

Gerahty Family

- ↪ CECIL ♥ MYRTLE PARKER
 - ↪ Cecil
 - ↪ Kath ♥ 1938 Nugget Stanley
 - ↪ Lil ♥ John Somers
 - ↪ Bill
- ↪ DIGBY ♥ Mary Treeves
- ↪ EMILY ♥ 1913 1. HERB CHRISTIAN WILDER
 - ↪ Herb Julius ♥ Kathleen
 - ↪ Herb “Herco”
 - ↪ Claude “Cooee”
 - ↪ Emily “Biddy”
 - ↪ Hilda
 - ↪ Clive
 - ↪ Albie
 - ↪ Don
- EMILY ♥ 2. PERCY “MICK” SKINNER
 - ↪ Pat

- MARY TREEVES ♥ 2. FRED HORNUNG
- ↪ Jack (mail contractor)
 - ↪ Stanley (grocer)
 - ↪ George
 - ↪ Hilda ♥ Bill Winton
 - ↪ Mary ♥ 1953 Bert Brisbane
 - ↪ George
 - ↪ Henry ♥ 1955 Isabel Flewell-Smith
 - ↪ Ivy
 - ↪ John “Choco”
 - ↪ Elizabeth “Tootie”

Opposite: Lil Gerahty (holding her Christmas book) and Kath (holding the umbrella in dispute) at Manfred Arms Hotel.
[Lil Gerahty, SL01, ca 1928]

1. The Manfred Arms Hotel was on the Flinders River crossing near Manfred Downs. Tom Quilty, in the introduction to one of his poems in a book titled *The Drover's Cook*, tells some of its history: “Fifty miles north of Julia Creek on the road to Normanton stood Manfred Hotel. At one period it was owned by Richard Nicholl known as Dick the Dog. He died and was buried near the hotel. In its last five years it was owned by Miss Olive Underwood. It was closed in 1938.” Tom Quilty and Miss Underwood aren't just passers-by in this book. The story of their adulterous relationship, their “curious capers”, is told via court records on page 644.

Kindness Itself

The Gerahtys, Wilders and Wintons

Kath Gerahty

Died May 2005

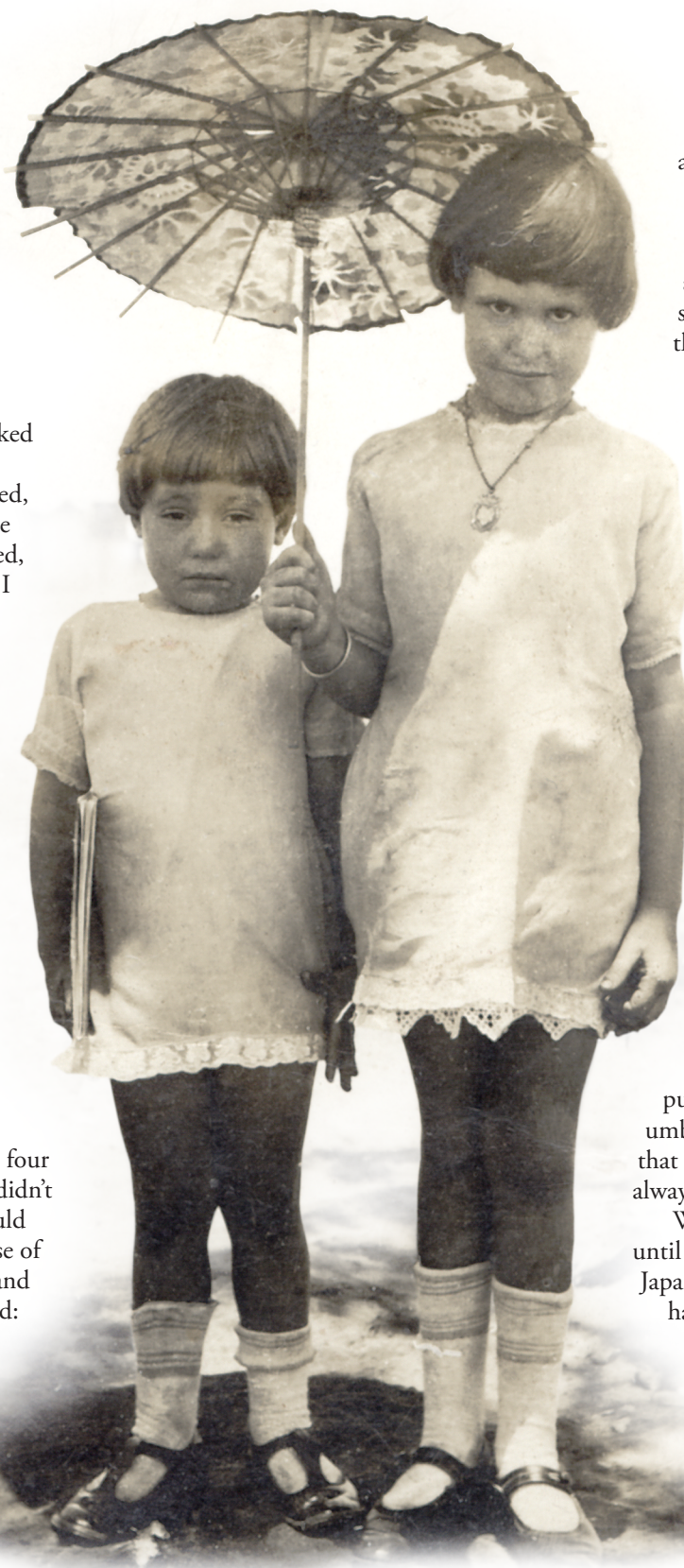
MY GRANDFATHER PARKER – that’s my mother’s father – bought the Manfred Arms Hotel off a bloke called Dick the Dog¹. Now don’t ask me his real name because I don’t know it. Every time Mum talked about this bloke she called him Dick the Dog and I never ever got to know what the gentleman’s name was.

When Mum finished her boarding school education she went back to Manfred and worked at the hotel for her father. Dad was a fencing contractor working on stations around Manfred, and that’s where he met Mum and that’s where they got married. When Grandfather was killed, around 1916, the hotel passed to my parents. I lived there until I was nearly 7.

There was no town at Manfred, just the hotel. Our companions were mostly picaninnies. The dark lady who looked after us, Mary was her name, she lived at the Aboriginal camp on the river bank in a shanty made of timber and tin. “Black Mary” had two little girls. I think she had a little boy too, but I can’t remember much about him.

The black kids never wore a lot of clothes and Grandma reckoned it wasn’t right that little girls, or little boys, didn’t put clothes on. Nothing for little picaninnies to have no clothes. So when the Afghan came on his camel, she’d buy a roll of floral material, cretonne they used to call it, and she’d make dresses for me and my sister and Mary’s two little picaninnies; all the same, the four of us. Mary used to walk us to the river – we didn’t live far from the Flinders – and Grandma would make out that she couldn’t tell us apart because of the dresses, each with a frill around the neck and a sash around the middle. She’d shake her head: “Oh, those four little girls. I can’t tell the difference”. And two as black as ink and two little white ones.

Black Mary had a store of native folklore. Whirlywinds were common at Manfred. They’d swirl and roll, move around and go anywhere, picking up grass, leaves



and dust. They could be huge. Mary told me to point a finger at it if I saw one coming towards me and it would veer away. I’d see the Aboriginal kids squealing and running about, pointing their fingers at a whirlywind so that it wouldn’t hit their shanties – or them.

The Afghan and his camel train used to come to Manfred regularly. He’d have all these goodies on the back of his camels in big cane baskets. Lots of people came in from the properties to have a look at what the Afghan had. Word of mouth it was, that the Afghan was at Manfred. I still remember him wearing his turban and his long... I used to call it his nightshirt, his long shirt. Mum would be there, buying whatever she needed for herself or the hotel, and anything she thought would be okay for a Christmas lolly stocking.

We always got a book for Christmas and it was usually *The Girls Own Annual*, and it was thick. But we never got much else, other than a lolly stocking with toys and games in the top part, and in the foot, lollies.

One Christmas morning we gets up. Lily had a stocking with an umbrella in it. I spotted the umbrella and I claimed it – *my* lolly stocking. Lily put up a fight. It was *her* lolly stocking and *her* umbrella. One of my aunties told me years later that I should have had a hiding every day, that I always wanted what somebody else had.

Well, Lily and I fought over the umbrella until one side was ripped. It was made from Japanese plastic-paper-looking stuff; paper that had been waxed over. Very pretty, but you can’t tell that from the photo. Mum said to share it, but neither of us wanted to share that umbrella. She took a photo. We’re both standing there; Lily holding her Christmas book, and me holding this darn umbrella that’s ripped on one side.

I WAS BORN IN CHARTERS TOWERS in 1919. Three of my family were born in Charters Towers: my brother Ces, he was the oldest; then two years later there was me, Mary Kathleen (but I was known as Kath); then my sister Lily.

Mum and Grandma taught us school. We had chairs and a little table and we had school at Manfred. But when Dad got a big fencing job on Fort Constantine, he decided to sell the hotel and move to Cloncurry so that his three children could go to a proper school.

I was happy amongst the dark children at Manfred. They were our companions and we played with them – and wonderful people, too, the blacks – but when I went to school in Cloncurry and saw all these white children, I felt uncomfortable and created a stir. I clung to the bannister, screaming and kicking, and they couldn't get me up or down the stairs. They told Mum to go home and leave me to the teachers. Miss Calem, she came and told me I could sit near her and I could help her teach. All the baloney. But still and all, it worked. I quietened down. I was the teacher's pet, or so I thought.

In 1928 my mother was having another baby – brother Bill – but he was only a couple of weeks old when Mum got septicaemia and died. She left four little kids; the oldest was 10 and the youngest was a baby of a couple of weeks. My brother Bill – an aunt came and took him. She said she would take the new baby and rear him.

That left Dad with three children, and if he'd moved into Cloncurry to look after us he would have had no money coming in. His job was on Fort Constantine, yard building, fencing, fixing windmills, things like that. He spoke to his sister, Hilda Winton, about what to do. She was a stepsister really, a child from a second marriage. Auntie Hilda had five children of her own, but she decided that she would take the three of us.

So, in 1928 we went to Julia Creek to be with Auntie Hilda. Dad stayed working on Fort Constantine and other stations. He supported us and came to see us, but he never lived or worked in Julia Creek, he was backwards and forwards from Cloncurry.

I left Julia Creek in 1950, that's how long I stayed. It was a wonderful little town and I still have only fond memories of living there.

WELL, THERE WERE EIGHT CHILDREN in the Winton house in Coyne St. It was a special house, two houses built as one. What happened: there was a mining town called Kuridala out towards Mount Isa, and when they closed the mine all the houses were put up for sale. Grandfather Hornung (Auntie Hilda's father), he went out and bought two houses, put them end to end and added a verandah on three sides. The house was quite large. We used to sleep... there was my sister and me and Mary Winton, the three of us slept in a double bed; the boys were on the verandah; and the baby slept in the cot. Grandfather Hornung had a room to himself, as did Auntie Hilda and Uncle Bill, though Uncle Bill was hardly ever home, he was a drover.

The dinner table in the Winton household was nearly as long as this dining room and kitchen combined. It had to be, to fit everyone in. Grandfather Hornung sat at the head, and the children all sat round. You never spoke a word – only to ask if you wanted something. If you wanted the salt and the pepper you'd say: "Salt and pepper please" and someone

would pass it. No jumping up from the table, no talking out of turn; nothing like that. As regimented and reserved as mealtimes were, they lost some of their formality – and we thought we were made – when Auntie Hilda brought home a tablecloth printed with pink roses.

Auntie Hilda bought bread from Bally Kaeser if she had enough money, and if she didn't, she'd make it. And she'd make jam. I longed for the day when I could have bread and butter *and* jam, because we were allowed bread and butter, or bread and jam, or bread and syrup, but you couldn't have two spreads together. We didn't even ask, we knew we couldn't have it. Things were rather tough. We never had meat other than goat, and we never had milk other than goat; yet we always had food – we had lots of goats. Even now I imagine that I can smell goat when I see goat's milk.

Butter came in a tin about so high, a 7-pound tin. By the time you got near the bottom it was smelly, there was no way of keeping it properly. Auntie Hilda had a hole dug in the shade under the house. She'd put the tin of butter in the hole and then bits of charcoal all around it. Then she'd cover it with a wet bag. It was remarkable how cool it kept. Eventually, of course, it got smelly (that's why she kept it outside in the hole) and she'd use it to make brownies, a cake with sultanas and currants and spices in it. We used to think brownies were marvellous.



GRANDFATHER HORNUNG worked at the woolscour. He was a windmill expert too; he'd go out and fix windmills. And to earn extra money at home he made iceboxes and sold them to the town people. Around the outside of the iceboxes he put charcoal, held in place with wire netting covered by hessian. He'd go over to the coalstage with a bag, picking up pieces of charcoal of the right size. The inside of the iceboxes he lined with tin. Wasn't like a refrigerator, it wouldn't freeze, but you could put things in it and they'd keep lovely and cool.

He was a stern old man, very strict about children behaving themselves, and we were frightened of him. There was no such a thing as playing up because he'd put a stop to it straight away. And if you wanted to have a fight you did it when he wasn't watching. But I can remember once being very sick and I went to his bedroom where he was lying down reading. I stood in the doorway so he'd notice me, and he said:

What do you want, love?
I feel sick.

He got up and came over. He was kindness itself.

GRANDFATHER HORNUNG won Tatts in 1937, but he didn't live long after that to enjoy it¹. He left half his money to his son, Jack, and half to Uncle Bill. He wouldn't leave it to Auntie Hilda, his own daughter, because he said she'd give it away.

1. Fred Hornung died 6/2/1938 and is buried at the Julia Creek cemetery.

for the first time this year.

The good news that Mr. Hornung senior has drawn a big prize in Tattersall's Sweep reached Julia Creek a few days ago. The news was conveyed to him on Bunda Bunda where he is working. He could scarcely believe his good luck. Mr Hornung is a hard working citizen and very careful. We are all pleased at his good fortune and pleased to see it come to our centre.

We understand that Mr. Sneyd our chemist – and a keen golfer – is contemplating going to Cairns. He will certainly be missed.

THERE WAS A FAMILY AT THE BACK OF US called Murrays. Mrs Murray, Auntie Hilda and Auntie Emily (that's Albie Wilder's mother), they'd put chairs in the laneway between the two houses and they'd sit and gossip after tea, while all their kids, and there were plenty of us kids, played rounders. Rounders was a bit like baseball – three bases and you hit a ball with a bat. When it got too dark for rounders we sat in a ring and the bigger boys told ghost stories. I'd be too frightened to get up and move by the time they'd finished: "And the dead men will come and get you if you play up". They'd frighten us to pieces, all in good fun. Then when it started to get real dark Auntie Hilda would say: "C'mon kids, home to bed", and we all went home.

Every Saturday we hoped that Auntie Hilda had enough money to send us to the pictures so that we could see what happened to Rin Tin Tin and the woman he saved from being run over by the train. Rin Tin Tin – the dog who could do anything. We sat in the front on forms; girls one side, boys the other. Why, I don't know. We were more interested in Rin Tin Tin, the darn dog, than trying to have a romance with a boy. That came later on when we were allowed to sit in the canvas seats.

Up the back was where the Aborigines had to stand. They didn't congregate with us – or weren't allowed to. And really, they had the best position in the house.

WHEN I LEFT SCHOOL, after Scholarship, the headmaster tried to help Dad get me into St Gabriels in Charters Towers as a boarder. He suggested that I be a working pupil. Some of my jobs would have been to wait on the tables and help wash up. But Dad objected; he wouldn't entertain the idea.

So then I had to find a job. They had what they called the Cottage Hospital¹ in Julia Creek. It was a house that they'd turned into a hospital. It had two rooms upstairs, one for the men and one for the women, with two beds in each. Downstairs was the quarters for Sister Needham. Doctor Hogg was the name of the doctor.

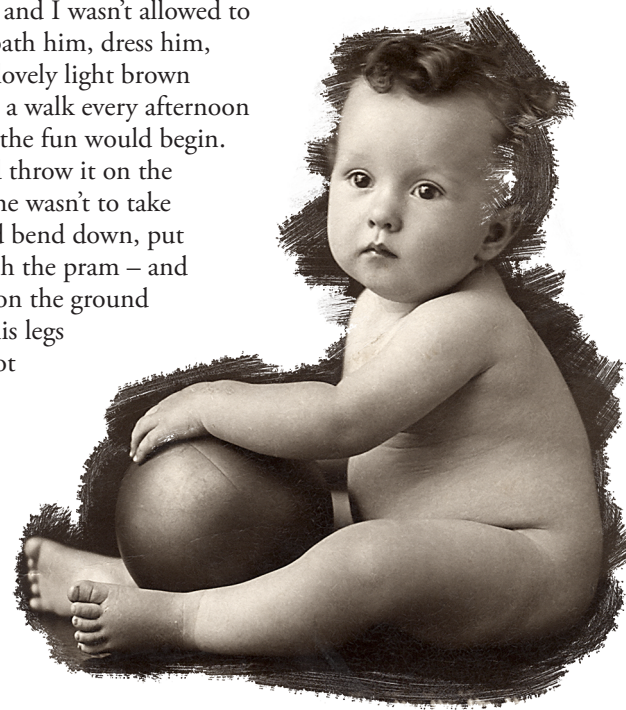
Sister Needham wanted someone who was interested in a nursing

profession. I wanted to be a school teacher, really, but that went by the board, and at 14 I went to work for Sister Needham. She was a tough lady too; she worked me really hard for the 10 shillings a week I earned.

One day we had a falling out and I decided that I wasn't going to be there any longer. She came round to the house that night and said she wanted me to stay till I was 17 and then I could go to Charters Towers for training to be a nurse. I refused. She'd got my back up.

I had no job then until I went nannying. There were people in Julia Creek by the name of Davis. He was a teamster, Bill Davis. He had one of the loveliest homes in Julia Creek. His daughter Tibby had a little boy and she wanted someone to mind him because she used to dressmake. I applied for the job and I got it.

Malcolm², I have to say, was allowed to do pretty much anything he liked and I wasn't allowed to chastise him. I used to bath him, dress him, comb his hair – he had lovely light brown curls – and take him for a walk every afternoon in the pram. Well, then the fun would begin. He'd pull his hat off and throw it on the ground. Tibby told me he wasn't to take his hat off outside, so I'd bend down, put it on his head, go to push the pram – and the next thing the hat's on the ground again. He'd be kicking his legs and carrying on. It all got too much. I wanted a job that paid better and that maybe I could advance with.



1. St Joseph's Private hospital in the CWA cottage, Burke St.
For more details see Note 1, page 393.

2. Malcolm's story is on page 726.



Opposite: "Mum got septicaemia and died."
Kath's mother, Myrtle.
[Lil Gerahty, SL08, ca 1924]

Left: "He was a teamster, Bill Davis.
He had one of the loveliest homes in Julia Creek."
The Davis home at 29 Coyne St,
owned in 2009 by Billy Ryder.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM07, ca 1935]

Above: "Malcolm, I have to say,
was allowed to do pretty much anything he liked."
Malcolm Dewar, Kath's charge when she was 14.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM04, 1933]



Above: "Don't think I'm drinking beer in that photo, it was ginger beer."
Julia Creek girls posing with beer bottles at Eddington waterhole.
From left: Kath Gerahty, ?, Lucy Byrne, Thelma Pedersen.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK17, ca 1937]

Bill Gannon was looking for a waitress. I went to see him and told him I'd never been a waitress. He said that was okay and gave me the job. I still remember how much he paid me – £3/6/4 a fortnight – and I had my own quarters. I was branching on 17. I worked at Gannon's Hotel for ages, all through the war.

Sunday was our day off. If anyone had a truck – there was a bloke called George Regan and he had a truck – we'd go for a picnic out to Eddington. We'd bring along the food and the homemade ginger beer. Don't think I'm drinking beer in that photo, it was ginger beer. I've got to impress that on people. When my daughter saw that photo she said to me:

Ha! You told me you never drank in your life. What's that in your hand?
Homemade ginger beer.
We've only got your word for that, Mother.

We'd eat, talk, and everyone would go for a swim. Some of the boys might go fishing. Every Sunday something was on. We always went somewhere.

Opposite: "I was the captain and goalkeeper for years."
From left: Lil Gerahty, Olive Gannon, Rene Triffett (daughter of Tassie, blacksmith), Gladys Young, Myrtle Kaeser (daughter of Bally, baker), Hilda Wilder, Shiela Triffett, Kath Gerahty. This photo has a professional look and was probably taken to accompany the newspaper article (opposite), though it did not appear with the article.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK16, 1937]

Below: "I worked at Gannon's Hotel for ages, all through the war."
[Kath Gerahty, GeK07, ca 1940]



CLONCURRY HAD A BASKETBALL TEAM and Richmond had a basketball team. Everyone had a basketball team, but Julia Creek didn't. We decided (we all got together; we were 16, 17, 18), we decided to form a team. One of the women in town knew how to play and she took us under her wing. We used to go to Richmond, Hughenden, Winton, all over the place playing basketball, and we were darn good. An old lady we called Ninny would come with us. Her name was Lindsay Francis, married to Jerry the cook at Gannon's. She became our chaperone. You weren't allowed to go anywhere much by yourself at 17. Well, I suppose you could if you wanted to, but no one really defied their parents. So we'd take Nin. Oh, and when I think back, she was a Briton. She'd sit in the front seat of the lorry next to the driver and put up with our shenanigans without complaint.

The old lorry... nobody had cars. We'd all put in a couple of shillings for petrol, and crowd on the back of the lorry. Sometimes the footballers would come too.

I was the captain and goalkeeper for years. We won lots of games. Won a championship once; we beat everybody. Even when I had a baby (my eldest daughter Gail), I still played basketball. She'd come with me as a little toddler, or someone would mind her.

And then I decided I'd take on the umpiring. Well, I got into more strife than Speed Gordon¹, being the umpire. Especially when the big games were on. I used to call it as I saw it.

I often wonder what became of all those basketball girls.

...of the summer.

A team of basketball players left for Cloncurry on Sunday morning and returned early Monday morning, tired but victorious. The match was keenly contested and a brilliant display by both teams resulted in a win for Julia Creek, the scores being 11 goals to 8. The visit was thoroughly enjoyed by the girls who are looking forward to more inter-town competitions. The Julia Creek team consisted of Misses Kath Gerahty, Gladys Young, Olive Gannon, Myrtle Kaeser, Sheila Triffett, Rene Triffett, Hilda Wilder and Lil Gerahty (emergency).

NQR: 07 Aug 1937

1. Speed Gordon was Australia's version of the adventure comic strip Flash Gordon in the 1940s and 50s. The Australian papers changed the title because to call someone "flash" in Aussie slang meant they were possibly showing off, even a little effeminate. It wasn't long before politicians, and Kath Gerahty, were getting into "more strife than Speed Gordon".



THE DANCES AND BALLS WERE EVERYTHING. Girls got a new dress for a ball. After the races, all we could talk about was going to the ball that night. They were big time and everybody went. You missed out on something if you didn't go to the balls. You danced till 3 o'clock. Many a time I went home to the quarters, changed out of my dance clothes, got into my work clothes, and started work at Gannons at 5 o'clock in the morning. You just danced. You didn't ever want it to finish.

For my deb I asked Mrs Wilkins to make a new dress for me. She owned a little dress shop¹ and I was friendly with her. I said to Wilkie:

My deb's coming up, Wilkie, and I need a dress.

Well, you buy the material and I'll make it.

She decided she'd make it a bit different from the normal dresses. It had a cape collar with frills on it. Didn't charge me anything either, which was good because I never had a lot of money.

Three people judged the Belle of the Ball at my deb. You didn't have to raise any money; they judged it on how you behaved, how you were dressed, who looked the nicest. And they chose me. I didn't get a tiara or anything like that, just a sash they pinned on. Then I took the floor with my partner. We danced and everyone joined in. And that's all it was. It was no big deal being Belle of the Ball, yet it was an honour.

WHEN I FIRST SAW NUGGET at a dance in Eckford's Hall I thought he was the biggest lair that ever had two legs given to him. He could dance, there was no doubt about that, but he used to lair too; he'd show off. That's how I felt about it. In spite of that, I was hoping he'd ask me to dance. You sat along the wall and you had to wait for the boys to come along and say: "May I have this dance, please". That's how they asked you. I was hoping he'd come over and ask me, but he didn't until the dance was nearly over. He had manners and he spoke nicely. We danced. I thought to myself: *He can show off as much as he likes* (I didn't change my view that he was a show-off), *but underneath it all he's a good bloke*. Bill was his name, Bill Stanley, but they called him Nugget.

There was a chap named Dick Magoffin² and he used to play the saxophone at the dances. And he could play it. One night we were doing the Pride of Erin. Nugget kicked his leg in the air, lairising again I reckon, and came down with a crash and a big white patch on his back. They used to put boracic acid, or boracic something on the floor, and it was white. He's lying on the floor with the wind knocked out of him, and this mad Dick Magoffin comes over, lays next to him, and continues to play the saxophone while everyone dances around them. I didn't think it was funny. Didn't think it was funny at all:

Are you going to get up?

I'm too winded. I'll stay here a bit.

Dick Magoffin only encouraged him: "Don't get up Nugget. I'll lie here with you and play". Never missed a beat either. So I had to turn on my heel and walk over and sit on the side. Somebody said to me: "I don't blame you Kathleen. He was drunk and couldn't even stand up". But Nugget never drank. Lairised, but never drank.

Above: "And they chose me."

Kath, Belle of the Ball, dressed for her deb.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK14, ca 1936]

Right: "They used to put boracic acid, or boracic something on the floor, and it was white." Kath had a good memory. After talking to her I came across an old packet of ballroom powder in the Mondure Hall (Max Burns' early stomping ground). The powder was white, as Kath remembered, but was she correct about the boracic acid? The label's "special chemical preparation" gave nothing away, but in the book *Practical Mechanics For Boys* (J.S. Zerbe, 1914, available for download from gutenburg.org), there is a recipe for ballroom powder:

- hard paraffin (1 pound)
- powdered boric acid (7 pounds)
- oil of lavender (1 drachm)
- oil of Neroli (20 minims).

A drachm was one-eighth of a fluid ounce (a *teaspoon* measure is close to one drachm), and was divided into 60 minims. A minim is approximately one drop. So the recipe for ballroom powder requires a pound of wax, a teaspoon of lavender oil, and 20 drops of Neroli oil (which comes from the flowers of the Seville orange).

As for the 7 pounds of boric acid, it's other name is boracic acid, exactly what Kath remembered from nearly 70 years previously.



1. Footnotes are on the opposite page.

IN THOSE DAYS, a boy would come over and ask you for a dance, and if he said: "Will you save the medley for me?" (that was the formal asking), you knew that he wanted to walk out with you to take you home. I was at a dance and Nugget came over. By now I'd seen him a couple of times at dances. I was friendly with his sister and she was always singing his praises, telling me what a wonderful man he was, and telling him what a lovely girl I was. Our romance was half her doing, I think. We had a dance and then Nugg said: "Will you save the medley for me?"

He walked me home to Gannon's Hotel. Bill Gannon told all his girls that he didn't want any men hanging round the quarters. If they walked you home that was all right, but there was no hanging around. You said goodnight and went into your quarters. And you didn't dare disobey Bill Gannon, I can tell you that. Nugget said goodnight and gave me a peck on the cheek. He went home and I went into my room.

Another dance came up and he asked me if I'd go with him. He asked me to go to the pictures. It just sort of blossomed from there. I was only 19 when I got married, a month off being 20. Really, you could say I was 20. I was married in 1938.

Nugg bought me a lovely engagement ring. We had to send away for it because there was no jeweller in Julia Creek. We had a catalogue that had pictures of engagement rings and a card with holes in it. You measured your finger in the holes. We picked out a ring that had two hearts and a diamond in the middle. It didn't cost a lot of money, but it was a lovely ring, really nice.

So we announced our engagement. The Younger Set of the CWA gave us a little party. You had to bring something to the party (everyone used to buck in) because... well, nobody had a lot of money, let's put it that way.

We decided we'd get married at the end of the year, in the December. I said: "It's no good us getting married if we've got nothing". And Nugg said: "Well, I've got £50 in the bank". Fifty pounds was considered a fair amount of money, without being rich, and I had £25 myself, but we didn't think it was enough. We'd have to wait till Nugg started in the shearing industry the next year. We both wanted to get married, but it was sensible, y'know, that we not rush into it.

Nugget loved a horse. He loved racehorses. Come Melbourne Cup day he said to me: "There's a horse I like in the Melbourne Cup, Kath, and it's at long odds. If I put a pound on it I can win a hundred." I told him to back it to come last, because if it was 100:1 it wouldn't have much of a chance. Lo and behold if it didn't bob up³.

We married in Julia Creek on the 19th of December at St Barnabas, the Church of England, thanks to the money the horse won for us. We held the reception at home.

NUGGET IN HIS YOUTH was a butcher. He served his apprenticeship in Richmond with old George Jaques⁴. George's son, also called George, had a butcher shop in Julia Creek till just after the war when he moved back to Richmond. Sometime during 1950 young George decided to sell out of his Richmond business and he asked Nugget would he like to buy in. Nugg was pressing at the scour and we didn't have much money. George offered us good terms: whatever money we had plus so much a week. He had a liking for Nugget. My husband was no angel – he liked to gamble, he liked a racehorse – but he didn't drink and he didn't smoke. He was a clean living fellow, really, and George liked him. We talked it over and decided to give it a go; to leave Julia Creek and move to Richmond.

THE BEST PART OF JULIA CREEK as far as I was concerned was the companionship. Everybody seemed to be your friend. The Kaesers (Bally Kaeser was the baker), they had all these children, yet Mrs Kaeser was ready to do anything for you. And if you wanted to go somewhere, there was always someone who would help.

My memory may be dim about a few of them, but I've never forgotten the people who lived in Julia Creek. If you wanted a friend, well, there was always one waiting around the corner. That's my fondest recollection of the Creek.



The wedding of Mr. Bill Stanley and Miss Kathleen Gerahty took place in the Church of England, Julia Creek, on Monday the 19th December, the Rev. Brother Russell officiating. The happy couple left by Monday night's train for the South and Tasmania where the honeymoon will be spent. We wish the happy couple every success in their future life.

Contractor Mathews is busy

NQR: 31 Dec 1938

is able to burn so easily.

Mr. Bill Stanley has purchased a butchering business in Richmond and has transferred his home to that centre. Mrs. Stanley and two daughters will leave this week to take up residence in Richmond. We cannot afford to lose such good citizens who are always ready to assist in the progress of the town. Mr. Stanley has been Chairman of the State School Committee for many years and has done an excellent job. As the recently transferred Mr. McNickle put it: "Mr Stanley has the knack of getting things done without creating any dissention." We wish Nugget good luck in his new venture and feel sure that he will give Richmond the benefit of his personality and energy.

Miss Ivy Gannon, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gannon, writes from London where she has been d-

NQR: 05 Aug 1950

1. On the right of the (not yet built) O-K store. See photo page 636. The Wilkins' story is on page 654.

2. Richard Magoffin's father, see page 569.

3. The horse that Nugget backed must have been *Catalogue*, an 8-year-old trained by Mrs A McDonald. It started the 1938 Melbourne Cup at 25:1. The SP bookmakers in Julia Creek may have offered longer odds.

Two interesting facts came from *Catalogue's* win (three, if you count Kath's story about being able to marry Nugget sooner). Mrs McDonald was the first woman to train a Melbourne Cup winner, and since 1938 no other 8-year-old horse has won the Melbourne Cup.

4. See page 221 for the Jaques story.

A Julia Creek boy joins the army, tastes his first beer, and goes bad

WELL, I WAS BORN IN TOOWOOMBA, 26 January 1923, the son of William John and Doris Barbara. The old fella was working with the PMG at the time. He was a linesman, moved around. We were living in some little whistle stop and Mum went to Toowoomba to have me.

Dad was studying engineering of some sort to improve his prospects, and he landed a job in Brisbane with Babcock & Wilcox, the boiler crowd. Things got real crook during the Depression. Babcocks didn't have a job for him anymore, so he was doing roadwork, cracking rocks. Anyhow, Babcocks offered him work in Julia Creek to help commission the boiler for the woolscour, the new one they were putting in. That was his caper, so righto, away he went to Julia Creek and did the job. While he was there it became permanent and we got word to pack up and leave Brisbane. That was about 1934. I was 11.

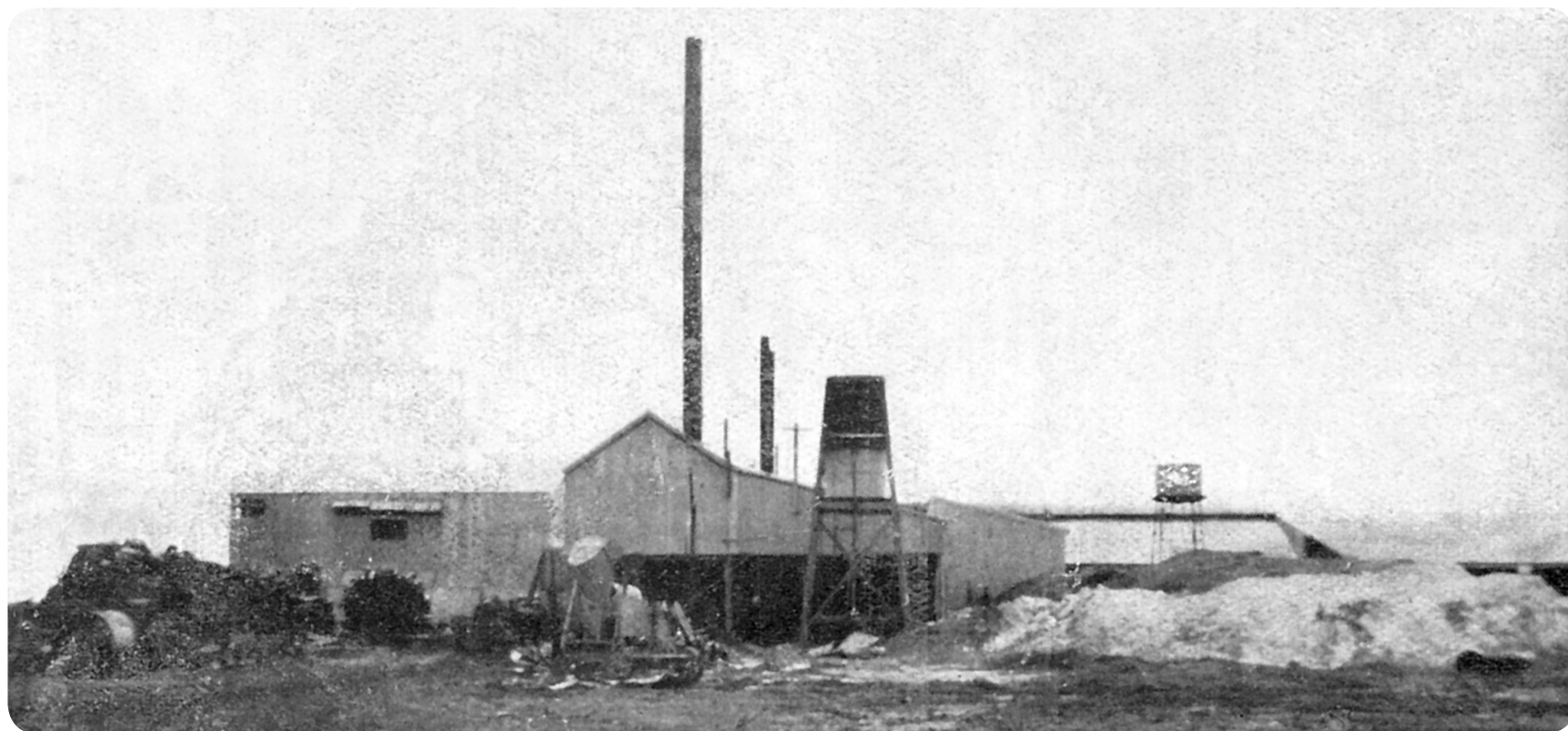
Mum and the three kids – Maris, Jim (deceased) and myself – went to Julia Creek. John wasn't born yet. We went by train from Brisbane. Thursday night we got on in Brisbane and we arrived in Townsville about 5 o'clock Saturday morning. The train for Julia Creek left a few hours later with the whole tribe of us perched in this three-berth compo – sleeper compartment. There was only one passenger train a week. The

Flies – ha! Bert Brisbane

mail train used to run most days, 42-up from Townsville and 19-down from Mount Isa, carrying passengers, general goods and the mail, but the compo was only once a week. I can remember brewing ginger beer on the compo and having to feed the ginger beer bug. I fed him ginger and sugar every day. There's not a lot else I remember. We got into Julia Creek very early Sunday morning.

Flies – ha! I remember the flies. We had to wait for this chap from the scour to come and pick us up, George Bligh. His sister was married to Waldron Taylor, manager of the scour. While we waited we stood on the ground at the end of the station (there was no platform or anything fancy like that) and what has stuck in my mind are these black flies as the sun started to come up. We were hoping – touch wood – that our house at the scour was gauzed. And she was. So inside, at least, we had no flies.

There were two plants at the woolscour and six or eight blokes to operate it. Apart from Dad, there was the yard gang, an engine driver, a shift foreman, two feeder men and one bloke in the wool loft. In the new plant the wool was taken up to the loft by an elevator. The bloke up there put it in its right area so the wools from different properties didn't get mixed. In the older plant the wool was blown up to the loft by a blower.



Wool arrived at the scour by train. The yard gang – this is about four men – they'd unload it, put it onto a rail trolley holding about six bales, and push the trolley down to the shed for storage. Each day the manager worked out a list of what wool he wanted scoured for that shift. If your wool was ahead of mine, well, you'd get scoured ahead of me; but not necessarily – the order also depended on the quality. The best-quality wool went in early to stop it getting grubby; dirtier wool from a different property went in nearer the tail end; and the rough stuff, it came in last.

When you started a shift you filled the main scouring tank with hot, clean, bore water and loaded it with soda ash and soap powder. We're talking about a long tank; 30 feet the first one. The next two were shorter. At the bottom of the tanks were plates drilled full of holes to let the sediment through.

The feeder bloke put the wool into the first tank. He'd bring his bale of wool to the feeder, tear it open, and push the wool onto the moving floor of the feeder. Just before the wool gets to the tank, an elevator with spikes lifts the wool up-n-over and into the tank. A series of plates working together pushes the wool along. They move continually in a kind of circular motion: along the tank, then up out of the tank, then down again behind the wool, forcing it through the water. At the end of the tank the wool goes through rollers to squeeze the water out. And the whole process happens again. This happens three times: three tanks in a row. When the wool goes through the last roller it drops into the dryer. It comes out of the dryer into the blower, and up she comes to the top floor – I'm talking about the old plant now – and gets put into bins ready for the presser. If there was a shortage of bins they'd throw a cover over the wool that was already there, and then stack the next line on top of it. The presser's job was to press the wool into bales and make sure the bins were just about empty at the end of the day. And so she goes. I suppose we'd scour anything up to 30 bales a shift.

When you had a change of line – say you went from AAA to AA – the foreman threw a wool cap into the dryer. That wool cap went through at the tail end of the AAA before you started on the AA. When that wool cap came out in the loft you knew it was a new line of wool, it had to go in a different bin.

On the newer plant the system was the same till it got to the end of the dryer. There's no blower for this bloke. The wool goes up to the loft on an elevator with hooks on it – grabs the wool, takes it up and dumps it. The fella up stairs has to shift it manually. In the older process with the blower, the loft had four bins, four big rooms they were, and the wool was blown straight into whichever room.

I DID ALL MY SCHOOLING at the Julia Creek State School. Fourteen I left. I didn't do Scholarship; headmaster give me away before that. Out at the races this race meeting night, Charlie Byrne said to Harry Nelson, the headmaster:

Any likely lads at school you want to be rid of?

Yeah.

Cos I want a butcher boy.

Nelson nominated me. He wanted me out. End of me education that was. I stayed with Charlie Byrne for... ah, wasn't long, about six months.

Charlie was a fairly big lump of a man, a well-built bloke. There was Charlie, me, Ostie Norton and Bosie Byrne; he was Charlie's son. Ostie was slaughterman. He'd go in of a morning to cut up the orders and then go down the yard for the killing. I'd come in and collect the orders and deliver them in time for breakfast. Very early deliveries because of the heat. After the deliveries I'd have breakfast with Charlie in his house next to the butcher shop. Then I'd ride my bike around town for a couple of hours visiting all the old sheilas, getting their meat orders, collecting the money, and come back to the shop to organise the paper work.

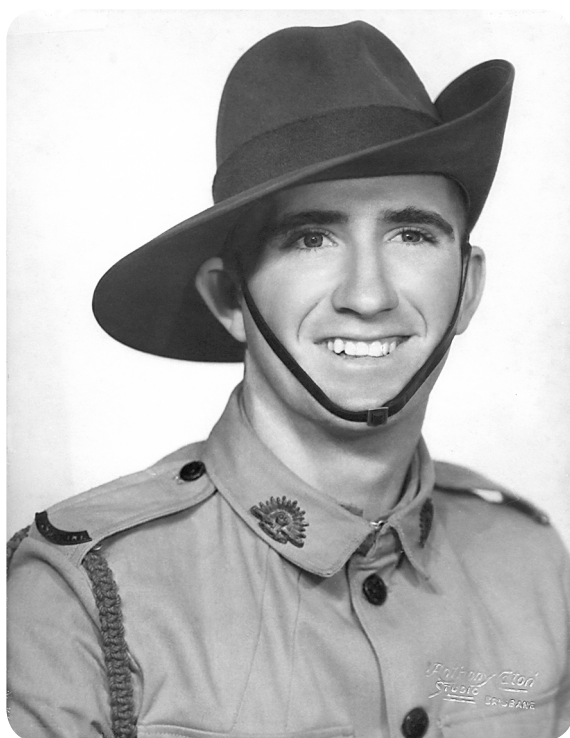
We weren't the only butcher shop. There was another one in the front street, a bloke from Richmond, George Jaques.

After I left working for Charlie I went to the scour. I was on the feeders, a boy on a man's pay. If there wasn't a full crew, Dad might be driving, looking after the steam boilers. Sometimes they couldn't get drivers – you had to have a ticket to drive a boiler – so Dad had to do it. Wood had to be loaded in the firebox, turned over, gauges checked, that sort of thing. When he wasn't driving he'd be somewhere around, because if anything went bung it was his job to fix it. Wood for the boilers came from around the Curry and from out over the Flinders, over the Punchbowl, out that way. Cloncurry stuff came by train; other stuff came by road. Old coolibah.

Opposite: Julia Creek woolscour, "Gunjoola", from an article in the *North Queensland Register*, 16/12/1939. [Dadie Dawes, DW59, 1939]

Below: Bert's workmate, Bosie Byrne, at Charlie Byrne's butcher shop. [Rita Byrne, FR34, ca 1945]





Mr. Jim Brisbane will be handing over the lease of the Julia Creek Hotel to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Brisbane, on the 1st of May. Bill and his wife successfully conduct the Crystal Ice Works & Cordial Factory, assisted by their son Bert. The Brisbane family is well known in this district having lived here for many years. Two sons, Jim and Bert, went to the last war. Many friends wish the family the best of luck in their venture into hotel business.

Congratulations go to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Byrne on the safe arrival.

CA: 28 Apr 1950

Misses Edna and Coral Eckford are as clerk-typiste. Miss Brennan is from Nelia.

Mr. Bill Brisbane and his family have taken over the lease of the Julia Creek Hotel and will dispose of their cordial factory at the beginning of July to Mr. George Peut.

Misses Edna and Coral Eckford ar-

NQR: 13 May 1950

I TURNED 19 IN JANUARY 1942 and I thought it was time to join the army. I had no special reason for doing so. I wasn't called up, I volunteered. I jumped straight into the AIF. Dad enlisted too. He joined the Militia, even though he was old enough to have had more sense. But he joined, and went away to camp in Townsville. The Militia were like the Reserve; they didn't go out of the country. And they did a good job.

I was back at the scour after the war as a feeder man. Dad was still there as engineer. One day he came home and told us:

We're gonna buy the ice works.

Are we? Okay – if that's the way you want to go.

And we did. We bought the Crystal Ice and Cordial works from a bloke named Jack Ahern¹. Dad and I both worked there making ice, making soft drink, making more money than at the scour. We had it well-organised: start early, delivery the ice, close the pits down and freeze it all again, come home and have breakfast, then start making soft drink. Made them all: sarsaparilla, ginger beer, ginger ale... you name it, we made it. Sugar, water and essence. Carbonated. We had a machine into which we fed gas, and out the other end came the carbonated bottles. We scrounged the bottles. Went out to the cockies after the shearers had been through. They drank the big bottles of beer and we'd go out and collect them. We couldn't afford our own bottles; that all come later on after we sold out.

The day we had the problem with the plant, I was there. The engine didn't actually blow up; that newspaper story's wrong. All that happened was the crankshaft broke. So what we did, we borrowed Harry Stainkey's tractor and connected it by belt to the flywheel of the engine – that part of the crankshaft was still okay. When Harry wanted his tractor back, we bought an old Fordson and used that for ages till we got a new crankshaft made.

rains and became impassable.

The local ice works had the misfortune to have its engine blow itself to pieces on Thursday, just three days before Christmas. It looked as though Julia Creek would have a hot Christmas with no ice in the town, but folks rallied round to see what could be done. Mr. Stainkey offered his tractor as replacement engine. With sundry other loaned items and different men hopping in to give a hand, everything was in order by Saturday afternoon. Mr. Brisbane and his son Bert stayed up late into the night making ice for Christmas Day.

The Ahern family have returned

NQR: 31 Dec 1949

IN 1950 WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to go into the Julia Creek Hotel. My brother Jim and his wife were leasing it from Samuel Allen and they asked us if we wanted to take over. After we went into the pub we sold the ice works to George Peut. He thought it was a good idea, so he bought it and put his son Neville in it. Dickfos took over after him.

I was head "barmaid" at the pub. We had a couple of waitresses, couple of housemaids, cook and a laundress. Why we got out of the pub: what happened was my wife-to-be, Mary Winton, made a fuss. The laundress quit, the cook quit, and we couldn't replace them. There was nobody else to do the work so Mary was doing it all, and she got sick. She went to the doctor and he told her to get out of the pub. So we left the pub in 1952 and bought a house.

We didn't leave Julia Creek initially. I got a job with Lionel Wall, driving the mail, the Iffley mail. Go out Sunday and come home Monday. I was with Lionel 12 months.

In October 1953 Mary and I came to Townsville. We got married a month later. We never got engaged, we couldn't afford the ring.

1. The cordial works had these owners over the years: Darcy Lavarack, Jack Jensen, Jack Ahern, Bill Brisbane, George Peut, Dick Dickfos, and Jumbo Harris.

THE BEST THING that ever happened to me at Julia Creek was the day I joined the army and I had my first beer. I was over at the station. A bloke from the sheds was waiting for the train and the damn thing was late:

Seeing as you're going away, Bert, to join the army, come and I'll buy you a beer.

I don't drink beer.

Well, it's time you started.

We walked over to old Ma Cummins at the Top Pub and had a pot of beer. And from then I went bad. I was drinking plenty by the time I got back from the war.



Opposite: Bert, first day of leave in Brisbane.
[Mary Winton, WMa02, 1942]

Below: The Julia Creek Hotel as Bert would have seen it from the railway station just before he tasted his first beer.
[Dadie Dawes, DW33, ca 1955]



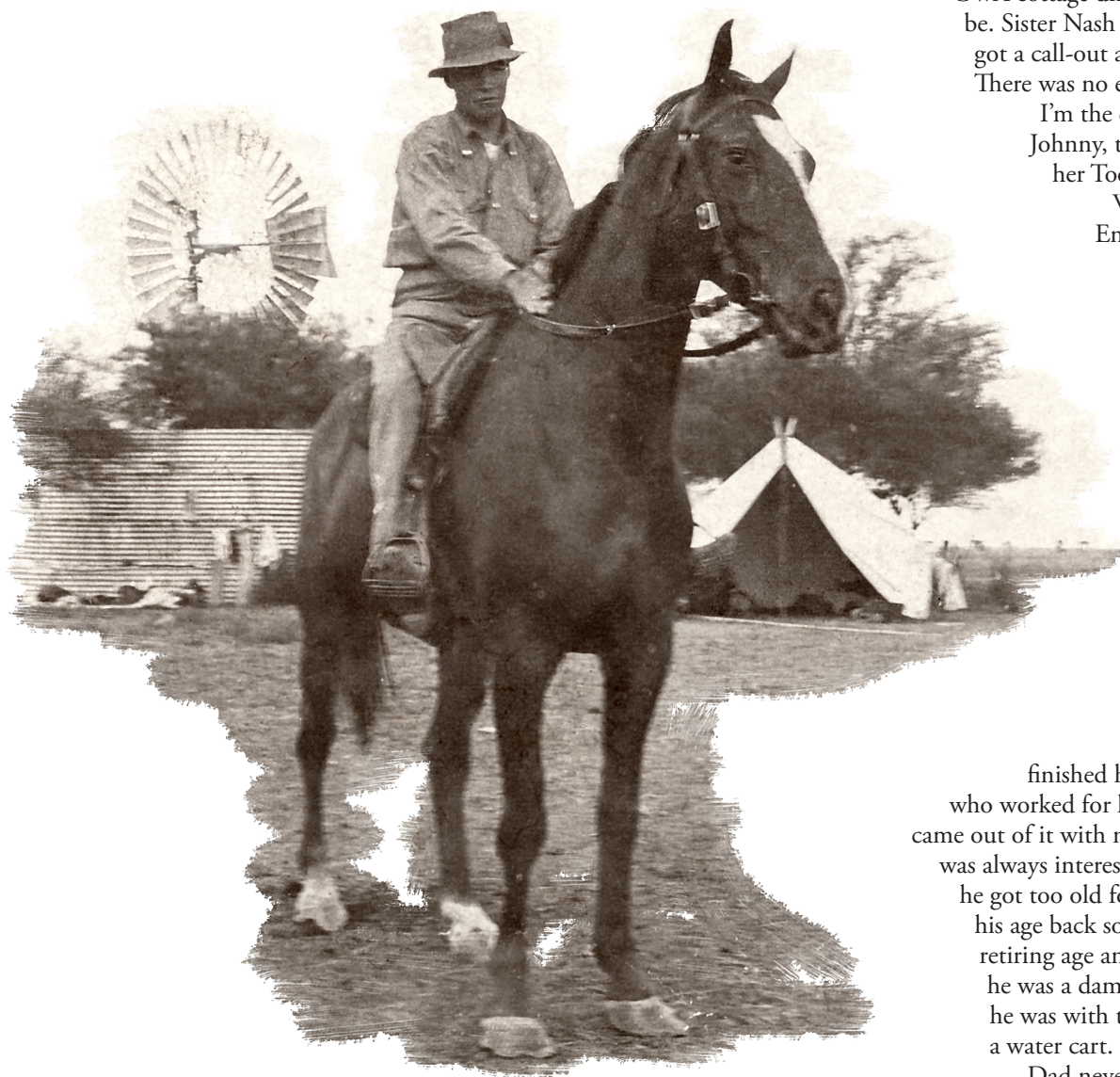
My father was a drover **Mary Winton**

Died 16 May 2007

I WAS BORN IN JULIA CREEK. I don't know any more about it. All I know is I was born in Julia Creek in 1925. As far as I'm aware there wasn't a hospital then, and I should imagine I would have been born at home with the help of Sister Nash. She was a bush nurse who lived on the top floor of the CWA cottage directly opposite where Lavarack's ice works came to be. Sister Nash was noted for being a Florence Nightingale. If she got a call-out at night time, off she went with a hurricane lamp. There was no electricity in Julia Creek.

I'm the eldest, then Georgie, then Henry, then Ivy, then Johnny, then Tootie. She was Elizabeth, but everybody called her Tootie.

When I was born, Mum was living with her sister, Emily Wilder, in Goldring St beside Kaeser's baker shop. But before I tell you about me, I'll tell you about Dad. See, he was a drover; he was never home. All through the Depression my father was a drover.



Above: Mary's father, Bill, in front of his droving camp, Julia Creek area.

[Mary Winton, WMa04, ca 1925]

Opposite: Winton family. From left: Johnny 'Choco', Mary, Tootie, George, Hilda, Henry, Ivy.

[Mary Winton, WMa01, ca 1940]

contractor.

A mob of 650 Iffley fats in charge of drover Bill Winton is due at the trucking yards within a few days, followed by a similar mob in charge of drover Herb Fickling.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Horace Downey on the arrival of twin daughters at Charters Towers, all doing well

NQR: 09 Jun 1934

The last trip he did during the Depression, finished him as a drover. He got nothing out of it. The men who worked for him got paid, but my mother told me that Dad came out of it with nothing. Then he worked on Wyaldra Station. He was always interested in the land because that's what he knew. When he got too old for the land he worked on the railway as a navvy; put his age back so he could get a job. He owned up when he reached retiring age and they let him work for another 12 months because he was a damn good worker. After he finished with the railway he was with the council in Julia Creek watering the streets with a water cart.

Dad never stopped work till he developed cancer. In those days you never talked about cancer. You never mentioned the word. It was a taboo word. He was in dreadful pain and he complained about his legs all the time. He'd get me to rub them. I told him he had arthritis, but I knew he had cancer. The doctor called me aside and said: "Do you realise what he's got? He's not going to get through it". We didn't tell him, but that's what he had.

It was the first time he'd ever been into a hospital. He died in Townsville in 1966 and he's buried there. After that, Mum went back to Julia Creek, to our house in Coyne St, but she, too, died in Townsville. I had her cremated so we could take her ashes back to where she wanted to be – in Julia Creek.

I DON'T KNOW WHEN we moved to our Coyne St house. My grandfather Hornung was a real handyman; he could turn his hands to anything. He bought four cottages from Kuridala, a mining town further west, and put them together – two for Auntie Emily and two for Mum. They became houses with two hips. It made them quite big houses, really. The one beside Kaeser's baker shop was Auntie Emily's and it didn't get any further improved. Ours in Coyne St, Grandad put a verandah three ways round it and turned it into a great big house. If you come back from the Town & Country Club and turn left, and at the next street turn right – not the first house, the second house in on the right – that's where we grew up.

I can remember terrible nightmares in that house as a young child. I was a beggar for nightmares. One night, for some reason or other, Mum had me in her bed and the door was closed. I woke up from a nightmare really frightened. Hanging up behind the door was this damn fur coat and that frightened me even more. I thought it was a bear. So I'm getting out of bed and I'm heading under the house to hide. That's my earliest memory, and that was in our Coyne St house.

No trouble at all to amuse ourselves. We had a big yard at the back with high netting on the fence to keep the fowls in. Albie Wilder, this cousin of mine (we were more or less reared as brother and sister), he was always good with his hands, so we built a cubby house in the fowl yard. I tell you what, it wasn't too bad. We had a whirlywind go through the town that blew roofs off people's places, but our cubby house stood up. Never got knocked down because we were under a Parkinsonia tree. I think that's what saved it.

During the past week or two we had quite a few experiences with dust storms and whirlwinds. On Friday last we witnessed one of unusual force which happened to strike O'Sullivan's building on the south-east corner. Many sheets of iron were lifted off the roof and blown against the dining room wall of Hudson's Hotel causing much damage thereto. The wall of Sallen's Store also suffered slight damage as the result of flying sheets of iron. The boarders of Hudson's Hotel, who happened to be enjoying their midday meal, suffered considerable shock from the terrific blow. Fortunately, all escaped without any injury. The whirlwind madly continued on and, apart from several kerosene tins being relocated between neighbours, no further damage has been reported.

NQR: 11 Nov 1933
Hudson's Hotel is the
Julia Creek Hotel.



In those days Julia Creek only had a primary school. There was no secondary school; that came later. When you passed Scholarship, if you wanted more schooling you had to come away to the coast. I came to St Pat's. Others went to St Mary's in Charters Towers, places like that. You had to come away to get a secondary education.

Harry Nelson was the first headmaster I remember. The next one was Arthur Cann, a real disciplinarian. But before Cann we had Billy Bragg. Six weeks before breakup, Nelson went away and Billy Bragg came out in his place. He was a young fellow and he had his girlfriend with him, which

in those days, remember, was not the done thing. But nobody took much notice of it.

Billy Bragg was the one who took us to Eddington in Bill Blanch's sanitary cart. We took all the pans off and everybody's sitting on the back, feet hanging over the side, as many as could fit. The rest of the time with Billy Bragg we were preparing for a concert. The best concert we ever put on was in his time.

I tell you what I do remember about school. We used to love it when it looked like rain because we were allowed to take lunch. Other than that, we walked home for lunch. You walked home and then you walked back. But if it looked like rain, Mum would give us a cut lunch and we could stay at school. We thought that was absolutely marvellous, staying at school at lunchtime.

This chappy I mentioned before, this Arthur Cann, he turns up to take over the school. "Hands up those who went to the pictures last night." This was on a Thursday, meaning Wednesday's pictures. Up went my hand, and I got into trouble. Saturday night you could go to the pictures, but not Wednesday night. You had homework to do during the week. So when I got home I told Mum:

We're not allowed to go to the pictures anymore Wednesday night. Why?

Mr Cann said we can't.

I'm running this house. He's not telling me what to do.

We all still went to Wednesday's pictures. At the pictures, over in the two front corners, sort of pushed out to the side so they didn't interfere with the people at the back, were forms for the boys and girls. We weren't allowed to sit in the canvas seats, that was one of Eckford's rules. And girls weren't allowed to sit with the boys – that was another rule. Boys had to sit on one side of the hall and girls on the other. For drinks we used to buy a big bottle of soft drink for a zack¹, one bottle between us. And you didn't take a glass with you either; we all swigged from the one bottle.

On the Saturday of last weekend, 4th December, the school children had a preliminary picnic after their successful concert Friday night. Watermelons were the order of the day, assisted by soft drinks. Mr. Billy Bragg, relieving schoolmaster at Julia Creek, and his able band of helpers are to be congratulated on their achievement. The real picnic, however, was held on the 10th instant when justice was done to all good things such as cakes, sandwiches, watermelons, fruit and ice cream. It will be long remembered as a day of days for the children of Julia Creek. Mr. Bragg's concert was good, but the children voted the picnic as better.

Tuesday 7th December being a frightfully hot day, a swimming party went to Eddington waterhole. After a lot of organising, the group got on the back of a lorry and felt the cooling breeze as they speeded along. They were cooled even more when they got in the water. Games were indulged in till it was time to return home.

NQR: 18 Dec 1937

My first job was at the refreshment room at the railway station. It was just a room. If it was 10 foot square that was about the end of it. Only person in there was the girl making the tea and sandwiches. Flaps lifted up and the customers stood outside and drank their tea. Bert Burrows owned it. His wife said to me:

Mary, do you want to do the tea?
Oh, all right.

I remember the pay was 25 shillings a week, which was good dough in those days before the war. I didn't have to work much, only for the mail trains coming through.

Bert also had the Blue Bird Cafe and I worked there for a while, and then for Mrs Flo Watson when she took it on. There was only the one waitress and Mrs Watson. Your busiest time was after the pictures.

I was in the Blue Bird one day when Jim Parsons, the shire clerk, sent for me:

Would you like to come and work in the council?
I can't. I didn't do commercial.
You can learn. Typing is only practice.

I had done an academic Junior and I didn't know the commercial subjects. However, at that time in Julia Creek the nuns had a bit of a convent and they taught the commercial subjects: dressmaking, things like that. I went there to learn to type. I didn't learn shorthand because Jim Parsons said I wouldn't need it.

After enlisting and going away during the war, I ended up back at the council office. Then I went into the Top Pub with Bert Brisbane, my husband to be, and from the pub we came to Townsville in 1953. It was my idea to leave Julia Creek because there were only a few openings for kids when they got to working age. Everybody's gotta work and I suggested to Bert we come away where the kids could get an apprenticeship when the time came.

NOTHING ABOUT JULIA CREEK sticks out from the rest, except that I did have a very happy childhood. It was. It was a terrific childhood. It was a good place for children to be reared. Fewer motor cars in those days. We played out in the streets at night. You can't do that in a city.



It is with regret that we have to report that the Roman Catholic Convent is closed and that the Sisters of Mercy left for the South on Tuesday morning. This is a sad loss to our town as their many pupils show great talent with music, singing, and commercial subjects.

CA: 09 Jul 1943

1. Sixpence

Above: The Railway Refreshment Room where Mary worked. "If it was 10 foot square that was about the end of it." Flaps on three sides opened out to serve customers. Ben Burrows (brother of Bert,

the owner of the refreshment room) is on the left. The other man is unidentified. Mary also worked at the Blue Bird Cafe (opposite).
[Ivy Burrows, BI24, ca 1948]



Very hard in them times **Herb Wilder**

I WAS BORN IN JULIA CREEK in 1931 in the CWA building. They held meetings there and it had a bit of a medical centre and a nurse who helped look after pregnant women. If you cut your finger you went to this nurse's station. No hospital in Julia Creek then.

My father was a building contractor. When I was about 6 we went out cutting house stumps for a house he was building. One of the trees was hollow with some bush honey inside. Naturally, we had a lick of this bush honey. There must have been something in that honey because we all got sick. I had a taste and I survived. My father, for some unknown reason, didn't.

After Dad's death his mother looked after us till we left school. Mum had to go away looking for work. There wasn't all these wonderful things available for widows and unmarried mothers, you were on your own. Wages weren't good and you had to watch your money to survive. Mum would visit us when she could and we'd visit her, but it was my grandmother, Emily, remarried to a fella by the name of Mick Skinner, and living in a house full of her own children and relations (Pat Skinner, Uncle Albie, Uncle Donny, Auntie Hilda and her couple of kids, and Cooe and I) – it was my grandmother who looked after us. Very hard in them times.

I started school and I finished school in Julia Creek. Just after the war I went nippering on the railway: boiled the billy and kept the tools together. They had different coloured flags to restrict the speed of trains and that sort of thing, and I had to walk so-many yards along the line and stand this green flag up. I was only there for a couple of years. It was hard to live on a 16-year-old's wages and pay your way. As a nipper you'd get two or three pound a week, but if you went to the shearing sheds you could double that and

get meals and lodgings thrown in. You didn't get any extras in the railway, so that's why I left.

There were more people around Julia Creek then; there was plenty of activity. Every Friday night they had a dance, and every now and then they had their balls. Of a Saturday night you wouldn't get into either one of the pubs. Men would be spilling out on the footpath, beer being handed out to them. They'd be real packed. There were four or five shearing teams around Julia Creek; that's 50 or 60 men at least, just shearers. And the railway, in the steam train days, God knows how many men they had.

But there was no future for a young person in Julia Creek. The only work was at the woolscour, the railway, and in a few shops. Other than that there was not much permanent employment, it was all seasonal: shearing and droving. If you married and settled there, well, you'd be all the time away from home chasing work; and if your children wanted a trade or apprenticeship when they grew up, it wasn't there for them. I decided it wasn't the place for me, and like other people I wandered away. I married in Mackay in 1954.

Having said all that, when I got married I went back to Julia Creek to work for my uncle Mick Lander, Mum's brother, carpentering. It was willy-nilly, running here, running there, and I thought: *This is no good to me*. So I took a job in the railway as an engine cleaner and got stuck into books, learning, trying to get out of Julia Creek again, looking at the weekly notices, looking for a good depot. I passed the fireman's exam in 1955, and in 1957 with the closure of the steam sheds I came to Townsville. I've been here ever since.



the town the windows so attractive.

Despite the fact that the seasonal outlook is bad, the town still continues to go ahead in the building line. Building contractor Herb Wilder is now putting the finishing touches on Mr. Bert Burrows' new cafe in Burke St next to the Post Office. Mr. Burrows hopes to be well established in the Blue Bird by Christmas. Mr. Wilder will then go on to a new residence for Mr. George Peut at the western end of Goldring Street and when completed this building will greatly improve the appearance of that end of the town.

Mrs. Grace Horton is making extensive inside improvements to her refreshment room in Goldring Street which will help her to cater for the public in a more efficient manner than heretofore.

NQR: 22 Dec 1934

for themselves.

The death of Mr. Herb Wilder, one of our carpenters, came as a shock to everyone in the town and district. He and his men were working on Winslade at the time and it is thought that they drank some water that was impure and all got ptomaine poisoning. His companions eventually recovered, but owing to Mr. Wilder having a weak heart and also having suffered from ptomaine poisoning a short time prior to this, the strain proved too great and he passed away on Tuesday night. He was quite a young man being but 23 years of age and had lived all his life in Julia Creek. He leaves a wife and two small children to mourn their loss.

Mrs. Lance Halloran left by Monday night's train for a holiday of six months, portion of which will be spent in Cevlon.

NQR: 27 Feb 1937

Right: Blue Bird Cafe, Burke St, next door to the Post Office. Built by Herb's father (also named Herb) in 1934. Herb's grandfather was yet another Herb – see family tree, page 368, to help avoid confusion.

On either side of the word "Cafe" are drawings of a bluebird. The writing on the left says "B. Burrows, Prop", and on the right "Phone 7". See page 256 for the history of this cafe.

[Kath Gerahty, GeK04, ca 1940]



Ptomaine poisoning (see NQR above) is an outdated term no longer in medical use. Ptomaines are formed when protein is broken down by bacteria. It was once customary to classify all food poisoning as ptomaine poisoning until it was discovered that ptomaines are not the problem – the human gut can completely neutralize them. Instead, it is the toxins produced by bacteria in food that may cause illness. Sometimes, as happened in the case of Herb's father, the illness results in death.

Donald Do d'Dinner **Albie Wilder**

Died 6 Feb 2009

WE LIVED IN GOLDRING ST next to Kaeser's bakery in a house that came from the mining town of Kuridala. That's our backyard and that's the house. See how the middle's up and down in a valley? It's actually two houses put together. Dad and my step-grandfather, old Fred Hornung, did that. Over on the right you can see a part of the bakery. That stick on the left, that was our see-saw and merry-go-round all in one. It was just a post in the ground with a piece of timber across and a spike down the middle. We'd get on it and spin round-n-round or go up-n-down.

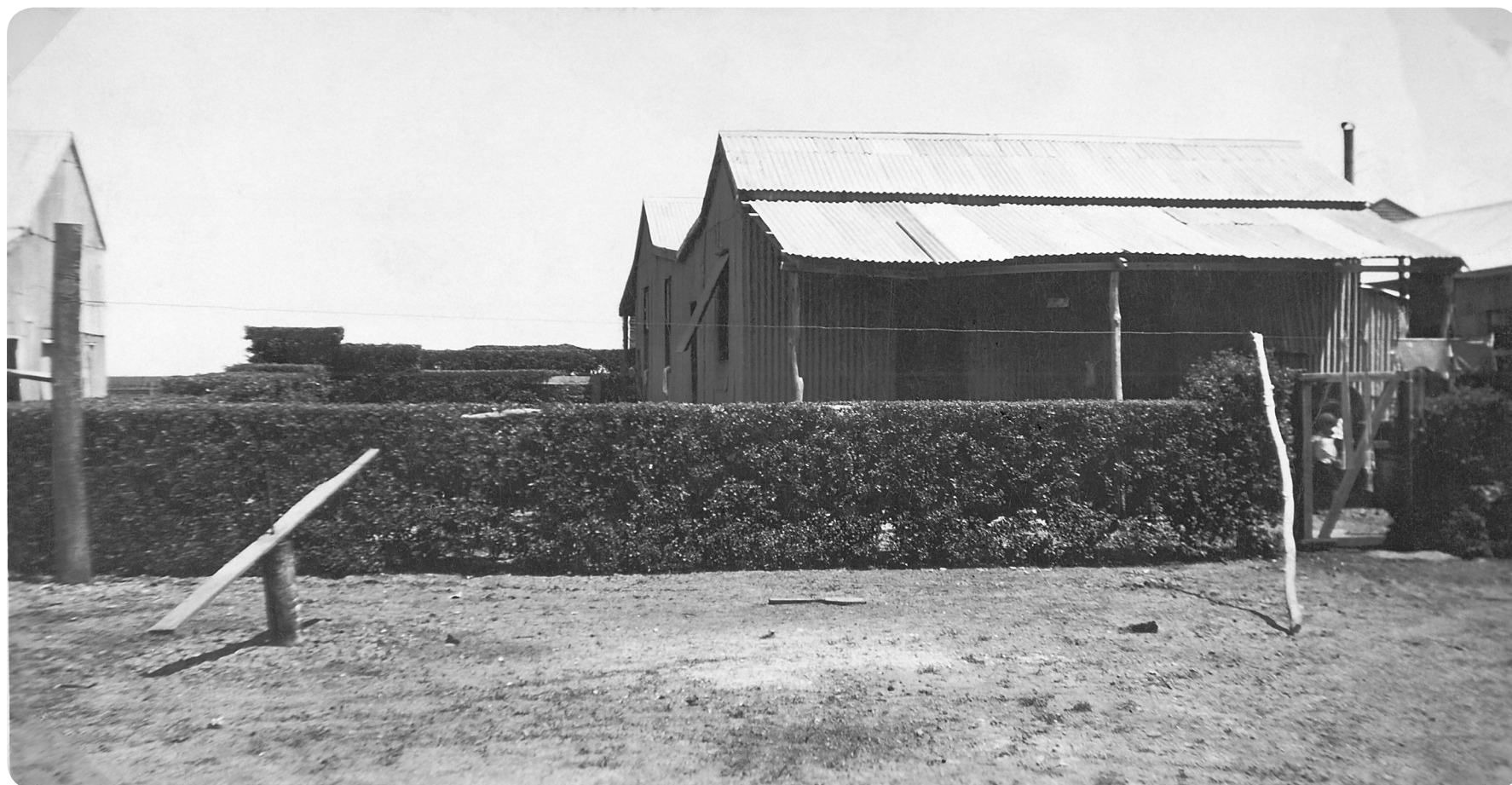
Mary Winton and I were playing on it one day and she wouldn't get off – and I wanted her to get off. I had a tomahawk in my hand: "Get off or I'll cut ya!" And still she wouldn't get off. So I aimed to go close, but I got her on the foot. It's a wonder she didn't tell you about that. Anyway, the evil deed was done on that stick. The other stick on the right, that's the prop for the clothes line; you can see the wire.

The front of the house was the same as the back, except it had beds on the verandah. We used to get under there as kids; the verandah was three steps off the ground. From the front gate to the door there was a hedged walkway. It was a saltbush hedge that went all the way around the house. On the corners, and on both sides of the gate, Clive built it up like a rampart. It was his job to keep it trimmed.

As you walked in the front there was the main bedroom on one side, a lounge on the other, then you came through a passageway to two more bedrooms, and then the dining room. Beyond that, right at the back, you were in this great big kitchen the full width of the house. You can see the stove's chimney sticking out above the alcove on the bakery side.

When you wanted a bath you went out to the wash house in the backyard through the gate in the hedge. You can't see the wash house, it's off to the side. And of course, further down the back was the thunderbox.

All us kids lived in that house. There was five of us, then there got to be six, and then there got to be Pat.



I WAS BORN ON THE 24TH JULY 1925 in Charters Towers. And the reason for that was: the family was living in Julia Creek, but when one of us was to be born Mum always went to the Towers. Mum and Dad met there. I think they came to Julia Creek around 1913 or '14 and more or less used it as a base. Dad was a teamster, drover, fencing contractor. Mum used to go with him until there were too many kids. After 1922, when Herbie and Biddy started school, she stayed in town.

Dad would work at anything. When the council couldn't get a dunny carter to empty the pans he took that on for a while. He didn't have much schooling behind him and couldn't read or write, but he was learning. Towards the end he could write his own name.

He was Common Ranger when he died. I'll tell you what happened to him.

He was on Mick Byrne's property, Wallacooloobie, woolpressing. There's a lever with a pawl on it that drives a ratchet mechanism. You push on the lever and the pawl presses the wool down. He had it just about down and the pawl broke; the lever sprang back and hit him under the heart. Well, he was quite sick for a while there, and he decided that we were all going to his brother's place for a holiday, a milk farm out from the Towers.

At the Cape River a fella was bogged – it was all sandy roads. Dad had no tow rope so he gets out and helps push. He was a big powerful bloke. When we got to his brother's place he felt tired and went to have a lie down. They got tea ready and then Mum tried to wake him. He was dead. His heart was strained too much by pushing the car, plus the damage from the accident on Wallacooloobie. He's buried in Charters Towers. I was three. 1928, yeah.

Mum was left with all us kids: Herbie, Biddy, Hilda, Clivey, myself and Donny – six kids. And then Pat, seven kids.

She married Mick Skinner soon after Dad died. Mick was a navvy. He'd work at anything, anything at all – a bit like Dad. He started a little fruit shop in Julia Creek and did all right in that. They called him Mick, but his name was Percy. He was a good bloke, too; treated us really well. It couldn't have been too long after Dad died that he married Mum because Donny was only a baby in arms. Eventually they had Pat, their only child. He's a half brother, Pat. He's a Skinner and we're all Wilders.



Above: Albie's parents, Emily & Herb Christian Wilder.
[Albie Wilder, WA08, ca 1915]

Opposite: Wilder home in Goldring St, taken from the backyard looking south. Bally Kaeser's bakery, right; Clive's hedge-rampart on the skyline, left.
[Albie Wilder, WA15, ca 1930]

That's Donny and my sister, Biddy. Well, Emily, but Biddy she was known as. When Donny was little, Joey Kaeser from next door at the bakery used to tease him:

And what's your name, little fella?
Donald Do d'Dinner

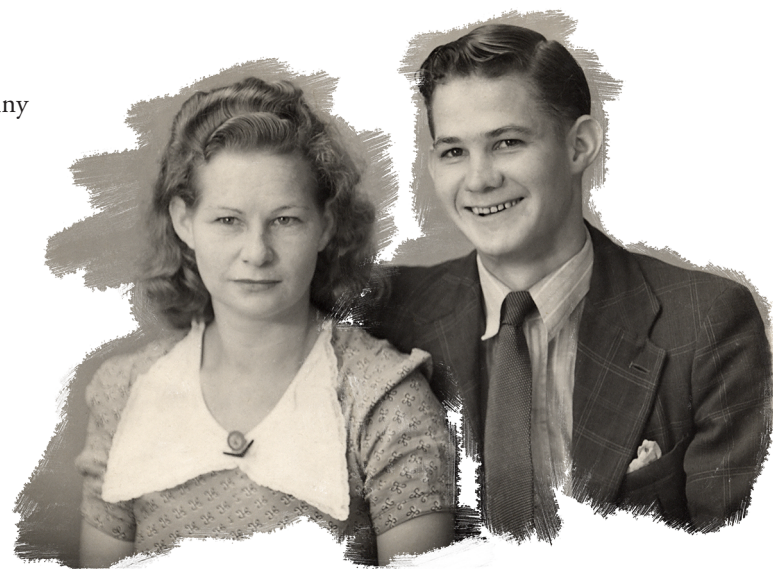
Donald Stuart Skinner. He always claimed himself as a Skinner even though he was Dad's son, and a Wilder. Mum said to Mick:

He's only little; we can change his name to Skinner.
No, he's not mine. I'll look after him, but his name is Wilder and he deserves to keep it.

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I can remember about Dad is his car when he was the Ranger. It was one of those rag-hood models, a 1924 Dodge. My one recollection of that is when Mary Winton and I were toddlers; we hid in the car and did a round with him on the common. I also remember Dad having a harness shed in the backyard with all his droving gear hanging from hooks. We used to go in there and swing on the horse collars. One day this horse collar broke and down we came. I wouldn't have been much older than 3.

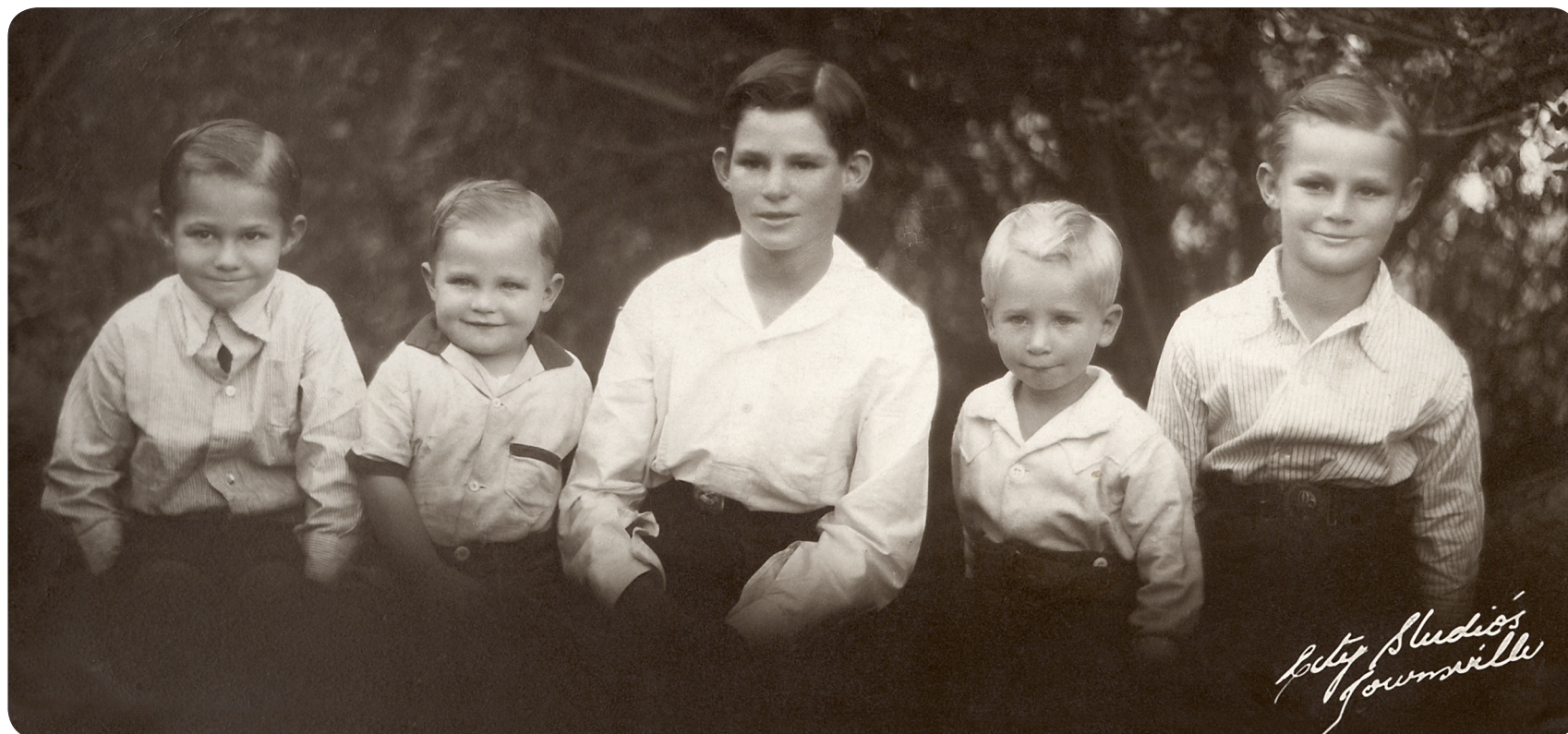
We never had shoes as kids, and our feet cracked and bled with the cold weather in winter. I'd go out to the scour, playing, and bring home lanoline, the grease scoured from the wool. Mum rubbed it into my feet. By jeez, it fixed them up.

Jimmy Brisbane and I used to sneak into the scour and play amongst the machinery when it wasn't working. His father had a job there. We'd climb inside the dryer at the end of the scouring tanks and crawl up and down the chute. We'd come out upstairs where the wool was, in these big rooms about the size of this house. The scoured wool was blown up through the chute; all fluffy-white stuff banked in a heap, ready to be bailed by the presser on the next shift. It looked just like snow. The electricity in it tickled hell out of you. You'd dive in amongst the wool and your hairs would start standing up on your arms.



Above: Biddy and "Donald Do d'Dinner" Wilder.
[Albie Wilder, WA04, ca 1946]

Below: Some of the Wilder boys and their relations.
From left: Don, Pat Skinner, Clive,
Herb (Albie's nephew), Albie
[Albie Wilder, WA09, ca 1935:



TWO BROTHERS, JIM AND JOE ECKFORD, had the picture theatre. Joe was the one who went round town and put the posters up. You'd say to him if you saw him in the street:

What's on at the pictures tonight?

Two goodies – a Cowboy and Anothery.

Joe took your tickets as you went in the door. Anyone throwing their bumper away – the cigarette butt – he'd pick it up and put it out. He had a tin of them, and when he wanted a smoke he'd get this needle, pick out the tobacco and fold a cigarette. And the old bugger had money. That's Dadie Dawes' uncle.

The pictures, well, we only got a go at them every so often. As you went in the door you bought your ticket. Inside there was a counter selling lollies, peanuts, and little bottles of soft drink. Or, if you wanted to, you could go down the back and get big bottles. They only had little bottles at the counter. Down the front near the screen, over this side were the boys, and over that side were the girls. And it was funny: as soon as the lights went out you'd see heads going across. Then you'd see Jim Eckford. He'd be out the front with a torch, shining it round: "Get back to your seat!" And he'd chase the boys back to where they were supposed to be.

We had a pet cockatoo that went to the pictures with us. He'd fly ahead and sit on the fence, waiting till we caught up. Sometimes he'd come in and other times he'd stay outside. He talked like a thrashing machine. I'd come home after school: come up the back lane, open the door, throw my school bag in, and he'd sing out: "Albie's home, Albie's home. Get the goats Albie, get the goats". Get the goats – that was my job. And of course, Mum would know I was home and tell me to get the goats. We had him a long time. He was still there when I left Julia Creek.

I was out getting the goats once near the coalstage, and being a kid curious, I pulled up. We used to play around the coalstage; climb it sometimes and have high jinks. Here's this swaggie and he's cooking sausages. They used to jump off the train during the Depression and get in underneath the piers of the coalstage and camp. They were like flies, leaving the train in swarms before it got into the station. I hadn't seen too many sausages and I was standing there gawking, drooling. He said to me:

Hey kid, can you play draughts?

Yes mister.

Well, it's your move first. If you don't get out of here I'll cut your bloody head off.

I thought I was gonna have me a game of draughts and a sausage. I never went back near the coalstage for a while after that swaggie frightened me.

ESSIE SILLS USED TO GO AROUND JULIA CREEK delivering fruit and vegetables in a horse and cart. There was even a Chinaman gardener in opposition. Fancy having gardens in Julia Creek. Essie's garden was over on Hilton Park, but the Chinaman's was in town; quite a little farm affair, growing everything. As you were going out to the cemetery along Julia St, you turned left into Coyne St and the Chinaman was down a bit on the north side. He used to hessian bag his lettuce to break the heat. He made a little frame, only so-high, and stretched a bag over it. Hose the bag, and that kept the lettuce cool. He'd come around with two cane baskets over his shoulders. As soon as he picked them up he had to start jogging; that was the only way he could carry them.

Over the road from the Chinaman lived a Japanese fella, Harry Kamada. He was the laundry chap, and the two of them were always squabbling. Harry had wooden steps over his fence – step step step – instead of a gate. One day coming home (I didn't know the difference, being a kid; I thought they were all the same race), I said to Harry:

Do they have these steps in China?

You bludy bustid! You calla me a Chinaman. I not bloody Chinaman...

And I off. That night I was looking around to see if Harry was after me because he'd already been in strife in Julia Creek. He was in love with this... I'll probably think of her name in a minute... but she was married. There was another bloke involved too. They had a fight and Harry pulled out a dagger and into him with it¹.

...eme works.

We in these parts endeavour to keep our name on the map, the latest development being a stabbing affray which occurred here on Monday last. It appears that Harry Kamada visited a private house where Ernest Rumbold was lodging, and after heated words a struggle commenced. It is alleged Rumbold was getting the better of his assailant when Kamada attacked Rumbold with a knife. Both victims being considerably knocked about made straight for Sister Needham's Private Hospital just across the street. Dr. Hogg and Constable Borghardt were at once summoned and it was found that Rumbold's condition was most serious, while Kamada appeared to be suffering only from facial injuries. He was taken to the watch-house and arrested on a charge of inflicting grievous bodily harm, and the following morning appeared before Mr. Jim Parsons and Mr. Fred Hickman, J.P.s, charged as above.

Walter Borghardt, police constable stationed at Julia Creek, stated he received a phone message from a Mrs. Emily Skinner who resides in Goldring St, Julia Creek. He proceeded to a house occupied by Mrs. Gertrude Hall and saw fresh blood stains on the floor and on the front steps. It appeared as if a fight had just taken place. On the floor was a butcher's knife, a blood-stained pair of bloomers, and pieces of an earthenware teapot. From there he went to the hospital and saw Kamada on the verandah. Kamada's shirt and trousers were saturated with blood and he was bleeding from a wound over the left eye and his face was cut and bruised. On entering the hospital he saw Dr. Hogg attending to Rumbold who had several stab wounds. He later took Kamada to the police station and asked him how the fight started. Defendant said: "I had an argument with Rumbold for kissing Mrs. Hall and I threw a teapot at him and we then had a fight. I got very excited and lost my temper as Rumbold said he was going to kill me." Defendant said he would not sign a statement as he wanted to see a solicitor.

After formal evidence was given by Constable Borghardt, the defendant was allowed bail of £100 (one surety of £50 and self of £50), to report every morning at 10 o'clock at the police station.

Rumbold's condition is much improved although it is believed he is not yet out of danger.

NQR: 01 Oct 1932

...esent ridiculous prices.

During the past week the Police have been kept busy meeting incoming trains and have arrested 16 unemployed men who have not paid the fare. With the recent increases in the cost of living and reduction in wages I am of the opinion that special "jumping the rattler" trains will have to be scheduled to cope with the demand.

A general meeting of the members of

NQR: 22 Nov 1930

1. Kamada's story is on page 392.

AT THE AGE OF 12 I was in the Cloncurry Hospital for three months with rheumatic fever. It affects your heart. It leaves it with a murmur and it's weakened. When I came out of hospital I had to keep away from sports. I wasn't to get excited, that was the thing.

Around that time a new head teacher arrived, Arthur Cann, and he was a horrible old turd. I was halfway through fifth grade, just back from hospital, and this old bugger used to belt hell out of me because I couldn't get the grip of learning. It wasn't long after Cann arrived that I left school, although I did go back for two weeks when the education train came out. One carriage was for the girls and one for the boys. The girls learnt dressmaking and cooking; the boys learnt tinsmithing, woodwork, how to make chairs, and things like that. The two carriages parked on a side line just down a bit from our house. I went to it twice, the second time only because I liked woodwork. I'm pretty sure I'd left school by then.

My first job was with Bert Pollard. He was the undertaker and I was going to do an apprenticeship with him as a builder of coffins. Oh, he had the foulest mouth going, and his girls were just as foul-mouthed. He used to talk with them any old how. He says to me one time there: "Go and find that fuckin' spanner. I told you not to lose the bastard". And I said to him: "Look, I've had enough of you. I don't have to put up with your swearing. I'm not one of your kids you're talking to now". I left and got a job at Jaques' butcher shop.

Charlie Byrne had a butcher shop in the main street, and George Jaques had the other one in the front street. At the time I was getting 15/6 a week. All my other mates from school were in the shearing sheds getting two and three pound a week and their keep, so I said goodbye to the butcher trade and went out to the sheds. And from there I joined up.

I was down at the Gabba camp in Brisbane when they told me: "You're out". They gave me a little slip of paper saying: "Temporarily medically

discharged" owing to heart whatever-it-was. That was on the 24th March 1942. I came back from Brisbane and I went into the shearing sheds again. I wasn't in the sheds long; the heat got too much for me. I came to Townsville and got tangled up with the Americans, their Fifth Air Force. I was attached to them during the war.

It was in Townsville I met my wife and we got married in '46. I've been back to Julia Creek several times since, but never to live.

I LIKED THE FREEDOM we had as children in Julia Creek. You played here, you played there, you weren't frightened, you could go out and leave the house unlocked, you could come and go as you were able to – or let.

Different nights we'd be at our place or at the Winton's, singing songs around the piano. On moonlit nights we'd get out and play Crows & Cranes, Drop the Hanky, or Red Red Rover. With Crows & Cranes there were two rows of children and there'd be one child calling. She'd sing out "Crrro..." then change it to "Cranes". The Crows ran off and the Cranes had to catch them.

We had good times playing those simple games; and we had good times at the fancy dress balls, too. Mrs Pedersen organised them. She had this Grand March and she'd parade us round-n-round in Eckford's Hall.

Below: The "Travelling Domestic Science Instruction" train.
The only children identified are Marie Kaeser (far left)
and Albie (second from right, standing).
[Albie Wilder, WA18, 1938]



That's Clive in fancy dress. He went as a swagman. In the background you can see a miniature waggon. Another brother, Herbie, he used to yoke that waggon to the goats. He had all the team stuff, the bridles and yoking gear, and he'd go over to the railway with a team of four goats and cart cinders around town. People put cinders in their yard for when the ground turned muddy during the wet. Herbie went to old man Tracey; he had a grocery store:

Do you want any cinders Mr Tracey?

Yes, Herbie, how much a load?

Herbie told him so-much.

How many loads you want, Mr Tracey?

Oh, you keep bringing them and I'll let you know.



But there must have been some misunderstanding, because Herbie loaded up every bit of cinder he delivered to Mr Tracey and brought it home and spread it around our place.

I was in the Grand March as a baker boy one year, carrying a tray full of little buns and wearing an outfit with "Baker" on it and "Eat More Bread". Bally Kaeser made the buns and the other kids were stealing them off me. I wasn't selling them; the mickie loaves were just advertising his bread. Mickies were a little bread roll. If Bally had dough left over he'd make balls out of it and put them in the oven. All us kids would go to the bakery after school: "Ya got any mickies today, Bally?" and he'd hand them out.



Above: Albie's brother, Clive, as swaggie, on his way to a fancy-dress ball. Herbie's cinder-carrying billygoat cart in background.
[Albie Wilder, WA10, ca 1927]

Left: Albie as baker boy, holding a tray of mickie loaves. The writing on his cap reads "Baker" and on the front of his tray "Eat More Bread".
[Albie Wilder, WA05, 1937]

Bally Kaeser was a little nuggety bloke about so high and he had a big belly on him. He'd often get drunk and come home singing in German. He had a whole heap of daughters, but only three sons: Joey, Albie and Kenny. The two older boys were going off to war and Bally's drunk one night, feeling depressed and saying to Joey: "You're going over there and you'll be shooting your cousins".

Bally made excellent bread. You'd go a long way before you'd find any better. In those days the stores didn't handle bread; you couldn't buy it from them. You had to go to Bally and get fresh bread from him; or if he had stale bread he'd sell you that at a cheaper rate – or give it to you. There was a heap of us Wilders and we wouldn't have known much about bread other than Bally Kaeser would bake a bit extra and pass it over the fence to Mum:

But I've got no money, Mr Kaeser.

That's all right. The goats will be getting it if you don't take it.

We were poor, yeah. We'd come home – you know how kids come home today and ask for a biscuit or an orange? – we'd come home and we'd ask Mum: "Have we got any crust of bread?" And if there was, we'd get the dripping (it was real black) and put it on the crust and sprinkle salt and pepper on it. That was our afternoon special.

We knew we were poor, yet we were quite happy. Never really wanted for anything. We grew vegetables and had our own goats. Still, we never had the things that others had. There was no money for shoes a lot of the time. I'd go to school barefooted. In the winter out there, as I've mentioned, it was very cold and my feet would be cracking. Lanolin helped, but I remember Mum giving me two shillings to go to AJ Smith's and buy a pair of sandshoes because my feet were that bad. Two shillings would also get you a pound of butter – a pat of butter – and a dozen boxes of matches.

Two shillings would get you a lot, those days.



Below: At the saltbush hedge in front of the Wilder home, Goldring St. Standing, from left: Bally Kaeser, Mick Skinner, Mrs Elizabeth Kaeser, Emily Wilder (Albie's mother, at this time married to Mick Skinner). Front: Clive Wilder, Joey Kaeser.
[Albie Wilder, WA21, ca 1939]





Above: Julia Creek lads next to George Regan's truck at Eddington, acting as if they are drinking beer. Standing, from left: Eric Blanch, Billy Gerahty, Laurie Crawford, ? Front: George Winton, ?, Albie Wilder.

"We used to go out to Eddington waterhole to have picnics. The men put in two bob for the soft drink and petrol, and the women made the cakes. There was no alcohol in amongst it. We were just kidding that we were drunk." (Albie Wilder) [Albie Wilder, WA07, ca 1940]

Below: Peter Dawes' hawker's van, Julia Creek area. Clive Wilder is in the middle. [Albie Wilder, WA24, ca 1940]

"Peter Dawes had a shop in Burke St. He sold a lot of things, but we never had much money and we thought his prices were pretty dear.

"He was a cunning old bugger. He had a hawker's van and he'd go out to meet the ringers, shearers, and drovers, and get their orders before they got to town and spent their money somewhere else." (Albie Wilder)

"Peter Dawes, well, he earned his money I suppose, but they used to call him 'Dear Peter'. He'd go out as far as Sedan Dip, meet the drovers there and get their orders, and then come back to town and make up the order and take it out to them – if they weren't coming to town themselves. All that sort of thing. He was called 'Dear Peter' because he was so bloody dear with his prices." (Reg Fickling)



Harry Kamada knifes Ernest Rumbold in love tussle over Mrs Hall

Four Pieces of Broken Teapot



ALBIE WILDER was a boy of 7 when Harry Kamada, the Japanese laundry man in Julia Creek, knifed Ernest Rumbold. The incident made such a strong impression on Albie that 70 years later he was able to recall enough details to enable me to find original documents.

The Wilders lived next to Kaeser's bakery in Goldring St. Mrs Hall, the woman the fight was over, was a neighbour who lived across the lane in Burke St. She was friends with Albie's mother, and on the morning of the fight had walked across the lane to take a phone call in the Wilder home. The call was from Harry Kamada.

For small town Julia Creek the story of the fight would have been big news; more so in the Wilder home because of the indirect involvement and the close proximity. I imagine that when Albie returned home from school on Monday afternoon, the blood-letting that happened across the lane in the morning would have been well-discussed.

I have reproduced the story, below, because it is more than just a fight. Primitive instincts show their hand (racism, and the recourse to fists and knives rather than words) and blend with finer instincts of honour and fair play. From the start Rumbold had the advantage. He was a much stronger man,

30 years younger than Kamada. He could have walked away at any time, "but I stayed because I was enjoying the fight", and because Kamada was "of an alien race". Kamada could have walked away too, but chose to prolong the fight by baiting his opponent, and ended it by introducing a knife.

The wounds inflicted on Rumbold were serious. In Dr Hogg's words: "I think he would have died from those wounds had he not received medical attention". But Rumbold refused to give a police statement, and during the initial court proceedings shied away from accusing Kamada of stabbing him: "I make no direct assertion that Kamada stabbed me".

The psychology is fascinating. Here is a man who pummels another and enjoys it; who could have died because of the injuries he received in return; and then chooses not to cooperate with the judicial system in prosecuting the person who stabbed him: "I think he was justified in doing so in view of the injuries I inflicted on him". Rumbold's sense of fair play, no less instinctive than his descent to violence, urges him towards magnanimity.

Because of Rumbold's reticence to give evidence, the police were unable to proceed against Kamada. In a letter dated 5th December 1932 to the Officer in Charge of Police, Cloncurry,

the Registrar of the Circuit Court writes: "I am in receipt of advice from the Department of Justice, Brisbane, that it has been decided not to present an indictment against Kamada in connection with this matter".

But what was all this about? There are no police statements or court transcripts from Kamada, so his version of events is not known. Answers by Mrs Hall and Rumbold to certain of the prosecutor's questions give the best indication of the root cause. Mrs Hall: "Rumbold stops at my place with my husband's permission. There is nothing wrong between Rumbold and I, or between Kamada and I". Rumbold: "The remark to which I took exception was not one about kissing Mrs Hall. That remark was never made".

The prosecution knew what was going on. Kamada had feelings for Mrs Hall (almost certainly unrequited because of his age and race) and may have seen Rumbold kissing her. That hint of impropriety was followed by jealousy and confrontation from the older man, and was met with aggression from the younger man, who, when he had time to reflect, succumbed to fair play and maybe even compunction. This is more than just a fight. This is the Tristan and Isolde of Julia Creek. As Albie Wilder remembered of Kamada: "He was in love".

Magistrate Court Proceedings¹
Julia Creek,
13th October, 1932

ERNEST RUMBOLD on oath states: I have known the defendant Harry Kamada for five or six months. On Sunday the 25th September, 1932, I slept at Billy Hall's place. Billy Hall is the husband of Mrs Hall. I was staying at Mrs Hall's house by permission of her husband.

The next morning at about 9.30 a.m. I received a message, in consequence of which I went to see Kamada at his house in Coyne St. He treated me to three or four drinks of whiskey. I remained there 20 minutes. I had visited his place previously and it was an ordinary visit. I then went back to Mrs Hall's house.

Kamada came to Mrs Hall's house about 10 minutes later. He and I sat on the edge of the bed and talked. It was a friendly conversation until Harry passed some remark that I took exception to and I abused him. A teapot was beside him and he hit me between the eyes with it. The teapot broke.

Witness looks at Exhibit 3. "I think they are the parts of the teapot with which he hit me."

I started hitting Kamada with my fists, hitting out as often and as hard as I could. He tried to take his own part. I knocked him down four times and then knocked him out of the doorway onto the ground. He came inside and said he'd had enough. He washed his face at the washstand and he passed some other trivial remark. I took the remark as an insult at the time; it was offensive to me. We grappled and we both fell on the floor. I got up and realised I was bleeding from two wounds in the side, losing a fair amount of blood. I said to him: "I think you stabbed me Harry". I did not see anything in his hands. I left the house and walked to the hospital.

Witness looks at Exhibit 1. "I recognise that knife. I saw it at Mrs Hall's house. It was used as a bread knife. I did not see it while the fight was on."

In answer to questions by Mr Vic Faithfull (solicitor acting for Kamada): I do not drink much. I had three or four whiskeys at Kamada's place that morning. I do not remember what he said to me at Mrs Hall's house, but it was after some remark of his that I called him a Japanese bastard. The remark to which I took exception was not one about kissing Mrs Hall. That remark was never made.

Kamada had the teapot in his hands when I called him a Japanese bastard and I expected him to retaliate in some way. When the teapot hit me I struck him with my fists and he fell on the bed. When I let him up off the bed his face was covered in blood. From a pugilistic point of view I used my fists to best advantage and he had no chance with me. I knocked him through the door twice from punches. Both times I could have got away, but I stayed because I was enjoying the fight. When he tried to come inside the second time I held him near the door and said to him: "Don't you think you've had enough?" He said: "Yes". He walked over very quietly to the washstand. While he was washing his face he made use of a common remark, something about me being an Englishman². I hit him again and we started to fight. That was when I realised I was bleeding from two wounds in the side.

Apart from the stabbing (if those injuries were inflicted on me by Kamada) the remaining injuries inflicted on me were not sufficient to send me to a doctor. I make no direct assertion that Kamada stabbed me. At the time I was stabbed he was covered with blood and I do not think he could have seen what he got hold of. Assuming that he did stab me, I think he was justified in doing so in view of the injuries I inflicted on him. Up to that time I had the best of the encounter and I was giving him a good hiding.

From the time I called him a Japanese bastard until I went to the doctor, no one else touched him. If, as you say, he had two black eyes, a cut over the left eye, was bleeding from mouth, nose and ear, had one tooth knocked out and had other injuries, I gave them to him. If Kamada had not been of an alien race I would not have carried on as far as I did.

1. SRS 5309/1 Box 9, Qld State Archives.

2. Pommy bastard?

I am 24 years of age. I know Kamada well. He is a man a little over 50 years of age. At the time of the fighting I was much stronger physically than Kamada. He had no chance of protecting himself against my assault with his hands only. Any injury he inflicted on me was in self defence.

I cannot give any reason why Kamada became hostile to me except that I called him a Japanese bastard. I refused to give the police a statement. I have told the court all that happened that day.

DR JOSEPH HOGG ON OATH STATES: I know Kamada and Rumbold. I was called to St Joseph's Private Hospital¹, Julia Creek, at about 11.30 a.m. to see Rumbold. He was in a serious condition: he had a bruised lump over his right eyebrow; a cut over the roof of his mouth; a cut on his left forearm; skin off the knuckles of his right hand; and three chest wounds, clear cuts made by a sharp instrument. The chest wounds were serious and likely to cause permanent injury or death. Each of these wounds penetrated the chest wall. The wound on the right had penetrated the lung. The one on the left side under the nipple had penetrated the pericardium, I think. It would be dangerous to make an examination of a wound like that to make sure it had penetrated the pericardium. I think he would have died from those wounds had he not received medical attention. There is a likelihood of there being permanent injury to Rumbold's health.

I saw Kamada on the same day. He had two swollen bruises over his left eye; a cut over his right eye; a tear at the juncture of the right ear with the cheek; a wound on the left upper lip with a tooth underneath missing and one beside it loose; slight tears at both corners of his mouth; his nose was broad and full of blood clots; and his whole face was red and puffed.

Kamada walked away after being examined. Rumbold was detained in hospital for three weeks.

GERTRUDE MARY HALL ON OATH STATES: I am the wife of William Hall and I reside at Burke St, Julia Creek. I know the defendant Kamada. I know a man named Ernest Rumbold.

Rumbold was staying at my place on the night of Sunday, 25th September, 1932, and the following morning he had breakfast there. While I was at breakfast Mrs Skinner² called me to her house to attend to the telephone. Kamada spoke to me on the telephone and asked me would I send Rumbold over. I returned to my house from Mrs Skinner's and told Rumbold the message. He finished his breakfast and went in the direction of Kamada's. He came back to my place in about an hour.

Sometime after Rumbold returned, Kamada arrived. Rumbold, Kamada, two children and I were there. Kamada walked in, picked up my eldest boy, sat on the bed with him and gave him some lollies. Kamada and Rumbold then went outside and talked together for about half an hour. When they came inside, Rumbold sat on the edge of the bed and Kamada was talking to him. I was standing at the dresser. I did not take any notice of what they were talking about.

HARRY KAMADA had his laundry in a small shed that Dad owned across the lane behind our butcher shop. Dad had a stile³ built over the fence to get to Harry's laundry, and when there was a ball on I'd see the young fellas climbing over the stile coming to pick up their laundered clothes from Harry.

JENNY BYRNE

HE WASN'T A BAD BLOKE actually, Harry Kamada. This is before the war. I used to visit him. He made model planes out of paper, like kites. Across the road was a Chinese gardener. They didn't like one another at all.

Old Harry the Jap was interned during the war, and when they took him away they reckoned he sang out: "Japan win the war! I come back here and kill all of you".

GORDON LAVARACK

Rumbold was about 4 feet from Kamada and looking towards the doorway when Kamada pelted the teapot at him. I did not see where Harry got the teapot from. It was not my teapot; it was a strange one to me. Kamada had something under his arm when he came to the house. It would be something about the size of a teapot.

I grabbed my boy to get out of the house. The last I saw was Rumbold and Kamada wrestling on the bed. I did not stop to watch them. I stayed away from the house until Constable Borghardt came. When I returned, there was blood about the floor and some broken crockery.

I know the knife, Exhibit 1. It is my property. I use that knife for cutting bread. I used it that morning at the breakfast table. That knife would be somewhere amongst the things on the table that morning. I had not finished cleaning up the table, I was cleaning the dresser.

In answer to Mr Faithfull: I am a married woman residing with my husband and family. My husband is working on Cabanda Station. Rumbold was previously employed on Cabanda, but is now camping in the backyard and having his meals with me. Rumbold stops at my place with my husband's permission. There is nothing wrong between Rumbold and I, or between Kamada and I.

Both of them were at my house on the Sunday night prior to the fight. We were all in the house talking. Kamada left in the early part of the evening after an hour or so, but he returned a few minutes later. He said he would tell Billy, meaning my husband, when he saw him. Rumbold said: "Go away, don't be silly". Kamada lit a cigarette and walked away. Rumbold and Kamada parted friendly.

When Kamada came the next morning I had just finished breakfast. He was quite friendly; he did not appear to be excited or offended over anything. I did not hear the words "Japanese bastard" used that morning. It is quite possible for Rumbold to have said something to Kamada to cause him to throw the teapot without my hearing what was said.

I have known Kamada about 12 months and I have found him to be a quiet and peaceful citizen. He has often lent my husband money and brought food to the house. He has been very fond of my children. He often brings them lollies and little presents and he frequently takes my eldest boy for walks down the street. Through his friendship with the children he can practically come and go from my house as he wishes. My friendship towards him was really on account of the children. I never had any fear at any time of entrusting the custody of my children to Kamada.

I have known Rumbold three or four months. Before the fight he was a very strong young man to look at. He is much younger than Harry Kamada.

Mr Faithfull made an application for a dismissal, but the Police Magistrate committed the defendant to stand trial at the next sittings of the Circuit Court to be held at Cloncurry on a date to be fixed.

Unlawfully doing grievous bodily harm.
Harry Kamada, 55 years

The case of Harry Kamada has been committed for trial at Cloncurry in the year 1933 on a date to be appointed. The defendant has been admitted to bail himself in the sum of £50, with Charles Stewart Byrne, butcher of Julia Creek, as his surety in a similar amount.

The witnesses bound over are Constable Walter Borghardt, Ernest Rumbold, Dr Joseph Hogg, Mrs Hannah Donnelly and Mrs Gertrude Hall.

- Exhibits are:
1. Knife
 2. Lady's bloomers
 3. Four pieces of broken earthenware teapot.

Acting Police Magistrate,
13 October, 1932.

1. Saint Joseph's Private Hospital, also known as Sister Needham's hospital (see NQR 1/10/1932, p387), was in the CWA building in Burke St (see photo p705). Kath Gerahty worked there for Sister Needham (p371) not long after the Kamada fight.
2. Albie's mother, Emily Wilder.
3. The "step step step" of Albie Wilder (p387).

Doctors and funerals Cooee Wilder

CALL ME COOEE. I was born in Townsville, 22nd July 1935 at Burwood Private Hospital. I've got a brother, Herb, four years older, and he was born in Julia Creek. The reason I was born in Townsville, I'm not that sure.

My father was a carpenter, built a lot of houses in Julia Creek. Herbert Julius Wilder. He died before he was 23. I was only about two. My mother had to leave us to go and find work because there was no dole or government assistance, you had to work for money then. My grandmother, Emily Skinner, reared Herb and I as well as all her own children, though most of them had left home by the time I arrived.

My father was born in Charters Towers but grew up in Julia Creek; went to school there. And I did all my schooling in Julia Creek too, what little I did. My grandmother was blind from around the age of 50, and me being the youngest and the only one still at home, I became her eyes. I did a lot of things for her at the expense of my schooling: lit the fire, boiled the kettle for a cup of tea, did all the shopping. Just various jobs around the place. I only had a fourth-year education.

Because my father had been a carpenter, my grandparents got me an apprenticeship as a carpenter with Ray Mobbs. At that time wool was worth a lot of money and station people were modifying their homes. We were working around Oorindi, but my heart wasn't in it. I only lasted 10 months. Then I went to the shearing sheds as a general rouseabout, picking-up wool, penning-up sheep. Just on seven years I was in the sheds. I became a shearer towards the end.

Every weekend I'd come in to Julia Creek and we'd go dancing or drive out to the Punchbowl. Just our small group, not doing anybody any harm. The only harm we ever did was flog the gelignite and the detonators off Max – he had them for his earthmoving – and take them out and throw them in the waterholes. We didn't blow up buildings or anything. You cut a piece of fuse and you put the detonator onto it. Then you put a hole in the gelly with a screwdriver, put the detonator in the hole, and light it. The gelignite was like a sausage, about 12 inches long and an inch and a quarter in diameter. Blow up big – bloody big! Made an awful big splash in the waterhole. After a few times no one would hold them:

Here, hold this while I light the fuse.
Stuff it. I'm not holding it.

Ended up we threw them in the glove box. Only had to get a decent knock and the detonators would have gone off.

JULIA CREEK WOULD HAVE BEEN a pretty miserable place without the pictures or the dances. I'm fair dinkum. What was there to do for young people? For dances we'd go to Kynuna, McKinlay, Cloncurry, Nelia. Cloncurry had the Post Office Ball where they had phones at each table and you could ring somebody for a dance.

You never got dressed before you went, there was too much dust on the way. We'd go to a turkey's nest when we got there, have a wash, put our clothes on, and that was it¹. We went as far as Richmond a couple of times, but we didn't seem to enjoy it there.

Pictures twice a week.

Cowboy shows and bloody horror movies.

Used to frighten the shit out of me when I was young:

Dracula Meets the Wolf Man,
The Beast with Five Fingers.

Walking home afterwards...

(well, running home,
it was black as a dog's guts;
no street lights in Julia Creek)

... running home along the laneway
at the back of Gannon's where the goats camped,
they'd move or let out a bleat:

They're after me!
and I'd run all the harder.

My poor blind grandmother would be feeling her way to the door,
(she'd hear me calling from the lane)

and I'd fly past her.

She'd say to me:

"What's wrong with you?"

"Aw, the pictures scared me."

"You're not going to those pictures again. You stay home and..."

But I'd still go the next week.

The theatre was open air. If it rained, and nobody was sitting in the chair in front of you, you'd pull it over as a cover. The chairs were only canvas and very light; just pull it over.



1. See drawing on page 487.

THE FIRST TIME I SAW MAX BURNS I had a cart full of manure. I used to go and get manure from the cattleyards with a cart and billy goat. Max pulled me up and pointed to the cart:

How much would one of those things be worth?

Hmm... Nothing – if you can't catch the goat.

That'd be 1948 and I was about 13. Max and his clan arrived in town, but I had nothing to do with them for a fair while. I wasn't in that clique of Choco Winton, Donny Burns, Benny Burrows and Lionel Fry, until the night I was in Dawso's Cafe by myself and they all turned up. I thought: *Hello, these bastards look like they want to start a blue.* And that didn't concern me too much because I didn't mind a blue. Anyhow, they invited me to go with them to the Burns' house at the end of town. I didn't go that night, but about a week later I did. We had record players and we used to buggerise around.

CHASE WILD WOMEN? The women weren't too wild, mate, and they were as scarce as rocking-horse turds. Early fifties, y'know, and not long after the war. There was a shortage of lots of things, women included. Most Friday nights someone tried to hold a dance – you could meet girls that way – but holding a dance depended on who was around and if Mossie McDonald was available to play the piano.

Below: Cooe and his Julia Creek mates outside the Burns' two-storey home, *Dew Drop Inn*. From left: 1. Choco Winton (partly cut off), 2. Lionel Fry, 3. ?, 4. Benny Burrows, 5. Shirley Gluyas, 6. Cooe Wilder, 7. Hazel Dennis?, 8. Joy Burns, 9. Henry Winton, 10. Isabel Flewell-Smith, 11. Pat Skinner. [Joy Burns, J24, 1953]



On Friday nights, no dance on, our group would go to the billiard room in Mrs Burns' black Mayflower. She was always kind to our group; she had a soft heart for us young people and let us borrow her car. But she was firm about being careful with it.

We're at the billiard room having a game, paying our money, and Doug Wilmot decides to turf us out. He wanted to gamble, see, play kelly pool. "The Menace" we called him. Doug was a real smartie, a gambler, worked as a steam engine driver at the woollscour, and he was running Roy Hampton's billiard room. We said to him: "Y'got three tables and there's no buggar here. We're playing billiards". Well, Wilmot got hold of Reggie Fels and had him in a headlock. Wilmot was a well-seasoned bloke, forties or so, and we were only kids really, 17 or 18. I'd seen a bike tyre on the footpath when we came in, so I put it over Wilmot's neck and reefed back on it, and with that, Wilmot let Reggie go. We jumped in Mrs Burns' car parked out the front. Wilmot came out of the billiard room, picked up a big rock that kept the door open, and threw it at us as we drove off. He missed – luckily. I'd rather have had another run-in with The Menace than have to explain to Mrs Burns how her car got dented.

Another thing that comes to mind about the Burnses was when their double-storey house at the end of town burnt down. I heard noises like crackers going off, exploding, and I looked out towards the west and here's all this smoke. I didn't live more than a hundred yards away; just came along the back lane and there it was. They didn't have a proper fire brigade in Julia Creek. The council had a couple of hoses, that was about the limit. By the time they got the hoses ready the house was gone. They just let it burn. Nothing they could do about it.

I went to the telephone exchange at the Post Office to ring Donny. I think it was Pattie Pattison on the switch – if it wasn't her it was Carmel Fickling, because they both worked there – and I told her: "The Burns place is on fire. I got no money on me, but I know Donny is at Nelia and he's probably at the Brennan's residence." Bigger me dead, I got him on the phone. He wouldn't believe me, so one of the girls cut in – they were eavesdropping – and told him about the fire. He came from Nelia to Julia Creek in about 45 minutes on that terrible road with all those grids. And grids weren't flat like they are today; you had to go up and over every one.

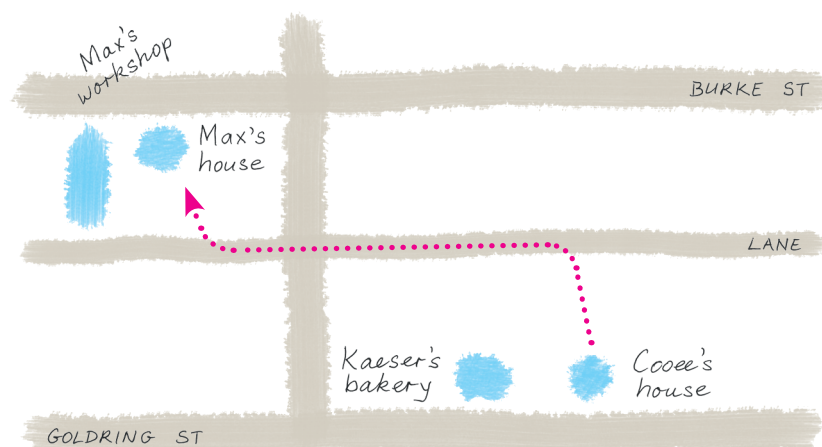
I REALLY MISS MY TIME with the Burnses. They made an indelible mark on my life. And I'll never forget the good times in Julia Creek; they'll never rub out.

It all came to an end in 1964 when I left. I was a guard on the railway and the railway was closing up. Not so much the stations, but the depots. Julia Creek was a staging post for coal and water; it had a coalstage. The engines would come from Hughenden, where they took on coal and water, and they could make it as far as Julia Creek. The engines would pull up beside the stage and fill the tender with coal. What happened: the big diesels were introduced and there was no coal needed. That's why the depot at Julia Creek was closed down.

See, we had 70 men. There was a railway depot at Julia Creek with 10 train crews, each with a driver, a fireman and a guard. That's 30 men. And you had the shunters, the porters, the cleaners – all of them, the backup for it. When they closed the depot, there were very few railway people left.

I had a house in Julia Creek. I built it with my limited carpentering knowledge, and I wasn't too frightened to go and ask somebody if I was stuck. I ended up selling it in 1964 for £2000. Just couldn't get rid of anything. Nobody wanted a house. So you come to the coast and start all over again.

It was good times in the 1950s. The only things we went to were births and weddings; now it's only doctors and funerals.



"just came along the back lane
and there it was"



Below: A building of mystery.
[Bill Beutel, BB10, 1950]

Clouds appear to float around a hairdressing sign as Bill Beutel (one of Max Burns' tanksinkers) leans against a post in front of Roy Hampton's Billiard Saloon in Julia St. The photo is a double-exposure. The billiard saloon with its white lettering, tall support posts, and Bill, belong to one photo; the bicycles, small support posts, two-humped building, and car turning at the Post Office corner from Julia St east into Burke St, belong to another. But what is that other?

When the image is enlarged, to the left of the lower word "saloon" the blurry words "Mathews' Hall" can just be made out on the superimposed image with the two humps; and to

the left of "billiard" is a rectangular sign, slightly paler than the surrounding fascia, that says "cafe".

Mathews' Hall (actually a hall *and* cafe for most of its existence) was across the road from the Post Office on the site of the present day Civic Centre. In the *North Queensland Register* of the 1950s the hall also went by the name of Peut's, Champneys', Hampton's, Dawson's, Lafferty's and O'Neill's (see page 317), and at an early stage of gathering information for this book, I thought there were several halls and cafes in Julia Creek. I had no recognizable photos of any of them, or a clear indication of where any of

them were, until the murky letters "Mathews' Hall" emerged from this photo under computer magnification. It dawned on me that the various halls and cafes of 1950s Julia Creek, including what was sometimes called the Corner Cafe, were actually a single entity situated over the road from the Post Office. Once the name of the building was confirmed, I was able to recognize its distinctive shape elsewhere.

Although it does appear in other photos (pages 317, 489, 707), in none of them does Mathews' Hall feature on its own. It remains, for me, a building of mystery as it is below, always in the blurry distance or ghosted by double-exposure.



Harold Walters

Died 18 Apr 2007

I USED TO WORK FOR CHARLIE BYRNE at his butcher shop. Two and six a week he paid me for helping out in the morning till about 8 o'clock, and again in the afternoon. Cleaning-up boy, making sausages. I'd be about 12, I suppose, at the time.

Richie Parker was one of the butchers with Charlie. He used to do the slaughtering at Charlie's slaughter yards a couple of mile out of Julia Creek. The killing pen... well, the beast went into a bail, a bit like what they put them in when they're milked. Then Richie stood on top to peth him. You put the beast into the pen, and what Richie used to do, he'd mount a series of steps – about half a dozen – and he'd peth the beast. He had a cold chisel welded onto a piece of waterpipe and he'd drive the cold chisel down into the back of the neck of the bullock. That would hit the nerve there and the beast would drop.

Same with a kangaroo. When we shot a roo the first thing we did was grab it by the two ears and sever the spinal cord.

This particular time Richie said: "Bring that roan one up here". So I pushed it up, locked it in, and he gave it a whang and down it went. But the beast snorted and threw its head back. The pipe hit Richie under the chin and knocked him out. Here I was: couldn't drive a truck, 2 mile from town, and Richie out cold with a massive lump of congealed blood under his chin, and a beast that, if I didn't do something about it, would be useless. I knew I had to look after the bullock first. I cut its throat as best I could and then I poured a pannikin of water over Richie. He kept saying: "Under the seat, under the seat". I ran to the truck and under the seat was a bottle of rum. He plastered himself with three or four good nips and we came back to the Creek and he went to see the doctor. A couple of other blokes went out to the yards and they skinned the bullock.

Richie would always peth the bullocks. He never shot them because of the brains. Out of his butcher shop, Charlie sold everything bar the bellow.

Everything Bar the Bellow

Harold remembers how to peth a beast
but almost forgets his mother's name

I'M HAROLD KEITH, and my father was John William – "Jack". He married... Oh Christ... my mother of course. I'm trying to think of Mum's maiden name... ahh... Spence – Elizabeth Spence.

I was born in 1925, but I wasn't born in Julia Creek. I was born in Kuridala which was a mining town outside Cloncurry. My grandmother had a hotel there, the Railway Hotel. Two dining rooms: one was for the notables of the town and the other one was for normal blokes, the workers. Mum and Dad used to run it. Dad was the licensee because Grandma Walters, being a woman, couldn't have a licence. The mines petered out when I was about 3 and we went to Julia Creek. 1928 I think it was. My grandmother and my brother Jack went to Townsville to live. I stayed in Julia Creek with Mum and Dad.

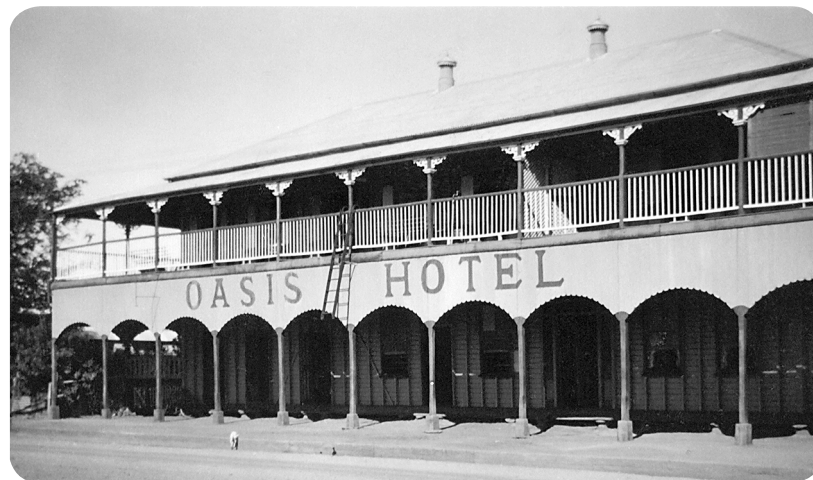
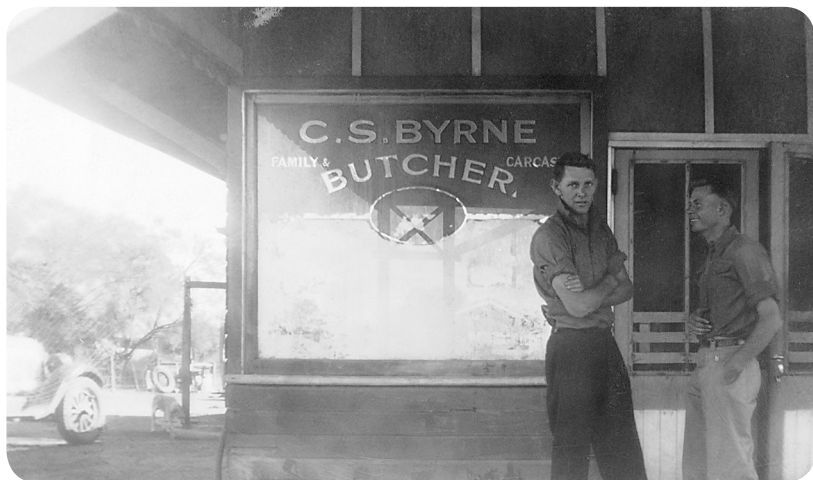
When Gran sold out, the hotel wasn't demolished, it was taken down and transported to Cloncurry where it was renamed the Oasis.

Dad had had a gutful of hotel life. Not so, Mum. She was a terrific caterer. From what I can remember her telling me, the hotel copped all the trade from the Kuridala mines. It was nothing for Mum and Dad at half-past 11 at night to serve every miner going on shift with an aluminium pot

Below left: Lennie Thomson ("Splinter") and Buck McPherson, outside Charlie Byrne's butcher shop, Burke St, where Harold worked as a young lad.
[Rita Byrne, FR29, ca 1945]

Below: Oasis Hotel, Scarr St, Cloncurry.
[Carmel Bulley, BC14, June 1951]

Opposite: "Those newspaper stories, they were written by my mother. She used to write the Julia Creek Notes for the *North Queensland Register*. The payment was terrific. Every six months they'd send her a packet of stamps." (Harold Walters)



of beer for threepence. They'd clean the bar, and then the shift coming off would have a pot of beer. That's how my parents existed.

Another thing Mum did was prepare cut lunches for the mine workers. She knew that Tommy Jones had bread and jam and didn't want butter, and somebody else wanted bread and butter and didn't want jam. I've heard her say that she prepared, at times, anything up to 200 lunches.

I think Mum wanted to box on as a hotelier. They went to Winton and had a look at a hotel, but Dad said no. He was more interested in horses.

Dad was a wonderful horseman and owned a lot of racehorses. In Julia Creek, many many times he had anything up to 10 racehorses in training.

Ours was a reasonably big block of land in Julia Creek, and in the backyard we had some stables and a mini-track to exercise the horses. I can remember one Sunday morning, Dad had a horse in training called King Rusco and he was setting it up for the Nelia Cup. I went down and mounted him by climbing on the K-wire netting fence – he was about 15 or 16 hands high – and went for a bit of a jog. Frankly, I couldn't ride at all. Somebody came around the corner in a car, and King Rusco took the bit in his mouth and away he went. Dad, I can still visualise him on the verandah singing out "Fall off!" as I'm going around trying to look for a soft spot. I eventually fell off and the old man raced across and grabbed the horse first, then he came back to me. I was okay; just a bit of stuffing knocked out.

Racing was in my father's blood, there's no doubt about it. There were a number of places that had race meetings – Julia Creek, Cloncurry, McKinlay, Gilliat, Nelia – and Dad used to handicap most of those. Practically all of them really, because he knew most of the horses, most of the owners. They'd ring him and say: "Would you handicap this programme". But see, racing dwindled during the Depression and meetings were held less frequently. I don't know exactly what happened, but Dad's working with horses petered out and he became a shift boss at the woolscour. After we lost our home to fire, he finished up in the railways as a fettler.

The fire that razed our house to the ground is all very hazy and sketchy now. The only things left upright were the concrete posts. Frank Whiting had built that house; a high-stump place with entrance steps on both sides resembling those of the Masonic Lodge¹, which was in the next block. The house was insured with the State Government insurance; however, some sort of a legal battle ensued and we didn't rebuild. We rented a house in Coyne St instead. When Dad became a fettler, and later, a ganger, the railway supplied a cottage.

DURING OUR EARLY YEARS IN JULIA CREEK everyone called Mum "Auntie". I don't know how many babes she would have delivered. There was no hospital in Julia Creek in those days. Directly opposite Darcy Lavarack's cordial factory there was a CWA home and Mum would put the ladies-in-waiting in there.

Two packed ports were an enduring feature in our house. One was Mum's and one was mine. Many times the shire clerk, Jim Parsons, would call for Mum and take her out to some station to deliver as midwife. It was a common occurrence. The women intended to come to Julia Creek but left it too late. While Mum was away for the delivery, I stayed with Mrs Grace Young, my aunt².

Mum also had dealings with the Flying Doctor. He'd fly in from Cloncurry and land in Burke St. The sergeant of police would stand at one end of the street, and Constable Borghardt³, who lived alongside of us, would stand at the other. They'd stop what little traffic there was, and the plane would land and taxi to the CWA home. The doctor would have a look at the mothers and babes and say: "Well, everything's okay Mrs Walters" and climb back into the plane.

Once I had a ride with the Flying Doctor. I was standing beside Mum and he asked who I was. Mum said: "That's my son". He turned to me:

Would you like a ride in the plane?

Too right.

I was the talk of the town.

I STARTED MY SCHOOLING in Julia Creek and I was a pretty good student. As a matter of fact I won a trip to the Brisbane Exhibition for a school project on poultry. I had to keep records of this, that and the other: weigh the eggs, count them, write a story about the various diseases that fowls experience. Not necessarily all the children did a project on poultry. There were different topics. You chose whatever interested you most.

When I finished school I sat for a railway examination to be a lad porter. Must have been an easy exam because I came third in Queensland. Then I sat for the PMG exam. The decision about a railway job was a bit late in arriving, and in the meantime I was offered a job in the Post Office. Bill Gannon, he was great mates with Dad, he convinced my father I should take the Post Office job. I started in January 1940 when I was 14½, delivering telegrams, and I remained in the Post Office for 44 years.

Under the rules in those days you had to have so-many telegrams to deliver before they gave you an

an inch of rain.

The Julia Creek State School Project Club held its first annual meeting on Monday. This club is under the supervision of Mr. Arthur Cann, head teacher. A number of townspeople were in attendance and they were surprised at the progress made by the children. The poultry projects were inspected at the childrens' homes in the morning. Highest mark went to Ann Brabazon with 83.5 marks. Harold Walters came second with 79.5 marks. Then followed Norman Whiting 78.5, Valerie Ahern 77.5, Eric Blanch 70, Noel Peut 69, and Gloria McCarthy 69.

During the afternoon a meeting conducted by the children, with Harold Walters as chairman, was held in the school room. This was well attended by both children and grown-ups. Every praise is due to those responsible for the splendid work of the Project Club. The work already accomplished is commendable.

A small lot of

NQR: 09 Jul 1938

for a few weeks.

Julia Creek had a bad fire on November 27 when the residence of Mr. Jack Walters, situated in Mathews St near the Church of England, was destroyed in a short space of time. It looked as if the residence on the north side of the house would also be enveloped in flames, and so endanger further buildings, but a change in the wind spared one, or even two more buildings from being burnt. There were a great number of assistants at the fire but the flames could not be subdued.

The local wool scour has closed

NQR: 17 Dec 1938

has just been completed and is an asset to the town and district.

Advice has been received that Master Harold Walters, aged 14, chairman of the Julia Creek State School Project Club, has been invited to attend the Brisbane Show as a guest of the Royal National Show Committee. This honour is extended to students of outstanding ability. As 25 members only are selected throughout Queensland, Master Walters is to be congratulated. The Julia Creek Project Club has been in operation for about 18 months and has made good progress.

Amongst the visitors to town during

NQR: 15 Jul 1939

We are in receipt of advice that Harold Walters, who sat for a postal exam with others at Julia Creek, was successful in obtaining first place, thus securing for himself a position in the local Post Office. We congratulate Harold on his good pass and wish him every success. From enquiries made, Harold is taking up duties at the Post Office in the near future. He was educated at the state school, Julia Creek.

Christmas Day was fairly busy in

NQR: 30 Dec 1939

1. See page 262 for a photo of the Masonic Lodge.

2. Harold's family tree is on page 658, and a photo of Harold amongst most of his relatives is on page 170.

3. Constable Borghardt was stationed in Julia Creek from 1928-32. He gets a mention in the cases of Harry Kamada (bottom right of page 393) and "Fettler Runs Amok" (page 272).

official Post Office bike. I did have a bicycle for delivering telegrams, but it was my own, bought from Lance Lewis. Eventually, with an increase in telegram traffic, we reached the particular number required and the Post Office hired my bike from me for 2/6 a week to save them providing one. Thank goodness, too, because the type of bicycle the PMG had, with thorn-proof tyres, was one of the heaviest bikes you could find. It was an effort to pedal it, let alone deliver on it.

Just after the war started I absconded from the Post Office to join the armed forces. I blew through to Brisbane while I was on leave and jacked my age up. I was only about 16, but I was a fairly big lad and I could have easily passed for 18. I gave them a false name – Hawker. See, if you were employed in essential services like the Post Office you were given a manpower card and you were restricted to that type of work. You weren't allowed to join up.

First of all I tried to enlist in the air force but they wouldn't have me, so I tried for Petty Officer (Wireless) in the navy. In those days, Morse Code was the chief means of communication in the services and I had to do a few tests. Being young and a bit exuberant, I raced through the Morse Code – showing off. The examiner didn't know what was happening when I got on the Morse key. He smelt a rat; realised I'd had training somewhere. They got my real name out of me and I was shown the door. I was manpowered back to Julia Creek as postal clerk. They wanted me in the Post Office and that's where I stayed. If I hadn't gone back I would have been arrested. They could do lots of things during the war.

The Post Office more or less forgave me for running away, but all along we had our differences. Every three months my application to be released for military service was reviewed and every three months I got a letter: *Sorry, can't let you go*. Later on I joined the Naval Reserve and the Volunteer Defence Corps and became an Acting Sergeant, all the time while working in the Post Office.

I was about 16, I'd say, when I was sent to Prairie. I don't know who cried the most, my mother or I. From Prairie I went to the Selheim Military camp and I was there for over 12 months working as 2IC.

In 1942 I was transferred back to Julia Creek. Coming home from Selheim I got permission to travel on a Yankee troop train and I made friends with some young fellows who flew Flying Fortresses. They were just young Americans, a couple of years older than me, who'd been thrust into the war. From time to time, when they got R & R, they'd come to Julia Creek and spend a bit of time. We always had a spare bed or two on the verandah.

That went on for two or three months, and then I never heard any more of them until the Coral Sea battle. I happened to be in the Julia Creek Post Office when a Flying Fortress appeared overhead and did a victory roll. It was these beggars. You can imagine what a Fortress would be like in a victory roll. The Post Office was made of timber and I reckon the walls just about touched. Everybody raced out into the street to watch this massive plane flying low over the downs.



Above: Harold.
[Harold Walters, WH03, ca 1950]

SATURDAY AFTERNOONS I pencilled for Roy Hampton. Dad used to work there too. Sergeant of Police, Tom Brennan, he used to say to me:

Whaddaya doing Saturday afternoon?

Playing billiards.

Make sure you are – around about 3 o'clock.

That's when we'd be raided.

Three SP bookmakers operated in Julia Creek: Uncle Roy, Jack Cramp and Bluey Baker. Roy was pretty well-heeled and I used to pencil for him on the weekends for three quid. He had tremendous connections – agents in McKinlay, Nelia, all those places. They phoned their bets through and Roy paid them commission of two bob in the pound. I'd go back on Sundays and do the books, the win and loss statements. Settle up with the punters – and with Sergeant Brennan.

Brennan had £5 on the winner of the last race in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane – one bet with each of the three bookmakers. We never actually saw his money, and it wasn't on a particular horse, it was always on the winner. His wife came down to collect one Sunday morning and Roy told me to give her £15. She queried the amount: "Tom said it was supposed to be 20". And Roy said: "Might have been – if your husband actually put his money down".

Brennan also got a kickback from the pubs: a dozen bottles of draft beer. He was always looking for handouts. My cousin, Chookie Graham, she leased the Julia Creek Hotel with her husband, and they used to pay Brennan's tariff, and because of that they could go for their life. But Bill Gannon wouldn't pay and he'd be harassed. Brennan would come to the Post Office at about quarter to 10 and sit on the steps, and at 10 o'clock¹ he'd walk over and close Bill down.

It was commonly known around town that Brennan was on the take.

I had a number of Post Office transfers after Julia Creek: Richmond, Maxwelton, Cloncurry. In 1951 I transferred back to Julia Creek as Acting Postmaster. Keith Hutchison² took over from me in 1952.

HAS ANYONE MENTIONED PHYLLIS, the red light lady? As well as the obvious services she offered, she'd take in the old fellas who were down in life and get them on their feet again. I remember she had a soft spot for Jim Tierney³. If you turn that tape machine off, I'll tell you a story. [I turned off the recorder, but I still had my ears switched on.]

Several of my mates and I went around to Phyllis' place one night. She lived at the outskirts of town, near Mrs Shaw in Mathews St:

Whadda you fellas want?

Um, well, we wanna know... um...

C'mon, don't beat about the bush.

Um... How much for...

Ten bob.

Uhh... we've only got five.

Well then, come back when you've got the rest.

Just then she looked around the group and recognised me. "Harold Walters! I'll tell your mother when I see her next." Well, that somewhat dampened my enthusiasm. For the next several weeks I was in a panic, worried she might carry out her threat.



1. Queensland did not have the "6 o'clock swill" of the southern states. From 1923, hotel closing time in Queensland was 8 p.m. During the war, closing time was extended to 10 p.m.

2. Keith's story is on page 705.

3. Stories about Jim Tierney start on page 460.

Julia Creek Races

(By J.M.)

Arriving home full of spirits on Friday evening I announced to my household I was going to the Julia Creek races at 1 a.m. and would have a few hours rest. Was soon in the land of Nod, to be awakened at midnight and told the taxi was waiting to take me to the train. It was cold and I was sorry for making rash promises. However, I joined our party at the station: Joe Twible¹ of *Cloncurry Advocate* fame, Private Jack Purtell on leave from New Guinea, and Ted Anderson.

The train was crowded and we had just enough time to squeeze into a four-seat compartment. As the train went along, Ted decided to do a flying fox act by climbing up onto the luggage rack where he lay on his chest with legs hanging down. He did not look too comfortable, but it gave us more room.

I was telling a fellow passenger about this on my return journey and he said: "Oh yes. Last week two women did the same and one had her legs..." but that is another story.

We had all but dozed off when Jack Purtell yelled out: "Someone pinched my *wong*". (*Wong* in Fuzzy Wuzzy means money.) The carriage was in darkness so we could not see who the culprit was. By striking matches we found his *wong* beneath the seat and all was well.

We were a sorry lot. The only refreshments we had were inside of us, a-la-camel. Revellers in the next carriage had been more sensible and we listened to the corks popping. Now and then a dead marine would hit the earth outside the train.

We arrived at Julia Creek about dawn and made for the nearest pub to try and get a room. The hotelier told us, however, we could not even get a shakedown to change in. Away we went to the next place, Gannon's, where we were told by that genial host we might get a room if we waited three months. As we had no desire to stay even three minutes at the hotel unless the beer was on, we went and found an old friend, George

Julia Creek Races

About 50 Cloncurry sports went down to the Julia Creek races by the one o'clock train on Saturday morning. All report that the race meeting was a real good one with plenty of money and bookmakers, and with owners not afraid to back their horses. Mr. Bill Chaplain ('Boomarra Bill') won with Amurak, twice, but the horse lost one race on account of the leadbag falling off whilst the race was in progress.

The visiting sports only had two complaints: the horse yards are in a very bad state and horses may be injured if repairs are not carried out before next meeting; and the sanitary conveniences are rather crude. In France, urinals are covered only from knee to neck, but on the Julia Creek race course there is a new idea. The hessian reached from the ground to above the knee, and from chest to forehead, leaving bare what the French cover.

Otherwise our sports say everything is okay. They all thoroughly enjoyed themselves and will go again.

Next week we will publish a full report of the meeting by our local racing correspondent.

CA: 01 Sep 1944

Rosenskjar who has a saddler's shop. Here we were able to dispose of our luggage.

By this time we were hungry and cold so we made for Mrs Edwards' railway hotel. We were met by that charming young hostess and were soon seated before the best repast ever. What a wonderful service – good meal, excellently cooked, and splendid ministrations by a pretty waitress.

Like giants refreshed we sallied forth into the streets crowded with visitors. Cloncurry was in strong force: the owner of Five Pence wore a red cardigan and an expectant look; Boomarra Bill sported a broad tie, a surcoat of nigger brown with ringer boots of the same hue, and a ton of confidence in the Cloncurry horses.

I left my party and wandered round the town and was surprised to see nice homes with green lawns. The architecture of these homes was refreshing after the old style of two rooms and back skillions that go to make up the majority of Cloncurry dwellings. Curryites would be well-advised, post war, to visit Julia Creek and copy these styles of homes.

Another thing that surprised me

was Lance Lewis' Service Station which is equal to any I have seen, even in big towns. Marvellous range of stock, well-presented. Why not, Cloncurry garage men?

An excellent lunch by Mrs Edwards, and then to the race course per boot, led by Jack Purtell. Jack usually walks 28 miles per day on route marches in New Guinea where he has just come from on leave. It's a mile and a bit to the course and we enjoyed the march over the loose downs in the heat.

We were encouraged by Jack with the promise of beer at the course, but when we arrived the beer had not. When it did, it consisted of bottled ale at 6/- per bottle. I resolved to obtain and drink water, but of water there was none. Neither was there shade or rest for man, woman or beast; not a seat, not a log, not a stone, not a tree. What a place. The appointments at the Julia Creek race course are the most primitive in the Commonwealth and a disgrace to any civilised club. This club has been in existence for over 20 years and surely the public, who make the sport, are worthy of some consideration. No attempt even to provide a place for women and children to rest or change. My sympathy went out to the mothers with little ones (and there were quite a number) who put in a hot afternoon on the downs with nowhere to have a wash or change.

There is one thing about the Julia Creek Race Course appointments – everything is equal. There is not much of anything: no bell to denote weigh-in or weigh-out; no flags to advise the punters of protests; no bell to warn that a start has occurred or that a winner has been okay'd. In the case where a winning horse slipped his weight, it was fully 10 minutes before the public woke up to the fact, and by that time some punters had torn up their tickets on the second-placed horse. The yards are a menace to horses, being in a disgraceful state of repair. Last, and not least, the sanitary arrangements would not be tolerated anywhere but Julia Creek. The men's convenience, which faces the road from town and over which all traffic must pass, has a WC minus

'The appointments at the Julia Creek race course are the most primitive in the Commonwealth and a disgrace to any civilised club'

a door. And the latrine, enclosed with old torn hessian, covers the person from head to chest and from knees to feet – but not the private parts. What about it Mr Health Officer?

Apart from the appointments, the course, and the programme, was good. It was grand to see 11 acceptors for the first race, and a great race it was. The next also was a good race and everyone was on their toes. The racing was very good right through, with the Cloncurry horses on top.

It was bad luck for Boomarra Bill to lose the race when his horse, Amurak, slipped his weight. Had there been proper supervision by the stewards this would not have happened. Part of a steward's duties are to see the horse properly saddled, as a tricky owner could throw a race easier this way than by pulling a horse. However, on the whole, it was a good day as far as racing goes, and everyone seemed to have plenty of cash.

There was a big attendance of the fair sex and some pretty costumes that would have graced even Flemington. I am sorry I am not able to give a description of these, because nothing pleases the fair ones more than to read about what they wore.

I met a friend of long standing, that Beau Brummell² of amateur riders, Jack Walters³, neat and active as ever. Jack is handicapper and starter for the Julia Creek Club and he certainly did his part credibly. Meeting Jack brought back memories of the good old racing days and I could see him bringing home horses like Kurgan, Royal, Crown Scholar and others in many stirring finishes.

And so back to town per hoof. When I got to the railway line I sat on a sleeper block and thought of the time over 30 years ago when I walked from Julia Creek to Cloncurry, of which some day I may describe⁴.

CA: 08 Sep 1944

1. Editor of the *Cloncurry Advocate*.

2. Beau Brummell (1778-1840) is credited with introducing and establishing as fashion the modern man's suit worn with a tie.

3. Harold's father.

4. I scanned the *Cloncurry Advocate* from the date of this article until the paper folded in 1953, but was unable to find the account of JM's walk from Julia Creek to Cloncurry.

An old man gazed on a photograph,
In a locket he'd worn for years;
His nephew then asked him the reason why,
That picture had caused him tears.
"Come listen" he said, "I will tell you, lad,
A story that's strange, but true;
Your father and I, at the school one day,
Met two little girls in blue.

Refrain

"Two little girls in blue, lad,
Two little girls in blue.
They were sisters, we were brothers,
And we learned to love the two.
And one little girl in blue, lad,
Who won your father's heart,
Became your mother; I married the other,
And now we have drifted apart."

"That picture is one of those girls" he said,
"And to me she was once a wife;
I thought her unfaithful, we quarrelled, lad,
And parted that night for life.
My fancy of jealousy wronged a heart,
A heart that was good and true –
For two better girls never lived than they,
Those two little girls in blue."



Above: Marie Kaeser (left), Dorothy Guest and Nookie, in front of Tommy Guest's workshop, Coyne St. Tommy Guest's house is on the right.
[Nookie Guest, GN03, ca 1933]

"From the first year I went to school I was mates with Marie Kaeser. Her father had the bakery in the front street. Marie and I went to several fancy dress balls together. It was a big thing for kids. There wasn't a lot of other stuff for kids to do in Julia Creek."

"In that photo, taken beside our house in front of Dad's garage, we were *Two Little Girls in Blue*. My sister's poked in there between us, as Lady Pompadour. Mum made the costumes." (Nookie Guest)

Two Little Girls In Blue

Julia Creek's Eastern Princess
battles trachoma

Nookie Guest

EVERY SUMMER towards the end of the school year I'd leave Julia Creek and stay with one of my relatives on the coast. Sometimes it was with Auntie Ellie at Home Hill; sometimes with Auntie Dinah who lived on Harveys Range; or sometimes I stayed with my grandmother in Townsville. See, I had trachoma as a little girl. Trachoma is a scum that grows over your eye. A lot of Aboriginal children have it these days. Flies and dust, apparently, cause trachoma, and there were plenty of both at Julia Creek.

Around the time I started school, Mum and I went to Townsville and stayed with my grandmother. Every weekday morning for three months I used to go to Dr Bennett, an eye doctor on Charters Towers Rd, to have bluestone treatment¹. He had a gadget like a large toothpick with which he folded over the top eyelids. Then he painted this bluestone stuff directly onto the eyes. It used to burn like hell.

The bluestone didn't work, so Dr Bennett operated to remove the scum. It was a daytime thing. I wasn't in hospital overnight or anything like that. I remember coming out with both eyes covered by a bandage around my head. Two or three days I had that bandage on, and then I went back to Julia Creek.

I've only lately found out that I've got a fair amount of scar tissue on my eyes as a result of that operation.

It was after I had the operation that I went to the coast every year – the doctor's recommendation – to get away from the dust and the flies.

The effect trachoma has on you is that you can't look up at sunlight; you can't handle glare. That photo shows me dressed as an Eastern Princess, and you can see that I'm looking down. My mother hired that

costume from Brisbane. It was beautiful. It was a school fancy dress.

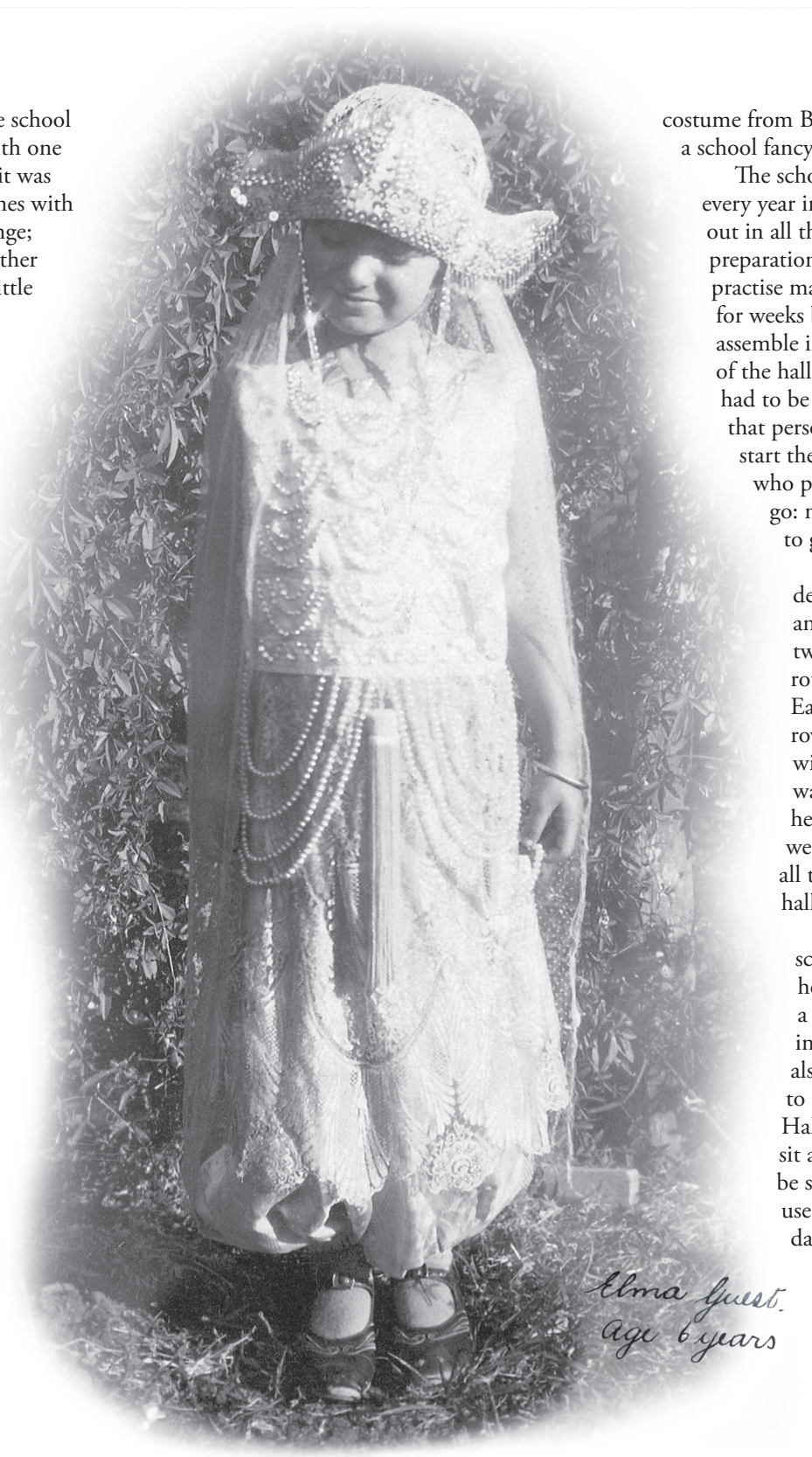
The school had a fancy dress night every year in Eckford's Hall. You'd deck out in all the gear and put on makeup in preparation for the Grand March. We'd practise marching in the schoolyard for weeks before. On the night, we'd assemble in the supper room on the side of the hall and settle into our places: you had to be behind this person and beside that person. Then the pianist would start the music – I can't remember who played the piano – and in we'd go: march march march. It seemed to go on for about an hour.

The Grand March was a big deal. You went in two-by-two, and then two went this way and two went that way. You came round and you went back up. Each time you came round, the row got longer. You finished up with eight or ten across. That was the Grand March. It was held at night and the families were the audience, seated on slats all the way around the edge of the hall.

During the latter years of my school days... You would have heard of Mrs Pedersen? She was a fantastic lady, heavily involved in community things. She was also pretty talented and she used to arrange a cabaret² in Eckford's Hall with tables for people to sit at. A group of kids would be selected from school and she used to train them to do certain dances. I was in it one year.

Left: Elma Guest, age 6 years, in an Eastern Princess costume hired from Brisbane.

[Nookie Guest, GN07, 1933]



*Elma Guest,
age 6 years*

1. Copper sulphate.

2. See page 343 for a newspaper cutting about Mrs Pedersen's cabarets.

I cannot see the sheep market getting much brighter.

Mr. Tommy Guest, motor engineer, has engaged contractor Herb Wilder to build an uptown shop next to the Bank of N.S.W. and when this shop is completed it will be one more step to making Burke Street the principal business street in the town. Mr. Guest still intends to carry on with his motor works in Coyne Street as well.

Messrs Magoffin and Co. Ltd. of Rosevale have just landed three very high class stud rams from the Haddon Rig Stud. These rams, or really two

NQR: 28 Jul 1934

DODGES, BUICKS, they were the two top notches, but the Chev and the Ford were the main ones. Lance Lewis had the Chevs, and Tommy Guest around in Coyne St had the Fords. When the Holdens came in, Lance got the Holden agency as well.

MANNIE SILLS

Below: A load of sheep skins in front of Tommy Guest's garage in Burke St. The skins were taken from dead sheep during a drought and sold for sixpence each. The building later became Peter Dawes Store.

[Dadie Dawes, DW29, 1934]

Opposite: Nookie's father, Tommy Guest.

[Nookie Guest, GN01, ca 1965]

Opposite: School breakup, back of School of Arts building. The two children identified by arrows are Jim Eckford and Olive Gannon.

[Dadie Dawes, DW08, 1924]

THE REASON OUR FAMILY came to be in Julia Creek was that my father, after he learnt his trade as a motor mechanic in Townsville, decided it was time to "go west young man". And that's what he did. He went into shearing sheds and maintained the shearing machines and any other machinery on the stations where he worked.

Around the same time that Dad went west – in 1925 – my mother also went west. She was 19 when she started work at the Julia Creek Hotel for Bill Gannon. At that stage he had not yet built his own hotel. Somehow Mum and Dad got together and I was born on 11th December 1926. There's only me and a younger sister.

Dad had a garage at the western end of Coyne St, second from the corner. Our house was next door. On the corner block, one jump ahead of a humpy, was a little cottage – and you'd be surprised who lived in there. We used to hear Mum and Dad talking about it at the dinner table, and we used to hear the kids talking about it at school. Sometimes blokes would come there and they'd fight, or they didn't want to pay, or she might have been in a cranky mood and didn't want to service them. They'd have a blue – strong language and whatnot – and Dad would go over to the garage and start up all the engines so we couldn't hear. That saved him calling the police when the language got really rough. I don't know if the lady was married, but there was no permanent man there, only men who visited.

MR McIVOR WAS HEAD TEACHER when I started school, and I think he was followed by Mr Nelson, a lovely man. And then came Mr Cann, a real so-n-so. He came from a place called Ogmores, and there wasn't

a day went by that he didn't ram down our throats how good the Ogmores school was. Many years later I used to pass the Ogmores sign driving home (it's north of Rockhampton) and I'd think to myself: "I'll go in there one of these days and have a look at that rotten school".

The Julia Creek State School was up on high blocks and completely enclosed with gauze. Before we went into the classrooms, two of the kids stood at the top of the steps and shooed away the flies. Underneath the classrooms, between the uprights, there were forms that we could sit on to have our lunch. It could get quite hot under there, so we used to have our lunch in the bough shed. That was a cooler spot, a little bit away from the classrooms. It was just four posts in the ground with a corrugated iron roof and a row of parkinsonia trees around the outside. On hot days the parkinsonias cooled the breeze as it came through – what little breeze there was.

We only had tank water to drink at school. You couldn't drink water from the taps because it came boiling hot straight from the bore. There were tanks on either end of the school building and one in the bough shed. The water in the bough shed was cooler than in the other tanks because it was shaded.

Sometimes on a hot day a kid would have a spare threepence and he'd go over the road to Eckford's ice works. Every kid in the school was his mate when he came back to the bough shed with a block of ice and proceeded to break it up.

I remember we had trouble at school from corellas turning the football field to a sea of white. We couldn't hear to do our schoolwork because of their screeching. Harold Walters, one of the bigger boys, it was his job to pelt a tin of stones at them to get them on their way so we could go back to having school.

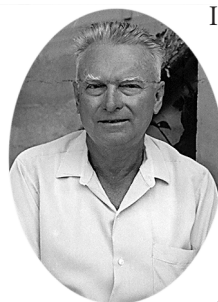


Every year, just about, the North family blew into town with their travelling carnival. Their children came along to school for two or three weeks and played havoc with the local marble players. When the carnival moved on we had to replenish our stocks. We were no match for the Norths. Even their girls were champs.

Breakup day at school was a real celebration. There'd be sporting activities and lots of eating and drinking: huge trays of sandwiches and homemade cakes, and as much lemon or raspberry cordial as you could guzzle, finished off with lashings of watermelon. I've never tasted watermelon like it since. Before leaving to go home, each child was given a small bag of boiled sweets.

About mid-week, magazines and comics arrived at the newsagent. You had to order them or you missed out. The mothers would take home the *Women's Weekly* and the *Women's Mirror*, while the kids – those lucky enough to be allowed comics – gathered in the alley beside the newsagent to have an early read and to stickybeak at what their mates had. If the rest of us hung around long enough, and the owners were in a good mood, you might score a comic on a few minutes' loan.

Most families had a billy cart: a pine box mounted (usually) on worn-out pram wheels. We didn't have a billy cart, so I borrowed the one from the Winton family across the street. I'd pull it behind me to one of the soft drink factories, Eckford's or Lavarack's, to cash empty bottles. Another way for kids to earn money was collecting newspapers. You had to keep them clean and laid out flat. When you thought you had a good lot, you rolled them together and tied them up and sold them to Charlie Byrne, the butcher, for tuppence a pound.



Did I have chores? Did I ever! You weren't supposed to do it but everybody did: when new sleepers were being fitted to the rails they were stockpiled beside the line. Anyone with a truck – and we had a truck – could go out and knock them off. A hobo named Mike Connelly, he was friendly with Dad, he always seemed to know the right time to come. He'd jump the rattler and turn up at our place just when the sleepers were in. Mum would feed him, and Dad would give him a few bob for helping with the sleepers. Then he'd be on his way again. I used to hate the sight of the man because every time he arrived it meant I'd be given the job of lugging chopped-up sleepers. Our house was high set and the stove was upstairs – upstairs! I had to carry the wood up those bloody stairs on my arms, and stack it in a recess off to the side of the stove. If wet weather was imminent, I'd put some in the bathroom as well. What didn't fit in the bathroom I stacked under the house.

DAD SOLD THE GARAGE in 1936 and worked for Lance Lewis until he went to Hughenden in 1940. We moved to Hughenden when Dad got an offer.

I remember the night the man came, and I remember the man – Arthur Lowe. Arthur came to visit us one night with a proposition. Us kids were told: "You go to bed" while the grown-ups talked business. Dad was offered the opportunity of going to Hughenden as the Ford agent and that's why we ended up leaving Julia Creek.

For reasons I don't know much about, Dad found himself in court when he sold the garage. It cost him a lot of money – not that he had a lot of money to start with. I think he arrived in Hughenden with not much at all. He started again, virtually from scratch.



Hungry For A New Face

Nita Crawford

Mum, Ted, Nita and Laurie Crawford, accompanied by a drunk and a waterbag, arrive by ship and train from Victoria

IT'S JUST LIKE YESTERDAY TO ME. It's funny that, isn't it. The mail train came through once a week and it was a social event because you saw the people who stayed on the train and you saw the people who got on and off. And it was somewhere to go. Don't forget there was not much to do in Julia Creek. Whatever happened was like a social event. The mail train came in about 5 or 6 o'clock of a Monday evening from Mount Isa and there were always interesting people on it. Kids like us were just hungry for a new face, to see someone else. It was an isolated community so we'd go over to the mail train to see faces.

When the boys went to war they all went on that mail train. Everyone was crying on the platform. The boys had gone – the girls hadn't joined up at that stage, but we did later on – and then the girls were gone too. There was hardly anyone left. It was quite extraordinary.

Opposite: Nita in Cloncurry.
[Nita Crawford, CN06, 1941]

Below: Burke St looking east. Buildings from far right: Mrs Wilkins drapery store, Cameron's O-K Store, Lance Lewis garage, Bank of NSW, Peter Dawes Store, Garden of Roses Cafe, vacant lot, and Gannon's Hotel. In the next block in the distance is Eckford's picture theatre. There are two shop awnings on the left. The closest is Charlie Byrne's butcher. Further along near the truck is the Blue Bird Cafe.
[Dadie Dawes, DW17, ca 1945]



I WAS BORN IN DUNKELD in Victoria, at the foot of the Grampians, 1922. My Dad was a Light Horseman in the First World War. When he came back from the war he married Mum. He was allotted a soldier settlement block north of Bendigo, about 120 acres, and that's where we grew up. All the time on the farm he was very sick; gassed during the war.

He never liked cows – us kids milked the cows – he was more a sheep man. One year he went north, shearing with friends. He wrote home that the pea bush was so high they couldn't see where they were riding. He loved the warm dry climate (the weather suited his bronchitis) and he never returned to Victoria until he was in his seventies.

Mum sold the farm and up we came to Queensland. That would have been at the end of 1936, beginning of '37. Ted had just left school the year before, Laurie was still at school, and I had just finished school. I had a cap and gown for music from ALCM – the Associates of the London College of



Music. After four or five years when you passed your exam you had a cap and gown, it was your honour board so to speak. Not that it ever did me any good. Julia Creek didn't acknowledge anything like that.

We left Melbourne on Christmas Eve. Coming out of the heads we were all seasick – 480 passengers on the *Canberra* and only 40 down for Christmas dinner. When we got to Brisbane we weren't allowed off the boat because of a polio scare. Infantile paralysis was bad then and they wouldn't let us off. We went up through the Whitsundays to Townsville, still on the *Canberra*. That was our first feeling of the tropics and it was magic: balmy air and dolphins near the boat. It was January. It was just beautiful.

We disembarked at Townsville. Mum was horrified. She'd never seen anybody without a singlet on before, and here we were at this boarding house and these fellows – they were workers I suppose – just in their shorts. That was the first of many shocks for Victorian people coming north.



Then we did the long trip to Julia Creek. Dad was waiting for us – we hoped. On the way out on the train we saw a camel team, a long thin string of camels, and we thought we were in the wild west. That really got us. I was only 14½ and I was impressed. I can still picture it: me looking out of the train window at a stream of camels.

It took us two and a half days to get to Julia Creek and all we had for water was a waterbag. It was a goods train which stopped at every siding to take on or relieve itself of freight. The mail train, the one with decent passenger facilities, only went once a week and we couldn't wait a week in Townsville. We sat in a carriage at the rear of the train. The only other occupant was an old drunk. On and off he'd wake up and have a drink of cold water or a swig of hot rum and go back to sleep. Just Mum and us three kids, and a drunk, and a waterbag. Can you imagine? For two hot January days we lived for that waterbag on the back of the train.

We got to Julia Creek in the afternoon. Dad had booked us in at the hotel near the railway line. Now my Dad, well, he was an ex-soldier wasn't he. He'd get on the rum now and again, and he wasn't there to meet us. I can say that now because he's been dead many years.

We went to the hotel with thoughts of a bath after days on the train, and out came scalding bore water. You had to let it cool off before you could get in. So we waited and waited. That was our introduction to Julia Creek.

Next day we moved into a flat. We were quite close to the hotel, a bad place to be with Dad the way he was, but anyway... We were in the flat for a few months and then we rented a house right on the outskirts of town, an old corrugated iron place. For the rest of my time in Julia Creek that's where I lived.

Dad worked in the shearing sheds and Mum worked at Gannon's Hotel in the laundry. She had to work because Dad was out in the sheds. You have to understand that our groceries were on tick until Dad came home. If he came straight home with the cheque, all right; but if he didn't, then we still owed money. So Mum went to work.

Like Mum, I worked at Gannon's too. My first job was housemaid and waitress combined. Bill Gannon put me on and he expected me to work like a grown up, like an adult. I was only 14 and I physically couldn't do the hard work of scrubbing verandahs on my hands and knees, plus the



long hours of waitressing. I'm a small person. The only time I've had a bit of weight on was in the army. After two or three weeks I got the sack.

Then the Franzmans were looking for someone to work for them at the Nelia pub. I helped look after the kids. They were a Catholic family so the kids kept coming. And I was also the waitress. I'd don a black satin blouse and skirt that Mum made me, and a white apron, and I'd go and wait on the tables in the dining room. I was shy, very shy. It was agony.

I didn't work in the bar – though I used to have to clean the bar, especially after a race meeting. Five o'clock Sunday morning I'd go in and clean up the pig trotters, boiled pig trotters. The bones would be there from the night before. The men had them with their beer and just tossed them on the floor. The race meeting would be on a Saturday, and at night the bar would be full of men drinking beer and eating these pig trotters. It was a well-known treat for race day.

The hotel quarters where I stayed had eight rooms with two single beds in each of them. Nothing on the floor, just bare boards. That was the hotel accommodation. It was made of galvanised iron, just like a shearing shed. Can you imagine how hot the rooms were? Now and again I'd have to clean up, sweep them with a broom – I was also the Franzman's housemaid.

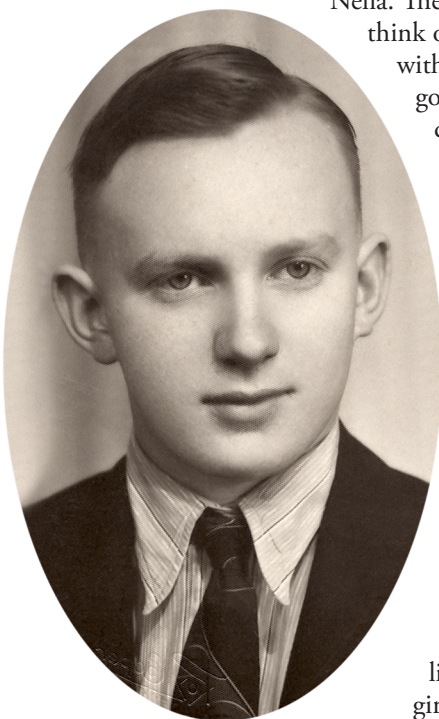
IT WAS MR FRANZMAN who more or less put me in for the Queen Competition. I was 17, 18 maybe, I wasn't very old. I was the only girl that age for miles around. There was nobody else. It wasn't like being in Julia Creek where you had more people. Nelia, you might go days and not see anyone walking about other than at the railway. There weren't a lot of people around Nelia.

They wanted girls to raise money and they asked different ones. Mr Franzman said he'd give me a hand, sponsor me to some extent, and that I could probably get men at the bar to donate. That's how I became involved and that's where most of the money came from – the bar patrons. Of my own accord I would never have entered. I had agonies of shyness, no confidence in myself at all. When I look back now, I suppose I was as good as anybody else, but in those days I didn't think so.

LAURIE MUST HAVE BEEN in grade 7 when he ran away from school and came to Nelia. The teacher was giving him a hard time; he was a real bully. I can't think of his name¹. I can see his face. Big overbearing man he was, with glasses on. Laurie left a note for Mum to say where he was going, and he took his little bank book that children had in those days. He did all the right things. It was terrific what he did, riding his bike from Julia Creek to Nelia in the heat of early summer. Only bush roads, no bitumen in those parts, nobody around. He arrived in the afternoon, his face all burnt. Poor Laurie; he was in tears when he got there, he was only a kid. He was coming to me, his big sister.

Mr Franzman made up a job for Laurie, gave him a job of packing groceries. Thanks to Mr Franzman's generosity, Laurie had a job and got paid for it. He might have been with me a couple of months and then he went back to Julia Creek and worked for Darcy Lavarack, carrying ice around the town for people's ice boxes. No fridges. People had an ice box and it was filled every day with a block of ice. The next morning the ice would be delivered again.

I was at Nelia for a couple of years until Mr Franzman sold out to the Tunnys. He went into a hotel in Cloncurry and he asked me to work for him, so I went. The Franzmans were like family to me – well, I lived in the quarters – but I was their girl, sort of thing. I helped with the babies as they came along.



1. Arthur Cann, head teacher in 1938.

Opposite: Julia Creek Hotel, the one Nita and family booked into on arrival in Julia Creek.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK03, ca 1940]

Left: Laurie Crawford.
[Nita Crawford, CN09, ca 1940]

JULIA CREEK NOTES

The Ambulance Queen Competition was finalised last Friday night when the Coronation Ball was held. The three Queens, Miss E. Riley (Julia Creek), Miss D. Tracey (McKinlay), and Miss Nita Crawford (Nelia) collected £147/7/1, £50/10/9 and £35/4/- respectively.

A most spectacular ceremony was witnessed when Mr. Bill Allison, Chairman of the Shire Council, placed the Royal Cloak and Crown upon Miss Riley the winner. All three girls made a splendid effort for this most deserving cause and as a reward received ten per cent of their gross amounts. The Ball was a success financially and socially, and credit for the sumptuous supper is given to Mrs. Jack Walters and her helpers. The money raised will go a long way towards the purchase of a new car for the Q.A.T.B. which is urgently needed. Any further donations, small or large, will be gratefully received by Mr. Henry Benson, Superintendent.

Town and country folk alike are playing a most pleasing part in the purchase of War Savings Certificates and other War Loans. Continuous efforts are being made by the Red Cross Comfort fund, C.W.A. and other organisations. Approximately £180 has been received to date for the Lord Mayor's Bomb Victims Relief Fund. We hear and read enough about the hardships being borne by those in Britain who form the front line of our defense. Comparing the peace we still enjoy should be sufficient to urge us to give all possible assistance to our friends across the sea. Mr. Jim Parsons, Shire Clerk, will acknowledge any donation.

CA: 08 Nov 1940



Above: Lil Gerahty in Townsville.
[Lil Gerahty, SL07, 1943]

Opposite: Nita, 16th Ack Ack Battery, Townsville.
[Nita Crawford, CN08, 1943]

I JOINED UP FROM CLONCURRY. Lil Gerahty and I enlisted at the same time. Everybody did. The boys were gone, you had to do your bit. Australia was in dire straits in those days. It was adventure, too, I suppose. There we were out west: *Oh well, we'll join up.* Of course, we didn't know what we were in for. How could we? Just country kids, naive. We didn't know a thing.

We volunteered for AWAS – Australian Women's Army Service – and then we waited. You didn't go straight in, you had to wait until you were called up. For a long time they wouldn't call the women folk, and then when they did, things had got very serious in lots of places and they weren't prepared for us. We didn't have uniforms for at least a couple of months.

When we first joined up in Townsville we were camped at Jimmy's Lookout, near a swamp. Every morning we had to go out and route march for a certain length of time. It was a standard thing for girls and boys. For the first two months we did that in civilian clothes, trailing through this swamp in our civvies. No one in Australia was ready for what happened.

Lil went to Group Headquarters somewhere and I ended up at Ack Ack Headquarters. We've been friends ever since.

During the war Mum and Dad were asked by the Presbyterian Church if they would look after a hostel in Brisbane for service girls on leave – army girls, navy, air force, all of them. Mum always was a church person. She was a real lady, my Mum, not by title but by the type of person she was. She and Dad were asked to go down and look after Wairoona Hostel, and they did. Mum became the housekeeper; and Dad – there were extensive grounds – he became the gardener and odd job man. The hostel was a beautiful old home at Highgate Hill. It's still there now. I see it changed hands not so long ago.

So my parents went to Brisbane and that was the end of any of us Crawfords ever being in Julia Creek. Laurie went down with them and joined up with the air force as a cadet. Just as he came out of his training the war ended.

ONCE YOU'VE LIVED IN JULIA CREEK you're part and parcel. You've made everlasting friendships. There's something about the place that still urges me to go to reunions in Brisbane whenever I can. There are people there I know, some I don't.

My memories of the Creek go a lot of ways.

I remember riding on bikes with Rene Triffett
and... who was the other one?

Their father was the blacksmith in Julia Creek...

Dorrie!

I met Dorrie in later years at the reunions.

Riding our bikes on those bloomin' dirt tracks
going out to some station.

Nearly died, trying to get there and back again.

We went to everything that was on:

balls, dances, sing-songs, pictures.

Wednesday night and Saturday night were the pictures
and you wouldn't dream of missing them.

The billboards went up in the morning;
by afternoon the goats had them eaten.

If you didn't look at the posters early
you didn't know what was on, did you.

Wild and woolly nights roller-skating in the picture theatre.

None of us could skate properly;
we'd fall over, get up and go again.

The Byrne family, they were a large family.

Rita and Jenny

and the two boys, Bosie and Paddy,

we all seemed to be the same age.

I virtually lived with them.

Over you went to the Byrne house and had a sing-song.

Didn't matter if you could sing or not,

we knew all the songs.

You didn't wait for an invitation;

it was open house, you just arrived.

It was a wonderful way of life.

At the time we thought:

Aah, nothing happens in Julia Creek,
but when you look back, what a life we had.

It was such a... they were such...

What can I say? Hard people?

Not hard – that wouldn't be right.

How can I put it?

Coping with the Queensland west was something I felt was always bigger than me. I always felt that I wasn't able to handle the heat and the flies and the dust like the locals. I never actually felt I coped with the type of place Julia Creek was. For country kids from Victoria to go up there was a big thing. I was fair-skinned and for years never knew – saw all these brown kids – never knew that I wouldn't tan.

I was never as tough as those Julia Creek kids.



To
The Byrnes Family
with
Love & Best Wishes
Nita.