AGM was in Number 1 tank when it was not working.

The mixture from the Batch House was delivered into the furnace, called the hot end (for obvious reasons) heated to a very high temperature and when ready was directed into the glass blowing machines via tubes. The exact amount of molten glass was measured and arrived in the mould and the bottle was automatically blown by compressed air. It was then emptied out of the mould and guided onto the curing conveyor belt called a Lehr, a German invention. The belt was of metal construction to withstand the heat. The bottles were cooled down from red hot to room temperature over a period of eight hours where they arrived at the 'cool end' to be packed into cardboard boxes for the next part of the journey.

Working For Boyd

I was in my sixth year at the Bottle works and looking for another job, when lo behold, out of the blue, Boyd Probert who was a local electrical contractor, called in at home to see if I would like a job. I jumped at the chance and started work there in 1963.

The business was run from Boyd and June's home at 17 Dove Avenue Altona West. It was called the 'bird cage' as all the streets were named after birds: Emu Avenue, Linnet Street and so on. In the early days it was called the Mine Paddock due to its proximity to the Altona coal mine. There were no made roads and a lot of water around.

There was Boyd, an apprentice Ray who was a complete and utter ratbag, and me. The works vehicle was a 1952 Vanguard, three seats in the front, all the gear in the boot and on and around the back seat, and ladders on the roof rack. Most of work was local, around Altona.

I had known Boyd and June, his wife for a lot of years; his parents had the local general store in Seaholme which was not far from home. They were both in the Altona lifesaving club and knew a lot of influential people, which was good for a new business in town.

We sub-contracted to two local builders, Hans Peisl who built homes around the area and Lou Noordenne of Noordenne Homes who started Altona's first housing estate off Millers Road. He also built houses elsewhere around the town. The houses were constructed by 'subbies', sub-contractors who ranged from carpenters, plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, drainers, and painters.

Everyone who was on site at morning tea and lunch time would prop inside one of the rooms together on the floor and eat and and talk. Topics were many and varied, from football to football. Gary Simonds was a chippy. He now runs a multi-million dollar building company in Melbourne. On Mondays you knew if his team Geelong lost, he would mutter "I'm not talking football".

It was a steep learning curve coming from the bottle-house to contracting. There, a small wiring job could stretch out to weeks but here, a house had to be wired in a matter of hours. The system in those days was to do the wiring of power etc. before the floor went in, then come back later when the floor was in to finish off. Now everything is wired with the floor in which is easier on the knees. The brace and bit was the preferred weapon of battle; it really kept you fit. After that time, we used electric drills with a three-foot shaft with a three quarter inch auger. All drilling is now done with battery drills.

Throughout the years we engaged in many different types of pursuits ranging from many and varied styles of houses, to Altona Library, a block of shops with residences on top, a supermarket, sewerage pumps, the Werribee Italian Social Club, Altona Soccer Club, and a shearing shed at Diggers Rest.

At South Yarra there was a multi storey apartment block where several units and one penthouse had to be completed.

In Melbourne several lifts needed wiring, one at Bourkes ACTU and one at Gravure house now Lindrums Hotel. My first job on the top of a lift occurred in Park Street in South Melbourne with Don, lift foreman for Johns and Waygood. The building was about twenty floors and we started on the top floor. He manipulated the lift car top to line up with the floor level of the building and we on board quickly found something to hang on to thinking we were going to freefall as lifts seem to do. He shut the doors and were off very slowly, what a relief.

The next major job was at the ABC in Ripponlea.

On the roof of the four-storey building was a one hundred foot transmitting tower which supported the transmitting discs that had to be brought down periodically. Our task was to design and install the control system.

My first attempt at climbing the tower I failed miserably. I got a third of the way up and just couldn't make myself go any higher. That was

that, better luck next time. The next time I tried, I made it to the top. It was very windy with the tower swaying in the breeze, and me shaking along with it. Going down wasn't easy – but we got there safe and sound.

Wiring jobs were also done at Lake Mulwala on the Murray River, such as the Cypress Gardens caravan park. Eventually the Proberts moved up there and after a while set up the Denison County caravan and cabin park until, many years later it was decimated by a mini tornado.

Boyd was a great believer in employing apprentices starting with Ray Singh who disappeared into the ether when he finished his apprenticeship. Others were John Barron who eventually became an engineer, Kevin Marion who went on to run his own business and become an Electrical teacher, Jordan Messina who became an electrical inspector and John Hanniver who started up his own business. Mick VanDyke was our Trades Assistant. Gottfried Schwartz and Rick Winkworth were two tradesmen who worked for us over the years.

Sadly, both Mick and Gottfried were both killed in separate car accidents, a great loss to everyone.

During the early years June and Boyd had three children, Sandra, Adam and Matthew. Adam was diagnosed with encephalitis which slowed his progress in learning and he attended Yooralla special school in Carlton. Over time his condition worsened and June and Boyd had to attend the hospital on a regular basis, leaving me running the business.

Along the way the work vehicles consisted of a new Holden EH station wagon which was bogged in Deer Park in its first week. It was complemented by an early Volkswagen Kombi which struggled with loads it had to carry. The next acquisition was a EK Holden panel van, we were told it was owned by a little old lady who used it to drive to church on Sundays. I think she drove there through the Murray River judging by the amount of rust in it.

A four-wheel drive Toyota Land Cruiser flat top ute arrived and it was a great machine. Boyd's father-in-law, Snowy, fitted ladder racks

and tool boxes and we were up and away. A Holden HR ute, covered in with lids on the back, kept everything safe and dry. It was an ex PMG [now Telstra] vehicle. Third vehicle was a Ford Falcon ute with a tonneau cover over the ute section. The three vehicles were painted electrical orange with a signwritten B.W.Probert, Electrical Contractors. Later on, I had a Land Rover which was great on some of the building sites.

I worked for Boyd and June for fifteen years, a great place to work.

The Theatre

The Williamstown Light Opera Company

I was guided to the Mechanics Institute in Williamstown by Alex Barrie who worked as a linesman at the Bottle house. He said that they needed electrically trained people to do the lighting. I arrived there and ended up being trainee lighting person for 'New Moon' by Sigmund Romberg. It was magic, and I was hooked. I enjoyed every minute of it.

The next show was 'The Pirates of Penzance' by Gilbert and Sullivan. I went to every rehearsal and learned the show and worked out all the lighting cues. Fortunately, there are not too many in G&S. The show was a success and I was totally involved.

We did 'South Pacific', 'Paint your Wagon', 'Belle of New York', 'Naughty Marietta', 'Maid of the Mountains', 'Calamity Jane', 'Rio Rita' and a lot of other shows.

One year we put a float in the Moomba parade. The float was a castle based on 'Naughty Marietta'. It was built on a 1947 Chevrolet farmer's truck, very rustic, which I drove. Some floats took months to build, ours was built overnight at the drill hall in Melbourne Road Williamstown.

We left Williamstown early to go Carlton to get into formation for the start of the parade. The cast arrived dressed in costume from 'Naughty Marietta' ready to either walk beside the float or ride on it. We did not win anything but we all had a good time.

During my time at the Light Opera Company, I did lighting, stage managing and served on the committee.

Williamstown Little Theatre

I also did a number of shows with the Williamstown Little Theatre at the Mechanics, starting with 'The Monkey's Paw' directed by someone called Gillian Wadds, who also was part of the cast. It seemed to work well, no great problems. Over the next few years with the Williamstown

Little Theatre I did the lighting for ‘See How They Run’ and ‘The Boyfriend’.

Many years after retiring from the theatre, I designed the lighting for another show at WLT.

After Gillian’s play, ‘Who Cares?’ had been professionally produced by Queensland Theatre Co. and published by Currency Press, the Williamstown Little Theatre decided to put it on as part of their season. I agreed to do the sets which were constructed by the theatre’s team and I did the painting. The show was a success and it was decided to enter it in the play competition at Monash University run by the Victorian Drama League. The sets and and props were transported to the theatre at Monash and duly installed trouble free under my direction. Although we did not win any prizes for the show, we were lucky enough to win the award for my management of the bump-in and out, and I accepted the award on behalf of the WLT.



My foray into theatre restaurant

My friend Peter Norman suggested I come and do lighting and sound for a mob called Couch Productions. This also involved prompting during the show, which could be very difficult due to cast forgetting lines. The cast consisted of Margaret, Margo, Bob, Archie and Peter. Gillian wrote a script for one of the shows.

They travelled their shows around the countryside, playing in halls or motel restaurants and had a permanent gig at the Highway Inn, a motel in Sunshine. It was sometimes referred to by one of the comedians as the Highway Robbery which annoyed the hell out of the owners.

School Productions

During my tenure at Sunshine Technical School I was involved in several productions in the school hall which was a rather large building that seated heaps of people. My job was lighting and sound. It was a good experience.

As careers teacher I arranged with Sunshine Tech. TV studio to bring students over to the studio to do televised mock job interviews. It worked really well, the participants found that it built up their confidence and prepared them for the real thing.

Skating Days

It all began one weekend. A group of fellow students, all about eleven or twelve years old, from Form 1 at Footscray Technical School decided to go ice skating at the Glaciarium in Melbourne. We caught the train to Flinders St. Station and walked the short distance to the Glaciarium. But when we arrived it was shut for the summer. The others decided to go for a river cruise on the Yarra but I decided to have a go at roller skating at Wirth's Olympia. The building was part of Wirth's Circus which was set up nearby and was used for roller skating. Roller skates in those days were very primitive, unlike the up-market inline skates of this era.

I hired some skates and strapped them to my shoes and commenced to stagger around the fence that kept the skaters from erupting out onto the street and into the traffic. I found that I liked this kind of a challenge and continued to pursue it week after week. I gradually built up enough confidence to move into the main arena, always within close range of the fence, for insurance purposes. Although I was getting more proficient I still fell over. I learned that if you fell forward it was only your knees, elbows and hands that took a beating and not the back of your head.

So after many weeks of trudging around I was asked by an older woman whether I needed any assistance with the fine points of skating. She was all of nineteen, and was old by my standards as I was only eleven. She taught me how to skate in a straight line, go around corners and most importantly of all, to stop.

I continued roller skating for several years until I started to go ice skating at the Glaci, as it was called. I used to get a lift with Allan from next door every Monday night. General skating would commence at 8pm and finish at 10-30 pm. The Glaci. was long and wide, it had what they called "Mugs Alley" down the bottom end, which allowed skaters who had trouble standing up, to hold onto railings with both hands, which

saved the one hand over the other on the outside fence. Skating is a great sport, it can be a team sport as in ice hockey or speed skating relays, but for me it was an individual sport, one where you could lose yourself in the atmosphere of the place and forget any problems which may have occurred during the day, or meet friends or other people.

As I started to get better at skating, my confidence also had risen so I used to take part in the “mad minute”. “Gentlemen only fast skating” was the announcement. The appropriate music was played and the gentlemen would hurtle around in a clockwise direction for what felt like a minute and then it was “Gentlemen only reverse fast skating” I think this was to unwind you in case you could not slow down.

Then it was the Ladies turn.

You took your life in your own hands when you entered the fast skating especially the Gentlemen only variety, because there were people out there to get you and some of them were maniacs – ice hockey players who would practise hip checks and the like, which is very off putting when you are travelling at what feels like a thousand miles an hour in a straight line and start to head at an alarming rate towards the side fence, then you are hit from the other side and bounce back towards the centre.

I thought about this state of affairs and came up with the idea that it was better to get to know ice hockey players and the speed skaters. This proved successful as I was mercifully spared in the future.

The Glaciarium was closed and ended up being knocked down and parts of South Bank built where it once stood.

The only other skating venue around at the time was St Moritz on the upper Esplanade at St Kilda.

You could reach St Moritz by train from Seaholme to Newport, Newport to Flinders Street and then by the St Kilda Beach tram.

When you entered the rink by the stairs at the entrance the smell of cold would hit you; it was like a drug. You paid your money for entrance and for the hire of skates. Then 8pm arrived and away we went, skating

until 9pm. Then there was the dancing segment which preceded the fast skating. The dancing was really a time for the figure skaters to show off; they said it was valuable practise time. There were usually three or four dances, but if there were any complaints from the fast skaters waiting for their turn, Bill in the booth would announce several more. One night he announced “The next waltz is a dance”, which left him red faced for quite a while.

As my prowess at skating got better, I was going to the “saint” two nights a week – once by car on a Monday with Allan from next door and the other by train on a Thursday. This went on for a few years until I got my driver’s licence, then I joined the Southern Flyer’s speed skating club. This meant training on Saturday morning at some ungodly hour like 6am, racing Sunday afternoons and Tuesday nights, not to mention the running and exercises that went with it. My first race was a half mile handicap, where I was given a half lap start but even with that advantage I still came second. A half mile was seven laps around the rink, one mile was fourteen laps and two miles was – too far for me! So I stuck to quarter mile sprints. I was a sprinter not a long-distance expert.

Eventually with the aid of the car to get me there I skated every day of the week, twice on Saturday and twice on Sunday. I forgot to say previously that I joined an ice hockey club, The Black Hawks which was one of the top clubs in Melbourne and they used to train on Sunday mornings sometimes starting at 4 am which I thought was a bit rough. There were four teams that I can remember, and they were all based at St. Moritz and all trained on Sunday mornings – at different times of course. They were a great mob of blokes, would help you one minute and knock you down the next, it was all good fun.

There were some characters in the skating scene. At all general skating sessions there were floor managers who skated around and patrolled the ice watching for evil doers who would break the rules, either by skating too fast or knocking someone over, accidentally of course. The

penalties were varied depending on whether you knew the floor manager or not, but they ranged from 5, 10, 15 minutes off the ice, or longer. If you belonged to a speed skating or ice hockey club, you could get away with a lot more.

One character that used to bend the rules was, I am sorry I cannot remember his name. He would do a few laps to build up speed and then execute a perfect set of tram tracks down the centre of the rink. Tram tracks are parallel lines caused by the heel of the skate dug into the ice which annoyed the managers so much it made it worthwhile to do regardless of the penalty. Another trick he would do was “barrel jumping”. Barrels were a bit hard to come by during general skating, so he substituted real live human beings who lay down, side by side, until the correct jumping length was obtained. He would do several laps to gain speed then approach the bodies and launch himself into the air until he cleared the last prone body, always without incident.

Keith and Johnny used to arrive at the rink in an old Jaguar sedan. The story went around that one night, not far from the rink, one poor motorist put his trafficator out, which was the precursor of the turn indicators of today. The trafficator was a small arm which appeared out of the door pillar behind the driver and was used when indicating either right or left. The offending motorist apparently put the wrong trafficator out and duly turned the opposite way which kind of annoyed Keith and Johnny coming behind, so much so that they pulled up beside him and lopped off the offending instrument with a machete. It may be an urban myth, but I knew what these two were capable of.

Then there was Tank, who was a refugee from an ice hockey team and believe me he was built like a tank. He was a nice bloke when you got to know him. One of his favourite tricks was to sidle up next to you and sort of lean on you which made you suddenly veer off in a direction you were not thinking of taking, mostly into a fence somewhere.

One year there was speed skating competition in Sydney, between Victoria and NSW. I was selected in the Victorian team – what that really meant was that not too many were available. We took the evening Spirit of Progress from Spencer Street and took off for Sydney, thirteen hours away, in the sitting up compartment. We arrived at Central Station rather tired, found our hotel, dumped our luggage and staggered around to the rink at Prince Alfred Park. This was a swimming pool in the summer and an outdoor skating rink in the winter and it was magic to skate on. This was the first time I ever skated outdoors, and the speeds were a lot quicker than the inside rinks, for me anyway. After training for a few hours, the racing was ready to commence. I was rostered on to race my favourite distance, the quarter mile. I almost won, pipped at the post; but coming second for Victoria is not a bad achievement, and it was my fastest time over that distance, I was very proud.

The two-mile relay was my next event. The two-mile relay has 4 skaters per team; there is one skater racing at all times whilst the other 3 are skating around the centre of the rink waiting for their turn to enter the fray and dodging the opposing skaters who all have the same modus operandi. When it is your turn to enter the race, you build up speed in the centre of the rink and then branch into the track in front of your team mate. Building up speed all the time, he puts two outstretched hands which are on the end of two arms which are not outstretched until the moment you are both in position going like the clappers, then suddenly his arms outstretch and two hands arrive on your hips which then propel you at what feels like 1000 miles an hour or faster. I do not know why they don't use batons as they do in running relays. If the change-over is correct you complete your allotted number of laps and carry out the same procedure to your next team-mate. Sometimes the change-over can go wrong, an example of which is the way the push occurs. If the push is upwards you lose control of your skates and end up in a big heap either into the fence or on the ice.

We skated at a few different rinks in Sydney, one at a place called Hurlstone Park, which was a converted picture theatre, and a very small picture theatre at that. Saint Moritz was brilliant compared with this place: at St. Moritz it was seven laps to the half mile, but eight laps to the quarter mile at Hurlstone Park. At the end of a race, if you lasted that long, you would be totally dizzy.

My last race was at Saint Moritz on a Sunday afternoon in the interval between the ice hockey terms. It was a quarter mile race and the whole afternoon was televised by Channel 2 who always supported the skating community. The race was almost finished and I was leading; we were almost on the finish line when I tripped and fell, my hands went over the line before my feet, but the rules say it has to be feet first. I came second.

I resumed my skating career when I took Mon and Simon skating at St. Moritz and Footscray. As a teacher I was rostered on for skating duties, both ice and roller, ice at Footscray and roller at Sunshine. I found that after all those years I could still skate. The saying is that once you learn to ride a bike you never forget how to do it, skating is like that.

The Boats

The first boat I first had an interest in was a sixteen-foot clinker built dinghy given to me by my Grandfather at Tooradin. It was a beautiful boat, very graceful, but the boards had opened up and it leaked. The remedy was to sink the boat with water over the gunwales and leave it for three or four days allowing the boards to absorb water and come together thus producing a waterproof seal.

The idea was I would row the boat up the inlet to the flood gates at the bridge at low tide and head back down the inlet with the outgoing tide. When the tide turned then I could reverse the process and go back again.

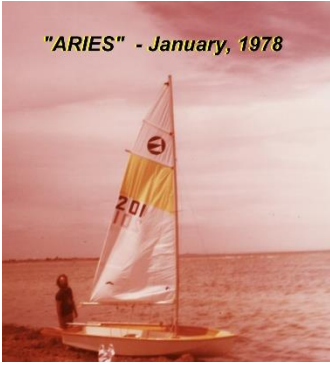
My next boat was scrounged from the beach over the road from our house in Seaholme where it was washed up. We got it into the back yard at home where it stayed until it was sold.

The next acquisition was a wooden Sailfish yacht, approx. twelve foot long, two foot six wide, hollow and a good collector of water. It was shaped like a floating door. At the Elwood Sailing Club where my mate,



Ron Hogan, and I raced it most Saturdays, it would fill with water and had to be towed ashore. It was decided to obtain a fibre glass version, with exactly the same specifications. I would like to say that it did not leak “but it did”. That was the end of the Sailfish era.

"ARIES" - January, 1978



I like to think that the next acquisition was a real boat. Developed by the sailfish people, it was called a one-two-five. It was 12 foot 5 inches in length, carried mainsail, jib, genoa; all in all a racy machine. It was easy to launch, either from the beach or from the boat ramp.

The next boat was a twelve-and-a-half-foot tinnie which I did not use very much except for one memorable trip up the Yarra and back. I eventually sold it, and I ended up buying a new fifteen-foot Savage, centre-console tinnie, a great boat used mainly for fishing on the bay. Things got busy and I sold it.

*The good ship "Sappho"
Williamstown - Nov.1980.*



Then along came Sappho, a nineteen-foot-six keel boat, designed by an Englishman in the UK, a very seaworthy yacht. It came equipped with two mainsails, a jib, a genoa and a spinnaker, all in sail bags. There was a collection of assorted ropes and fittings. Down below was a sink, a small metho stove, two bunks with mattresses and a toilet. A Volvo Penta 10 hp outboard motor was

also supplied. It was an electric start which needed a battery that I supplied. A 10-foot fibre glass tender plus wooden oars came with the sale, along with the mooring. I cannot remember the sale price but it took some negotiating to get the deal done. The boat had been deteriorating on the mooring for some time and needed some TLC, like a good wash down above and below the water line and then a final anti-fouling coat. It was a great boat to sail and Gillian and I sailed just about every week end. It was great to anchor it off Shelly Beach and go swimming and

diving, and also collecting abalone which we cooked at 10 Osborne Street. It was a magic boat, and many a good time was had by all who sailed on her.



The Teaching Days

A quiet glass of chardonnay or two on a Friday afternoon in 1978 at the Prince Albert Hotel in Williamstown, with Gillian and the teachers from Willy Tech. was the catalyst for applying for a teaching position in the Victorian Education Department.

With support from our teacher friends, I submitted my application. Soon I was granted an interview.

A number of weeks later, I received a reply informing me that my services were not required. It seemed that I was going to stay a sparks for ever more. So being Friday, down the Albert to tell everyone that the education mob could stick their job. Now, for one or three chardonnays.

A few weeks passed and I received a telegram saying that they had changed their minds and that I was due to arrive at Hawthorn Teachers' College on a certain date and to report to Footscray Technical College and see the head of department, Roy Howard.

It was like coming home, I did my electrical course Footscray Tech. and also my Technician's Certificate. The plan was to go to Hawthorn two days a week while the three were to be spent at Footscray Tech. supposedly learning how things worked in a school.

On about my third day at Footscray Tech. I was advised that I had a class of second year apprentices, subject: Fitting Bloody Theory which I hated. I arrived at the class and to my surprise there were several apprentices I knew from contracting days who said, "what the bloody hell are you doing here?" We all survived.

Once a week I had to create a lesson plan which detailed everything that was going to be included in the lesson. It was good in a way, because if there was problem during the class, the plan allowed me to get back on track. While the lesson was in progress one of the other teachers was sitting at the back of the room taking notes on the performance. At the end of the lesson, he would sit down with me and explain how one could

improve the set up next time, mostly positive feedback. Each there was a different teacher doing the “crit”.

I spent six months at Footscray then was sent to Tottenham Technical School which was a boys’ Technical School that went from Year 7 to Year 11. It had all the trades: electrical, sheet metal, plumbing, fitting and machining, automotive and woodwork. Those were the good old days. My supervisor was a sullen pom named Stan Ansell, who seemed to enjoy his own company as he did not seem to mix in with anyone, let alone student teachers. We went through the same rigmarole of lesson plans crits and so on. The difference between Footscray and Tottenham was yard duty. There was none at Footscray. Yard duty was a form of riot patrol, whereby you had to keep the peace in your allotted areas. Keeping Australia beautiful by getting the students to keep the yard clean and tidy. In every school we have the ratbags who seem to go out of their way to make things difficult for you, like riding bikes on the verandahs and in the corridors inside the school – and that was just the teachers.

Smoking was a favourite student pastime and some teachers were paranoid about it. One senior teacher used to stake out the toilet block to trap the smokers, but it was not worth it. The school had had a couple of fires in the past and my policy was to walk near the smokers, make it known that I was there, and walk away. That way they did not drop their butts near the buildings and cause fires.

Keep them out in the open, after all, they are in the fresh air.

The days at Hawthorn, or Bonehead College as we called it, were a bit different with subjects ranging from Teaching Method, Drawing, Media, English, Educational Psychology and, at the end of the year Sport. English was a breeze; the lecturers were great and all had a sense of humour. The secret was to give them what they want and do not argue. Psychology is a different kettle of fish; one lecturer advised us that if we spelled psychology correctly we would pass that subject.

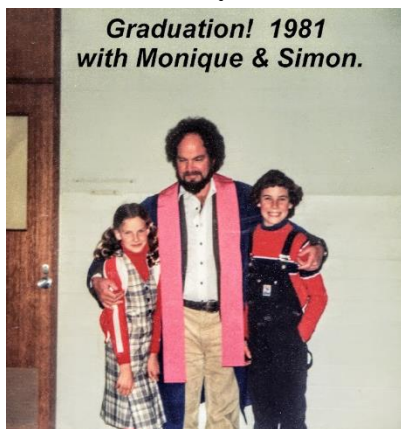
The members of our class in psych. were all chippies and sparkies, a bad mix for the unaware.

The class would usually start with the lecturer, who was a very capable person but she did not understand tradies. This was shown when she asked a question to the class. A chippie would answer and he would be met with remarks from the class like, “What would you know? You’re only a chippie!”

She would then put her hands to her head and say, “Why do you do this to each other?” and storm out. End of lesson.

This set-up happened every week.

Tradies 40 Psych.0.



After the first year at Hawthorn doing the Certificate of Technical Teaching, the course changed from two years to three, meaning if I passed I would gain a Diploma of Technical Teaching.

During the course, we sometimes as a group visited the former workplaces of the inmates. I led the way to the Bottle Works at Spotswood. We went to CUB brewery in Carlton, the Board of Works pumping station at Brooklyn, the Port of Melbourne at Appleton Docks.

The Bottle House brought back memories of my time there. We looked at the power-house, the hot end bottle making machines, the cool end, the packing end. Everyone was suitably impressed. The brewery was impressive with free samples and a look at the manufacturing process. The next port of call was Appleton Docks where we proceeded to learn about the huge dockside container cranes which were accessed by a lift running up the inside of the leg structure which is in vicinity of 120 feet

high. I hate heights but I went to the top; it was a bit scary, as every time the boom moved the whole thing shook violently. The view was great, but I could not wait to descend,

We then headed off to Brooklyn pumping station instead of going up, we descended into the earth 200 feet where the pumps and machinery were situated. The reason for the excessive depth was the sewerage pipe from Melbourne had to cross under the Yarra and maintain that depth to Brooklyn. A lot of the sewerage work around Melbourne occurred in the late 1800s and the tunnels were mostly of brick construction and were still in use.

In the third year at Teachers' College, one of the subjects I took was 'Sport in the School Curriculum' which was run by Jack Potter, a former state cricketer and a fellow yachtsman. He was the only one in the college who knew how to teach teaching. He did this by assuming that nobody had any prior knowledge of the subject. We have all had this problem in the past and it has caused problems. His system was, if you were teaching soccer skills.

1. Get the student to kick the ball ahead while watching the ball, to the end of the path laid out and back again to that start.
2. Same process but without looking at the ball.
3. Same again but through added witches hats to the end and back but looking at the ball.
4. This time ball kicked around the witches hats without looking at the ball.
5. While running kick the ball around through the witch's hats, without looking.

This is a simple system whereby, it starts off easy and the scale of difficulty increased along the way. If all these goals are reached move on to the next stage.

It is fairly simple logic, but it works, as teachers we tend to forget.

I worked as a teacher for twenty-one years in various areas, from TAFE teaching apprentices, being a Careers Teacher at both Sunshine

and Tottenham Technical schools, Electrical and Electronics at the above schools plus Balmoral and Ouyen High schools.

In 1998, we spent 12 months at Balmoral High school, which had a total student population of 67 students in Years 7 to 12. A great size school to teach at.

We lived in a comfortable “teacher’s house” on an acre of land where we became sheep farmers for a time with two sheep called Baarbara and Maartin. The time went very quickly and was very pleasant.



The whole school - staff and students

THE GOLDEN AGE AWARD

Because Geoff is leaving he is not eligible for an achievement or academic award but after much deliberation and consideration it was decided to offer him one on account of his advancing years.

Geoff can be regularly seen reading the paper in a relaxed manner.

He is never troubled by students or teaching classes.

Geoff arrives early and always leaves early and wishes he could leave early on Tuesdays as this upsets his rigid routine.

He has been known to have said : “not another staff meeting”.

Fumigation can now proceed to eliminate those pungent TEA BAG odours that frequently wafted about the place.

Next year he will really need to work on improving his sour face, grumbling, rudeness in the mornings, his moods and unfriendly and discourteous attitude towards fellow staff and students.

It was pleasing to see that Geoff really took to the Western District by setting up his own hobby farm, sadly after discussions with the Gore Pastoralist Company, a viable partnership was unable to occur. Due to heated and lengthy telephone conversations, Geoff set up his sheep venture in OPPOSITION.

Next was Ouyen High School where we stayed for four months, leaving after I began suffering from arthritis in my knees. Enough of Ouyen.

The Lions Cub of Camperdown

After living in Balmoral and then Ouyen, we decided we would rather live in the country than in the city. We found Camperdown after spending a couple of weeks there on holiday and decided we liked it enough to move here. So, in 2003, we sold our house in Altona and moved to a one-acre block on the edge of town where we have trees, views and plenty of space and fresh air. We called our new place “Treechange”.

Shortly after we arrived in Camperdown, I was approached by Maree and Andy Belyea who invited me along to a Lions’ Club meeting to see if I was interested in joining. I attended a few meetings and decided I liked the people and the work they did for the community.

The club had their own merry-go-round which was hired out for different functions, and a barbecue on a trailer to service similar occasions. The President, Ron Gravett, was a good bloke; he was a local racehorse trainer aka as “The racehorse trainer” and trained horses at the Camperdown racecourse. The treasurer was John Gee, a dairy farmer from Chocolyn, and the secretary was Andy Belyea, an ex newsagent, retired.

Barbecues were a specialty for the Lions’ Club; they were used by local businesses for special occasions, like opening or closing, or jump-outs at the Camperdown Racecourse, where the horses practised starts in races. If there was an event on somewhere there would be the Lion’s barbecue.

One of the biggest gigs of the year was the annual agricultural show at the local showgrounds. The Lions’ Club contribution to the day was run like a business enterprise, with people out the back doing the barbecuing and people at the front serving the customers. It seemed to work fairly well.

Another big gig was the Camperdown Cup in January at the local racecourse. As usual the barbecue was there along with the Lions' milk caravan, which served flavoured milk and various other dairy products. The Lions' Club covered many more jobs on the day, jobs such as attending to the entry points and the carpark and the horse float parking area. Other tasks were entry into the mounting yard and various other pursuits around the course. For a couple of years I organised the Lion's involvement for the day as well as looking after the car park. After the end of the big day, we had a wind-down and a barbecue for the members. Sometimes it was at our place, where the workers were able to relax and enjoy themselves. I resigned after a couple of years.

The Battle With The Medical Profession

In mid 2016, sometime after coming back after a holiday in Port Douglas, I went to the doctor for a normal check-up. I saw the Nurse who took my blood pressure which was through the roof. Next thing I was on my way to Warrnambool Base Hospital in an ambulance, complete with lights and music. Apparently it was somewhat urgent. Straight in for an MRI scan and then back to Camperdown Hospital the next day. The result: I had suffered a stroke. I ended up in hospital for about a week.

The result was that some of my short-term memory had gone missing, I had to write everything down on paper. Fortunately, my long term memory was still as good as it was.

After a couple of months, I was sent to a Gerontologist in Geelong who took me through a number of tasks to see if I was sane. Turns out I was, and have been ever since.

Some years later I suffered an injury to the joint on my left foot which started to bleed and carry on, so off to the Doctor then hand passed to the Nurse who looked at it and gasped, she then dressed it.

“Please come back tomorrow and the next day for dressings”, which went on and on for no positive result. One day during a procedure, one of the nurses noticed swelling on the right foot, and she put a pressure sock on. Overnight the sock rubbed on the skin and wore it away and left a gaping wound which would not heal. Now I had two for the price of one.

On and on there were daily dressings with no healing. It was then decided that should I go to a Podiatrist in Warrnambool, who stuffed around with my foot for nearly two years for zilch result, albeit a week in hospital at Warrnambool and another week in Camperdown for industrial strength antibiotics, which did not work.

The District Nurses arrived and dressed the wounds until things did not look good and I arrived back at Camperdown Hospital again. During

that visit my doctor in the operating theatre, administering anaesthetics for a surgeon, and asked if he could bring the surgeon to see me. The surgeon came to see me after surgery and advised me he would operate and remove the toes from my right foot.

All that happened without any problems.

Down the track the other foot got infected and that eventually was amputated below the knee which meant a stay in hospital of eight weeks and one week in rehab.

I was very lucky because the nurses, doctors, and specialists were all terrific. Throughout all this drama there was minimal pain during the operations due to the professional approach with the administration of the anaesthetics through the arm and with blocks behind the knee and also with a spinal block. They all worked well.

During these leg dramas I had two cataracts removed in two operations where everything went well. Excellent service all round.

I would like to thank Chris and Simon and the boys for their financial contribution along with Bernie and Conrad for theirs, much appreciated. Due to Covid restrictions, the waiting list for cataract surgery was out to eighteen months which is why we had to pay up front.

Throughout all these dramas there was one person who supported me all the way at all times through thick and thin it was my lovely caring wife, Gillian. She graduated as head nurse, district nurse, Doctor, accommodation adviser, driver and hospital visitor when allowed due to covid restriction. An all round excellent effort.

Twelve months on all seems to be well, touch wood. I now have a prosthetic left leg and a device in the right shoe to compensate for the lack of toes on that foot.

Finally

So, after eighty years, I have survived through thick and thin and all these medical dramas to be living on the family sheep farm with the two standoffish sheep.

Thanks to Gillian for her love and support and help in the publishing of this history. Thanks also to the Senior family, Simon and Chris and the boys, Jack and Lucas, Mon and Harper.

To the Wadds Family, Conrad and Bernie, Stefan and Alex, and Saige and Riley, Philip and Regina, Marcus and Suzanne, Marley and Olive, thank you all for being there.

Cheers: Geoff.