

We're Not Dead Yet

Lives full of adventure, humour, a can-do attitude, hardship and optimism


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These are stories from local people who have had amazing lives. Full of adventure, humour, a can-do attitude, hardship and optimism.

The "We're Not Dead Yet" project was delivered by Lilydale Community House in partnership with the Victorian Government

VICTORIA State Government

Allan Kitt

I was born in Bendigo in 1942. As a child, I have been the black sheep of the family, for all my life and I had a mother, and this is a terrible thing to say, but I never hated anyone so much in all my life. But anyway, that's her. My elder brother was “Lord Jesus”, so nothing went wrong for him, right? His life just sailed along, dying at 31.

He'd say “Allan, go and get a biscuit.” Go and get this. Go and get that. I'd go and get it. You see, he'd sit outside the back door and eat it. And I’d go up behind the woodshed, mother would come out, and she's like, “where did you get that?” to my older brother and he would say “Allan got it.”

So I was the one that got the hiding. One day, she put a rat trap in the biscuit tin, and I got my fingers caught. And I thought, you'll never beat me. So I reset it. My two aunts came in the afternoon, and of course, my aunt goes to get the biscuits out, and the rat trap went off.

I explained that I got caught by the rat trap. I said, “see my fingers?”, and I explained I’d reset it. I spent a lot of time in hospitals, from hidings and things. My mother, she was a cruel, cruel woman.

Even so, in those days, when I look back, and I think of my childhood, it was bloody fantastic. There was no such thing as money, it was all coupons. But I don't understand about the coupons, not sure if they got them every fortnight, or whatever it was, but they'd get coupons and this was when Australia was a beautiful country. Everyone in the neighbourhood, it didn't matter how many blocks away they were, everyone had a meal on the table.

My dad had a really good vegetable garden that had veggies practically all year around. I was born and bred in Bendigo and so we would supply veggies. And we had chooks. In those days, the tip used to be all set on fire, and the Egg Board used to dump all the fertile eggs, and the heat from that fire would hatch the eggs. After school, I'd go out and collect the chickens and bring them home, and then I go along the railway line and sweep up the wheat.

And that's how we existed. We sold the chickens, either pullets or dressed, we used to sell a lot of dressed chooks, especially for weddings and big functions so it helped us financially, you know, it was great.

Everyone in the neighbourhood, it didn't matter how many blocks away they were, everyone had a meal on the table

I was such a shit of a kid that my Nana used to come and pick me up after school on a Friday and I'd stay there till Monday morning. She'd take me back to school, and then I'd go home for the rest week, and that was my life. My nana and grandpa, were beautiful people.

Across the railway line from Nana's was the [water]race. I don't know where the water came from, or where it went, but there was the race with all the clear water that I think it went to the reservoir for Bendigo’s water. I used to get in the water, naked, and all the leeches used to grab on to me and I’d get out, my uncles would pull the leeches off, turn them inside out on a match, put them in a jar of water, and when they got a jar full, Uncle Tom would get on his bike and race to the hospital. We used to get two shillings for each leech because they used them for wounds in the hospital.

This one day I've walked out of the water and there's one on my dick! Oh no, uncle Kevin just screamed and ran home screaming and he couldn't talk, and Nana come back because she thought I must have drowned.

In our street, Catholics lived on one side and Protestants lived on the other side. You don't have nothing to do with one another. We had an imaginary line down the street. We played on this side. They played on that side. If the ball came over our side, it stayed there until we went inside, if our ball went over their side it would stay there. We'd bring it home. We would use phenyl and wash the ball and get all the maggots off.

It was racism in a way, you know. We'd go down to the shop, the grocer shop, and if a Catholic was in, we stayed outside. They did the same. We respected one another.

I'd say, I hope there's a Catholic in the store, and I'd go around the back of the shop and get a couple of bottles and to bring them into the shop. And I used to get threepence a bottle, so I'd get sixpence, so I'd be able to buy my lollies and double dip.

Cyril, who was a Catholic and lived diagonally across from us. We became really good friends, practically all our life. And we'd get on our bike, and I'd go up the hill and around into Caledonia Street, the street over, and there was a big hill in front of us. We'd meet over there, and we'd get into trouble or do whatever we had to do. We were friends right up until Cyril died. He died about 15 years ago now. He ended up marrying my bloody girlfriend, and I was best man!

He didn't know money anyway. He couldn't write or anything like that. And I used to swap him my two ha'pennies for his thrippence because he thought he had more money that way. But we shared everything. Yeah, we were great mates, and we did some horrible things in life.

But my childhood was a real, happy childhood. Then my teen years were quite good.

I did a lot of dance. Loved dancing. And I ended up doing professional dancing and Dawn (the love of my life), and I did very, very well. I'd go to the balls. In those days, country balls, oh, there was nothing like them.

There was a lot of Italians in Bendigo, they took on growing tomatoes and all of that, and they used to pay me for dancing. Now, in those days, I was getting five pound a fortnight. They would pay me 100 pound to partner their daughters into the "Belle of the Ball" because she'd win. I made a fortune.

I saved up and I bought an old Harley motorbike and sidecar, and I went around Australia in that for two and a half years. It was bloody marvellous, you know. It was more outback, not along the coast. I would do all the outback, and I would work at a shop somewhere, or out on a farm, and I'd get enough money for petrol and some food, and off I'd go again somewhere. And that was absolutely wonderful.

I'll never forget my 21st birthday as long as I live. My father got up in the morning and I was sitting there having my breakfast, and he said, "You've got to go down to the electoral office and put your name down on the electoral roll because Noel Beaton, who was his friend, was standing for Parliament.

I thought you're not going to tell me what to do. So I never did it. Do you know I've never voted in my life? Because I never put down my name of the electoral roll, I refused to do it.

If you tell me not to do something, I'll go ahead and do it. I will never be told what to do. That's me.

In those days, we never started school till seven, and my birthday was on the 30th of May, so I didn't have to start school until June.

But when it got to the end of the year, and I was 13 and a half, and I was going to be 14 before the New Year, the next year I was allowed to leave school, so I left school at 13.

My first job was going around with the horse and cart, delivering wood to the houses.

Wonderful job. I didn't have to do anything only throw the wood on the cart and horse. She used to know which house it had to go and stop.

There was a lot of Italians in Bendigo, they took on growing tomatoes and all of that, and they used to pay me for dancing

Then I did an apprenticeship as a boilermaker, and my legacy is the Richmond Station. That was all made in Bendigo at the Rail Workshops, and then brought down to Richmond and put together, and now they have a classification on the station. It'll stay there forever. Where the verandah comes down, there's all these bits of steel going up and down. I did every one of them, that's my memorial.

And so then I caused a riot at work. In those days, an apprentice didn't have to join the union, but every fortnight, they'd come around and want two shillings for the Sinking Fund. This went on for three years, and they'd come around, and say, "Your two shillings" and "I said, no, no, two shillings." He'd said, "What do you mean?" I said, "if the thing hasn't sunk now, it never will, and I'm not paying any more towards the sinking fund, and that's it."

As an apprentice, you had to work with a tradesman, and so they stopped me working with a tradesman. So the last two years of my apprenticeship, at work I did absolutely nothing. I used to sign on and sign off, and I used to sit there all day and do nothing.

We used to go to the School of Mines and do practical and theory work at the School of Mines where we built the diving tower for Bendigo pool.

While I was there, I then had this urge, I wanted to be a nurse. So I decided to finish there and go to be a nurse. I had to come down to Heidelberg Repat to do my nursing training. And in those days, males didn't do nursing, I was the only male in the school. And it was fantastic, because in the nurses' quarters down on the boardwalk, the nurses would go out, and I always left my window open so they could get back in and I used to get five shillings for letting them in. You know, I had wonderful time.

And then when I graduated, you weren't allowed to work in that hospital. You had to find somewhere else. So I went back to Bendigo and I worked in what was called the Benevolent Home. It changed its name so much but it was the old people's home. And there was an asylum at the back - Ward 11 was the asylum. And I loved working down there. That was very interesting.

In the midst of that, I had a girlfriend, Dawn, who was the love of my life. She was Chinese, beautiful person and her mother, Rose was a lovely lady. We were to get married on the Friday. On the Tuesday, Rose ran out in front of a tram. She didn't get killed. But on the Friday, Dawn and I were standing out in front of the church hall bawling our eyes out telling everyone the wedding was off. Dawn looked after her mother up until she died years later.

I was on the rebound then. And of course, in those days, if you weren't married at 21 there was something wrong with you.

I was 25 when I got married on the rebound. I came down to Melbourne for work, and I was going back to Bendigo and this girl was standing at what used to be called the Man in Gray. It was the signs up for where all the trains were leaving from. And I said to this woman, can you see where the train to Bendigo is going? Because I can't read properly, I am dyslexic.

She told me where the train was leaving from. And then upstairs at Spencer Street, there was a cafeteria, and the only place for me to sit was where she was sitting. I asked if she would mind if I sat there, and she said, No. Then we talked and talked, and she was going to Geelong, and I said, "Oh, I'm going to come back and marry you."

And she said, "Come back when you're sober, but I wasn't a drinker."

That was on the Thursday or Friday, and then on the following week, I met up with her, and we went to the jeweller, bought an engagement ring and got engaged. Six weeks later we got married.

We had a daughter, then we lost a son, then we had another son, and then 12 years later, we had our last daughter. But there was nothing in the marriage. All it was, was me working. I'd go to work on day shift. I'd knock off day shift and go and do afternoon shifts at a nursing home and on my days off, I'd work. I used to work for a builder and I used landscape the gardens at their display homes. So, every cent that I earned would go to my wife to manage the house and all the rest, because I didn't know how or what that was anyway, and I thought she was managing very well, and everything was going fine and I became a workaholic.

Then I gave away nursing because the politics were getting out of control. I got a job at Taralye, which was in Blackburn. It was a live-in caretaker job, it was beautiful with all the deaf children. I just loved it. I worked some very long hours, because there used to be a lot of meetings at the place.

We had a good, good life there, kind of, and my wife got a job at a nursing home in North Blackburn.

It was when things started to change as she worked night shift and she always used to collect the mail and bring it down into the office. And I never really understood why she ever did it.

This one day I had to go somewhere, and I on my way back, I thought, I'll collect the mail. And there are all these bills that had never, ever been paid. I don't know what she was doing with the money. I don't know, but nothing got paid.

I had to have an operation on my neck and on my back because in nursing, you had to lift all these patients on your own. And anyone that was heavy, they called me all over the hospital to lift patients, to turn them and this in time caused problems.

I was in hospital, had a neck operation, and then I had to go to a rehab and my daughter come in, and I says, "How's your mother?" And she says, "She's good." I said, "Oh, she hasn't been in to see me." She said, "Oh, she's left you". I said, "She's what?" She said, "Oh, she's gone. She sold up everything because she's gone".

So when I got out, I still could stay in where I was working, and there was a kind of a bed, an old chair and a knife, fork and spoon, bowl and a plate. All my personal things, everything, she took, took everything and drained the bank.

Then, after having a neck operation, I had a stroke, and I was in hospital. Then they put me in the Peter James Centre in Burwood. At that

time, I had really lost my speech, it was really hard to understand me.

It ended up I got a unit in Nunawading. It was a dump but it didn't matter."

I went from Nunawading to the Housing people who got me a unit in Blackburn. After my neck operation, I ended up having a back operation. I never worked from then on, from 52. I was a mental case because I couldn't work and I was in and out of hospital. I never had a day off school, never had a day off work until I had the neck operation, and then my health just went down the gurgler.

I went up to Bendigo to stay with my son. Circumstances changed and I had to leave. I really had nowhere where to go, and so I came to Melbourne. I was 70 at the time, and I was homeless, and I used to sleep in the lift at the Box Hill Station, for the night. Someone got me and put me in a place somewhere in Box Hill. I can't remember where it was. My memory gets pretty mucked up on this kind of thing. I eventually moved back with my son and my grandson. But due to circumstances again, I had to leave and ended up in the Royal Melbourne Hospital. And then I went from there to North Melbourne to the Salvation Army place, a halfway house kind of place, you know, full of drug addicts and people out of jail and it was the most shocking place. And for 12 months I locked myself in a room, I couldn't get out because I was too frightened to go out. Then they moved me to a place in Footscray, oh God that was lovely. Loved that place. Good neighbours, it was really great. And I thought, I hope I stay here forever. I was there for nearly 12 months.

I've turned 80, and I thought if you haven't done anything with your life, you might as well start doing something. So I decided I'd start painting. I've just finished a painting but it's the last one, because my eyesight's gone.

I've also got Parkinson's, the doctors have got my shakes under control, but my sight's going awry and my swallowing has gone.

And I've got that finger on one hand and thumb and same on the other hand, that's all I've got for the use of my hands. The others are just to look at and I can only make sure that they're washed every day. I woke up one morning and my hands were so closed, so tight, you couldn't open them. They were like that for six months, and the stench, because then they hadn't been washed, and God knows what was in there. I had Botox put into the hands so they opened, but they haven't done anything other than open. I've been back to them. They said, "no, we can't do anything now." So, you know, I struggle with everything. Everything I do is bloody struggling, you know?

The thing is, all my life has been about others, right? Maybe 15 or so years ago, I was awarded the Australia medal for my charity work. I've raised millions. When we had the Spastic Society, and we had Miss Australia. With June Anstey, we raised 28,000 pound. No one ever, ever got anywhere near that. She ended up Miss Australia Charity Queen, I was so rapt. But you know, through my life, I've mixed with the cream of society. I had Prince Charles come to our house, and I've chimed the bells at the church for the Queen. And, you know, I've had a very interesting life. I've met with all types of people, they're nothing special to me, they're just people. I don't put a class on anybody, because the only thing I put a class on is old people. I can't stand old people. I hate old people, and then I'm not going to bloody live with them - I'm 82. I have younger folk who like to hear of my story growing up in yesteryears.

My life every day is full. I just keep myself active all the time and still helping those less fortunate.

Jackie Clough

I was born in Warwickshire in the Midlands of England, and when I was just very young, we moved up to Lancashire at wartime, because where mum worked was a armaments factory, and the Germans were bombing Coventry, which was just a few miles away from where I was born. And so we moved up to the north of England. There was an empty factory, and they moved the armaments factory up to a place called Nelson, up in Lancashire, and that's where I grew up.

I went to school just at the top of my street, and it was a one-in-five hill. So it was a climb up and a climb back down and then I went to a boarding school because I had a lot of lung problems and bone problems, and it was called an open air school. There were no outside walls in the classroom, you were outside, but covered by three walls and the roof as the internal side. And at night time, or if it was really raining or very, very cold, then they put closed glass doors so we could still see outside, but we were protected from the weather, and that's where I went to school. I was there for seven years.

Then I went home and did High School back in Nelson. Boarding school was like primary and middle school. And at 11, I went back home and went to the school just up the street. After that I went to work. My father came back from Burma. He was on the Burma railway, so he'd been very sick. So I grew up not knowing too much about my dad. I'll call him my dad, and have a reason for that.

He was a gentle, kind soul, and he was always very good to me. It was just somebody special to me. He used to take me on long, long walks up in the countryside. When my father came back and he wasn't well, he couldn't do anything, and the government gave him quite a fair bit of land, a full paddock of land, we call those fields there. And he had a chook farm. So some of my time was on that chook farm, being 11, helping my dad, you know, before and after school, and we built all the sheds and everything by going to the vegetable shops and asking if they had any wooden boxes. And they were like weatherboards, and that's what we did to build the sheds and everything. Dad couldn't work, mum had a bad heart so we were relying solely on the government for everything that we had. I learned a lot of lessons from then, and that really moulded the rest of my life, of what I've become and how I live myself.

We had a massive water shortage, they put stand pipes at the end of each row of houses. We were only allowed to have one bucket per household per day for everything. This was in the early 1950s. So my mum sent me down to get our bucket of water. And it was a metal a bucket, and I struggled with two hands and often the water was going down my knees. Took that home.

And then I suddenly thought, how do the old people get the water? And some of them are standing at the gate, up the hole in the next row, and I'm thinking. So I go to them “do you want me to get you some water?” I got the bucket, and I went down, and the man said to me, “you can't have any more water. You've already got yours”. He said, “go and tell your mom you've got yours”. I said “it's not for me mum,it's for the lady up the road”.

And of course, the word soon goes round. I think I delivered about six buckets of water. And then he said to me, go and get your mum's bucket and I'll give you another bucket of water. And I said, “No, it's one bucket”, and I wouldn't. I would not go back home and mom's bucket.

So that started the way I feel about some people that need somebody else to help them, whether they're old or whether they're sick or whatever reason. I never, ever questioned the reason, and I still don't. And so that sort of moulded me to what I do. And then at 11, I started, because they specially said "she needs to swim good, for her lungs". And I ended up swimming for Lancashire County Council competition swimming. I was really very good at what I did, and I absolutely loved it.

And I could swim because my dad threw me in the canal when I was younger, before I went to boarding school. He said, "Come on, swim!". And of course, I'm going underneath and coming back up and spluttering. And I did the doggy paddle, and to get he said, "Go like this". And I did, and got to the bank. And then he made sure that I could swim. He gave me swimming lessons and did all that.

We had the window open, and I snuck a bun out through the window to him. And I think he must have thought, "gee, that's alright, she cooks"

And growing up, when I got to 15, 16, and I was so good at swimming, the local swimming pool employed me to do swimming lessons. And I did that until I came here. I was swimming instructress and lifeguard, and I joined the GLB the Girls Life Brigade, and so I was in that until just after I got married.

I came here in 1975 and a lot of people didn't know, and my family didn't know, but some of my family, did that I married a plumber and central heating engineer. And he was a mountaineer and cave explorer. I can't stand heights. I'd got stuck off all the way up a mountain and broke my ankle coming down.

He had his own business, and he used to say, I'd love for you to come to work and give me a hand. And this got more and more and more on the weekends. So I went to Rolls Royce and did my apprenticeship as a plumber and heating engineer. I was the only lady tradie in England.

I went and got my license to plumb, and still had it when I came here, but then I let it go when we came here, because I didn't want it was too heavy for me here, too much learning to start, because the plumbing here is totally different to England.

I met my husband, Sam when I was 11, and he was the plumber putting the guttering on our school, and he was working just outside our school which was three storeys, a big black stone building.

Actually, it was sandstone when it was built, and I was doing home economics, and was making buns, and I used to stay back. I had a French cooking teacher. Amazing woman taught me so very much. And she said, if you want to stay back, Jackie, I'll show you how to do some extra little things, which was just amazing. And of course, Sam was doing the plumbing.

We had the window open, and I snuck a bun out through the window to him. And I think he must have thought, "gee, that's alright, she cooks". He was 17 then. And we started to run a youth group together. We hired our local church, on a Friday, and we used to all get together at five o'clock and start cooking, and we used to take it to old people and sit and have a meal with them. And that's what we used to do. Then we used to go back and play games, and we'd get somebody from the church to come at nine o'clock give us a talk and make sure the church was locked up and sent us on. So, from there then Sam came to Australia with his family because he was still a minor. He had to come when they came here. I

had two jobs when I started work. I worked for G-Plan furniture, as an upholsterer and then at night time, I used to run two miles to the cinema, where I was an usherette till 10 o'clock. I was 16. Sam's sister was an usherette, she was in charge of the usherettes. One day she said, "Oh, it's the fireman's ball Jackie, down at the Imperial Ballroom, walking distance to the theatre". And she said, "Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Lane are performing." Well, I love jazz. And that was me gone. I was smitten. I said yes, and I took me a change of clothes to work, got changed there. I've never been much of a dancer because of my legs, so I'll get them do a bit, but then I can't handle it anymore, and sit down. We're sat up with a baby champagne Perry, and this guy comes up, and she said, "Oh, this is my brother". And I said, "Is it"? She said, "Yeah, this is Sam". I said, "I know who he is". And that was it. On my 18th birthday, we got engaged. And I was 19 when I got married.

He was in the army here, so I went back to England, and then he came back too. It all just worked out just really nice. He did just two years National Service here, and then he came back. But by that time he could suit his self, he was like 18, so could suit himself when he came back. He's eight years older than I am, we had very happy marriage and two children.

And then we decided that things were bad in England. There was no electricity, and all the industry was only working three days a week. We had our own business, plumbing and heating engineers. I'd always wanted to come to Australia, because I have family here in Adelaide, and they'd always wanted to bring me here. And I wouldn't. I said, I'd never leave my mum. And anyway, I thought, we have no alternative. There's nothing here for my kids. Kids here had gone through university, and they're sweeping the streets, and there's no prospects. There's no prospects for my family here. So we decided that we would come back and Sam's mother sponsored us over. We ended up in Croydon in 1975. All the family met us down at the docks. We came over by boat, but we paid for ourselves because we had to, because Sam had already came as a miner, but he came on the 10 pound government handout and because we were plumbers and heating engineers, you needed plumbers here.

And a company called McDougall & Ireland, brought us out. And we built the school in Albury Wodonga. They brought us on to build it. We built the school because, well, we weren't just plumbers. We did everything, the carpentry and everything. The only thing we didn't do was electrical and glazing, because we wouldn't touch glass. So we had the McDougall & Ireland employed us to do all the plumbing and the carpentry and the electricals and everything else was done by the actual builder.

Well, I love jazz. And that was me gone. I was smitten.

We stayed, and we just loved it here, we never thought we'd made a mistake. It was just amazing. And I found that if you put stuff into here, this country is a good country for you. It's been good to my kids. I did a few jobs when I came here. Actually, I worked for the Pancake Parlour for a while. While my kids were at school here, when they were eight and 10. They had little shop down the little lane on the Main Street of Croydon. And I actually worked at that little shop, and used to make 180 cheesecakes a day for all the restaurants.

Meanwhile, we bought a block in Millgrove and built our house on it. When we were finished, I was glad my mother came over in 1983 from England and stayed with us for six months.

I had a family friend, and he was the manager of Waltons in Croydon, and he said, "You shouldn't be working like this in here. You should be over there with me, you'll be really good in retail". I started in Manchester. I ended up the manager of Waltons in Croydon.

And then we joined the church up at Millgrove, River Valley Church, it's part of Careforce in Mount Evelyn. We started a church with Andy Bennett in the Millgrove school. And we ended up doing really well. Within 12 months, it was full of just normal people. They come as they are, the jeans, in the dirty clothes, whatever they came in. The doors were open to them, and they all went to home with something to eat. And we started the outreach there, and I was the community support worker.

I went and qualified as a community support worker and that grew until we decided to go ask the education department and build a big stadium on the school grounds and half of it was our church, and the other was a basketball stadium, but the school had access to the stage when they do concerts and everything else. And it worked. We had a really good partnership with Millgrove Primary School.

My husband Samuel, passed away in 2005 and I carried on working full time for the church and doing what I do and helping people out in need, sorting out bills. And I felt that that's where I've been aiming to go all my life, and I've just thoroughly enjoyed older people. Sometimes at a great cost to me physically, because when we moved down, to Dandenong Road, I found that when I was going up to work and starting eight, I was leaving it down here at seven, and sometime I didn't get finished till seven at night time, and I'd have to pull in on York Road near MECS school and have a sleep because I couldn't make it home. I didn't get paid, I was a permanent volunteer. And during that time, as well, I was an integration aide, at Wesburn Primary School.

So I taught there for four years as I was passionate about children that can't read. Because if they can't read, that gap is really big, that they fall into because all the work that children have to do now, right from primary school, right from the infants, everything they have to do is written down on a piece of paper, and if they can't read it, they don't know what they have to do for the day. And it's absolutely mind blowing for those kids that just sit and look at it and have no idea.

So for a long time, I've been working as a full-time volunteer, doing something or other.

I moved into this village and I am very involved with the community here. I'm on the village committee, and I have been since I came here seven and a half years ago. I still cook for food parcels. And anybody that's sick here gets meals, and things like that. And anybody that needs help and advice to do with any problems that they might have, they all come to me. So I'm actually still working. I've never retired, and I can remember asking somebody, "when do volunteers retire?" We don't, we don't, because it's always going to be somebody out there that needs a helping hand.

And early growing up, I got to thinking that I'm okay, but if you're not okay, I can't be okay, while you're not. If I'm okay and you're okay, we can both do something about making everybody else okay, and I've grown up with that. I've grown up with that there's always somebody that you need. I've enjoyed my sporting life, bowling. In 1975 after my husband died, I was the president of Coldstream Seniors for many years.

I'm now the president of Lilydale Seniors. I've been the president for the last year, and I've thoroughly enjoyed working with the seniors. They're just so lovely, because the strangest part is I never think I am one. It's really funny. I'm working with the seniors, and seniors get a

lot of help in here off me. I never think that I'm a senior and I'm nearly 80 and I'm enjoying life. I'm right to the full every day I wake up and I think, well, this is another day you've given me God, to make a difference in somebody's life.

I remember me saying to my mom, where have I come from? She said, under a Cabbage Patch in your granddad's garden. I thought, no, no. I said, Well, why am I here?

She said, You're here because we love you. I thought, I don't understand. They said, Well, where am I going? She said, that's up to you.

I asked three questions and I got three wrong answers.

When I was 12, I asked the same question to a vicar of one of the schools that I went to, he said, “You're here to serve Him”, and where am I going to, he said “going back to God when you're finished”.

Robert Reed

Born in 1941, I was the second eldest of fifteen children, nine boys and six girls. Since the age of five, I lived with my family in Mt Evelyn, where my siblings, friends and I got up to all sorts of fun and games. We would spend most weekends yabbying at the dam near the railway station (where Bowens Hardware is now located). My friends and I would sell yabbies we had caught to the people from the city who had travelled out on the train. There were other times where groups of people would travel from Melbourne to Mt Evelyn Recreation Reserve for their annual picnic.

My friends and I would come along too and provide some entertainment for the visitors, like taking the bark off of the trees and marking out tennis courts for them to play a game of tennis. We would also ride our bikes as fast as we could down the very steep hill that runs down the back of the reserve, which the visitors found very entertaining. They would then usually pay us three or four sixpences for our efforts.

My father worked at the local quarry in Cavehill Road in Lilydale, while mum stayed at home to raise us kids and take care of the home. As there were so many of us to take care of, some of my siblings and I would regularly go cherry picking before and after school to earn a bit of money for the family. My mother would go out cherry picking herself where possible and together we would earn up to a pound a week; every little bit helped put food on the table.

It was sometimes challenging for us as a family when I was growing up, especially having so many children to take care of. For instance, when the soles of my footwear wore out, I'd have to put cardboard in the bottom of the shoes, and that's what I wore to school for a while. I remember one day my mum was crying as we didn't have a penny in the place to buy any food. So, I decided to sell my gun, which I used for rabbit hunting and handed the money I got for it to mum so she could buy some food. My mum was amazing though, always baking and cooking food for us, and she did it all on the wood stove, which she would collect the wood for each day. Sadly, my mum passed away when she was only 49 years old.

I originally attended Mt Evelyn State School, but as my family were Catholic, I was moved to St Patricks Primary in Lilydale around grade 2 or 3. I never attended high school and at the young age of 13, I started my first job at an abattoir in South Melbourne. I'd leave home at 5am each morning, either catching the train or getting a lift with a family friend. I worked at the abattoir for almost a year, but left after having a work accident. I then got myself a job at the Spicer Shoe Company in Lilydale, opposite where the Nylex factory is currently situated. After a while the work hours dried up, so I was sent to work at their factory in Fitzroy.

Six months later, I was offered an apprenticeship, however, I decided that I didn't want to keep working in a factory all my life, so declined. My mum suggested that I get a more secure job, and we happened to notice that Australia Post in Lilydale was advertising for positions. You needed to sit an exam, which I passed, and at age 15 I commenced work at Australia Post in Lilydale. Initially I undertook deliveries and a while later I was later transferred to Australia Post in Collins Street, Melbourne. There I gained a lot of experience and had some interesting experiences.

When the Melbourne Olympic games were being held in 1956, I was given the important


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DUNN CARMAN ANDERSON SHAW
MOORE THOMPSON BETTS
WEARMOUTH
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job of delivering a telegram to the Queen who was here on a tour for the games; that was a real highlight for me personally. I also snuck in amongst the crowd to see the parade being held for the Queen, which was along Collins Street, until a policeman told me to nick off!

Eventually I was transferred back to Australia Post Lilydale to deliver mail again. After only a few weeks though, I began working night shift, operating the telephone exchange. I was 15 years old by this stage, can you believe that people were relying on a 15-year-old to be able to make a phone call, its difficult to imagine that today, isn't it? I had some very interesting things happen while I was working there; one night I received a phone call from the local butcher. In a very quiet voice, he said to me "mate you should call the police" and I said "why, what's wrong?" He replied, "there's some people trying to rob the bank next door". I got him to stay on the line while I phoned the police, who then went to the bank and were able to catch the thieves.

There was another time when I was working in the post office sorting mail, and the postmaster needed me to assist him in doing the banking. The bank was located on the opposite side of the road to the post office, next door to the Crown Hotel. The postmaster tapped me on the shoulder and said, "righto, you're going you come with me". He then handed me a gun and instructed me to walk beside him as he walked the money across to the bank.

So here I am, a 15-year-old with a gun in the main street of Lilydale. Afterwards, I found out the gun didn't have a firearm pin in it, so I guess it was really just for looks. Eventually, I left Australia Post at age 17 and sat the exam to become a linesman, who repair telephone lines and that sort of thing. I worked there for the next 30 odd years, though only as a linesman for five or six years, as I went into other areas within the company and eventually became a Manager.

I met my wife Sandra at a football club dance, I was 17 and she was 16. I then asked her to come watch me play footy for Mt Evelyn and we've been together ever since. Around the age of 19 or 20, Sandra and I bought a block of land in Mount Evelyn, and paid this off just before getting married in 1963.

We then built a house on the land, costing us 4000 pound, which was big money at the time, especially considering I was earning 1000 pound in a year (about $43 a week). I always had 2 or 3 jobs at once. Our house was finished being built by 1965, just after we had our first child, a daughter. We had twin boys a couple of years later.

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We sold up our first house in Mount Evelyn in 1992 and bought the current in Silvan, which we still live in today. The property is 2 acres and was formerly a cherry orchard, with the original part of the house being over 100 years old. The original shed in our backyard still has the names of the workers and how many cherries they picked, written on the walls. So, there is quite a lot of history with this property which I have tried to keep alive.

In 1974 I became involved with Mount Evelyn Lions Club, and was both their president and secretary for a period of time. The Lions Club ran a number of charity events, such as the annual Cherry Festival, which my children and I were largely involved in organising along with other members. The event was a family friendly event held at the Wandin Football

grounds, with well-known bands and children's entertainment, which raised money for local charities such as the Melba Centre. The club also raised money to help those affected by bush fires in the Yarra Ranges areas. Overall, I spent 10 years with the club and it's a time I look back on as being very rewarding in every sense as I was able to help others in my community.

Aside from family life, the Lions Club and work, I was also very involved with the Mount Evelyn Cricket Club and played in their first couple of premierships, in 1961 and 1962. However, I eventually gave cricket away after a few years, as they were two-day games and I worked every second Saturday. I continued to play football with Mount Evelyn, playing one full game one week and every alternate Saturday I'd knock off work at four o'clock, rush to the ground and play the last quarter of that game. That was until a few local influential gentlemen who were involved with the club, decided they would personally pay my wages. That meant I didn't have to work Saturdays and was then able to play a full game each week to help out with team numbers.

Elaine & Steve Nichols

Elaine –
Steve and I have lived in our home here in Lilydale for around 32 years. Prior to that we were living just up the road in Mount Evelyn, so altogether we've been in the area for 57 years. We have been married almost 58 years and have a son, a daughter and 4 grandchildren.

Once my children started school, I began doing the bookwork for a market gardener in Silvan. Following that I worked for my father's business, doing his bookwork until he retired. I stayed at there with the new owner for a time but when business became quiet, I found a 3-month temp job in accounts payable with B and D Doors, and ended up working there for 20 years.

During my working life I also started volunteering with Quilts for Orphans; a group of volunteers who make quilts and donate them to people and communities in need. Prior to covid, many quilts were sent overseas, but the cost of sending them has now become so expensive that the only way we have been able to do this is when a local high school has an overseas student trip and they have delivered quilts for us. We also had one local gentleman travelling to Vietnam that took 75 of our quilts to disadvantaged communities at his own expense.

Recently the group has been doing a lot within the Shire of Yarra Ranges after we received a grant; some of the quilts have been donated to local nursing homes as well as donating special quilts for premature babies born to the Royal Children's Hospital. Being a part of this group has been personally rewarding and something I am proud of. Aside from giving to people in need, it also provides social connection for me with other like-minded people (volunteers).

When our son was a young teenager, he became involved with The Melbourne Gang Show through Scouts. The MGS was devised by an Englishman prior to the Second World War to give young boys a chance to express themselves by doing skits and short plays. It commenced in Melbourne in 1952 I think and was all boys initially; they would also play the female roles. Around 1960 it became co ed, and Girl Guides could also participate. I volunteered my sewing skills for around 10 years making costumes, while our daughter helped with doing make up, and Steve also volunteered, so it was a whole family affair really.

Another of my long-term volunteer roles has been with the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre. In 1987 our son wanted to learn stage lighting and began doing so at the theatre. This led to me helping sew costumes, handing out programs and even doing the dishes, since the theatre used to serve sherry to guests on arrival and supper after the show. There are only two paid staff, the theatre manager and ticket salesperson, otherwise the theatre relies on volunteers. After retiring, Steve became involved with building sets at the theatre.

One of my proudest achievements is us both receiving a Life Membership Award with Lilydale Atheneum Theatre. All of this is probably what led to our keen interest in live stage shows. There's not many shows we haven't seen, and It was nothing for us to go and see 2 or 3 shows a week in the city. We have collected over 600 programs from the shows we've seen all over the place.

Steve –
I spent the first four years of my life living in Tooradin. My dad worked for the CRB and at the end of the war in 1945, my parents bought a small property at Kinglake West where we

lived until mid 1956. Looking back, I was fortunate in that my parents and I moved away from where I grew up in Kinglake West, as it was quite isolated living there. We then moved to Mount Evelyn, where there were many more activities to become involved in and also, more chance of a career other than farming. I completed my secondary schooling at Box Hill Technical School at 15 years of age. I enjoyed school, but I found some subjects difficult. Around this time, we happened to have a carpenter building an extension on our house. Coming home from school, I was excited and intrigued to see the work progressing, and this led to me deciding to become a carpenter. After a couple of false starts I gained an apprenticeship with Lapthorne and Knowles, a Mount Evelyn builder. I went on to work for them, mainly in housing, for nearly 11 years. I enjoyed the work however, a couple of near miss incidents had me thinking about safety. I also wanted to have a secure career going forward, so I began a trade theory course at night school.

During primary school I had one very good teacher, and I thought how much I would like to become a teacher similar to him. Whilst at high school I learnt the requirements of being a teacher were quite demanding, so I let go of the idea of becoming a teacher. Following a discussion with a fellow trade student one evening at night school, and a chance meeting with a Technical School Inspector, I applied for a position as a Trade Instructor. My wife Elaine was working at Eastern Suburbs Building Society at the time and their director was a Technical School Inspector. He kindly assisted me with my application, and I was then accepted as a Trainee Trade Inspector. I did my initial training at Mooroolbark Technical School, which consisted of three days in the school teaching under supervision and two days at the Technical Teachers College.

Upon graduating, I was appointed to Box Hill Technical School as a woodwork instructor. Over the 16 years I was there, I taught subjects including Woodwork, Solid Geometry, Apprentice Carpentry and Joinery, Hobbies and Woodwork and Graphics. At one stage I was acting Head of Department, but was content to see that appointment finish.

While I was at Box Hill, the school became Box Hill Technical College before TAFE was formed and after TAFE moved to Elgar Road, the school became the Box Hill Senior Secondary College. At this stage the Government closed most technical schools leaving only high schools, or secondary schools as they are now better known. I later applied for a position at a Catholic secondary college in Ferntree Gully, where I taught Graphic Communication and Woodwork. I taught there for fifteen years until stress started to get the better of me and I retired in 1999. After a short time, I applied for a part time position at Mount Lilydale College and spent three and a half years there, stress free. At the same time, I became involved as a volunteer with the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre, working on set construction and a continuing association.

In the mid-seventies Elaine and I bought a caravan and also joined the Combined Caravan Club of Victoria, travelling widely throughout Australia. After becoming fully retired, Elaine and I have toured widely through New Zealand, the Americas, Britain and Ireland as well as a number of Continental countries. There have been three Pacific cruises, a Baltic cruise, a circum-navigation of South America cruise followed by an intense land and air tour of South America which included the amazing Galapagos Islands. We still get away caravanning as much as possible with friends, but now we stay in cabins continuing the friendships we've formed over many years.

Michelle McDonald

I was actually born in Swan Hill, in Victoria, and we grew up in the Mallee. We lived out of the middle of nowhere, and my parents were doing the canals with 12 horse grays, doing the canals that are out there in the Mallee now.

So that was interesting. The canals were for getting water into the Outback there further, but we lived with all the Aboriginals when we lived out there. Then we came into town and we were in Swan Hill for quite a while. I think I was about 6 or 7 at that time, because I've got quite a lot of vivid memories from being out there. Then we went up to Red Cliffs, which is near Mildura, and my mother had the "Gem" paddle steamer as a floating guest house. She had that for a couple of years, and was doing well. The Gem is now in the museum up at Swan Hill. It didn't have the engines in it there, they'd all been sold off for scrap. It was moored in one spot as it had no motors in it.

But where we were, a lot of the other paddle steamers would come past us, and they would use us as a walkway to get up onto land. So they'd moor next to us and just walked through. But mum, she was in charge. She did all the cooking and cleaning and that, and our rooms were about two doors behind the wheelhouse, up on the third floor, because it was three storeys.

After a couple of years, we went back to Swan Hill in for a while when I was in my teens. In my later teens I was in Melbourne, and I worked at the Alfred Hospital for a long time in the diet kitchen. I left there for a bit to go and join an arena act travelling around with the shows.

I was a stunt clown and an escapologist. That was the second time I broke my back. I used to be in a straitjacket, hung up in the air from the ankles with a rope above me, and the rope above me was on fire, 35 foot up in the air. I had to get out of the straitjacket before the fire burnt through the rope. And the other stunt was that I dressed as a clown, and we had a fire engine, which Dennis used to go inside to drive it, and I pretended driving it up the top. I would get off the engine and it would keep going.

So, you know, I'd have to chase after it because it had no driver or anything, in actual fact underneath there was the driver. Then Gary came with a motorbike. He was dressed as a policeman, and he was helping us to try and catch the fire engine, because every time he went close it went again. I used to stand on the sidecar of the motorbike. He was tilted up in the air. And I was up in the air on the side car, on the tip, standing up there. It happened when his pedal accidentally clipped the ground because he went too far. He saved it, but I fell down into the sidecar, which didn't have a seat or anything, and it had boards there, and just whacked the boards, and that was it. When all that healed up, I went back to the Alfred to work and I was in the sterilizing theatres at that time, back in the sterilizing department.

But then I got married and had Phil, my first child. The marriage didn't last, though, only a few years, and living in one place while was pregnant with Phil, and we were in a rooming house in Punt Road, just across the road from the Alfred Hospital. They had a big old mansion there, and I had a room with a hallway going to the bathroom. So I had an actual ensuite part.

My mother had a room on the other side of the hallway, nearby as well, because she was working at the Alfred too. And at about three o'clock in the morning, I woke up and I

screamed the place down, because everything fell on top of me. The ceiling collapsed, and the whole room was thick with the ceiling plaster, the old plaster came down, but me on my bed, it was just around like an eggshell. All around me was clear. There wasn't one speck of dust. And of course, they couldn't get into me because I couldn't open the door, because of all the debris on the floor. They had to shovel through it. My mother's trying to get in, because she heard me wake up with a scream. It was in the middle of the night, so it was pitch dark. They couldn't see what had happened. I just knew that I could hardly breathe because it was so much dust.

I kept working at the Alfred for a while. Then I went up to back to Swan Hill, and I worked in the operating theatre in the hospital. I worked sterilising the instruments. I cleaned all the needles and that, and sterilized them and I was in the sluice room, which had the operating theatre, and where they put all the instruments that have been used, and I'd have to clean them and get all the blood and muck and everything, then put them in the sterilizer, and then make up the bundles ready for the next operation.

I'd go to walk that way, and my legs would go the other way and I was having a lot of trouble.

And I used to just sit with the patients before their surgery to calm them down. I liked calming people down because they come in and they leave the ward, and they're sort of in this room before they go in to get surgery, and they're wide awake and they could see all the activity, but not in the theatre itself. So they were nervous, and particularly the kids, they'd been petrified. And of course, they couldn't have their parents or anybody with them, because they're actually in the theatre section.

After a while I came back into Melbourne, and then I had Chris, there was seven years between Phil and Chris who I had with my second husband, though we'd split it up and got divorced by then. I had him though it had been "medically impossible" for me to have children. I had 10 pregnancies but three alive that I'm very grateful for. I'd had a couple of surgeries, but of course I proved them wrong, and then I quit.

We were living in Carnegie, and that was when I had the surgery on my spine, because I'd broken it about four times.

The first one, I was a kid, stuffing around, I was in about seven. And then the stunt clown was the second, and I done it again. I can't remember exactly went wrong with it. But anyway, they decided to do the surgery because I was having trouble walking through doors and kept missing. I'd go to walk that way, and my legs would go the other way and I was having a lot of trouble.

After the surgery they did I had a scar about 12 inches long on my back, and I had to lay on my stomach. They took me stitches out and said, right, you can stand up now and you can walk around. I said, "Great!", and I get out of bed. I went to stand up on the floor, and I just went straight down, nothing big, just collapsed. It sent the whole place in tizzy, because I had no feeling from the waist down. I had walked in and I was wheeled out. I was in a wheelchair after that, and they said I wouldn't walk again. I said, "you watch me".

And I did walk with a stick, off and on. I had to be careful which way I went, because it would narrow in the spinal canal as well. So I was in the chair for about six months, and then I'd be out of it for about nine months, and then back in the chair, in and out. That went on for a few years, until about 35 years ago. Somebody knocked me over, and I fell down. And that

was the way I fell, I said to the boys, you know, because I had another kid since then, after that episode, I wouldn't have any more kids.

I thought why am I on the pill if I can't have kids? I went off the pill, and six months later, I was pregnant. If you're going to have children, you will have children, no matter what they say. Then I had Tim another five years later, after a couple of miscarriages. I was upset, Over the years I had a lot of problems with staggering and I couldn't walk straight. But I always passed it off, even to my husband, and

At times I totally lost everything where I couldn't move or anything, couldn't speak

that it was due to the surgery, because when they had surgery, the knife slipped and it cut the cord into all the nerve ends. I woke up during surgery, so I was listening to what was going on, and the head honcho, was having a go at his offsider, ripping into him about what he did. And his sidekick said, "Well, how do I fix it?" He said, you can't. There's too much damage. He said, all we can do is close her up. And then he turned around and ripped into the anaesthetist and told him to keep his patient asleep would be helpful.

But I found out a lot more too since I had worked at the Alfred and I worked in the operating theatres, so I knew a lot of the nurses, so they told me what happened. But I mean it's 52 year ago, you didn't sue the doctors, because they were seen as gods, and they were untouchable, and they covered up, and there's not one piece of evidence of the surgery or me as a patient at the Alfred Hospital.

Even though I worked there for a number of years, and I used to go to the outpatients for my chest X rays and my needle for TB and all the rest of it. And I did my knee there, and, it all disappeared. The only proof I have is a scar on my back. I ended up 35 years ago, I couldn't keep going. It's because the simple fact nobody knew, and I wouldn't tell anybody, particularly my husband. At the time he had a thing against being ill. I'd get into trouble, if the boys were sick with the flu or anything. I wasn't allowed to, because "they're not sick", they could be at death's door.

So I thought of course, I had a lot of problems and things happening and the biggest contributor was the fact that I had MS, and I'd had it since I was 17. My first major attack was when I was 17, and then I was diagnosed at about 22. I kept it a secret. I blamed it on the surgery whenever I had problems.

At times I totally lost everything where I couldn't move or anything, couldn't speak. I lost my voice for about eight months one time. I mean, you only use a small percentage of your brain. You can retrain it to do other things, to do it again. You can use another part of your brain and still be able to move. So here I'm supposed to be either dead or a vegetable, but I'm still going.

I went back to studying, I did a lot of study. I've got a diploma in Clinical Hypnotherapy, diet and nutrition, and a certificate in neural linguistic programming, and one in herbal medicine. So I worked for myself. It didn't matter if I was in the chair, if people that came to me, if they had a problem, it's their problem, not mine. If you don't want to get fixed by somebody in a chair that's your problem.

These days I do a lot of volunteer advocacy work. I'm on the Disability Advisory Committee with the Shire of Yarra Ranges. And I've been on that committee for quite a number of years now, and I've done a lot of work with them. But even before then, when I in lived in Wangaratta, when I was working for myself. Trying to get things done as my

passion is accessibility and safety issues for wheelchairs and assistance dogs.

I've been in Lilydale for 24 years. And I've done a lot with the Lilydale Shire. They've had programs accessibility in their main street, and they would always call. And then, of course, I'm with the Lilydale Community House committee and also the Outer Eastern Community Inclusion Alliance.

I'm kept busy. I am called on to do assessments of buildings and other things to see how they work for people in wheelchairs, including at a library, galleries and at pedestrian crossings for example.

I've done a lot with the Eastern Health the "Margins of the Mainstream". I got an Australia Day award about 10 years ago now, the Ian De La Rue Community Leadership Award for my advocacy for accessible spaces for people with disabilities.

People look at me and see an old woman in a wheelchair. But man, I've had a life you know. The only difference is my legs don't work properly. That's the only difference between you and I.

I'm still not dead yet!

Philip Herry

I was born in the Lilydale Bush Nursing Hospital, on the 14th of February 1940. So, my very early childhood encompassed the Second World War. And my earliest memories was playing in an air shelter dug in a backyard, and that kind of thing. And I can't really remember much about the war, per se. I can remember, I went to St Patrick's Catholic School and Primary School Lilydale. And back in those days when they used to blast at Cave Hill at 20 past 12 every day. And explosives weren't as sophisticated then as they are now, and those explosives would actually rock the ground, in the Main Street. And I started school just before I turned five, so it must have been pretty much at the end of the war. And you sort of wonder whether that was actually bombs or the explosion. You sort of made sure it was 20 past 12, because then you would know that they were blasting at Cave Hill. So, then they'd have their lunch so the dust would settle and they could work later. However, they're my earliest memories.

I grew up pretty much all around Lilydale, never went anywhere else, never had the brains to leave until we came over, four years ago. And that was a very big move for me to move from the Lilydale to Kilsyth, however we've done it now.

When we finished primary school at St Pat's, Marcellin College had just opened in Camberwell. It was staffed by Marist brothers, a Catholic order of teachers, and they had just opened Marcellin College in Mont Albert Road. When I say we, there were three of us, Fred Brammich, Peter Myers and myself, finished primary school about the same time, and our parents sent us to Marcellin College. So that's where I did my secondary school, and as a result of that, I've really lost contact and I missed that secondary school association with local boys and girls. To complicate that, there was, in those days, a fair amount of sectarian division, you know, like the Catholic kids walk up the right-hand side of Castella Street to go to school, and the state school kids walk up the left-hand side. And, you know, there's a lot of acorns throwing and small rocks and pebbles across the road. So, I missed a lot of contact there.

But then, you know, when you get to that age where you know your almost a teenager, it's pretty easy to relate back to people that you've known. You know, I still have friends that I've known since before I went to school. Three of them are still alive, which is pretty remarkable.

I was expected to be a competent pianist. Our family have been musicians, going back many generations.

Life was busy being a teenager, and I was into shooting and fishing were my specialities. I was never encouraged to play football. I was expected to be a competent pianist. Our family have been musicians, going back many generations. And my father had an Old Time Dance Band, and it was a pretty successful kind of thing. And I was obviously educated and trained to take over playing piano. And I think he lived in fear that if I played footy, I'd get my fingers hurt, then I wouldn't be able to do it, and that would cause, you know, great friction. So, I missed that.

And the same with cricket, you know, you can't remember what everybody did, however they were perfectly happy for me to go and get shot. Crawled round in the creek. Never actually happened, but there were a couple of close shaves, I suppose.

I got my leaving certificate, and I was glad to leave. We had a very big family business in Lilydale. We had a milk bar and tea rooms in the old style, you know, a big business. My family had a famous line in meat pies. You know, pies and pasties, a big deal, and our freehold was on the corner of Castella Street and Main Street. And about the only vocational guidance I ever got was when I was about 15 or 16.

My father came to me and he said, "Look" he said, "I've had enough of this business." And he said, and Papa, his father was still working. You know, everyone worked. He said, "Now, what do you want to do with the rest of your life? Do you want to learn to make pies and then you can sort of come into the business, what do you want to do?"

I was at that stage of my life and I wanted to find out how clever I was, so I saw another job advertised, and I applied for it, and I got it ...

And the last thing in the world I wanted to do was make bloody pies, and work as hard as they did. They'd be up at five o'clock in the morning. My father, and his dance band would go out and play for a ball at night and get home at one or two o'clock in the morning. And he wouldn't go to bed. He would make pie cases, so that in the morning they would have set, and they'd be able to fill them with filling and cook them in the big range we had. And the scope of this thing was, in the footy season, on a Friday night, they would prepare 100 dozen pie cases by hand. And he'd get to bed at about four or five o'clock in the morning, and then someone else, probably mum, and sort of filled with by 10 o'clock, when all the buses started to go and take people to a footy matches. You know, those pies will be cooked. They'd all be sold in about an hour and a half, all gone. In answer to Dad's question – "Well, no, I said, look, I'd like to work in the bank." He said, "Why would you want to work in the bank?" I said, "Well, they closed at three o'clock and I'll be able to go fishing and shooting". That was about how responsible I was. I never improved much.

So my first job was in the National Bank, and I lasted there for about 18 months or two years I suppose, I was one of the last trained ledger keepers with old Kalamazoo hand ledgers, you know, red and white, quill pens and all that kind of stuff. I was 17 and they sent me down to Bairnsdale. I could transfer to Bairnsdale because it was the last National Bank that didn't have Ledger machines. And you know, talk about a fish out of water. I couldn't exist in Bairnsdale. I lasted about three months, and I resigned.

Then I worked briefly with the CSIRO in Albert Street, East Melbourne, where my father, after they'd sold the business, he worked there until he was old enough to retire, and I got a job there, and that was just a typical public service junior kind of thing. And then I was offered a position with Joe Dobrigh, who was an accountant in Lilydale. And then I worked in the practice, which was just building up. And it was an income tax practice, and I worked there for six or seven years, quite satisfactory, I think, for both of us and in the meantime, of course, my wife and I got married.

And in 1966 I decided that I didn't want to be an accountant anymore. And I had a couple of mates, they were plumbers, and to cut a long story short, I bought a little Cranvel backhoe, which was a very primitive kind of machine, and it really replaced the shovel, and I started installing septic tanks. There was an estate agent in Lilydale, Laurie Hicks, and he sold houses, and I got into the building industry from that. My father had never quite come to

terms of the fact that I was putting in septic tanks. He would tell people that Philip was in earth moving. But anyway, in that decade I probably learned more about life and everything else than I did in school. I really knocked around. It was great.

I did that for about six or seven years until the machine wore out. And I thought, well, by then the technology had changed, and I had to get a bigger machine and I went to Rural Tractors in Lilydale and I said, to Graham Shaw, "How much are these new Massey Ferguson side shift backhoes?" And he said they're $18,000. I thought, what will I do? In the meantime, the Estate Agent Laurie Hicks, he developed an area in Lilydale in the Valencia Road, Carmen Court that was pretty primitive country up there. And he built about 40 houses in there.

We put in the water mains, and then started to build houses, and we formed a little building company and I was putting in the septic tanks, and Laurie was sort of manning his office. We used to advertise a three-bedroom house on $300 deposit to approved purchasers, and you'd have a queue of people on a Saturday morning. People had been coming up and having a look around. Laurie couldn't leave the office, and if I was there working, they'd say, "can we have a look?", and I started showing people through these houses. Anyway, Laurie said, "Look, I can't get out of the office and you're here. I'll give you a key so when they come up you take them through, and if we sell them, I'll go you halves in the commission.

So, I was actually making more selling houses than I was putting in septic tanks. To cut a long story short, I sold the machine. Well, I thought I sold it, they never paid me for it, but that was another story. I went into the real estate business. And then I got into sales. It finished up probably the most static area of my employment over the years. I sold prefabricated buildings for a while, and always managed to pay the bills and did everything you could do.

And then I got a job with Monier Roofing, and I got into the roofing tile business. When I finished there, I was a Victorian Tasmanian State Manager. You know, it was a pretty big job, I had about 18 reps altogether.

And then I was at that stage of my life and I wanted to find out how clever I was, so I saw another job advertised, and I applied for it, and I got it, and that was the National Sales Manager, for a crowd called with Vitclay Pipes in Nunawading, which was a division of Brick and Pipe, and we were the largest manufacturer of vitrified clay pipes in the Southern Hemisphere, one of the largest in the world. But it was a bit like saying we're the largest manufacturer of button up boots or something like that. You know, it was on the cusp. Our product was on the cusp of being replaced by PVC pipe, plastic, lighter, easier, more practical to use, nowhere near as long lasting, but cheap. So that was a bit of a battle, and it lasted for about five years. And we kept the company viable.

We had a big export group into Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates. They were sewering all of Arabia virtually, with their oil money they had to spend it on, they decided to sewer it, and we were competing against the English and the Germans, and we could do it comfortably, because we could freight pipes from Australia to Saudi Arabia cheaper than they could freight them from England or Germany, for the simple reason that the only thing we export from Australia is empty containers.

So, we were back loading, and we had a big advantage in freight cost, and that kept us going for a number of years. And when that ran out, when the job was done, the powers that be, the real estate that we occupied was

far too valuable for anything else, so they closed the whole place down and I was unemployed.

And I was about 55, so then I sort of went back to selling roof tiles for various manufacturers, Shelson's in Croydon in particular. And then we bought a little business in Knox City, which was the worst thing I ever did in my whole life, I suppose. And if anyone ever listens to this, whatever you want to do, never buy a business in a big shopping centre. You'll be crucified. So, we existed on that until it was really time for me to retire. In Knox City we had a little kiosk. We did colour photocopying, laminating, we made mugs, put pictures on mugs and plates and all that kind of stuff. And it was a novelty. But again, technology overtook us, now you can do that kind of thing at home, everyone does it at home and I was trying to do it there and paying nearly $100,000 a year rent. That's a recipe for failure. So anyway, that's what happened.

When, when I finally retired, we went overseas a few times, and generally, been around Australia. We've done all those kinds of things that people our age do, and now we're here, and we lead a pretty busy active life. We're very fortunate. There's always something you can do here.

All my life I have played the piano. I've been paid to play the piano since I was about 11 or 12 years old. And that has been a very big part of my life, and has been a great standby, money wise, over the years. I've had some very good piano playing jobs, which is unusual for musicians. You know, it's a pretty erratic lifestyle being a musician, but I've been very fortunate in that regard, and I've burnt the candle at both ends on a number of occasions. When I was with Vitclay, we had a pretty big win. And the boss said to me, "You've done really well with this. I want you to take a holiday. You know, we'll write it off". And I thought, I can't go on a holiday, I play the piano three nights a week, until afternoon, silly little things like that. Generally speaking, music has been a great help financially over the years. There's no doubt about that. I'm nowhere near the pianist I was, but then I'm 85. I've got to choose my repertoire very carefully. I can't do everything. I've always had a piano.

My philosophy on life. I was brought up in the strict Irish Catholic tradition, and it took me half a lifetime to come to terms with the fact that God really isn't that dogmatic. My philosophy is based on Catholic Christianity, and that's a rotten way to describe it but it would take a lot longer if we were to get into this seriously. But we don't wear our religion on our sleeve or anything. I don't make big deal about it, but in our Catholicism and our Christianity, we do our best, I believe, and no one's perfect, but we try. And I think probably for an eighty-five-year-old bloke, I'm not doing that bad, am I?

I've worked with a number of people who have never done anything else but the one thing all their life, granted I was at the other end of the spectrum. I was erratic, and I've got away with it. I don't think it's good to be myopic with your ambition. You know, like, for instance, at Vitclay, the first general manager we had there, he started off as the yard boy, and he's swept the yards, and the only time he'd ever worked anywhere else was when he was in the Air Force during the Second World War. Then he came back to his old job, and in the end, he's managing a big company and driving a Mercedes Benz. But that's all he knew. He didn't know anything else. If you don't experiment with your life, you don't learn much. On the other hand, looking back, I suppose I've been pretty lucky, well by good luck and good judgment.

Sibilla Johnson

I was born in Holland. I was born at the beginning of the Second World War, 1942 and my dad had been taken into Germany for working because their men were all fighting for the war. And eventually my father escaped Germany, and didn't think he'd have a wife and a daughter anymore, but he found them, which was very special. And my mum was sure that she didn't have a husband anymore, but they found each other. And we came to Australia when I was 14, and of course, a different language, and I was a shy person, and I found it very difficult.

We were living at Barwon Heads, near Ocean Grove. My dad was working at Ford Motor Company. And these young people came to me, and they were so friendly and happy, and they said, we wanted to help you to learn the language, and that was so special. And I spent time with them, and I would practice. And one day, after a while, when I was getting the language a little bit, I was practicing in the garden, and the lady next door was in the garden, and she came into our place, knocked on the door. Now, my mum's English was worse than mine, and mine wasn't very good. And Mum said to me, after the lady left, "You have done something very bad." I said, I haven't done anything bad. She said, "Yes, because the lady mentioned your name and she looked very upset." But she didn't know what the lady was saying. So there was another Dutch person who spoke English, not far from where we were living, and they took her back to the neighbour to see what a terrible thing I had done. And apparently, I was walking around practicing the dirtiest, filthiest, worst words that were around.

And so, I got very upset and then very shortly after, another girl came and said to me, not at the house, but I must have met her somewhere down the street, and said she wanted to help me. And I thought, here's another one. Because in my mind, I thought, well, this is the country. This is not good. Anyway, she took me to her place, and her parents were so wonderful to me. And they actually took me on the first holiday on my whole life, because in Holland we went nowhere. We didn't have a car or anything, I had a push bike. Anyway, they took me on a trip along the coastal road of Victoria towards South Australia and then on the way back, and they supplied all my food and everything, and it was so wonderful. I thought I was in heaven. I'd ever experienced anything like it.

And they invited me to come to church, so I went with them, and I didn't even ask what sort of church it was, because whichever the church was, I would want to go to because of the way that they loved me and treated me.

And so that's how I got started. I got married when I was 20. And my husband worked for Sanitarium Health Food Company. And I' also managed to work for them a little bit as well, in the factories, which was nice.

After that, we adopted a son, because I have a hormone imbalance. And Arthur, my late husband, and I, we prayed and prayed that whoever this child was, was meant for us. He's 55 now, and has terrible health problems and mental problems. My husband died 12 years ago, and Andrew, who is my son, lives with me, and I look after him, and things got very difficult because he's depressed and everything else, he drinks and so it's one day at a time, I'm learning, helps. But after I adopted Andrew, I had two girls, and they were complete miracles. And even the doctor said, because they hadn't removed anything, they removed it after the second one was born. They said both

of these girls are miracles, and they are wonderful girls. One is an engineer, not a girl's job. And the other one is a doctor. And they've made a tremendous contribution. And they also have been very special to me.

I set up my health program through the church. And when they realized the studying that I had done and the work I'd done, they said, "Can you run something here?" And I thought, oh, I don't know, but in a way, what I did in Papua New Guinea helped. I conducted cooking demonstrations and health talks for the local people of Lae in PNG, starting in my own kitchen. I did not have any recognised qualifications at that stage. We were there for seven years because Arthur started Sanitarium there.

What I learned is that the people look at you and if you suggest something to them, or you say, "Now, this is what you should be doing", what they were thinking "that's all right for you, because we have different lifestyles. That's not for us". And they say, thank you very much, but they don't do it. And so, when I started teaching, I learned to show them and teach them how the body functions and how food and drink affects us, and exercise. And they'd say, "Oh, that's why my husband died when he was 42." And that helped them to change some of their lifestyles that wasn't good.

So while my husband set up Sanitarium in Papua New Guinea I was involved in the nutrition side. We had our three children as well, so I was busy with the kids as well.

After seven years, we came back to New Zealand, also to Sanitarium. And it was Arthur, of course, he was manager by then, of the Palmerston North Branch of Sanitarium. The general manager of the Palmerston North Sanitarium Factory asked if I would be interested in getting some qualifications in the nutrition area. I accepted their offer to sponsor me, and as a result, I attended Massey University for a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Nutrition from which I graduated.

And from there we came back to Australia, to Warburton, where Arthur actually started, and where I had met him, and he was manager of the Warburton factory. We were in Warburton for many, many years.

So we were in Papua New Guinea from '77 to '83, New Zealand was a couple of years more, so it would have been '85 when we came back to Australia and to Warburton. In 1990 I managed the Sanitarium Nutrition Education Service for the State of Victoria. In 19998 I was invited to become the Health Director for the Victorian Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church which I accepted and held that position until December 2015, when I retired.

I conducted cooking demonstrations and health talks for the local people of Lae in PNG, starting in my own kitchen

Well by then I was teaching, which was the last thing that I thought I ever be able to do, because I was very shy with English being my second language, but I was able to do it, and that's when I started travelling to the different islands. Just usually a long weekend or half a week and be home again. Just to teach nutrition and I enjoyed that life. If someone had said to me earlier in my life, you know, when I was about 30 or 25, that one day I would really enjoy teaching. I would have thought "you have no idea who I am", but I did.

It became very meaningful to be able to help other people see and for them to decide, not for me to say this is what you should do, but for them to decide whether they would change and improve their health and well-being.

When I retired, my son then moved in with me, and I've been looking after him, and he doesn't manage life at all, and he won't see any medical person. But I've learned one day at a time, otherwise I go downhill too, because what you see and what you hear and you get yelled at and, well, that's not so much now, but it was earlier. I do remember what has helped me to look after him is that we prayed and prayed that whoever this child was, was meant for us. And I thought, well, God, will give me the strength that I need to look after him, one day at a time.

I don't remember too much of my childhood; my memory is really going at my age. And I went and saw the doctor because I thought there's something going on. And he said, "It's all age related." But I'm very grateful that I had the opportunity to do what I did in my family, yes, but also out in the islands and where I worked, which as I just said, was about the last thing I thought I would ever be able to. The Lord must have been smiling and saying, "Wait till she gets older and realizes what she's been able to do", not to be proud, but just to be grateful that you can make a contribution.

Fortunately, I did see some of my impact as I went to the islands after a few years. And the people would come to me, because I wouldn't remember them all, and they'd say, "Oh, we came to you two years ago, and this is what's happened since then". And your heart is singing.

These days, I try and walk four kilometres a day. And that really has made a difference, which is good. And I also used to visit people who weren't well, but they've passed away now. But that was also very comforting to know that you could be there. I look after the house and everything else and do a bit of art. And I really, truly, enjoy coming here [Lilydale Community House]. As it's become a friendship group, as well as the art and painting. It really does me good. And you know what? I really appreciate that when I'm ready to go home, I'm just as happy to go home as I am to come here.

Richard Galbraith

I grew up in Croydon, and sometimes when playing football with South Croydon Under 17s, we'd play an away game at Mount Evelyn. And Mount Evelyn, they always seemed to me to be very rough and tough football players, little knowing I would one day be a part of the club myself through my kids. And then I moved to Mount Evelyn when I got married. I was married to Sylvia at 21, and we've lived in Mount Evelyn in the same house ever since. Anna is our oldest, and then we have three boys, Dylan, Reuben and Daniel. And twelve grandkids at last count.

I grew up in Croydon, with two brothers and a sister. We did lots of sport and art and books and we didn't have a TV in our home. It was more common back then, no telly. I went to Maroondah High School. I think they changed the name to Melba College.

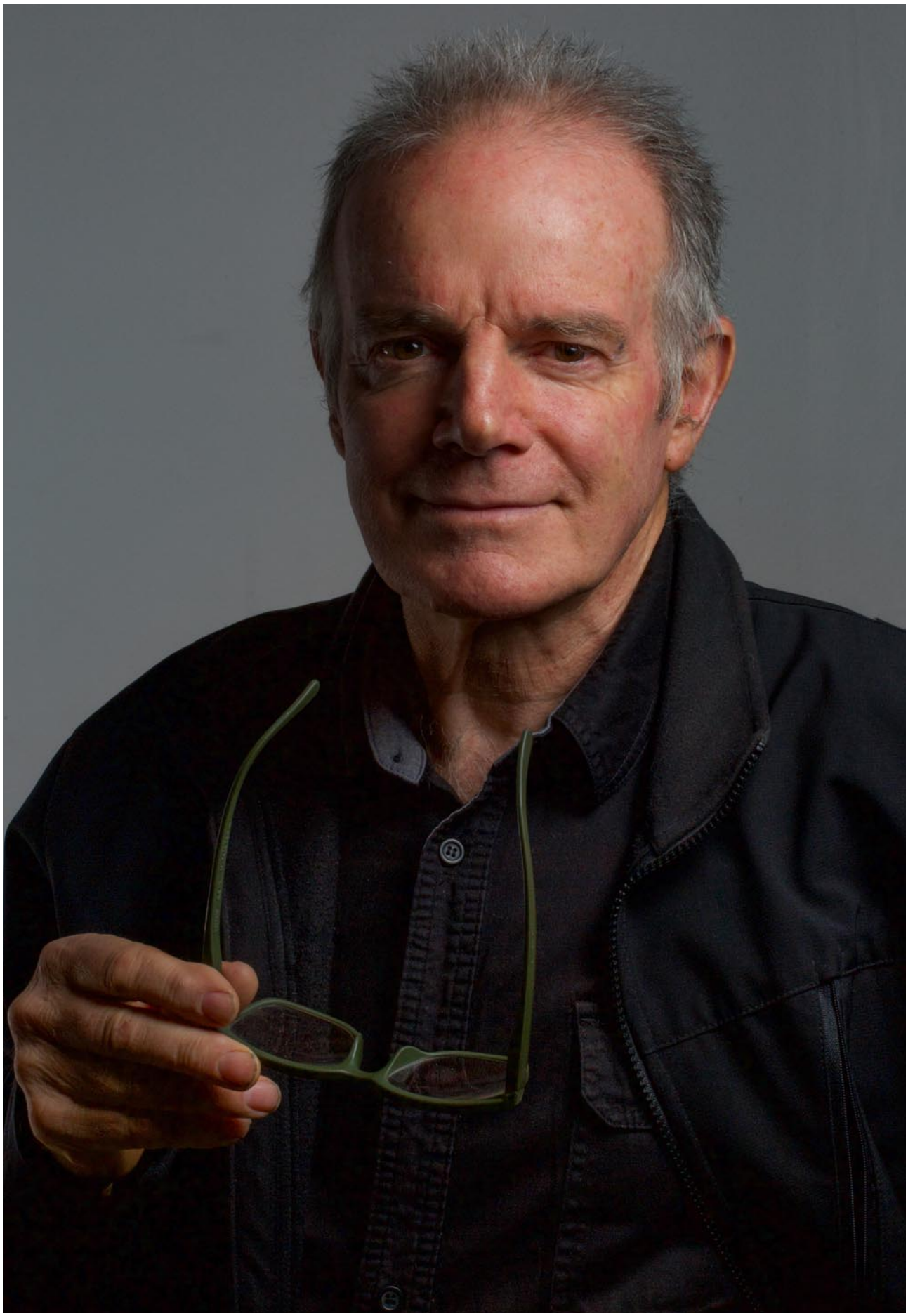
I spent 35 years making a living as an artist, book illustrator, and cartoon workshopper, teaching kids to draw cartoons. I wrote and illustrated books and cards and souvenirs, and Sylvia and I raised four kids and paid the school fees on my artwork. But in my early fifties, for some reason, I decided I wanted a change. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Thirty-five years is a long time, and during that time, I changed from illustrating with pencils and paper and watercolour paints to writing iPad apps, and illustrating with a tablet in Photoshop, which I do now, I use a tablet. We've seen a huge change in that time, in the way you create art. I love drawing and painting with a tablet. It multiplies your imagination. But you always have to be thinking about the next thing, what's my next thing going to be, especially when you're making a living out of it. So there can be a lot of pressure on you to keep coming up with new ideas.

I had two boys who were electricians, and I thought maybe I could do that. So I talked to my youngest electrician son, Reuben, and we kicked the idea around a bit. And, you know, to give him lots of credit, Reuben eventually agreed to take me on as his apprentice.

I would have been about 53, but I did make it very clear to him that the days of me telling him what to do because I was his father were long gone, he didn't have to worry about that. And you do see tradies where it's a father-son set up. And they're not always going very well, because the kid's cheeking his dad, and his dad's losing patience with his son. But this was reversed. It was fine because I was there to learn and so we set out as a team, and I went to trade school with all the kids who were mostly straight out of Secondary School. And they were great. They were an interesting bunch.

I learned a lot at trade school, some of it electrical. I graduated, got my A grade license, and Reuben and I, we worked together for about five years, and then he moved away down to the Peninsula, and so we've gone our separate ways. Now I run my own electrical business and it's great. I love it. There's me and my fourth-year apprentice, TJ, in the business. TJ's just been nominated for Apprentice of the Year, which would be richly deserved, and I've just taken on another apprentice. I'm 66 and I've got a few more years in the tank, so I guess with a new apprentice, that means I'll be doing another four years at least.

Back in my art days I did two things. First, I illustrated and wrote books and designed lots of greeting cards and souvenirs. Second, I presented cartoon workshops in schools. The cartoon workshops became a big part of my career. I travelled all over Victoria doing



cartoon workshops, and it got to the point where teachers would say to me, "I think you came to my school and did a workshop". But the trouble was they weren't teachers the first time I met them, they were kids. It makes you realize that you've been doing it for quite a few years. But the response was always fantastic. And I never got tired of doing it. Now I'm an electrician, I still do a little bit of cartoon workshopping here and there, but only if schools contact me and ask me to visit.

From an early age I've always loved books, and I've always loved drawing. I had lots of sketches and ideas and scraps of paper, you know, which you hang on to and develop and play around with and dream a little bit about. I drew from my imagination. I gradually developed a family of Australian characters – koalas, kangaroos, kookaburras and so on, and they took on a life of their own. I started creating more ideas and sketches and then one day you say, "Okay, I'm actually going to do this".

"The difference between talent and achievement is discipline."

I designed greeting cards and souvenirs, and I wrote a couple of books with my sister Andrea. I started my own greeting card business, and I built it up into something pretty reasonable. We ended up selling cards and souvenirs all over Australia. I wrote and illustrated twelve books over the years, including a novel, 'Snowfire' which I love. My favourite book is a picture book, 'Banjo Blue's Great Australian Adventure', which is still in print after twenty-five years.

So there I was, drawing and illustrating and increasingly caught up in running a greeting card business. We had four kids, and they were about to hit teenage years, and I was working night and day, and I decided I didn't want to miss their teenage years. So I closed my greeting card business and went and worked with John Simson from Simson Cards. I still do Christmas cards every year with John, and I've just finished next year's designs.

My whole art career was nurtured through my love of books and artwork and just self-taught, you know. I tell kids in school that you never stop learning when you draw and paint. I still get excited when I discover I can draw something that little bit better than I could before. Or discover a new idea. You never stop learning.

Looking at some of the early stuff, you look back on it, like my youngest son Danny once did. He looked at one of my early pictures, actually my very first Christmas card design, and he just shook his head, and he said, "Dad, how did you ever get away with it?" I sometimes wondered that myself, but I guess, as we develop, we do look back on our early work with a fairly critical eye. But other people might not see it quite the same way. I found with all these projects, for me, it came down to just saying to myself, "Okay, so you've been thinking about this for long enough, if you want to make it happen, then today's the day".

And that's what happened when I started out on my electrical career. I was fifty-three when I turned up at trade school on the first morning, and I was terrified.

There were a bunch of really young people hanging around outside the entrance to the electrical building, and I didn't know what to expect. And of course, they all thought I was a teacher, but when I said, "No, I'm an apprentice. I'm working for my son", and they all go, "Oh, cool!". So they were great about it.

I currently have a new apprentice, and she's only just turned seventeen. She's showing lots of aptitude.

There was a saying that I always had on my studio wall in the days of my artwork. I don't apply it quite so much now, but it made a big impression on me at the time, and it was "The difference between talent and achievement is discipline."

You can have all the talent in the world, but if you're not disciplined, you won't achieve. The essence of it is, it's discipline that's going to make the difference, and you need to be dedicated. For me now, I mean, I guess it's changed, but it's still a discipline. It's following up leads and typing up quotes and keeping up with the wiring rules. And getting up at 5.30 in the morning.

Back in my art days, it was reversed. You would work late. And then you would take the dog for a walk around the Mount Evelyn Football Ground and Olinda Creek at midnight when the moon was out. You felt like you were the only person on earth. And you'd do that walk in the moonlight, get into bed, and get up at eight o'clock next morning. Whereas now the discipline's different. It's still there but a different time of day, getting into bed at nine at night instead of midnight.

I never thought I'd be able to get up at 5.30 in the morning. But it's easy.

The process of learning to be an electrician was a completely new thing, you know, at 53. You have a bunch of wires coming out of a power point or a light switch, and it's just like spaghetti. It has no meaning. That took time to figure out. It's a fascinating field but completely different to artwork.

I remember when my oldest son was in secondary school, he didn't really like school that much, he was Year Nine, and he was getting into a bit of trouble and he said to me, "I hate school, I want to be a tradie." And I said, that would be good. We looked at different trades, and I had a friend who was an electrician, and I said to my son, I reckon electrics would be good because there's not a lot of heavy lifting, and you need a special license to do it. We looked at the different trades, and he liked the idea of becoming an electrician. We came up with a plan to keep him at school until the end of Year 11. He would do three days at school, English, Maths and Physics. He would go to TAFE for a day a week and pull engines apart. And he would work for his future boss for a day a week." And the school said, "Okay, fair enough". So Dylan did that for a year, and then he went full time electrician. He ended up getting Apprentice of the Year. That was twenty years ago. And these days, that is a full-on program. My young apprentice is doing exactly that.

The process of learning to be an electrician was a completely new thing, you know, at 53.

I've been a Christian my whole life, and that's always been a foundation and still is. My faith tells me there's meaning and purpose to life. It gives me a reason to get up in the morning.

Between my son, Reuben and I, we've had four apprentices, and they've all been great. I like working with young people. You've got to take them seriously and respect them where they're at. So I've just taken on a 17-year-old girl apprentice and I'm in my sixties. I reckon it's going to be okay. I've committed myself to intentionally teaching her the steps, teaching her the trade, starting with how to handle power tools and how to work safely, because that's something I learned when I became an electrician. I value safe work practices much more now. You sometimes hear the throw-away line that people over fifty should never climb up ladders, but I don't agree. It's not the

age that's important, but the mindset. Most ladder accidents happen at home. I refer to this because in my current line of work, I say to the apprentices, every time you get up the ladder, gravity is trying to pull you off. And so how are we going to do that safely and practically, so we all go home at the end of the day? Because you don't want to break your neck for anybody's air conditioner. It's a balance between learning how to work safely but not being so caught up in the red tape that you never get anything done.

I remember driving along early in the morning going to a job in Warburton with one of the young guys in the car, and the sun was just coming out, and there was mist and fog, and it was beautiful as the sun broke through. And I said, "Will you look at that?!" And I said, "Never lose your sense of wonder."

Sometimes I look back on my life so far, and I think, Did that happen? Did I just do that? It's fantastic, isn't it? Make the most of every day.

Chris Hill

I am the oldest of 6 children. Money was tight, but we enjoyed a good childhood,

We went camping every Christmas holidays for a couple of weeks.

My 1st job was in a Chinese Restaurant when I was 14. I had never been into a Restaurant let alone a Chinese restaurant. Neither had my parents. They knew nothing about Chinese people, but they let me go and work Friday, Sat and Sun night until 8.30, then get a tram, then a 1/2 hour walk home with Dad walking to meet me half way. Then I got a job at Coles Variety Store as well, after school and Sat morning.

When I left school at 16 I worked as a typist in a Government Department where I met my husband.

Over the years I have worked part time in a fruit shop, an Italian Restaurant, delivered flowers, an Italian coffee shop for 14 years, a couple more restaurants, a catering company, and Kmart for 21 years, and delivered pamphlets for the last 13 years as well to keep fit until I retired at 65.

Whilst doing all this, I had two girls and when the older one started playing basketball it gradually took over our spare time.

Terry coached, then the girls started coaching and I was team manager for most of these teams, whilst gradually taking over the organising of all the girls' teams in our Ringwood Hawks Club, about 12 teams, and also all the social and fundraising aspects of the club.

Then one day I saw an opportunity to start up a little canteen in the Aquinas gym in their ticket box on Saturdays and Sunday mornings as well as my other roles in the club and working part time for Kmart.

So life became very hectic.

This led to me starting up the canteen in The Rings Basketball Stadium when it opened.

When I reached 55, I had recently separated from my husband, the girls were off my hands and so I joined the Yarra Ranges National Seniors and took up the role of Activities Officer when the Lilydale Branch was formed a couple of years later. I have held this position for about 18 years keeping our seniors socialising. I also believe in supporting local businesses and organisations when organising outings for our seniors. We also donate to a few different charities each year as well.

I have also been involved in several charities over the years like Backpacks for Kids, I Dare You , the Salvation Army, and have been on the Productive Aging Council committee at the council for about 9 years, to name some.

Also about 16 years ago I started travelling with my sister and some good friends.

I am lucky enough to have visited 55 countries and a fair bit of Australia so far. When people tell me I am lucky, I say luck has nothing to do with it. You have to start travelling as soon as you can, when you can and do as much as you can as you never know what is around the corner e.g. Covid? because before you know it you are too old.

When I travel overseas I go for 6 to 12 weeks at a time and do 5 tours back to back as I hate the long20+ hour flights, and it also saves money on the flights.

I think every country is different and every trip has its little highlights that are not normally on your schedule, that you can experience and learn by, or appreciate them


GREENLAND
(KALAALLIT NUNAAT)
(Denmark)
NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES
NUNAVUT
C A N A D A
ALBERTA
MANITOBA
ONTARIO
QUEBEC
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
UNITED STATES
AMERICA
MEXICO
SOUTH
PACIFIC
OCEAN
RLD

I didnt realise until I started travelling that my Mum's parents, my grandparents would have been pioneers for their day as they sold their house when my grandfather retired and sailed to England for 18 months (they wouldnt get the big bird in the sky), and travelled through some of Europe before coming home, then did the same thing 12 months later. That was unheard of in those days. Dad put up a map of the world and we followed the places they went to from the postcards they sent us.

When Mum and Dad started travelling when they retired, they visited 95 countries before Dad died at 88. Mum died at 95.

I believe that parents are the most important teachers for their children

Dad put up a world map and put drawing pins in all the countries where they stayed overnight. I have done the same.

During the early years of our marriage, money was tight, but that was the way it was for everyone. You didn't have money to go for coffees, restaurants, etc. you went to neighbour's houses during the day and had a coffee while the children played outside with each other. You went to friend's for tea at their house. You budgeted to make sure the money covered your expenses. I don't think young people know how to budget these days. As you get older, the kids grow up and are off your hands and things get easier. You have a bit more money and so you can start spreading your wings like travelling etc.

I'm just who I am. People think I am never home and never stop, but that's not so. I like reading and doing puzzles. I buy 2 magazines a week and read the stories and do the puzzles.

When I split up I learnt to do Mosaics. It was very cathartic at the time and I enjoyed it but there is only so much mosaics you can do. That's when I joined National Seniors and the next chapter of my life began.

I believe that parents are the most important teachers for their children. If you are involved in your community, you usually find that your children will become involved in their community.

Meredith is still involved in basketball and Janelle has been involved in different sports with her boys over the years when they were younger, and her job with Domestic Violence takes up a lot of her time. so I am very proud of them. I have three grandsons, and a granddaughter, they are all doing well and I am proud of them all too.

My philosophy in life is to live life to the full. I dont think I would change anything. My advice is to do what you can, be involved in your community if you can. You get back more in satisfaction than you put in. I thank God for everything that I have experienced because you only have one life and so live it to the full.

I am 75 and don't have any intention of stopping any of these things in the near future as I enjoy doing them and it keeps me busy.

Marg Quon

I've lived in Mount Evelyn, since 1981 we built a log cabin in the hills.

So, growing up, I grew up for most of it in Colac, which many would describe as the end of the earth, and it was probably a time when I became most political without knowing it.

As a child, I just wanted what the boys had. I wanted to know why the boys were allowed to do all the things they were allowed to do. And because I was a girl, I wasn't, and simple things like, why did I have to come in and set the table? And the boys were still outside playing. At school, we the girls were second to the boys, so the boys went into class first, and you knew that they weren't very bright, but they got the full treatment, and there was no expectation. And I suppose that's where my very strong feminist views grew because I just wanted what the boys had. Look, I grew up with a very loving family, and dad would say to me, it's always been like that. Why do you want to change it? Because I do. It's me. It's about me.

We were very sporting and very active in that way. And then I was the very first in our family to finish high school, because I was young. And so, mum and dad were told to keep me in school because I was too immature to leave. And then it was a bother because I passed, what are we going to do with her? She's passed matriculation, and what will we do with her? I got into Teachers College, but I was, at the time, too young, so dad had to sign permission for me to go. I was the very first out of mum and dad's families to ever finish high school and then go on to tertiary education. So, that was a big thing for them. And then, my brothers after me have done the same and then, my father was like bursting with pride, because my youngest son's a doctor, and so, when he became Dr Quon, dad felt he was totally responsible for that.

I was a country girl until the late 60s, and then we moved to Melbourne, which was where mum and dad had grown up, so they felt it was a backward step. On reflection, I'd never have gotten an education if we'd stayed in Colac, I would have said I'd be one of the girls that had to go and work in an office or work with dad at the supermarket or something.

I was then a teacher for too many years. I taught in primary schools, and then I did extra training to be a Special Ed teacher, and I worked in youth detention, then worked as a consultant for kids with disabilities or learning problems, behaviour problems in this area, supporting teachers to help those kids in schools, primary schools and secondary schools.

I went into a role that was a project officer for drug education, introducing drug education into schools. I got sacked from that because my son was raided, and how I was politically embarrassing to have a mother working in one field where her son was an addict. They, the education department and the police decided I was a drug dealer. Stupid. I had this dreadful sense of humour, and said, if I was a drug dealer, we'd be making money. But anyway, that was a high price to pay, but you have to stand by your kids, and you have to look after them.

Out of that, I joined a support group that was first set up in Lilydale to support families with drug and alcohol issues in the family. And John, who was the social worker who ran it then left, and he went over to NMIT TAFE. He rang me one day and he said, will you come and teach these units of work, and I said to

him, I'm not qualified in that. I've only done training, but don't actually have a formal qualification. And he swore at me, as I was standing in the middle of Anderson Street at the time, and told him, and he reminded me I was a teacher. So I went over to TAFE, and I'd never worked in TAFE before. Oh my god, I loved it. It was the best ever. So, I ended up taking his job and becoming the manager of that department, until I took a package, because they wanted me to also manage the massage department. I had enough work to do with mine. So then, when they reopened Box Hill up here, I was one of the first teaching up there as a casual teacher in community services work and mental health and AOD [Alcohol and other drugs]. Our TAFE system is just brilliant. I love it, and I wish I'd known more about it to encourage even my oldest son to go into that instead of battling against our high schools and our universities. He just couldn't fit in. I've been a teacher for a long time, and it's diverse in so many ways, but I love it.

I'm not teaching now since I had a car accident. When I was teaching in youth detention, I was at Tallyho Boys Home, and seven months pregnant with my daughter, and I was taken hostage for two hours at knifepoint by one of the older boys that had escaped. They, Tally Ho administration thought he was off site, but he was hiding in the classroom. Because the boys were on light sentences, we were locked into our classroom, and until security came at recess or break time, none of us could get out. So that set off PTSD for me, which I've been able to manage, with great support from doctors here at Lilydale. But the car accident was just enough to trigger it again that was really hard, I think, being older, to get back under control, which was heartbreaking, because even at 65 I loved it, I still loved teaching.

I often think that we spend all our life in different roles, either as mums or teachers or whatever we do, but we the whole time we are gathering knowledge, skills, appreciation, understanding. When it all ended as in a working role, you think, oh, what do I do with all of that, that I know or that developed over the years, you feel like you've got this bank of knowledge that should be shared with someone or have somewhere to go. And a lot of it is history, like places like Tallyho Boys Home. It was a farm school. It's gone, it's closed, but we who worked there, know so much history from it, but it's not gathered anywhere for even the boys. The boys that might have been there, to understand why they were put there, and what it was like. So, I think that's a bit of aging that's starting to catch me. Is that documenting stories, of what we know?

I often think that we spend all our life in different roles, either as mums or teachers or whatever we do, but we the whole time we are gathering knowledge, skills, appreciation, understanding.

After Tallyho, I had Jaime, and then I was on what the government at the time introduced as family leave, so we had maternity leave and then family leave, so we were able to have maybe seven years all up. But then my time was up, and I got a phone call from staffing to say that they had the new appointment for me, and I remember being on the phone listening and being told now we've put women into Pentridge, so we've got a teaching position for you at Pentridge. My response was, I'm too short to go there. Apart from the travel to Coburg from here, the thought of being in lock up again was a bit much. And then I remembered I was pregnant. How did I forget that? No, no, I'm having another baby, I can't go there.

And I did have another baby, but the week

before the birth, my husband was killed. He was killed on a building site. So, the third baby was born 11 days after that. It was pretty chaotic for a long time, it was chaotic in a lot of ways because back then, Social Security argued with me that I wasn't old enough to be a widow at 32. What are the other criteria? Do you have to be dead?

And then they also argued with me that I was a teacher on leave, and that after six weeks after the birth of the third baby, I could go back to work. I could hardly put two words together; I was in such shock of everything that had happened. I had three little ones under the age of five, but the good old BLF stepped in. You might remember, Norm Gallagher, they fought on my behalf because Terry [my husband] was a BLF member, and they got me the widow's pension. Because even though Terry worked for himself, he was killed on a building site, and there has to be an inquest, and you're not actually dead until after the inquest, so you don't get a death certificate. Though the mortgage at that time had an insurance on it, they wouldn't pay out without a death certificate. I'm getting demands to be evicted from the house because I'm not making the house payments because I can't access anything because everything's frozen, all your accounts and everything. So, it was a pretty horrible time. Without the good old BLF, I won't have anyone say anything mean about Norm Gallagher. He saved us, really. Mum and Dad were there all the time though. They'd never have let us starve. But they were older, and they didn't need that extra burden, not that they complained once, but they were there. They moved in and helped with the kids and everything. So, yes, that time was a bit traumatic.

And, we get to this age, and we look back and if somebody said to me, look, at 32 you'll be a widow with three kids, and the third one will be born, the week after your husband dies, but somehow you'll put one foot in front of the other. You'd say, No, I won't. But I think as women, we do, and men probably do too, but mostly women. In amongst that, I had these three little people to look after, and my mum told me I had to snap out of it. She said the world's still beautiful out there, and you've got to show them that it is, you've got to not mope around and be miserable, even if you're feeling that way, because they've still got a life ahead of them, and you want them to see opportunities, have a go at things. So that became my motto, I suppose, to show them the bright side of life really.

When the baby was starting prep, that was the end of what they called my leave, and the end of what Social Security it was called. They agreed that I could have the widow's pension, but I could only be a widow until he went to school. So, I had to go back to teaching, and I knew that I couldn't go into a classroom after the knife attack. And a wonderful staff member, said there's a new thing called a School Support Centre, and it's where Ronald King's the clothing men's store was on Main Street in Lilydale. It was upstairs above that.

And she said, we can appoint you there as a consultant to support schools, because I had the Special Ed background, and since then, I'd also done another degree in Special Ed. That just worked perfectly for me. I could drop the three children to school at Birmingham, and rush to work. And it was school hours, so I could get back home or back to them to pick them up. Then Jeff Kennett came in and closed them all, because apparently kids don't have learning difficulties, and so we didn't need supports like we had.

The things I particularly fought for was women's rights. It was hard as we didn't vocalize it to a lot of people, because it sounded like we were being difficult, but the right for us as women to have the final say over our bodies. It was one of the things right back

at Teachers College, if any of us wanted to access the pill, we had to be married. Only married women could be prescribed the pill. But we're at college, we're in the 70s, the protests, with all the Vietnam stuff, and it's free love and everything, except you have to be married or find a doctor that was prepared to prescribe for you. So, I did. There was a time we called it our bodies ourselves. We spent a lot of time having little protests and marches, sort of demanding the rights over our bodies. And I felt very strongly about that.

And then you had Terry, my husband, he would have been happy to have 15 kids if he'd had his way, each of mine had to be by caesarean section. My body was saying I've had enough. So, I'd asked the obstetrician to tie my tubes after the third baby, and he said to me, "Well, you will need your husband's permission for that". Of course, Terry wasn't giving permission. There's no way. He wanted whatever amount of children he could have. I started practicing forging his signature, so I'd bring the papers in. I didn't need to have them because, sadly, he was killed before that.

It was only when my brother had come out to help with that estate and the inquest and all that stuff, he said, What's this? I said, oh, just been practicing.

That was 1985 and we still needed partners, or husband's permission. And yet, for men to have a vasectomy, we don't have to give permission, do we? Us as women, don't have to give permission for them to choose what happens.

When I started teaching, women weren't principals. People would say, you taught so long, you must have good super. No, once you were married, you were not allowed in superannuation. We didn't have super. So, there was those sorts of things that I argued for and for women to be able to be promoted. And so, I was lucky, because in 1974 I got to work with the first appointed female principal, and she was just a dynamo. Her name was Marjorie Dubois, and she would call me The Reluctant dragon. She'd say, you don't even know that you've got potential - get out there woman. I wanted for my own daughter, for those choices to be natural, not something she had to fight for, and for other young girls as well. And I wanted my sons to know that their sister was entitled to walk the same path as them, and to have the choice really to be whatever we want to be as girls, and to accept that we were just as smart as some of those around us.

I was very active with the anti-conscription stuff, because a family friend, he got called up, and he went to Vietnam. It wasn't the war or about that. It was about the boys' lives, that they were just conscripted, and how scary it all was.

My oldest son died from a drug overdose. He never found his path. He was very lovable and adorable, but he never found that peace within himself, and I always felt that as a family, we were very much victimized by the police. The local police victimized us dreadfully and traumatized us a lot, and then even my own family, that they didn't like to have Kris around them. He wasn't invited to weddings or Christmas. I remember I found a poem that he'd written about us going to Father's Day or something and seeing his aunt Judith clutching her handbag in case he stole it. I then did a lot of work with family drug help, trying to change the stigma around families that are affected by drug and alcohol or mental health issues. If we can remove the stigma, it's easier then for people to get help. If they're not embarrassed about that, or the family can walk through the door and say, we need help, instead of having to do it after hours or., anonymously. I did 20 years of doing that, I retired from the steering committee down at SHARC and family drug help, that's been really worthwhile, being able to have some say in policy around families.

We had an art exhibition out here that where we applied for some funding, and we got a teacher to come to the support group, and he was fabulous, and we were shocking artists, but he told us we were great, and we had an exhibition. And then this wonderful woman, Jenny Overend, came and did some writing classes with the support group. We put together a book with the help of Greg Carrick, one of our local people in Mt Evelyn, of photos of our paintings and our writing, and had a little book launch for our families to see our work. So, yeah, I guess I've always sort of been pushing a bit against the grain, just sort of wanting my kids to know I've done it for them.

I've got a grandson, who's 21 now. He lives in Bath in the UK. He's going to university there. He grew up with the maternal grandparents, and he went to Wesley, so he was very well looked after. And he would just say, oh, Nan, Nan with a sigh but now he goes, now, Nan, tell me how to do this. And I'm watching him grow into a fine young man. His dad would be very proud that he's making a difference to other people's lives. It's not measured by money or wealth. It's measured by the difference you make to other people. You hope that every day when you meet someone, you've given them some joy, and they give you some back. Or you learn something new from them, or they learn something new from you, or you give them a little bit of hope, because we don't have the material things to give that sometimes is the measure of how much people are valued. That's probably something vital.

But this will probably sound really silly, like my son had a difficult time with drugs and alcohol and fitting in.

I'm actually proud keeping him alive until he was 28. I know that probably sounds really quite silly, but I kept him alive that long, and even though we lost him at home, I was able to get funding through family drug help, and they've set up what we call the Supper Club, and that's for families and parents, siblings. It's for people who have lost someone through overdose because overdose is a silent death. It's really something people don't talk about. Nobody asks you what treatment he was in or anything else like that. And that Supper Club is now in its 15th year. It's still going and meets monthly and supports families. I think I'm really quite proud of keeping him alive, and then the supper club and the overdose awareness stuff that I've done since then.

My daughter's heartbroken that she lost both her dad and her brother, but works full time, and has got a couple of degrees. She's brilliant. And the youngest one, lives in Glasgow. He should be here, and he'll make a difference to some people's lives once he gets sorted. So, from our little beginnings in our log cabin in Mt Evelyn, we've filled it into bits of the world.

I think I've just been very lucky that I've got fantastic friends around me. And probably too that I refuse to accept that at 72 I have to stop doing things. I've just finished an eight-week improv acting course. I never thought I'd do that in my life, but I loved it. I was the oldest one there, needless to say. I go to a life-stories writing course over at Orana Neighbourhood House, and I'm loving that too. Not so much about what I'm writing but listening to everyone else's stories and learning and meeting people that you wouldn't have gotten a chance to meet. I think I just don't want to lose my love of life.

And, yesterday, I was at Bunjil Place. And friends of mine play in a band called Boom Babies, and they did an afternoon of music from Memphis with a 70-piece Casey Philharmonic Orchestra. I'm sitting in this audience saying, "who would want to be dead", things that are there for us that you just have to step out of our comfort zones and do them, until someone says, "No, you're too crazy".

Bill Cotter

I was born in the small Victorian town of Murtoa, just outside Horsham, in 1950. When I was 7 years old, my father Colin, a radio technician with the ABC, decided to take up a job on a tiny island off the Kimberley Coast in Western Australia called Troughton Island. The purpose of the island was to act as a radar station to direct ships around the islands in the far north of Western Australia.

So, along with my father, mother, older brother and older sister, we packed up all our belongings and travelled by car across the Nullarbor to Fremantle where we boarded the SS Cape Otway, a lighthouse steamship. It took us three long weeks to reach Troughton Island, as we stopped along the way to service the lighthouses scattered along the W.A. Coast.

To paint a picture, Troughton Island was only 950m by 450m in size, there was no TV, no telephone and fresh food was delivered by ship once a month. Our only way of communicating to the outside world was via radio telephone or morse code. We were one of two families living on the island, and my mother was our teacher during this time. My parents had to keep a close eye on us children as there were all types of potentially dangerous animals living on and around the island, such as crocodiles and sharks.

After two isolated yet adventure-filled years living on Troughton Island, my family and I returned to our hometown of Murtoa. Though, it wasn't long before my father had the calling to return to island life and take up a job as a lighthouse keeper on King Island. Once again, we packed up our things and headed south to King Island, located in Bass Strait between Victoria and Tasmania. At the time (1964), King Island had many industries operating on it including mining of scheelite, tin and mineral sands, beef cattle, dairy (King Island Cheese), cray fishing and abalone diving. The population back then was 4,000, though it has since dwindled to 800 since the closure of the mines and abattoir.

I left high school at Form 4 and started working as teller at the King Island CBA (bank), while continuing my education via correspondence. After turning 18, I left King Island and headed to the big smoke in Melbourne with nothing much but my personal belongings. I had to find a place to live and a job to support myself, which fortunately didn't take long.

I worked in several sales roles, during which time I met my wife, Alison. We moved around a bit with me getting different jobs, to Bendigo and even Sydney for a time, but eventually we returned to Melbourne and settled. After a couple of years working for a large telecommunications company, where I had gained knowledge about this industry and made many friends and acquaintances, I decided to take a chance and teamed up with one of them who was an engineer.

Together we developed a phoneware telecommunication management system that large corporate and government companies could use. Companies such as NEC and Ericsson then on-sold our product, and our company grew rapidly to employ 100 staff within 5 years. In 1997 the Business Review Weekly recognised us as Australia's 10th fastest growing company. In 1998 we listed the company on the Australian Stock Exchange, which was quickly fully subscribed and the share price quickly tripled in value. Two years later at age 50 I decided to retire as felt I had achieved my career goals and wanted to spend time with my wife and three children.

A few years ago, I felt the calling to visit

Troughton Island. Initially when I called to ask about visiting, I was told they don't allow visitors. However, when I mentioned that I was a descendant and gave them my name, I was welcomed to fly there along with a few friends. During my stay, I noticed that much had changed on the tiny island; all the original buildings had been destroyed by Cyclone Tracey and new ones built, and sadly the beautiful coral reef surrounding the island had been polluted and much of it had died. I have also returned to King Island many times over the past several years to visit old friends as there are a lot of memories there.

We have lived in Lilydale and now Chirnside Park for over 40 years and I have many friends in the area, it's important for me to socially. I am proud of my achievements in building my own company and of course proud of the family that I have raised together with my wife Alison. If I could give any advice to the youth of today I would say to save your money so you can buy a house and send your kids to decent schools.

Pamela Bingley

I was born in England in 1943. During the war my father who was in the Royal Air Force, was stationed in India. After returning to England, he could no longer cope with the cold English climate and wanted us to live somewhere warmer.

My father came to Tasmania, stayed with friends who sponsored him and gained a job as a supervisor of the Hydro Electric Scheme at Trevallyn. This included a house, so mum brought my brother and I over from England and we joined him.

At 11 years of age, I already had my own life and friends in England, so I didn't want to leave. I was keen on horse riding, so my parents showed me a movie about children in outback Australia who ride horses to school. We weren't living in the outback and I had to go to school on the bus, just the same as everybody else.

I found living in Australia a bit puzzling and a challenge to begin with. I had a strong English accent, which the other kids poked fun at. I struggled with spelling, because in an Australian accent, words were pronounced differently. I think I felt out of place as well, because we didn't have great weather in England, therefore I couldn't swim. Kids in my class were getting certificates for 50, 100, 200 metres and longer.

I remember one day going into a shop and I asked if I could have a lolly ice. The lady was very busy and said to me, "Well, do you want a lolly or do you want an ice cream?" There was a poster on the wall and I pointed to what is known here as an icy pole. Sweets were lollies, desserts were sweets, vests were singlets and waistcoats were vests. It was things like this which made it difficult to adjust at first.

When the Trevallyn scheme was finished Dad was offered a job at Tarraleah, but Mum said it was too isolated and cold, so he got a job with an architectural firm.

At the age of 18, I got married and my husband John and I moved to Devonport to live. After a couple of years, in 1964 John and I came to Cheltenham to live as he had begun playing football with the St Kilda Football Club. John was fortunate enough to play in the only grand final St Kilda ever won in 1966.

At that stage we had two young sons and not long after the grand final win, John was offered a coaching job and we returned to Tasmania to live in Hobart. Soon after I gave birth to another son Craig, though sadly he passed away from cot death when he was just three months old. This was a very difficult time for me personally and after some emotional help, we went on to have another son, Darren.

John took his team to their first ever premiership and was the toast of the town with many celebrations. While he was being the local hero, he forgot he had a wife and three sons, so I and the boys returned to Melbourne.

My parents had returned to Melbourne after my Dad retired, so I stayed with them and they helped me to look after the boys. I got a job in accounts and enjoyed my work. I felt it was important for mums to have a sense of belonging outside of being a mum. During the next twelve months and after many discussions, my husband sold the house in Hobart and we reconciled and bought a house in Blackburn. We later bought a house in Surrey Hills which we renovated. I changed jobs and was working in Personnel (now Human Resources) and attended Swinburne as a mature aged student two nights a week.

Although we'd reconciled, things had not been going well for some time in our 18 year marriage. I had stood by my husband for as long as I could, but eventually I knew it had to come to an end. I made the decision to divorce him, not just for my sake, but for the boys as well and he moved up to Queensland.

I stayed in the house in Surrey Hills, but when the mortgage rates went up in the 80s, I took on additional work doing ironing and baby-sitting. One night I was looking after a wealthy couple's baby while they went out, and when they returned the husband said to me "Isn't it great we have people like you who don't have a life, so that we can enjoy ours".

I realised then that I didn't have a life. The two eldest boys were working and had left home, so I sold my house in Surrey Hills. I bought a more modest and mortgage free house at the back of Wheelers Hill in Frankston. Then I moved to Vermont and lived there for twenty years until I retired from work. The gardening and maintenance were getting too much for me, so I sold the house and moved to Tudor Village.

I have gone through some tough times over the years but what has really helped me get through these challenges is having good friends to talk to and support me. Also, becoming involved with a few different community groups has been a saviour to me.

I joined Jaycee's, (Junior Chamber of Commerce) a training and fundraising organization for 18 to 40 year olds. They provided training in public speaking, and organizational skills for taking on supervisory or management roles. We also did fundraising projects such as Cash for Cans and Clean Up Australia Day. We also had a lot of fun and attended a conference in Townsville, with a trip to Magnetic Island. Their object was to help people like myself and others build skills and confidence, to go out into the world as capable citizens.

After leaving Jaycees at forty, I joined Mitcham Lions Club which is a worldwide service club which fundraises to help people in the community. Unfortunately, after a change in administration, we went from 30 members, to just 15 and eventually the club folded.

That was when I joined Kiwanis, a global service organisation. However, the local group I joined closed due to lack of younger members joining and older members departing.

I have gone through some tough times over the years but what has really helped me get through these challenges is having good friends to talk to and support me.

I've since been involved with U3A Yarra Ranges, taking part in Interesting Places and the Luncheon Group which I was the leader of for three years. I was Vice President and Welfare Officer for Yarra Ranges National Seniors for six years up until recently. Along the way I've made some beautiful friendships that I still have today. We catch up for lunch three times a year, and sometimes for a cuppa. The main thing is that we are there for each other during difficult personal times as well.

Another thing which helped during some of the difficult times, were our dogs.

Pal was a Terrier/Corgi cross and we lost him when he was 12. Goldie was a Labrador/Red Setter cross and we lost him at 17. I don't have a dog now, but I like looking after other peoples' dogs for them.

I think because my parents were always involved in community service, I felt drawn to do the same. I really believe in community and

service organisations and it's just something that I've been part of most of my life.

I was fortunate to receive an award for 25 Years of Community Service from Phillip Barresi MHR the Federal Member for Deakin on Australia Day in 2004.

I also received a certificate from the then Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard for Long Term Commitment to Community Service in 2011.

Jos Vandersman

I'm 78. I grew up in Holland, Netherlands, and migrated to Australia when I was five years old with my parents.

I remember, as a four-year-old having snow fights with my siblings outside in the snow because we lived near a river that used to freeze over in winter, so there was lots of snow around.

Migrating out here was a six-week trip by boat, I still remember some of it. And I remember the trip through the Suez Canal It's interesting because we went through the Suez and small boats came up offering to sell hats or whatever. They put these hats on the poles to bring them up to the ship where people could see them, and offered to sell them to us.

I've got five siblings, so I have three sisters and two brothers, and I was the oldest. On the ship for six weeks, my parents were looking after four kids under the age of six. I don't know how they did it, but I had a lovely time. I can remember sitting in the middle of the ship in the pool, and the ship was rocking, and the water was rocking over me as I sat in the pool. And, apparently, I had chicken pox, and I infected half the ship!

We landed in Daylesford, Hepburn Springs. There's a centre there, but we didn't have to go to the centre, we found private accommodation, which was pretty lucky. We thought we might have to go there, but we found private accommodation in Daylesford. Then we went to Mount Gambier and I did most of my schooling in Mount Gambier, so both primary and high school. And then I went to Hamilton, and I finished secondary school there, at a boarding school which was run by the Marist Brothers, a religious order, because I'm a Catholic. I finished off Year 12 there, and then eventually went to Uni. I graduated from Swinburne in Lilydale. And I've got an IT degree. So I'm one of those computer nerds.

First impressions when I landed in Australia were I just liked the place because it wasn't so cold. And also, I could do whatever I liked, because in Mount Gambier, we had our own 'Housing Trust' house. We had a big backyard, and we could grow all our own veggies. That was really useful. I used to grow lots of veggies. A Housing Trust house is basically, it's supported accommodation where the government owns a house and they rent it to you for lower than market rates. That was just because we were a big family and we couldn't afford to buy our own house. That was really good, we were there for a few years.

I was at boarding school for six years. Mount Gambier had schools, but they weren't up to my mother's expectations. In other words, she looked at the results of Year 12 and they weren't very good, and she knew that we wanted to go to Uni. So, both my brothers, and I all went to boarding school in Hamilton, because the standard of schooling there was really good.

Boarding school wasn't easy, there was a lot going on, and I was a fairly shy, introverted kid. And so I had to sort of fit into the boarding school. I fitted in most of the time, but not all the time. So it wasn't easy, but I did really well academically, and got several scholarships as a result of that. And my brothers got scholarships as well. We all went through uni. One brother became a Civil Engineer, and my other brother did a music degree, and he actually composes music. So we have many talents between us. And my sister became a teacher.

The issues at school were mainly because I was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fairly shy, I got picked on, unfortunately, and the school didn't have a strong enough policy to get over that, so I sort of struggled with that for a while, but eventually it was all right. Once I was older, I became a prefect, and that worked better after that.

Coming from another country, an issue was learning another language, which I picked up really quickly though. I went to kindergarten here at age five and a half. I did kindergarten, and then primary school, and I picked up the language fairly easily, and taught my parents how to swear in English. Well, they had polite English, which they studied, but they had no idea how to swear so here I was offering to help them.

I integrated into an Australian way of life quite seamlessly, because I picked up the language quickly. And once you've picked up the language, you know, you sort of get on with most people, fairly well. So we were readily accepted.

My father was more or less a labourer. He drove trucks, and he did odd jobs, and he was a handyman. He worked for the Agriculture Department and was inseminating cows at one stage, which would have been very interesting, but he was driving trucks a lot. In Mount Gambier, they've got a big pine forest, and he was driving the trucks through the forest, carrying loads of wood, because all of Mount Gambier is planted pines. And my mother was a piano teacher, so she had pupils at home about half the time. That was her main job, besides looking after the kids. I had a happy childhood. It was full of things to do, as you do with five kids. We all played Monopoly together, Cluedo, Scrabble, you name it, we played it. So it was happy, very happy.

I integrated into an Australian way of life quite seamlessly, because I picked up the language quickly. And once you've picked up the language, you know, you sort of get on with most people, fairly well. So we were readily accepted. And I did well academically. I got a scholarship from the College in Hamilton, which gave me free Uni study. Thanks to Gough Whitlam.

Out of my IT degree, I worked on a computer Help Desk for Swinburne. But in between, I was working with Telstra a long time ago, on their computer operations area. I was printing your phone bill. That was one of my jobs. They had a big place in Clayton, an old salt factory, and I worked there for years, just working on the computers, operating computers.

That was the main job, in between I had heaps of other jobs. And I did end up doing some publishing on the internet. There was a magazine that I published, and I worked with someone else, and we did the magazine between us, I did that for about a couple of years, and we were hoping to make a business out of it. That was very hard for marketing. We're both hopeless marketers, so we couldn't flog our products, but some really interesting stuff in the magazines. I have had a variety of jobs from working at Woolworths in the mid 1960s, to various jobs working with computers. I ended up retiring in 2012, when Swinburne left Lilydale, it wasn't by choice. I was working full time, and they decided to close down the campus and move most staff to Hawthorn where they've got a quite a big campus. And I said, I'm not doing that, but I was past retiring age anyway.

These days I work with a group at Ringwood library, which is helping people to write, and that's my current project, getting books out in E publishing format. So I'm using a computer, PowerPoint, and sound files, combining it all and making a book out of the sound file. We

teach people how to write and how to publish, called self-publishing, but they do it all themselves. The classes show you having to look for covers and editing and all that. You get your friends to edit you. So we've got a group of people who meet and we edit each other's books. And we use Beyond Words, for their prompts.

I've got three kids. Two of them have autism, so that's why they're not with us. They've got their own places called group housing. They're in two different houses, and they're paid for by the NDIS. One's in Bayswater, and the other one's in Boronia. My third child, was in the granny flat, but then she needed a wheelchair, and the granny flat was too small, so she's busy looking for another place, but she's been there for the last eight years. And she's what's high called, high functioning, so she's got autism, but she went through mainstream school. The other kids didn't manage mainstream, so they went to a special school. And they coped quite well, but mainstream was just beyond them, because they were non-verbal. It was tough because we'd never heard of autism. When we got the diagnosis, we thought, "oh, we better learn about this". And eventually we were almost experts in it. We were involved with a sort of autism organisation. There was a place, I think they're in Ferntree Gully, who do camps and natural families. We were involved with them for a while.

I remember playing chess for a long time. My father was really good at chess. It took me 10 years to beat him. I did! I got books about chess, he wasn't into reading about chess, he just liked to play, that's why it took me a long time to beat him. I lived in Adelaide for a while. I was in several clubs and I was doing tournaments in Adelaide. I was running tournaments in chess. And I was involved locally up until recently. I was teaching chess at Lilydale Library, but people stopped coming because they learn chess from other areas. When people were coming, they didn't have to learn chess, so I made up games that you could play with chess. And then people stopped coming for some reason. Up until last year, I was there once a fortnight.

I have been in Lilydale since 1998 so it's about 27 years. We moved here because we couldn't afford to live in Richmond because we had too many kids and we were expanding, and you can't afford to live in Richmond if you have to build onto your house. It's too expensive. But we were quite happy in Richmond until child number three came along.

We may move again but we're not sure. We're just looking at options, and this place is too old to renovate. Under the floor is all gas heated and will have to be replaced eventually, with electric heaters, and it's just too expensive. It's a pity, because the place is quite nice, very comfortable and suitable for three kids, but not for empty nesters.

My siblings are scattered all over the world. One in London, one in the Blue Mountains, one in Adelaide, another one's just moved to Bruny Island. We email each other, but we don't see each other very often.

Wendy Baker

I've lived in Lilydale for 12 years. Before that I lived in Montmorency for 55 years, in a house with land that was a bit too big to manage as I was aging, so eventually I looked at retirement villages and came here. I have two sons, they grew up there.

I grew up in Hampton. I was born in Coburg in 1936 and about 1940 we moved to Hampton because my parents were building a new house there. So we lived in a boarding house, for a few months while the house was built, and we moved into the new house late in 1941. My father's best mate persuaded him to enlist in the army, so he was away for all the war years, not demobbed until 1946. Mum was a tower of strength throughout that time and it was a lovely childhood. She coped by herself throughout that time on a soldier's pay. I only had one sibling, my younger brother, who is dead now.

We had a fun childhood, and when we moved to Hampton, it was on the edge of paddocks that extended as far as Moorabbin. Later on, the Housing Commission took over that whole area. And it boomed through the late 1940s and 50s. It was probably mostly returned soldiers and their families, you know, the Housing Commission basically took people who didn't have the means to buy a house of their own outright, and in later years, those houses were sold into private hands, and became just like any other house anywhere, as people changed them around and did all sorts of things to them.

I went to the local school at the end of the street, and the high school was halfway down the street, so I went there for high school. I left school when I was 14, and I became a junior in an office in the city, saving up to become a pilot. And when I was 16, I discovered that I couldn't get a learner's permit because I wore glasses. So that was the end of that dream until I was 80, and then I had flying lessons! I was able to have flying lessons with glasses and hearing aids. But then I failed the medical and couldn't finish, but I learned to take off and land by myself with the instructor beside me of course, and that was it. But it was a foolish thing for a pensioner to do, because, needless to say, it's the most expensive hobby in creation, but that was good fun. It fulfilled a dream.

Being a pilot I thought would be great. But I must confess, I was terrified coming in to land over Victoria Road, terrified I'd land on a car. It was good fun, but I was glad there was an instructor beside me. I used to wonder if the drivers below me were as worried as I was.

I loved being in an office during my teen years, and I had lots of friends all around the same age, so we all married around the same time. They all settled south of the Yarra, and I settled north of the Yarra. We tried to keep up but gradually family responsibilities and distance got the better of us. They're all dead and gone now. I've outlived them all.

I started as a junior, which meant I collected the mail, ran messages all over the city, lugged a bucket down to the slop hopper at the end of the floor we were on, and filled it with water for the urn, and made morning and afternoon tea for the office staff and served it to all the men, the women had to fend for themselves of course.

As I got older, I moved into a bookkeeping job in the accounts department and on and off I stayed there for the rest of my life virtually, except for raising kids and taking a year or so out to train as a nurse. But I only lasted 11

months in nursing and gave it up as my mother was very ill. And after sharing a room at the Women's Hospital for nine months, I was moved to the Royal Melbourne, where I had a room of my own. For the first time in my life, I nearly died of loneliness. I've never felt lonely in my life, except that month I was at the Royal Melbourne because I had my own room. I would have killed for my own room when I first started nursing, because I'd never shared with anyone before, having only a brother. I sat for the first-year professional exam and passed that.

Then I went back to office work, and stayed in office work until I discovered family history research, and then ultimately I became a genealogist. I sat for the exam in Salt Lake City and became qualified and did that on the side. I worked part time in later years, four days a week. And all weekends and evenings at genealogy, so I've have a lovely life.

At the age of 16, I joined 1st Beaumaris Sea Scouts as a cub instructor, and when I moved to Montmorency, by which time I'd had two kids, the local scout leader found me there, and I got to be the cub leader at 1st Montmorency until about 1980. Then I became the District Cub Leader for Eltham District. Some of the happiest years of my life were in Scouting.

When I first joined, I was 16, and they had the first State Scout Conference in Victoria, and I helped at that. And someone came up with the idea of putting on a show. So, the following year, about 1953 the first Melbourne Gang Show was held, and I was a volunteer usherette at that. Last year I went to the 72nd Annual Melbourne Gang Show, which now includes girls as well as boys. That's been different for many years. It was all boys when I was in scouting. I attended a lot of Gang Shows annually, but just as a spectator. And then there was a gap when I lost touch, and I was too busy raising kids out in the suburbs.

Then after I moved to Lilydale, out of the blue came an email advertising the 65th year of Gang Show. And by this time it had graduated from the Union Theatre in Melbourne University, to the Palais in St Kilda, and now it's at the Beson Centre at Mount Scopus College in Burwood.

Basically I've been on committees since I was 16 years old. Firstly on Scout committees, then kindergarten and school committees, the two Melbourne genealogy societies, the State Library and the Mormon library. I was a voluntary librarian there for about 15 years, and here in the Village, I've been on various committees since I've been here, and I've been here for 12 years.

I'm a bit over the hill now, and a bit wobbly, so there's things I can't do along the way.

My first overseas trip, had the excuse of a genealogical conference in Ireland in 1987 and I persuaded my husband to go. It was the year prior to our bicentenary, and the Tall Ships were assembling in Portsmouth in England, ready for a re-enactment. My husband had convicts in the First Fleet so when I saw the ads for it on TV, I sent off and booked for all the events and the accommodation, etc, hoping when we arrived at Heathrow to say, "oh, let's just get a bus to Portsmouth" and it would be a surprise for him. But of course, the ad came on telly again, and Kevin said, "Oh, what a shame we didn't know about that. You know, it's around the right time. We probably could have gone". So I had to tell him. That was great, and that was the first overseas trip we had. And since then, I've had nine overseas trips. On the first five to Britain I didn't see any tourist sights. I was in record offices researching family history, either for myself or clients. My poor husband was left to tramp the streets of London and learn all sorts of things before finally, on trip number five, we actually saw the touristy sights.

My parents were married for about six years prior to my birth, and that was probably because they were hard up. I've heard rumours that during the depression my father had a motorbike, and he used to buy up clothing from deceased estates, and my mother would sell them from a stall in Victoria Market using a nearby telephone booth as a fitting room. I don't know whether that's truth or fiction, but it makes a good yarn. It's the sort of thing I know my mother would do, because she was a go-getter, she was a saver. When they sold the house in Coburg in 1940 they were in the process of buying it, and mum told me that when they got the mortgage for it, she had 500 pounds as a deposit, and the bank manager said, Oh no, don't give us all that, keep some back to buy furniture, and then they found enough to buy the block of land at Hampton and build the house. But of course, for the war years, Mum was just relying on dad's army pay, which I think was six shillings a day or something, not very much.

Mum was a saver, and I think I absorbed the depression mentality where, according to mum, cash is King; it didn't matter how much you had in the way of bricks and mortar, if you didn't have the cash in your purse for the butcher, you starved.

And she was always careful with money. I know when I was a little tacker, I dearly wanted to have elocution lessons, because my friend was having them and mum said she couldn't afford it. But after the Disney Fantasia films, I had my eye on a little booklet in the newsagent about Thumper the Rabbit. That was a shilling, and I pleaded with mum for that. No, I couldn't have it, it cost too much. But then I had my tonsils out, and when I came home from hospital, mum bought me Thumper the Rabbit.

Mum was a saver, and I think I absorbed the depression mentality where, according to mum, cash is King; it didn't matter how much you had in the way of bricks and mortar, if you didn't have the cash in your purse for the butcher, you starved. So I grew up, just knowing I should save 10% of my wages all the time. So I'm lucky that I learned that lesson early in life.

When I was doing genealogy, I was also teaching genealogical subjects at the Council for Adult Education at the weekends, so the wages I earned there basically paid for my overseas trips. In 1990, I led a study tour to the Mormon library in Salt Lake City, with 12 accompanying me, all mad keen genealogists. We had spent a few months before the trip visiting the Mormon library in Fairfield once a week and getting all our references teed up ready to hit the ground running when we got to Salt Lake City. We had a wonderful time there, and didn't have much time for sightseeing. But, we did have a couple of bus tours and went to hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

I was privileged to have a tour inside of the Granite Mountain where the Mormons did all their microfilming and fiching of records before they were sent out worldwide to the libraries. I'm not a Mormon, by the way. I'm an atheist, but a genealogist. The Latter Day Saints accepted that I was a genealogist. And in fact, they were the agency from which I got my accreditation as a professional genealogist.

When I went to the States as part of that tour, I sat for the accreditation exam. Before I went, while I was still in Australia, I had to send them a five generation genealogy of Australian records prior to 1875 which means you practically had to have a convict to start with, otherwise you can't fit in enough generations. And if they passed you on that, you got to do an eight-hour written exam in

Salt Lake City. I took a day out from nurturing the group - with due warning, of course, and sat the exam. And after eight hours of writing, I thought I'd never be able to use my right arm again.

This qualified me with Australian records; I could have qualified for English, Scottish, Irish or any other country's records. They had experts in all those areas, but English would have been next in line, because most of our genealogy at that stage would go back to Britain.

I am still doing genealogy with Yarra Ranges U3A. Last year I was their newsletter editor, and I attend a genealogy class there, plus a dine out group which meets once a month. We go to a different restaurant each time, which is interesting. I go to an exercise class, which is held at the courthouse in Castella Street. I attend another exercise class in my retirement village, run by physios. They've been servicing the village for over 20 years. I've been doing that class most of the time I've been in the village, and I think it's mostly thanks to that, that I have had more near misses than actual falls.

I've had a wonderful life and brought up two sons, both of whom now live in country towns. I'm very proud of them. I have one grandson and one granddaughter and several great grand children.

My philosophy on life? Get on with it. I think everyone gets a bit down occasionally, but you know, if you don't get up and get on with it, you can't just sit there bewailing your misfortune. But some things you can't avoid, like illness and things going wrong, like heat is costing us the earth, some things you've just got to try and live through.

Advice to my younger self? Well some of the things I've done that could have gone awry I wouldn't have been smart enough to warn myself about! That was the problem. I could tell some hair-raising stories.

An example was when I was nursing, my roommate and I, used to go off duty sometimes and swing by the kitchen because the night cook had the key to the ice cream cabinet. So he'd usually feed us ice cream by the bowl full. And one night he had a mate visiting him and they were drinking whiskey. So we were invited to join them, using hospital cups. Margaret was downing the whiskey along with the blokes, and I was saying, "I'll just put a little bit of water in mine" and tipping mine down the sink, filling it up with water. And then the whiskey ran out, and the mate was going to go home and get another bottle, and invited us to go with him. Margaret said she'd go, and she was already tipsy, so I felt obliged to go too, and we were still in uniform, in our blood-spattered white aprons, and we drove with this unknown man to some unknown place and got back to the hospital in one piece, without him taking advantage of either of us. When we got back, I decided I'd had enough drinking going on around me and said goodnight and walked away quickly, and Margaret decided to follow me, but the man with the newly-got whiskey put out an arm, which she promptly ducked under, very, very nicely. We made our escape, but that was a big deal to me back then. I got back to our room and thought how scary. And how stupid!

We were 17 and a half. We were dumb kids at 17 and a half. When I think about it now, I think four year olds know more than I did at 35, everything hangs out in vivid technicolour on the TV now.

Michael Kent

I have lived in Lilydale 14 and a half years, and before that in Ringwood north, and then before that, Blackburn North. I was born in Epworth Hospital in Richmond in 1933. My parents lived in Murphy Street and rented accommodation in South Yarra near the South Yarra station. Then we moved to Caroline Street, which crossed Domain Road just before Punt Road, and ran parallel with Punt Road, and I have memories of that, even though I was only very small and young, I can still remember the house.

When we lived in Caroline Street, the Salvation Army band used to come and play on a Sunday morning on the corner of Caroline Street and Domain Road. And I thought I'd be quite musical, and I'd take my little tin kettle drum up there and join in with them. My father, and this is not my recollection, because I was too young to remember, I was told the story by my father, he said they told me to "run a long little boy" you're making too much noise. My father told them it was a very un-Christian sort of attitude to take of someone who wanted to be part of their Sunday morning performance. That's something that still sticks in my mind. I can remember the people opposite on the corner of Domain Road had a large property and horses, and they used to ride the horses around the tan around the Botanic Gardens, and I used to sit on their horse and have a bit of a ride on it.

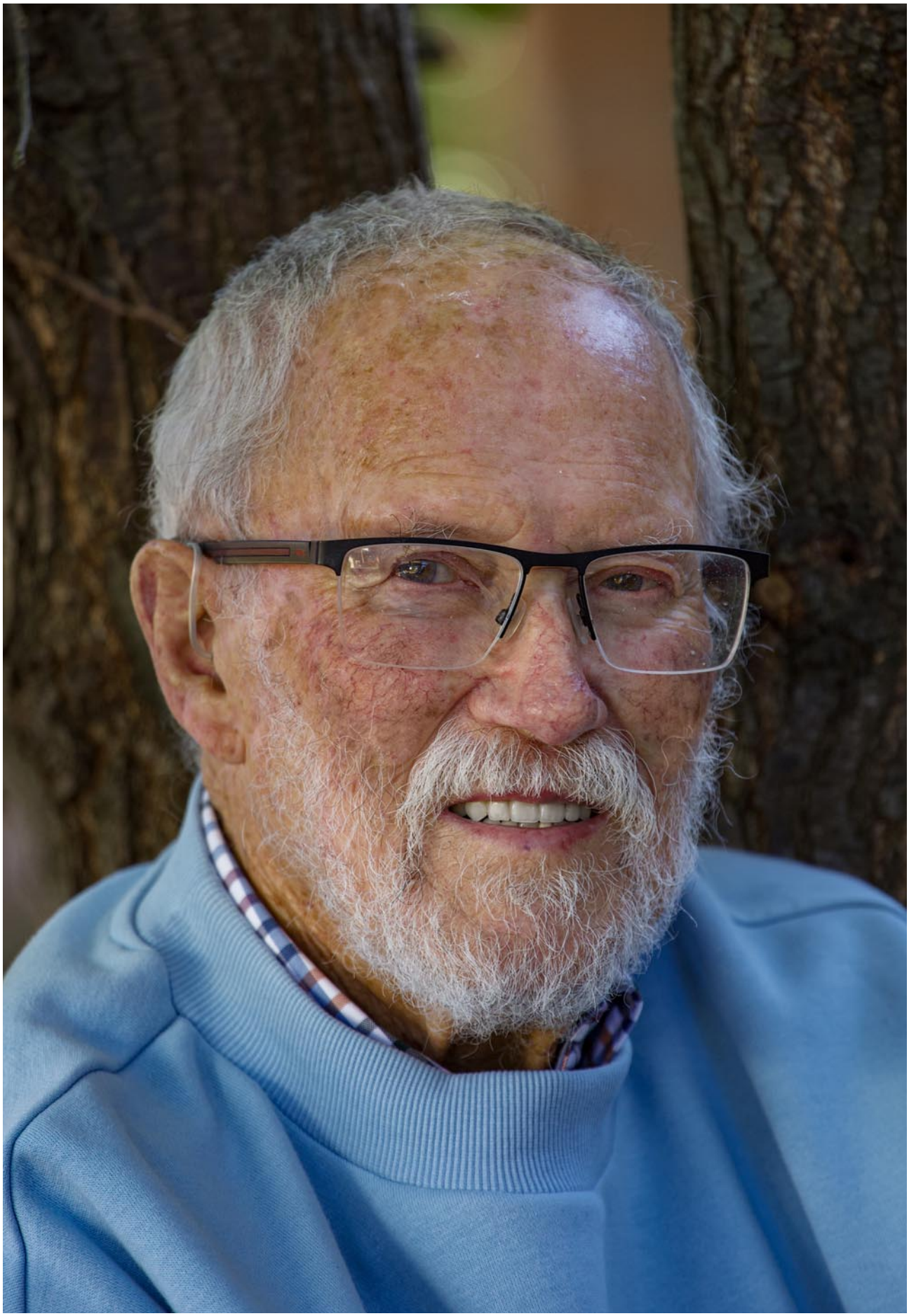
I can remember being taken down Caroline Street to Alexander Avenue to the Yarra River, and getting on the ferry service to take us into the city, which wasn't all that far, but that is to be the highlight. We'd go into the city with my mother, and she'd take us up to Bourke Street, and we'd get on the cable tram, which ran out from at Bourke Street to Parliament House, and then up past Parliament House, up Nicholson Street and then down Gertrude Street into Smith Street and down near to the street where my father had the factory. We used to love sitting on what was called the dummy car of the cable tram. The cable tram consisted of two units, the grip car, which was the one that the driver stood in and pulled the lever to grab the cable to pull the cable tram along the rails. And when we were going around corners, they'd say, "Hang on round the corner", because they'd have to let go of the cable and use momentum to get around. They had to have enough momentum, particularly going around the corner where it was going uphill, to fling it around the corner, to pick up the cable round the other side. I used to like sitting there watching the man pulling the levers.

Both my parents were not born in Australia. My mother was born in India, so British Indian, her grandfather was a veterinary surgeon to the royal horse artillery, and she was born in Calcutta, in the Punjab area of India.

My father was born in Somerset in England, in a town called Frome.

I'm a first generation Australian, I don't have any forebears that I can relate back to of ex-convicts or anything like that.

Then we moved to Murrumbeena, and I started at Murrumbeena State School late, because there was an Infantile Paralysis epidemic at the time, which is now called Polio, though it was not peculiar to infantiles. Started at Murrumbeena Primary School 1938. It was suspected that I may have had Infantile Paralysis because I was very scrawny when I was young. And in fact, my father, when I got a bit older, said, "I looked like someone that



came out of the Belsen horror camp during the Second World War", because I was skin and bones. But then, when I went to school, I ended up with chicken pox, scarlet fever and measles, all within three months of one another.

We left Murrumbeena because my father thought that Murrumbeena was too close to the centre city with the war starting, and we left there in about 1940 and moved to Beaumaris, and I grew up in my teens in Beaumaris. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there playing Tarzan along the cliffs and things like that. I was a foundation member of the Beaumaris Yacht Club. First season, I sailed as a crew, and then the second season, I sailed a boat that I built myself and won the club championship that year. I then met my then to be wife, and her father banned her for going out on my yacht because it was too small, and she might have drowned. So that was the end of my sailing days. Plus my father died in 1953 and I moved away from Beaumaris.

... we used to have milk delivered in a huge milk can, free milk for all the kids to drink, and it would sit out in the hot, summer sun. By the time we got it at lunchtime, it was sour.

We were burned out in the bush fires in Beaumaris in 1944. Well, it was during the Second World War, and my father had just bought me, I don't know how he bought it during the war, a Hornby electric train set. This is in January, the bush fires, at Christmas I got the Hornby train, and after the bush fires, I had no train because the house disappeared. We didn't own that house, it was rented. Most of the roads were just sandy roads, there was very few made roads in Beaumaris in those days, and the water supply was pretty poor, and the fire brigades were just sucking the water out with their pumps. My father said that the garden hose he had to use to try and put the fire, out water came out of the hose by about only six inches. That's as far as it had to come out because there was no water pressure left for fighting the fire by an individual as fire brigade were taking it all.

I enjoyed my school days at Beaumaris, it was a country school, two classrooms with four grades in each classroom, two teachers which was the Headmaster and one teacher. And it was there that I got this dislike for milk. Because we used to have milk delivered in a huge milk can, free milk for all the kids to drink, and it would sit out in the hot, summer sun. By the time we got it at lunchtime, it was sour. And the smell of yogurt these days, to me, is like smelling sour milk. I can drink flavoured milk, but I can't drink straight milk. That's something that has lived with me ever since I was six or seven years old.

I used to get attacked by magpies riding to school at Beaumaris because I had to obviously ride through areas where they were nesting, and they were quite aggressive when they were nesting. I lived backing onto two riding schools in Beaumaris, so I became involved with horses. My sister and I both had a horse each. We used to ride around Beaumaris on the sandy soil, and the trotting trainers used to bring their horses down, pacers and trotters to train on what was called 'the common' that we had at Beaumaris. There was an open area, it had a 440 yard or 400-metre track, just hand built by people. And they used to train their trotters and pacers there. I used to get involved with the horse-riding schools. They kept their horses during the week up on Warrigal Road in Cheltenham, near what was called the Heatherton Sanatorium and on Sunday evening, the horses would be taken

back to the paddock next door to this Heatherton Sanatorium. I think it was a TB clinic. So, I'd ride my horse there, driving these about 20 or 25 horses up to the paddock where they were kept during the week, up through Beaumaris, through North Beaumaris on Weatherall Road to Charman Road, up Charman Road across the railway line at Cheltenham, over Nepean Highway, down to Warrigal Road, across Warrigal Road, we didn't have any trouble with traffic back in those days. Took probably about 20 – 25 minutes. I was probably about 14 or 15 at the time.

One of the riding schools was 'Finch's Riding School'. 'Old Jimmy Finch' ran that one. He was a bit of a devil. He had a farm down at Mordialloc and during the Second World War, he used to have pigs and other farm animals, and he'd slaughter one every now and again we'd have butchered fresh meat, which you couldn't get without ration coupons. I've still got some ration coupons, from the war years, and petrol coupons.

My father had to buy a car, a 39 Chev, he put a gas producer on it because he couldn't get enough petrol to run it. One of my jobs was to clean the filters. They had filters so that the charcoal ash didn't get into the engine. He had another car, which was a DKW, which was the Deutsche Kinder-Wagen. It was a two-stroke engine car, little one, but it wasn't big enough to put a gas producer on and being a two stroke, it had an oil petrol mixture, rather than a straight petrol. So, it couldn't run on gas. So, we had two cars for a while but were frowned upon because it was a German car, and this was during the Second World War, anything German was taboo, hopefully, I think times have changed. We're not as racist or biased. Some people may have good reason to be, have their biases, but I think we're all going to live together, be one happy family, if we can.

My mother and father had been separated, and father remarried, and I went to live with my mother, and she was a companion to a friend of hers up in North Beaumaris. And I lived there for a while, and then we moved to Hawksburn, getting back to the area, sort of where I was first born, South Yarra, Toorak - Hawkesburn area, and lived there. When my father died in 1953, he'd bought a property down at Metung to retire. I suppose my parents were older parents, when I look back on it, I never looked at them as being older. But my father was born in 1901 and he came to Australia in 1924 and married my mother in 1927. I was born in 1933 so my father was 32 which in those days, was old for a person to become a parent, and I was 20 when he died in 1953. I was doing engineering at Melbourne Tech, and I was going to go into father's business.

I was always going to go into the factory business, which was a sheet metal manufacturing business that used to make filing cabinets, steel filing cabinets, but steel wasn't my first love. My first love was timber, because I built my yacht out of timber. I still have items of woodwork that I did when I was at secondary school at Hampton High School. It wasn't called woodwork in those days, it was a Scandinavian name, called Sloid. And I did that at Brighton Central School, after Hampton High School. And I was14 or 15, and obviously I had a bent towards woodwork nines and 10s for my work, of which I was rather proud. That led me to eventually building the yacht. I knew how to do woodwork. But then I went into the factory when my father died at Metung, which was a bit of a sad occasion, because he took possession of the property on the Friday and died on the Sunday.

I then went and ran the business. I would have thought people were so pretty mundane,

because I did it for 47 years, went to the same place for 47 years, in Fitzroy. I enjoyed work. When I look back on it, in business, you always have your highs and lows. The lows are obviously sent to test you and see how you manage to get through the difficult periods. And I found, looking back on life, that the times that I worried and got my internal organisms in a knot with worry, that it was all in vain, because everything turned out to be okay. In the long run, something would happen we'd get through. I mean, whether it be help from the banks or support from other people.

My father had a different philosophy towards running a business. He ran the business, and he treated his employees as part of the family, and they were more friends rather than employees, but it didn't do him much good, because he was frowned upon by the unions. He tried to join the Labor Party at one time, my father was probably a very lateral thinker and didn't conform to the normal things, which may have made me a little bit different as I grew up. But they would not let him join, because he was an employer and was the enemy. Though he couldn't be in the Labor Party, with that said, he still ran the place efficiently. I tried to do the same thing, and I tried to be fair in business. I found, if I was fair with people, that at some time or other that would return dividends in them being fair to me and considerate. Many a time I'd put in a price for a job, for a contract where the furnishing company might be office supplies company and was contracted to supply a whole floor of office equipment, and they'd say, "Oh look, I think we can get a bit more for you for that. I know at times you've time sharpened your pencil and done the right thing, so we can give you a bit more". So from that point of view, it bore dividends.

Eventually, my eldest son joined me in the business. He was with me from 1978 to when we closed the business in 1999. He took the place of a woman that worked in the office for my father and then came back and worked for me. She had a lot of experience with running the business, and her help, particularly when he died, with the people that worked there. They stuck by us and did what they knew they had to do, and they did the right thing. And my father left a pretty heavy load. He left a £7000 negative estate back in 1953 which was no small amount of money. But once again, the banks were quite helpful and helping us financially for the first few years, it was a matter of working to get rid of the debt. Eventually, we got on our feet. Two years after my father died, I married. That's when we moved to Blackburn North because I had a block of land at Beaumaris that I bought with an annuity that my father left me when he died of £500. I bought a block of land for £500 pound, and the time came to decide we'd build a house. So that was in 1955 I bought the block of land, and I went to borrow money, and they said, "Oh!!, no roads, no sewerage, no drainage, the place will never go ahead". So, I thought, right, I'll sell the block of land and get my money back. I more than got my money back because I got £1250 pounds after two years for an area that wasn't going to go ahead. That's when I moved and bought the place at Blackburn North, and it was £3750. And the State Bank of Victoria, which was called a Credit Foncier, doesn't exist anymore, they lent me £2025, and I got a second mortgage. The price I paid which included the land and I had £1250 to start with. I ended up with enough money to buy the place, and it was three houses from the Koonung Creek, which is where the Eastern freeway goes now. I lived there for 25 years. And the day after, I sold the place Steve Crabb, the Minister for Transport, decided that the Eastern Freeway wasn't going to come through anymore. So, the value of the property went quite sky high, but it was all bush along Koonung Creek back

in those days, and it was quite pleasant. The kids jumped across Koonung Creek and went to Donvale High School. I became involved with Donvale High School, after being involved in other activities.

As I said, I was a foundation member of the Beaumaris Yacht Club. I was a foundation member of PI ARC, which is a Phillip Island Auto Racing Club, which is where the Phillip Island race track is now. I'd have to go down there on members days, drive the car around the track to consolidate the ballast or the foundations of the track that were down there. Those very early days, my father suggested I should join since I was interested in motor sport. Always had a love for that. I suppose you could be called a petrol head in the past.

I found, if I was fair with people, that at some time or other that would return dividends in them being fair to me and considerate.

I moved into the house in Blackburn North on the 18th of December 1957 which was the day that my first child was born. My wife was in hospital. I moved in on my own, no curtains, lying on a mattress on the floor with no bed frame, and looking straight up to Mount Dandenong from Blackburn North. It was rather pleasant, but it was bit lonely. While I was in Blackburn North, I became involved with the Blackburn North Progress Association, which had formed a couple of years before I moved to Blackburn. It was a pressure group that agitated for local facilities, as well as a social group for residents, and I became quite involved in that. We used to have progressive dinner parties and things like that. We'd raise funds, and during the time I was involved with the Blackburn North Progress Association, it built three tennis clubs and three kindergartens. When I say it built them, it provided funding and the government or a council supplied funds on a two for one or three for one basis. I also helped set up the Blackburn North Bowling Club. I was Treasurer and then Secretary of it, and I had the dubious honour of being the last President, because it had served its purpose after quite a number of years. And I wound it up, and we distributed any funds that we had to the various organizations we had started or helped support.

Then I became involved with the Donvale High School, and I became convener of the Donvale Art and Craft Show. I got a bit interested in art, not so much the craft, but art painting, not that I do it myself. I appreciate nice paintings and that sort of thing. And that led me to get involved with politicians there too, helping to get facilities for Donvale High School, my then wife, was on school council as a staff representative.

She had a very interesting life, and it probably made my life interesting. When I met her she was studying to be a Radiographer. She started off to be a teacher. Then she got ill, had emphysema, and she was in Prince Henry's hospital for about a year recovering from that. And while she was there, she had numerous X-rays taken, and she thought that's an interesting occupation. I might do something about this. So that's what she did. And I met her at Melbourne Tech doing her Radiography Diploma when I was doing my Engineering Diploma.

After being involved with Donvale High School, we decided to move from Blackburn North because three older children had finished their schooling, and our younger son, who was eight years younger than his next sibling, he was going to Yarra Valley Grammar School. We thought we would move nearer to

the Yarra Valley Grammar School. We moved to Ringwood North and bought a property there on an estate that had been opened up as a Country Club but had folded due to lack of funds and was being sold off. We wanted a house on a large lot of land, but we couldn't find one, but this one had a park right next door, so it wouldn't be built on, because it had a barrel drain through it, so it was not to be built on. So, we had our acre of land next door, and we were there for 27 years.

As I said, I ran the business for 47 years, and in 1999 an agent came in and asked who owned the factory property in Fitzroy, where the business was, and I said, my wife and I owned it, and because I bought my sister's share of my father's estate by this stage they asked if I wanted to sell it. I said "No, I hadn't even thought about it", so I didn't do anything about it. Didn't think about it anymore. But a fortnight later, the agent came back and said, "my client would like to have a look at the place to see what it's like so they can compare it with other properties". They came and looked at it and it turned out to be a federal court judge who I recognised, and I showed them around the property, and they were very impressed with it. I wasn't interested in selling but they came back and said, they wanted to put in an offer. And various other circumstances, such as, some of our customers had financial difficulty, and we were short of work, and our factory was in Fitzroy, which was a built-up suburb, and probably realized we were a non-conforming occupation. We had a terrace house on one side and an old two-storey property next door being turned into a restaurant, and they put up with all the noise of the factory since 1934 when my father started there. But with more modern times, people were starting to get a little more conscious of the environment, and I could see the writing on the wall that we'd have to move eventually. I thought, well, business isn't too good, we'll see what we can do. So, we decided to negotiate with the client. And I knocked their first offer back. I said, no, I wasn't particularly interested, and they came back with a higher offer later, with very good terms. They wanted to turn the factory into warehouse living that covered number 129, and 131, Greeves Street, Fitzroy, so it was two blocks of land and had one building expanding the whole 50 foot with double block, and they wanted to turn it into a residence. And that's what happened. I accepted their offer.

I was 67 at the time, so I thought I'm getting to the stage when I need to wind down. My only problem was my son working for me. I felt I was letting him down. And he decided that, after working for another company that we did business with, after we shut the business, he retrained in IT business, and they ended up working at Melbourne University. So, he was set up pretty well. So, I decided I would retire. At that time, I'd been involved with the Clock Tower Probus Association, Probus Club in Ringwood, which was a mixed Probus Club. There was a Ringwood Ladies Probus and through them, one of their members lived in Tudor village here in Lilydale, where I now live.

... with more modern times, people were starting to get a little more conscious of the environment, and I could see the writing on the wall that we'd have to move eventually.

That's how I ended up in Lilydale. And you know, I thoroughly enjoy being here. Unfortunately, my wife passed away in 2013 having contracted a brain tumour. And the prognosis was that it was peculiar to the brain, wouldn't go anywhere else, and was treatable with radiotherapy. So that was done, but they had to do the biopsy in the first place to find

out what the tumour was, and there was the interference with the brain in taking the biopsy, The brain doesn't like to be interrupted or messed around with, so it led to her deterioration. So, she had to go into care. She was in care for two years at what was the old Lilydale hospital. For probably over 12 months of the two years she was there, I don't think she knew who anyone was. It was very sad. She used to smile, as though she thought she knew who you were, but she never, sort of said, “Oh, hello, Michael” or anything like that. She’d just smiled and say hello. Didn't speak much, but it was probably a blessing in disguise when she eventually did pass away.

I've written in my memoirs that I felt that my life had come to an end at that stage. Then I was fortunate enough to meet a lady in the Village here who was widowed and she'd had a knee replacement, hadn't been able to get out for some months, and I thought maybe she'd like to go out for lunch to Marysville after the bush fires had been through there just not long before, and we went there for lunch at Oscar's Restaurant, and we've been friends ever since. I have a new life, I suppose you could say, and I felt guilty at first as having been with one, I'll say woman, but she was a girl when I first met her. For 61 years, 58 of those as a married couple. To find someone else I thought it was sounding a bit like I was a womanizer. But I took this friend to meet my family, and my eldest grandson was asked by his mother, “What did you think of Grandpa's friend?” And he said, “Oh, Grandpa can't talk to his dog for the next 20 years. He should have someone he can talk to”. And his father, my eldest son, said to me, “Dad, you haven't had a wife for two years, and I haven't had a mother for two years”. And he said, “It's understandable.” You have to have companionship in your life”. And I think that's one of the benefits, I think, of living in a place like Tudor village. We all think on the same plane, and we tend to get along pretty well. It's a happy place to live in, and I'm thoroughly enjoying it, and I'll probably be here until I'm taken away in a wooden box.

Vincenzina (Vincy) Borrelli

I was born in Italy, in a small village nestled in the mountains called Sant'Eufemia a Maiella. In 1938, my father migrated to Australia. He had some relatives already here who urged him to come quickly, warning that another war was imminent. "If you wait," they told him, "you'll be called up to fight, and it could be years before you can leave." So, in a hurry and with great uncertainty, he left. My mother was three months pregnant with me at the time.

The war did come, and everything shut down. I didn't meet my father until I was nine years old. I grew up with my mother and her family—my grandfather and her brother—in our little village. They were kind and gentle people. We had very little, but I never felt I was missing anything. There were thirteen of us who shared meals together in one small kitchen. Though we slept in our own homes, we gathered to eat because food was scarce and needed to be shared equally. I still remember how every child was given the same amount—no one was left out.

During the war, we had a hard time. Then, a year after it ended, we finally received a letter from my father. For a long time, we hadn't known if he was alive. A returning prisoner of war who had been in New Guinea told Mum to forget about him. "You never know what's happened," he said. "They're terrible over there—some even eat white people. Don't be surprised if your husband was eaten." Mum was frantic, screaming, "The cannibals have eaten my husband!" I'll never forget that moment.

Eventually, we received word that he was alive. He began sending parcels from Australia—clothes, little tins of jam, even melted butter in containers. We used every bit. Parcels could only weigh a kilo, so sometimes he'd send one shoe in one parcel and the other shoe in another. One of those parcels didn't arrive until a year later.

He also sent money for our passage, but getting to Australia wasn't easy. Sometimes we had the money but no seats on the boat; other times, there were seats but the money had run out. After two or three such disappointments, my father and some neighbours in Wandin decided to charter a plane. It came to Rome and picked us up—36 of us altogether. We only flew during the day, so it took five days to reach Melbourne.

When we arrived, everything felt strange. Back in our village, we lived close together. Now, on a farm in Wandin East, the nearest neighbour was kilometres away. I was just nine years old and had to walk over two kilometres to get to school at Wandin Yallock. In Italy, school had been just steps away—my mother could stand in the doorway and watch me go. I remember thinking, "Why have we come here? What is this place?"

At first, I didn't understand the language. I thought Australians were deaf and dumb because I couldn't understand a word they were saying. I even poked my tongue out at the other kids, thinking, "Their tongues are the same as mine—you've lied to me again!" I was so young. The teachers didn't know how to teach me either—I was the first non-English-speaking student they'd had. They gave me dictation, and I would just copy from the board, not understanding a word.

But I was good at maths—way ahead because we'd already covered that in Italy. I'd finish quickly, and a teacher once called out, "No, she's not silly—she's done it all already. It's her

writing we don't understand!" That's when they realised I didn't speak English.

The headmaster eventually came up with an idea. He had a daughter my age, and he sat me beside her. She took me around, pointing at things: "grass, sky, tree, bird." Within a month, I was speaking English. That's how I learned.

Soon after, the Catholic school started sending a bus to pick us up, so I didn't have to walk the whole way. We went to St Patrick's in Lilydale, where many other Italian children were enrolling. That became our new school community.

We worked hard. My father had leased a farm during the war and employed other Italians to grow vegetables—potatoes, wheat, parsnips—for the war effort. The police checked in every week, but they were allowed to stay on the farm as long as they contributed.

We weren't allowed to buy property, only lease it. Still, they made do. Everything was so different—outdoor toilets, for one. I found it horrifying.

Before and after school, I helped at home: bringing in wood for the stove, looking after the baby when my mother fell ill after giving birth. She had to have surgery and likely suffered from depression. I had to leave school at twelve—though the legal age was fourteen—to raise my younger sister. The school agreed and said they'd provide a certificate if I ever needed one for work. I looked after my sister until she was old enough for school. By then, I was married.

My father made the furrows with a horse, and my brother and I followed behind, planting peas—20 to 30 acres at a time. We staggered the planting every few weeks, but they always seemed to ripen at once. On weekends, people would come from the city to help pick peas. Word got around—you'd get paid and be fed. That's how I met my husband.

We worked hard. My father had leased a farm during the war and employed other Italians to grow vegetables—potatoes, wheat, parsnips—for the war effort.

My father sponsored many Italians to come out. At one point, we were allowed to choose one more person. A list of names and photos arrived. I said to Dad, "Pick the handsome one!" We did—and the man we chose happened to come from the same town as three brothers already living nearby. They came to visit him, and one of them—my future husband—met me that day. His brothers wouldn't let him leave. We married when I was 19 and soon had our first daughter. I was still so young myself, having spent my teens raising a child and caring for my unwell mother.

My husband worked in the city with Metters, making fridges and stoves. I didn't want him to give up his good job to work the farm, so I agreed to move to the city. But I couldn't adjust—life there felt too boxed in. We moved back to the country and bought a fish and chip shop, which we ran for nine years while raising our daughter and son. Eventually, we grew tired of frying fish, so we opened a deli and sandwich bar instead. That shop became our new chapter.

Mark Featherstone

I was born in Georgetown, in Tasmania. My parents were born in Victoria, with my father born in Mildura. And when my father was about 20, he moved up to Warburton to with a lot of other people to start the Upper Yarra Dam. And he met my mother at a very tender age, and they got married. He was the Captain Coach of Warburton Football Club, which was then amalgamated with Millgrove. So it was Warburton-Millgrove Football Club.

Once the dam finished, the family then moved to Tasmania to start building Comalco, which was in Georgetown. So virtually all that workforce travelled over to there. I had a brother and a sister that were born here, and then me and three other brothers were born in Georgetown and lived there. Then my parents separated when I was about eight, we moved to Sheffield, which is in the centre of Tassie, the coldest place in history, and lived there for a year on a farm, and then they felt the call of my grandparents to Warburton. So we moved. My mother met another guy by then, and we moved to Warburton. My two elder brothers that were still at home, they went to Upper Yarra High, but mum didn't want me to go there. So we moved to Lilydale when I was about 12, and the three of us went to Lilydale High. And then from there, I've stayed here. I love the place. It's home. I mean, I played football here, went to school here, I just know everybody and everything. I'm comfortable. I still reckon it's the best place in the world. You know, I like the AFL, I'm an hour from the MCG, but I'm also half an hour from Warburton, you know, you can't beat it.

I left school when I was 15, and got an apprenticeship. I was the first apprentice at Lilydale Nissan, which was Lilydale Datsun in those days, and which is now where the Toyota dealership is, and did my apprenticeship there as a mechanic.

We moved around a bit in Lilydale, and we were up in Alexander Road before it was built. We were the last house. And then my parents built a house over in Morokai Grove, over near the tech school. And so we stayed there. It was funny, when I was 13, I remember coming home and saying to my mom, I've met the girl I'm going to marry. My mother laughed, and that was at high school and bugger me dead I married her. She was a Benham, there's a huge family of them in Silvan That's about 13 brothers. And so, you know, we sort of hooked up and got married when we're about 24, built a house in Mount Evelyn, and built our life there. I came home one day when I was about 28 or 29 and said, "Look, I've had enough of this." My father used to buy and sell businesses, amongst other things, like he had lots of different things, and he rang me up and said, "Look, I've just bought a swimming pool company. Do you want to come and work for me? I'll pay you 50 bucks a week more than what you're earning". And in those days, 50 bucks was a lot. I said, "Yeah, not a problem". Well, of course, I come home and told my wife and she started balling because she says "What do you know about swimming pools?" I said," Well, nothing, but I'll learn". And I did enjoy gardening, landscaping, that sort of thing. So I went to work with my father for about three or four years, and then decided to go out on my own and started a company called Falcon Pools, and ran that for 32 years, originally in Vermont, and then we moved, we outgrew everything, and we built a factory in Dandenong, which is still there today. And we're still running successfully, doing everything it should do. It's owned by my ex-business partner, so where it works well, is if

he's not there, I make it run. If he's there, he makes it run. He can go on holidays. He can do his bits and pieces. And I just actively make sure everything goes all right, so it's good for both of us, it gives me a bit of flexibility. And I'm not tied because I didn't want to, you know, when I retired, I didn't want to go back and work for a boss, so this way, I'm my own boss 99% of the time, so it works well.

Unfortunately, my wife passed away about nine years ago with cancer, which stuffed our plans a little bit. We had a house in Vanuatu, and we had one in Gippsland. And the theory was, what we were going to travel between the two. So we did the sun. And then after that, we had one child who was born with heart disease. So we didn't do we decided not to have any more. And my daughter, once her mother died, she said, "Look, you know, I really, don't want to do this and don't want to do that", so I sold up everything, and just stayed here. And of course, she got married, bought a property in Macclesfield. And then one day comes on and says, Dad, I'm moving to Saudi Arabia, which just threw all of my plans right out of the way. So, I'm still in Chirnside Park.

Lilydale was a very insular sort of area, like, as a young bloke growing up, we all used to drink at the White Dog.

I have a new partner, but it's complicated and a long story. She's in China and she's having trouble. She got ran over. So very serious leg damage, and it's taken a long time to repair, but as soon as she repairs, she'll be here, and then we'll work out the next part of our life hopefully. Meanwhile, I'm still working. I'm not actively in the community anymore.

I was involved in the football club for many years. I was on the committee, I was the treasurer, my stepfather was the President. But there comes a point in time where you go, you know what? It's just too hard. So I just sort of cruise around now do my work, because I've been here so long, I know so many people, there's always somebody to go and have a chat to. The Football Club is really good for all the old guys, we have a reunion about every four months now, which is really, really good. And it's also a way of all of us checking on each other, you know, but when we played footy, you would never have done that, you know. But now we've all got older, and we realized that we need to keep an eye on each other. So that's why we catch up. The last one was just before Christmas. I reckon there was 60 guys here. And the next one's coming up next month. We have them over at the Crown Hotel on a Sunday, and we all just get together. And of course, we're all better footballers now than we were then, of course! When I first went to Lilydale, they were going to disband. This is back in the early '80s. And then there was a group of us who got together and formed a committee and took over and ran the place, and we won four grand finals in 12 years. It was really good. But like everything, it was seven days a week, virtually, and it just burned everybody out. And I sort of don't go back now, you know, I'm just past it, I get invited every now and then, but I just, can't be bothered. I'm 64 now, my knees are buggered. Everything's gone. You know, it's funny, football is the greatest game in the world to watch, not to play. I've had three knee operations from it, broken hands, ruptures, ligaments, you name it. But when you're young, it doesn't matter, you repair pretty quick.

Really though that's virtually not my life, but it is lot of it. In between, I've been fortunate. I've travelled a lot. I've been overseas maybe 55 times. I've travelled through America, all through Asia. Did a lot of travelling in China, but all the Asian countries, been to Taiwan, Honolulu, America three times, and a lot of it's

through work, and that's been very enjoyable, but I've realized on this last trip I'm just getting a bit too old now.

In my work, pools, they are a funny thing. If you're not involved in it, you don't realize how big it is. We got to the point when me and my partner were together, we'd be doing 130 pools a year. Now, we weren't what we would call a big company. There's a lot of companies that are doing 200-300 pools a year. Approximately 4000 pools a year goes in, in Melbourne.

I mean, we sell 70 pools a year now, but we're lucky. We're in an area where we only sell very high-end stuff. We do a lot that's recommended by us, and we've got about six architects and builders that will only use us. We're very fortunate. So that makes it really good, you know, like, it doesn't matter what customer comes to them, they want a swimming pool. They say, "Well, this so who you use or we don't get your job." It's good for the clients, even though they may think they're paying a little bit more, we know we have to perform, because if we don't, we don't get the next job. It works well for everybody, and it's a good business. We bought the factory, Steve and I, we still both own it, so that's a nice little thing. And many years ago, the shop where we were operating from, I bought that as well. So that's now rented out to somebody else. So, you can sort of accumulate a few little things and it keeps you off the streets.

When I was a young fella, I wasn't the smartest kid in the street. Growing up in Lilydale, we had a fair share of fights and bits of trouble. But it was funny, Lilydale was a very insular sort of area, like, as a young bloke growing up, we all used to drink at the White Dog. And then you sort of progressed across to The Crown. And we didn't travel very far, because there was the Croydon boys, who were our arch enemies, so if we ever met, there was always a blue. And I can remember, getting on the train was a big deal, you know because we had everything here, and for fun, we'd go to the pub, and then after the pub, we'd go out to where the Gun Club is at the river. There used to be a drive right out there. We'd sit out there, light a fire, have a drink, you know, have a swim, if it was hot. It was a pretty simple life. And then the gym opened, so everybody used to go to the gym.

We didn't sort of feel that we wanted for anything, because I suppose when you grew up in the era that I grew up in, you didn't have much anyway. We were always happy if we had a few dollars to go to the pub, play footy, you know, a pair of new jeans. You know, you felt pretty, pretty fancy. We didn't feel the need to go. I remember when I got my first tattoo, I was 17, and in those days, you had to go into Bridge Road, Richmond. That was where there was two tattoo parlours. Dickie Reynolds owned one. He lived in Chirnside Park, and they only opened till 12 o'clock on a Saturday. So me and my best mate jumped on the train and went in there, of course we didn't tell our parents, and got a tattoo each, which was a big deal. And I remember coming home and I showed me, my stepfather. And he goes, "Mate, I don't care what you do, but you've got to get that past your mother."

Mum, didn't like it, and it's funny, even her favourite grandson was covered from head to toe in tattoos. But she never "saw" those. Everybody else's she saw, but not his.

In mum's day, she lived in Warburton and she used to catch a train to Lilydale to go to school, you know. And she used to go with Pop to watch the cricket. Mum loved the cricket, so Pop used to take her into the see the cricket at the MCG. It was a huge effort, you know, to go from Warburton and you changed trains here at Lilydale, and then go from Lilydale to the MCG.

It was a great childhood. I remember before the lake was here, we used to go rabbiting over in that hill, that was where everybody used to go rabbiting and riding motorbikes. We used to ride our motorbikes up and down the railway line, you know, and light a fire somewhere, and have a few drinks. It was a very simple life that wasn't complicated. You sort of knew, because we all went to high school, together, you knew that everything was okay. And so was Lilydale. Everybody had your back, you know, because you knew everybody. I'd walk down the street, and there'd be all the parents, they all knew you because they were involved at the footy club.

So it was, it was a good life, and really, you felt safe all the time. I was thinking it's funny, my daughter, she grew up at the footy club, and she was the same, like the kids. They used to be like 20 kids. My daughter's 40 now. There was like 20 kids that were always at the footy club, but every parent looked out for them, because we all knew whose kids they were, because they were like the mates' kids or whatever. All the kids grew up together, and they still stay in contact with each other, you know, because that's where they grew up. But they were safe, so it was a good environment for the kids, because there was always a parent looking out for them. And that's how we felt when we were younger, even when we were 18-19, some of the dads would be at the pub. They used to have Father's Day, so you'd bring your dad up to the pub for a couple of hours, and he could drink for free. Dads enjoyed that, and it was good. And that way you get to meet up with your dad.

When I first moved to Chirnside Park, it wasn't even developed, and a lot of the other areas that are developed now, like up here at View Street, they weren't developed. There was nothing there, I can still remember when it was Peter Robbie's Corner, just down here. My stepfather worked for Peter Robbie's as a mechanic. And then there was Eddie Pie's bike shop, which is where KFC is now. That was an old barn. And even where Woolies is that had a wooden boardwalk. I remember when that became Woolworths, it was like the biggest thing and the city's come to town. There was Woolies on one side and all little shops on the other. And there was a fish and chip shop in there. I used to work there every Saturday morning. There was a barber, a butcher and a fruit and veg shop. And that's where Percy's were first off, you know, Ronald King, that's where they were originally. And the next door was Sussan's. My mom used to work part time in Sussan's.

As a child growing up around here, it was fantastic because, we used to be able to still catch the train out to Tarrawarra and we'd go fishing during the school holidays, and out to Yarra Glen on the train. We used to go fishing in Olinda Creek, it was clean and it had trout in it. We used to ride our push bikes around everywhere, and it was a pretty good environment for kids to grow up in and your parents didn't have to worry. It was just like a small country town and had a real good feel.

I was a bugger of a kid, I deserved everything I got. I didn't really like school, I was always going to be a mechanic in my mind, and I just thought school was getting in the way. I didn't realize that you needed maths. And I love mathematics, you know. And I didn't realize at the time that's what you need. So what I did is, when I was in my third year, I got offered an apprenticeship. My mum said, "No, you're too young. You've got to finish form four." So I went to the high school, sat down with the teachers, one on one, and said, "Look, I've got a deal for you. I need to pass Maths, English, etc. If you give me a C, I'll shut up and be the best student in your class". Shook hands. I passed. I sat down and shut up, and it's funny when I

did, I enjoyed school, I really enjoyed it, and I passed on my own merit.

I could have gone further, but the apprenticeship was still there, and my father was working for what was called the “Datsun Man”, and they had workshops and stuff everywhere. I was going to be the first apprentice mechanic at Lilydale. It had just opened, so it was exciting. So, there was me, two or three mechanics and a boss, and that was it. And it was us living up at Alexander Road, so I just walked down the hill, straight into the back door and back home again. You can't get any better than this. And then when the gym opened, that was two doors from us. So, I used to walk to work, go to the gym.

Dee Fernando

I am 60 this year, I've had a lot of ups and downs in my life, but I'm still pushing and still working and still being creative.

I'm originally from Sri Lanka. I was six and a half when I came to Australia. My family is still in Australia, and mum and dad are still in Westmeadows and at the age of 89 years they are still looking after themselves.

I do remember my time in Sri Lanka. We lived in a big white house in Lomond and my father had a rubber mill. I remember, as a child running around in the rice paddy fields. I remember snakes through the floods. I think my parents decided to come to Australia because of harassment by the left-wing government, dad pretty much gave away everything and came to Australia. He had to work his butt off compared to what he had to do there. He had to do two or three jobs just to get back what he lost there. He worked as a cleaner at the Melbourne Airport at night, and he worked at Ford Motor Company in Broadmeadows. My mum worked as a payroll clerk. They eventually bought a house and I did my schooling in Niddrie, Airport West. I didn't really study that much as I was more into the creative side. I don't think that that's an issue, everyone develops their own on creativity. I never pushed my daughter either. She's also a good cook and we love creating food. I do use a lot of Asian flavours at Hendriks, because that's what I love.

I started off traveling in my late teens, I travelled quite a bit, I went through Europe and Sri Lanka. After travelling, I wanted to open a restaurant. My father is an excellent cook, and I wanted to have a business with him, but he had a great job at Ford so he stayed on . I ended up getting a job with Gaffney Licensing. We did a lot of character merchandising. I worked a couple of jobs as I wanted to travel again.

I went overseas and after returning I met Geoff at my second job while he was DJing. We didn't get married but we had a daughter named Jaime. We did a lot of music production, and we had a music business. We licensed music from overseas and released it in Australia. That went really well. Eventually sold music through a distributor called Dino Music, and unfortunately, they went into liquidation and we lost a million or so dollars. We ran a vinyl manufacturing factory in Sydney, in St Peters. We did that maybe 30 years ago and we were the last vinyl record manufacturers in Australia. We got a lot of publicity in Australia as we pressed vinyl for all the major labels and also for Alpha Records in Japan.

That was hard and dirty work and lots of late nights. I wasn't exercising or going to gym or doing anything that I normally did, but it was still exciting, because we bought a song from Switzerland due to my licensing knowledge. I heard the song while my partner and his business partner were listening to import records. We actually didn't have a dime to our names so I was desperate to find a gem. I heard whilst half asleep and I yelled out "Wow, what's that song?" And it was a song by DJ Bobo "Somebody Dance With Me". I said, "well, we need to buy that song and release it in Australia". They then replied, "We haven't even got a distributor. So, you can't do that". I said, "I'll find someone". And so, I bought the song for US$500. We didn't have much money, because the vinyl plant was a liquidated business when purchased and we had to turn it around to make a profit. We bought that song, released it through BMG Records, Possum Music, and it went Gold, so we started

making a lot of money. That was a good turnaround. After three years of pressing vinyl, I missed my family and I needed to go back to Melbourne. We packed up, sold our equipment, shut the vinyl down, and made a profit out of that business. In Melbourne we started our own distribution of vinyl and CDs.

I bought a lot of International music, and we produced and released it. But then we had another problem, where we picked up one song which we released through Universal music. We eventually lost that song because we had ex staff members that interfered in our record deal with Universal Music and my contract was terminated. I had just bought $50,000 worth of music, and released a song by Fatman Scoop and Crooklyn Clan – "Be Faithful". Universal Music waited three years until our contract with that song expired, and they released the song, and it went Number One. There were a lot of other issues in between all of that. We started opening up retail outlets in Westfield. Sanity music was our biggest buyer, but they stopped trading with us when we started opening retail outlets in Westfield. They weren't happy that we did that, but ours were a bit different to their retail outlets. We had DJ booths in our retail outlets where DJs would come and play and we'd get a lot of attention, they weren't happy with that, and they actually stopped trading with us, so we had to pull the pin on the music business. And so, our lawyer said, "Go do something else that you like. You're never going to win against these guys. They're too big."

I loved restaurants and cooking from the age of 18, that's what I wanted to do. So that's what we started doing. When we moved back from Sydney, we moved to Box Hill, where we had set up our distribution of music. But we then moved from Box Hill to East Burwood, which got rezoned to Camberwell, so we had bought a cheap house, which we sold and made a profit, and then we moved to Collingwood. I can't really give exact timings, but we moved to Collingwood and opened our first restaurant called Deelish. We were one of five restaurants in Smith Street, Collingwood. We lived in a three-storey building in Collingwood, and we had a daughter at that time as well. She grew up in Smith Street.

We had the restaurant a few doors down from where we lived, and that was a huge success. We did a lot of curries, and it was amazing. It was a really busy restaurant. We served burgers, and we had a Sri Lankan night, which was a very successful night. It was busy Tuesday night, and my dad would come and help cook, and so would my uncle, aunty and my mother would all come and help us cook. So that was great fun, a lot of hard work, but that was a success. We had a lot of stars like John Waters and Sigrid Thornton, Red Simons, the whole of Rove McManus' team. They always came in to eat at Deelish. We'd have the footy clubs, and Richmond Football Club would come after yoga. It was hippie style, really cool culture. After 14 years or so of living there, Geoff borrowed some money, bought a block of land in Lilydale and built a house and we moved to Lilydale. We sold our restaurant, of course, and I worked at Rochford winery for about 10 months. I actually got the sack at Rochford because the owner got a new head chef who brought his own team of chefs in, and, of course, there wasn't room for me and the original staff. I was not happy with that, I did take that to unfair dismissals, and I did win after I representing myself, that's when I decided to open up my own restaurant.

I loved restaurants and cooking from the age of 18, that's what I wanted to do. So that's what we started doing.

I still missed the city culture so we bought a shop in Castella Street Lilydale and opened up a cool little city style cafe. There was nothing like it in Lilydale. We opened up Bom Gosto restaurant and cafe. And that was a huge success. It went nuts. Again, just burgers breakfast and coffee. We had a wood fired oven, so we cooked all our meats in there.

The shop in Castella Street has been sold now, but we have Hendriks in Lilydale. We did bring a lot of culture into Lilydale, and we did put in a lot of effort into Lilydale, which is nice. After a year and a half trading with Hendriks, COVID hit, we had also started the Lilydale Market.

We had a farm to produce vegetables for Hendriks, and Bom Gosto. Covid destroyed our whole system. Bom Gosto also caught fire, so I lost that restaurant, but we did rebuild it, but because of COVID, I didn't have the opportunity to get staff and operate it. So it sat there vacant for over a year. At the end, someone wanted to buy the building, so I just stripped it apart and sold that building. Now I've only got this one restaurant and time to rebuild this one. The farm has never recovered, so we closed it down. COVID did mess around, even with Hendriks, you know, we've never got the trade that we had beforehand. People are just not going out like they used to.

Life hasn't been that simple, always recreating and moving ahead.

I've got two beautiful grandchildren now, so I plan to spend more time with them and be home a little bit more, I'm starting to head in that direction. One of my passions is to create my own label selling curry paste that I make, and chutneys and relishes. So that's something that, you know, maybe I might do as a part of my retirement. I'm still here, I've got this shop for quite some time. I have some good staff to work in the kitchen so I can create.

I am always thinking, always ahead and being 60 makes me want to do more.





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