PEOPLE OF 1950s’ ST ALBANS

Joseph Ribarow
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Front cover
The Ribarow family and their bungalow in Henry Street, St Albans, 1952. Image © from the collection of Helena, Teresa and Joseph Ribarow.

St Albans was never "officially" nominated as a permanent migrant centre, however, the willingness of the Keilor Council to allow half-houses triggered a population explosion. St Albans lacked the infrastructure to cater for development on this scale. Unmade roads, neither mains water nor sewerage, rampant noxious weeds, prickle bushes and snakes greeted new-Australian friends. Ongoing battles with authorities to provide infrastructure was a feature of the time. Together, these migrants and locals built homes, churches and facilities that defined their character and the meaning of "community".

Alie Missen
St Albans Migrant Settlement 1950 to 1969

PREFACE

This book is about people who settled in St Albans during the 1950s. At this time St Albans was a village of 900 people and at least 90% of them were of Anglo-Australian heritage. Then the migrants started arriving, and by 1970 the population reached 20,000 and at least 90% of them were of non-Anglo heritage. These stories are about some people of that era.

The main stories are about women from the 1920s who reminisce on growing up in Europe before migrating as young adults, so they represent oral history from a century ago. They encompass growing up in a Belarus village (Manya Hudinski) and a German urban setting (Irene Heymig). Aniela Siuda's story depicts village life in rural Poland at the time. Other stories are by younger migrants who arrived here in their childhood – their histories go back almost 70 years and represent the Euro-cosmopolitan development of post-WW2 St Albans.

Ten articles are about doctors who started working in St Albans during the 1950s and include Dr Igor Balabin who ran his practice for nearly 50 years. One of the great laments of St Albans pre 1950 was the absence of medical practitioners – earlier there was an occasional visiting service, but mostly people had to go to Sunshine or Footscray. This changed in the 1950s when Dr Daniel Wise of Sunshine established a St Albans' clinic and sponsored doctors to work locally. It was the start of a new era that saw migrant doctors responding to the migrant population by providing multi-lingual services to people sharing a common Diaspora.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Manya Hudinska 1
Irene Heymig 11
Sylvia Kopmann 21
Aniela Siuda 31
Steve Kozlowski 45
Alie de Vries 57
Anton Simic 63
Joe Bartolo 70
Jill and Fred Elzinga 73
Kon Danilow 75
Will Danilow 83
Mary and Ronald Howells 90
Terry Vyner 98
Ester Koopu 106
Ronald Fisher 108
Daniel Wise 109
Peter Frajman 111
Jack Rogozinski 112
Zygfryd Atlas 113
Igor Balabin 114
Henry Liszukiewicz 115
Patrick O'Brien 117
Bohdan Umrysch 118
John Brook 120
Karl Andermann 121
Edward Semini 121
Valentyna Horiaczko 122
Eric Roy Alan 123
Johannes Ferdinand Polotzek 125

MANYA HUDINSKA

My name as a child was Manya (which is a Russian diminutive form for Maria) and I was born on the 12th of July 1922 in Belarus to Ekatyarina and Anton Hudinski, a couple of small-village farmers from Belarus who grew up at the beginning of the last century. My mother's maiden name had been Ekatyarina Ihnatuna Radiuk, and my father's full name was Anton Fyedorovich Hudinski. Dad's father was Fyedor Hudinski and I believe his mother's first name was Helena.

I believe my great-grandfather Hudinski was Polish and he married a Russian Orthodox lady. Their children were christened in the Orthodox faith and lived in Byelorussia. Hudinski is a Polish name, and Radiuk is either a Polish or Byelorussian name. Despite these distant links with some Polish heritage, I've always considered myself to be White Russian. The language is different to Polish; in fact it is a lot closer to Russian, though there are differences in pronunciation and spelling.

Dad had two brothers, Peter and Victor, and three sisters, whose names I cannot remember. Uncle Peter and his family were the ones with whom we had most contact, apart from our grandparents.

I was the youngest of four children, the others being two brothers, Vladimir and Mihail, and a sister, Olga.

Ekatyarina and two sons © N Szwed

I was born in the village of Hriwda and lived there until I was 20 years of age. Thus all my early childhood and most of my teenage years coincided with the relative peace that prevailed between the two world wars that had devastated this land.

When Mum spoke about the First World War she told us how, in 1914 as the Germans approached, word got around how they tortured people and committed all sorts of atrocities. At that time most of the village people decided to flee into the city of Minsk, which was the capital city of Belarus, about 200 kilometres away in the north-east. Everything was packed up on wagons and the whole village left.

One old man, a loner, and a lady with children (her husband was a soldier) were the only ones to remain. Surprisingly the Germans did not harm these people who remained. It was also a surprise that they didn't loot our house. In those days towels were highly valued as possessions. They were given as special wedding presents and also collected as part of a woman's dowry. Mum was supposed to look after them but left them behind. The Germans did not take them, which really pleased her.

Dad was conscripted into the army. Dad's brother Victor wasn't, but he wanted to join the Army anyway, to help bring the war to an end. Mum wanted him to stay home to look after the family. Unfortunately he too was soon conscripted. As he left he vowed to come back either a hero or dead. Uncle Victor was thought to have died during the war because he never returned. His death was acknowledged regularly in church prayers.

The Great Patriotic War had ended in 1917, but the unrest between Poland and Russia continued, with Belarus in the middle. By now Mum had two young sons. Everything was in disrepair and much work was needed to bring things back to normal.

Mum had her first daughter, Olga, born in 1918 after the war. Times were very tough and food was scarce. To survive, even the potato peelings were cooked and eaten, and for greens we ate plants that were commonly thought of as weeds. Russia itself may have been very well off, but out here on the frontier we were living in poverty. Then in 1919 Poland seized the western part of Belarus, and Russia accepted this annexation through an agreement made in 1921.[1]

By 1922 Mum had her second daughter, me. In December that year the rest of Belarus joined the formation of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) with other founding members such as the Russian Republics and the Ukraine. Things were beginning to improve.

My childhood village of Hriwda was about eight kilometres from Kossovo and about twenty-five kilometres from the larger town of Slonim to the north. There were about 125 houses in the village and a small general store, but there was no doctor.

[1] The Treaty of Riga was signed in 1921 between the Russian and Polish governments.

Location of Poland, Belarus and Russia

Just outside the village on the other side of the main road lived a wealthy landowner who owned large tracts of land around the village. He was Polish and had a servant, so he was seen to be quite wealthy in comparison to the ordinary villagers. I loved visiting them and they were fond of me. Their wealth was obvious to us as they had many dolls and they also had servants. No one else had such a lifestyle.

We were part of a small rural community that relied on farming for its existence. Each house had between two and ten acres of land. Every house had one or two horses, a buggy, and between three and five cows. Horses were necessary for transport and working the farm lands. Cows provided milk from which we made cream, butter and cheese. My father's parents lived in the same house as we did. This was the normal practice, where several generations lived on the same block of land and usually in the same household. The family had another three blocks of land nearby: one for growing cereal crops, one for potatoes, and one as pasture for the animals.

At the time it was becoming quite crowded. Land was scarce – just as well that the war came along otherwise we would not have had enough room for everyone. People took up whatever jobs they could to earn a few rubles to support themselves. The extended family home was too small to contain the growing family. When my brother Vladimir was older he went to live in Kossovo and worked for others in various jobs like chauffeur. Michael …

The forest was only half a kilometre away from the village. It was a beautiful pine forest that was used by all sides, the partisans and the invading armies, as a shelter and hideout. The invading soldiers remarked on its beauty. On the other side of the village there were the open fields used for crops and pasture.

Each spring we ploughed the fields in preparation for planting potatoes. We used horse-drawn ploughs. I would lead the horse while dad held the plough. I worked just as hard as any boy but men and women were treated differently. For example, women were not allowed to smoke in public, while men smoked a lot. Children used to experiment by making cigarettes out of dried grass and weeds and paper.

When we were younger my sister and I had a pet dog called Larlvik. One of our neighbours did not like dogs and complained about our pet, so Dad gave Larlvik away to the large property owner. We really loved that dog and missed it.

When another neighbour's dog had a litter, this neighbour was kind enough to ask me to choose one as a replacement for the pet we had lost. I chose a lovely pup and the neighbour looked after it for a year while I played with it daily and took it home to feed and then let it return to the neighbour's home. I was about ten at the time.

One day the neighbour said he could not look after it any longer but Dad would not let me have it at home. I asked my brother who lived in Kossovo by then to look after it for me, and he agreed to take it with him.

I had a very happy and lucky childhood because I had very good loving parents. When I was a child I always wanted to see the world. My sister didn't. I believe my earliest recollections were when I was about eighteen months old. We had a long table with long benches as seating. I recall walking on the benches looking out the window thinking how far away things were, how big the world was. I remember looking out the window at the forest at the end of the fields one day, wondering what was beyond. (This is a recurring memory.) I used to gaze at the horizon wondering what was at the end of the world. I stood on a bench staring at the distant forest and dreaming of going out into the world.

When I was about five years old, my mother took me about a kilometre and a half into the fields near a forest. While she worked away cultivating the soil, I decided to go through the forest to the other side to find out where the sky ended. By the time my mother noticed I was missing and started to call me I had not been able to find the sky's end.

I must have been six or seven when I again sneaked away from Mum into the forest, to see what was on the other side. I was surprised to see another clearing and then more forest. On my return I questioned my mother and she explained about the horizon and the shape of the world.

I remember going into the fields one day to dig up potatoes and seeing a huge dog. He kept coming towards me to look at me. When he went away into the bushes, I followed him to see where he went. Later that evening my sister asked me if I had seen the wolf that afternoon. I told her I had thought it was a dog. She explained how lucky I had been, as obviously

the wolf had only recently fed itself and was not aggressive.

Dad was an educated gentleman. He taught me to read and he taught me my prayers, so he taught me the two most important things for life: a belief in God, and a love of learning. When he started teaching me to read, he asked if I wanted to learn Russian or White Russian. I chose Russian. This skill turned out to be very handy when the Russians invaded White Russia. I loved learning, but there was not much schooling available in a small village. Dad used to read me stories. When I was growing up my father would read me stories that were written in Russian. That's how I learnt to read Russian. At home I learnt to read both Russian and White Russian, while at school we were taught in Polish. My sister did not learn to read Russian. At the time we did not imagine that there would be any need for Russian.

I was very bold and adventurous in my youth. I was dad's eyes and ears. I saw everything and was very inquisitive, like my granddaughter Suzie. When I was a young teenager, I secretly would listen in on my older sister and brothers and their friends. When my brother caught me one day he told me off. He said I should stop listening in or he would hit me. I offered to tell him a secret if he let me off. This got me off the hook.

My elder brother was very good to me. Sunday was a day of rest from normal farm work and for going to church. My father would rest by sitting around and talking to his friends. It was my brother's duty to take the horses into the pastures. He complained that he also wanted to sit around and talk. After a few weeks I offered to take the horses. He was so pleased. I went off with my girlfriend. At the end of the day my girlfriend had trouble with her stirrups and couldn't get on her horse. I sorted them out for her and we were able to ride home together.

Village transport in Belarus © Nick Szwed

We had cows, two horses, and a carriage. I used to take the horses to graze in the fields. My elder brother felt he was too old for this job. My girlfriend and I used to go together to take the horses for grazing. Later on my brother bought me a watch as a gift for looking after the horses in his place.

My father used to help a widow plough her fields. Her daughter, Vera, was very frightened of horses. I loved riding horses and I was firm with her and taught her how to handle the horses and help with the ploughing.

Later on Vera was taken to Germany with me and a number of other villagers. I saw Vera again in 1977 when I returned for a visit. She cried bitterly when we met, saying how much she regretted not listening to me and not going to Australia with me.

My parents were wonderful, and, because of my father's position in the village, we, his children, were also considered to be wonderful and were used as an example of good behaviour to other children. There was never any foul language used in our family.

I loved school. I used to do all my homework very quickly at school, as I found it very easy. I always got full marks (i.e. 5 out of 5). My Mother was always most impressed. In particular I loved geography. I loved to discover where all the towns were and soon the horizons of my little village and nearby forest expanded into a much bigger world.

Manya (front centre) in class of 1937 © Nick Szwed

Hriwda was a relatively small settlement of about 120 houses eight or nine kilometres from the town of Kossovo, which was much bigger, with about 5,000 houses and numerous shops and restaurants; this was the administrative centre for the villages in our region.

Slonim was an bigger town about 40 kilometres to the north of Kossovo. The nearest big city was Pinsk, a big Polish city, which was much further away, about 90 kilo-metres to the south-east of Kossovo. Between the two world wars, this whole region, including towns like Slonim, Kossovo and Pinsk, were part of Poland. The Poles did not help us very much, but the Russians were much more supportive and gave us opportunities; or so it seemed at first.

When I was growing up, this region of the Belarus was traditional subsistence farming

country, with 90 percent of the population growing their own crops and raising livestock for a living. The land is flat and poorly drained but nevertheless the village economies are based on agriculture, which was not a lucrative business but at least provided a living. The main crops were potatoes, flax, and grains such as buckwheat, a staple food crop throughout much of the area. Potatoes were grown not only for human consumption but also as fodder for pigs. Flax seemed to grow well here and was used in the production of linen. This was another domestic industry; women were responsible for spinning the flax into thread and then weaving it into cloth on hand-operated wooden looms. The material was used as bed linen, towels, and tablecloths. Aprons and everyday working shirts were also made from linen. We would wash the linen in the stream and leave it to dry on the grass so that the sun would bleach the material.

I only committed one sin at school: my teacher one day gave me a book about black people (Africans) and I loved it so much that I didn't return it. Apart from this I was a well-behaved child and my father never had to hit me. Once he did prepare to smack me but my mother warned me and I hid under the table. My mother only smacked me a couple of times.

One of our teachers had a violin which he played while the students sang. He had a tuning fork, which was most unusual in those days. He was not good at disciplining the class and we often laughed at him. He could not control us. When a lady teacher took over from him, she settled us down and brought us under control.

In those days there was no fear of being robbed or mugged. We felt we had total freedom and safety. The only risk was from the wolves. They used to steal the lambs. I heard a lot about them and was curious to see one. When I finally came across one I didn't even recognise it, and instead of running away I moved towards it to get a better look.

We made our own towels and linen in those days, using a wooden loom. The women not only weaved towels and table cloths on their looms, they also decorated them with hand embroidery and fringes in traditional styles. We would also do the hand embroidery and decorative edging on the traditional costumes. Although I was always keen to do all the jobs around the farm, I hated weaving because Mum had specifically allocated the task to me. This was when I was about 16 years old. Mum couldn't understand why I didn't like weaving.

Dad was a Councillor. He did not really want to be a Councillor but the village voted him in. Dad kept a register of all the assets owned by people in the village. I would write information into the register and Dad would sign it. For example if someone wanted to sell a cow, they had to prove ownership. Police and all sorts of other officials would visit our place to inspect the register.

Many beggars wandered from village to village and were required to leave their passports with the local Councillor. I looked after the passports for Dad. The beggars were billeted to different homes.

One day he bought a bicycle. He wanted to ride it the eight kilometres to Council meetings. My brother had to spend a long time teaching him how to ride it. But I grabbed the bike one day, hopped onto it and rode off first try. We never saw cars in those days.

Manya (L) and friend © Nick Szwed

Manya (front left) and friends © Nick Szwed

When Olga was 17½ years old, she announced that she wanted to get married. Everyone tried to talk her out of it, her parents, teachers, relatives, the whole extended family and friends as well. She refused to listen and went against everyone's advice. She was very strong headed and ended up marrying her man. Life was most troubled for everyone after that. Everyone had known that he and his family had always been troublesome.

I also wanted to get married early to a fellow called Klin. I thought he was the only one in the world; I really loved him. But dad said I had no right to do what his other daughter had done. I was tormented … should I listen to dad or to my beau? Everyone liked him but dad would not agree because of the experience with his elder daughter.

Klin suggested that we elope. It still brings me to tears to think about it. I loved Klin and I loved my father. What was I to do? I did not have the courage to do as my sister had done. Dad did not like Klin because he was too poor. But I worshipped my father and could not go against him, even though I loved Klin … In the end I followed my father's wishes.

Later I realised I was stupid to have listened to my father – he was wrong. I told my sister that no matter how long I lived I would never have another man like Klin; and I never did. Now I live on my own in Australia and Klin still lives in Russia.

My sister tried to talk me into going with another fellow called Michael, who was very well off. Everyone from both sides tried to match me up with Michael. But I said I would rather drown myself before I would marry him.

There was an army officer called Commander Volkova Vladimir, whom dad liked because he had position. My mother did not want me marry him because she didn't want me to move to the Ukraine where he lived.

In 1939 my Uncle Victor (dad's brother) arrived unannounced. He brought me a doll as he had forgotten my age. He warned me to keep away from army people as they will have a fling and then leave you stranded.

I introduced Volkova to my uncle. That night my Uncle spoke with him at great length and checked him out thoroughly. The next morning my uncle told me that he was a wonderful guy and I couldn't do better; he was honest, open, and talked about his family – he was a really good person. I was still undecided.

Then there was Sheroza who was a teacher. Dad liked him. He was handsome and he was interested in me. He told me he could have chosen a teacher for a wife but he wanted me. But I didn't love him. He was nice enough and educated but I did not love him. He joined the army when I went to Germany.

I think I made a mistake, I should have grabbed him. He was a true, honest person. Life would have been good with him.

Three fine men and I missed them all. Bad luck and good luck.

My mother began putting together a dowry for me. When the Germans came in 1942 I feared that they would take away my dowry, but instead, they took me away. That was the most fortunate event of my life. If they had taken the dowry as I expected (instead of me) I would never have come to Australia.

I didn't take the dowry with me when I left home for Germany because I knew I would not need it.

The Russian Takeover

Ruled at different ages from Lithuania and Poland, the western frontier of Belarus became 'Polonised' through land ownership. It suffered in the wars between Poland and Russia, and also in the wars between Germany and Russia. Belarus came under Russian rule when Poland was partitioned in the 1800s, but after WW1 Western Belarus became part of Poland again. It was then taken over by the USSR late in 1939 in a secret agreement with Germany.

In September 1939 the Red Army marched into Belarus as they did into other parts of eastern Poland. When the Russians took over it came as a total surprise to the villagers.

When the Russians were heading west along the main road, everyone came out to watch them. Tables were set up and food was given to the soldiers. We had never seen such tanks. The soldiers told us we were now liberated and we were now all equal.

A few of us young ones followed the tanks to Kossovo. I spent the night at my brother's place. In the morning there were groups of people everywhere. The soldiers were saying "You don't have to pay taxes anymore, the land is all yours and you will all be wealthy". I was about 16 but I could not believe what they said. I reported all I had seen and heard to dad and he said that we would wait and see if the soldiers would prove to be correct.

In our village, the Soviets took over the Polish landowner's property and divided it into communes. The landlord and his family were sent back to Poland.

When the landowner's property was taken over, everyone went into their house and took away their belongings. My father would not do that. He said he didn't want to be party to that sort of behaviour. I was curious to have a look. Dad said, "OK, but just look." I asked if I could take a plant. He said No! He said I was not even to take away a blade of straw in my shoes. I did take some Swedish cheese, which was a luxury, as I just could not resist it. Dad said it was alright when I showed him.

One Russian commander warned us "You complained about the tough life under the Poles, but you were fortunate and well off. Just you wait and see what it will be like under communism".

Soon they started to recruit youth to work in the coal mines. I wanted to go, to see the world. A neighbour who bought milk off us was staggered that I would want to work in the mines. He said; "Don't tell anyone I spoke to you like this, but you have a wonderful life here, whereas you could perish in the coal mines. Don't go." I took his advice, he saved me as I was determined to go against my parents' wishes.

The Soviets were very greedy, they took half of everything. The Soviets took all cows in excess of two per household. Prior to the coming of the Soviets we had all sorts of shops and supplies in the town. Under the Soviets everything disappeared. People had to queue up from midnight in winter for clothing that was expected to arrive for sale the next day.

Uncle Victor was thought lost after the First World War. But twenty years later, in 1939, after Stalin took over that part of the country from the Poles, a letter was received from Uncle Victor together with a photo. We were so happy. Victor lived in Moscow. He had married three times: his first wife died, he divorced the second, and remained with the third. He had one daughter, Lucia. He could not write previously because he had been in Moscow and could not admit his "Polish" past existence in the Polish territories. Victor couldn't get promotions in Moscow because of his Polish name.

Uncle Victor arrived in December 1939 by train and then sleigh without any warning. It was a very happy moment and he was treated as a hero. He was a high army official. He collected letters from home to certify that he was Byelorussian. These letters were later accepted and he was promoted.

My uncle from Moscow asked if we liked communism. There was a shortage of salt at the time and my mother said how could they like communism when they could not get any supplies, not even salt. He exclaimed: "But we send it!" Next morning he went to the distribution centre and used his authority to get the supplies of salt moving.

Then the Vodka supplies arrived – there were no shortages of supplies of Vodka. It was available at a cheap price and was clearly being used to "keep the peasants happy".

At that time there was a young man in the village called Pavel who fancied me. He had heard a lot about me and my family. He came around one day and warned me not to attend church because the Soviets had held a meeting and announced that any young ladies who attended church would be forbidden to go out to dances and parties and the like.

I told my parents and couldn't make up my mind what to do. My father advised me to pray at home because those people would just harass me and continue to make trouble for me. This knowledge just made me more determined and I decided that I would defy the Soviets and go to church.

I went off to tell my girlfriends Volya, Natasha, Luba, and others who all agreed to join me. We then all set off for the evening service; the church was three kilometers away. As we walked along the path at dusk we noticed someone ahead. It was an old lady who warned us that there was a tall man covered in a sheet ahead who would try to frighten us. We all joined arms and marched ahead and defied him. On another occasion, there were soldiers waiting outside the church and they asked if we would pray for them. We were totally surprised that soldiers could believe in the church.

Another time we were directed by a Soviet leader to cut hay on a Sunday, which was against church rules. That man's baby died one Sunday and many villagers saw it as divine retribution for working against the church.

I was highly regarded (even by the Soviets) for the strength of my convictions. I was asked to form and lead a young communist's group for the village. I felt honoured by the request but I was required to sign a statement that I no longer believed in God. If I did not cooperate there was a threat that I would be sent to Siberia.

All this just served to strengthen my conviction about God.

When Uncle Victor returned I asked him if I should give in to the pressure. He advised me that they could not force me to follow their plan. Uncle Victor believed in God, but often denied it to survive. Uncle Victor's presence was enough to stop the Soviets bothering me any further.

But when it came to a confrontation with the German army, the Soviets didn't stay to defend these newly-claimed territories. When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Red Army abandoned the area.

The Soviets began to retreat as the Germans approached. Hitler had double-crossed the Soviets. Though he had signed a peace treaty with them, as the Russians dismantled their armour, the Germans built theirs up. And then they attacked. The Russians were caught off guard and had to run for cover. There were dead soldiers everywhere. We helped protect some of the soldiers by hiding them in our village but it was dangerous to do this.

When a few of us women went to collect salt, we found dead Russian soldiers lining the ditches along the side of the road.

As the Germans moved in there were no welcoming parties as with the Russians. We just secretly observed them out of curiosity.

The partisans hid in the forest. At night they would pass through our village to attack the Germans. During the day the Germans would pass through our village seeking the partisans. This went on for many, many days. One day I witnessed an exchange of gunfire between the partisans and the Germans in a field nearby. Each night I prayed to God that I would live to see the next day.

At the time there were more than 20,000 Jews living in the nearby town of Slonim. Many of them were refugees from other parts of Poland, which had been under German occupation for a longer time. When the Germans occupied Slonim in June 1941, the local population experienced the brutality of war as the Jews within the surrounding region were executed. A ghetto was established in Slonim and the Jewish population from neighbouring towns were concentrated there. Where they could, families fled to other parts of the country where they believed that conditions were better, and many that could fled the country to places like America.

The Jewish underground was active in the ghetto and established links with the partisans hiding in the forests. But by the end of 1942 many thousands of Jews had been killed and only a few hundred succeeded in fleeing the ghetto for the safety of the forest. Guerilla warfare by the partisans continued against the Germans for the duration of the war. By the end of the war in 1945 some two million of the Belarus population had lost their lives.

Off to Germany

In 1942 after the Germans had established their control over the area they wanted to take me and other young villagers off to work in Germany. They sent cards to each family saying that the young ones had to go to Germany. My father wanted my brother to go in my place, but he did not want to go.

At the time I was engaged to the village teacher. He spoke with the Germans and Mum bribed them with bacon and ham. They allowed me to stay, but that didn't last long. My brother was taken later that year.

In 1943, a card arrived for me to go off to Germany; I was needed to dig trenches. We were told to meet in Kossovo. I then considered running away to join the partisans. That last night I did not sleep but stayed up all night worrying. Should I run off into the forest? I was actually in two minds: on the one hand, I was excited about the idea of travelling out into the world, and on the other hand, I wanted to stay with my parents. If I joined the partisans my parents could be punished. I decided to ignore the card and see what happened.

The next day the Germans came around checking on stragglers. We received warnings. Some of the neighbours claimed that they were killing those who would not obey the order. We all panicked when we heard this and I quickly got a little bag together with a few items of clothing. All the women were crying. My father immediately grabbed a horse and took me the 8 kilometres to Kossovo where I was to report.

Manya (front left) and friends © Nick Szwed

As we left, the mothers of other girls asked me to look after their daughters. They told their daughters to follow my example and to heed my advice.

Alas, it was their misfortune later not to follow me to Australia but instead choosing to return home, a decision they were to regret, some of them admitting this openly to me on my return visit to the village in 1977.

The Germans put us in trucks and took us off to another town on the railway line. Then we were taken by train to Warsaw and changed trains for Germany. We were now under armed guard. From Warsaw the train took us to Wuppertal, Germany.

In Germany

I was fortunate to land in a factory where the owner–manager was reasonable and looked after the workers. It was in Wuppertal that I met Mihail Szwed a fellow country man from a village about 100km to the north of my village.

Initially we were treated reasonably well, the main meals consisted of potatoes, spinach, margarine, and a small piece of bread. But our luck did not last. One day the owner's wife burnt her leg and had to spend some time in hospital.

Thereupon the factory owner took up with her sister and departed. This was most disappointing for the foreign workers because the new manager starved them by feeding them just flour and water.

One of the German ladies working in the factory helped us by sneaking in extra food for us. Food was extremely precious at that time, and she was taking a big risk. Though her son was fighting in the war she was against the war, but what could she do? I always remember and appreciate that woman's courage in getting us the extra food. That is why I still consider food to be so important.

Off to Australia

After the allies took over control of Germany, my friends and I were put into refugee camps for displaced persons. It was here that I happened to meet my future husband, Michail (Michael) Szwed. He was a year older than myself and he was also from Belarus. Though he was not from my village, we shared a common history.

Michael and I fell in love and married in Wuppertal. A year later our first daughter Katya (Ekaterina) was born.

Manya, Mihail & Katya, Germany 1948 © N Szwed

Michail had been taken from a farm and brought to Germany to work in a factory, which was a foreign environment for him. The work was hard and pay was very small, everyone was practically starving. Michail found the conditions very difficult to cope with and he became very stressed out. He took up smoking. The doctor told him the smoking wasn't doing him any good so he started drinking.

One day he decided to leave. He had to change his name to avoid being tracked down and forced to return, so he called himself Schinkevich and found a more tolerable job in another factory. After the war he changed his name back to Szwed.

Hessen and the lands to the south and south-east were administered by the Americans, who came to the area Hessen about 1945.

Maria's first child Katherine

The allies offered all foreigners who had been forcibly brought to Germany a choice of destination. They could return home or go to another country. Most of my friends returned home but Michail and I did not want to return to the old life, having seen a little of what the world had to offer. We decided to follow others to South America (Paraguay - Uruguay) because others went there and Michail had half-siblings there.

Michal desperately wanted to avoid going back to Russia. However, I fell pregnant before we were due to leave.

In 1949 when I was pregnant with Nick, Mrs Kukiel wanted to get her own baby aborted and tried to talk me into doing the same. Our friends encouraged both of us to do it because of the difficult circumstances of the war and dislocation. They said it made things more difficult and risky to have children to look after in this situation. Finally we both resolved to do it. However, that night my mother came to me in my dreams and told me not to go ahead with it. In the morning I found that Mrs Kukiel had also changed her mind.

I was four months pregnant when Michail and I went to confirm our passage to South America and have our passports checked prior to us travelling. I was told I could not travel in my condition as pregnant women were not allowed to travel on ships. Our places were cancelled. Michail became very angry at this and abused me for not going ahead with the abortion. Michail was most upset because this meant that we would not be able to travel with our friends.

We had a major argument over this. I offered to divorce Michail and give him back his freedom. He did not take up this offer.

After Nick was born Michal and I changed our plans about migrating to South America. We had been hearing about a new country called Australia, which sounded even better than South America. Eight months later we received permission to travel to Australia.

We left Germany by train in late 1949. Nick had his first birthday on the train journey between Germany and Italy. When we arrived in Italy there was no fresh milk available, just greasy pasta. It didn't agree with his stomach and he got sick. I was worried that he wouldn't be allowed on the ship and prayed to God to permit it. For some reason they allowed us on board. From Italy we boarded a ship for Australia. Our friends couldn't believe that we had gotten through. The ship was called the Princess Helena [Hellenic Prince]. Both the baby and I were very ill on the journey. I became very sick as soon as I felt the ship's motion on the open sea. Nick was particularly sick and I prayed to God that he would not end up being buried at sea and eaten by the sharks.

Australia

When we arrived in Australia we were first taken to Bonegilla. Soon afterwards I remember waking in the night and worrying that the Japanese would take over the country. I prayed to God not to let the Japanese into Australia. We spent six weeks in the migrant camp in Bonegilla and one year in Mildura at a camp near the airport.

Manya with Kathy and Nick © Nick Szwed

In 1955, I sent my first letter back home from Australia. Even though I had sent letters home from Germany, I was too afraid to send them from Australia in those first years because it was rumoured that if the authorities discovered that I had "defected" my family could be sent to Siberia.

In the first letter, I asked my sister to contact my husband's family and to obtain the addresses of his siblings Mikolay and Nina.

We were living in Beaver Street, St Albans, when I received my first letter from my family. I was home alone when it arrived and I cried loudly. Shortly after this I developed an urge to smoke. I sent my daughter Kathy up the street to get a half-packet of cigarettes. Michail said it was okay with him if I really wanted to take it up. My friends couldn't believe I would do such a thing. I was the last person they expected to see smoking.

The family home in Beaver Street St Albans

Maria with Michael, Kathy, Nick, Luba & Victor

The backyard was a vegetable garden.

Szwed family circa 1960s © Nick Szwed

When I read in the Bible one day that it was forbidden to smoke, especially for women, it struck a chord in my conscience and I struggled with it for a couple of years until I realised it was not for me to smoke and gave it away.

Szwed family circa 1970s © Nick Szwed

Visiting Belarus

In 1977 I returned to my home town for a visit with my daughter Luba. When I was sitting at the table with my sister Olga she started crying. Olga cried because when we were in Germany I had told her to come with me to a new country instead of going back home to Belarus. She wouldn't listen and now she regretted it. She said to the others: "Look where Manya is: a real lady living in luxury, and look at me! What hurts is that she implored me to follow her but I refused."

When I looked around I saw that our old home town had not progressed much at all. The Soviets had ruined everything; they were godless people. There were queues for food and a great deal of poverty. There were no made roads. There was only one general store, a bakery, and a greengrocer.

On one occasion the taxi driver stopped his car and said to me that I was very lucky that he was an honest man as he could easily have robbed me, as many do.

The local school director wanted my daughter Luba[1] to stay behind and marry him.

When I visited Uncle Peter, he said he was just hanging on to see me. He was 86 and his wife had died when he was 80. At 82 he had wanted to get another wife but his daughters wouldn't allow it. Shortly after we left he died.

Uncle Peter and his wife Hripa had seven children: Pavel, who was my age, had two sons and a daughter (I used to write to him); Volya (Olga); Sonia had children, was musical, and lived in Kossovo; Misha; Vera (Vatsevitshi); Manya, who lives in Minsk and has two sons, both of whom have studied English; and Katya.

Uncle Peter was initially very religious, but when the Soviets took over he denied God and his family became Soviets. His faith then wavered and he was unsure. He was keen to see what I would say when I visited in 1977. He asked what the truth was. Was there really a God? I said "Uncle, just believe it". He said "Now no one will turn my mind again. Now I'm ready to go to God."

Uncle Peter was such an honest man. But when the Soviets arrived they set him up. They told him where there was electrical wiring lying around just for the taking. That night the police came for him and nearly took him to court for stealing. After that he vowed not to trust anyone. His motto became "Trust only in God".

When Uncle Peter died his daughters wanted him buried by a priest and his sons wanted music to be played. They did both. He was a very good man. He lived well and he was a leader of men.

Reflections

My sister and I are so different. I rang her recently [1996] and talked to her about the Olympics, the aeroplane crash etc. She asked me how I knew so much about world events. She said she did not take much of an interest in those sorts of things. I asked her if she had a television set. She replied that they had a very nice one but that she was not that interested in watching it.

When I was at the butcher's recently she asked me why I always appeared so happy. Everyone else came into her shop complaining about this and that. Why is it that you don't complain? I told her it was due to my belief in

[1] Luba's story is included in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 years 1956 – 2016.*

God. I told this to my son Nick who said it must be the source of my positive outlook on life. This reflection resulted from a discussion on our origins and how the Bible has not always got it right e.g. flat earth, centre of the Universe etc and now they refuse to acknowledge evolution. We are gradually discovering how God really built the Universe but the Church is slow to adapt.

I've always been curious, inquiring, and wanting to discover things and to know things. My philosophy of life is don't worry, accept your lot in life. Try to improve it but accept it as it is.

How I advised my children in love is that I chose not to interfere with their choice of partners. I didn't interfere with Nick's choice, or Kathy's – even though she had bad luck. Or Luba's. Although I must admit I warned Luba to be careful, but Luba would not listen.

Victor stayed at home with me after the others married and he seemed to have settled into that way of life. I told him he should not stay at home for my sake. I could look after myself. I told him he should find a partner. I told him that if he didn't find someone by the time he was 25 he could be a bachelor for life.

Maria's son Victor with wife Anna circa 2010

This talk seemed to stir Victor into action and he started to go out in the evenings. The first evening that I found myself on my own I found a bit frightening. I locked all doors and windows and slept poorly. But I soon became accustomed to it. A few years later Victor married at the age of 25.

There was nothing romantic about the hardships of rural life in Belarus. Working on a small farm was definitely hard work. In the winter time everything was frozen and you lived off what you had been able to grow and store in the summertime. If you didn't grow enough to store for the wintertime you could end up starving. This was a problem when the Russians took away the extra livestock, because families could no longer produce surplus food to be sold off at the village markets for cash to buy their other necessities. The mud was terrible and walking around barefooted along the slippery mud paths and roads was not an easy task.

Children these days probably cannot comprehend our village lifestyle in Belarus where I was born. It really was just a step away from the history of peasant farmers scratching a living. To my grandchildren the world I grew up in must seem like the dark ages. And if I look back in some nostalgia from time to time it is because of memories of my youth and family that still tug at the heartstrings.

Manya Szwed, as told to Nicholas Szwed 1998.

Victor, Luba, Nick & Kathy circa 2005 © N Szwed

Nick & wife Jutta with children, early 2000s © N Szwed

Manya with Luba and grandchildren © N Szwed

IRENE HEYMIG

I am Irene "Reni" Jutta Alma Stocker and was born on 2nd July 1925 in Stettin, Germany, to Hedwig Klara nee Matz Stocker and Johannes Konrad Stocker. Stettin is now part of Poland and its name is now Szczecin. My mother told me that when I was born I weighed twelve pounds and had difficulty emerging. The forceps had stretched my head and I looked half dead and had to be revived.

I was christened in the Schlosskirche in Stettin. Many years later I found a cutting about the church and sent it to Dad asking if this is where I was christened. He replied "Yes, next to the altar, our darling little Reni was blessed." Pastor's blessing was: "I will bless you and you will be a blessing unto others. May this come true." (My Dad said.)

My mother Hedwig Klara (nee Matz) Stocker was born on 21 February 1892 in Posen and died on 9 December 1982 in Kempten. She was of Catholic religion and became Lutheran upon marriage. Many years later when my sister Inge married into a strict Catholic family, my mother was living with her and returned to the Catholic faith.

My grandfather Ignatius Matz was a labourer at the railways. He married Anna Mallach who was a diabetic. They had 11 children, and my mother Hedwig was the second. When Anna would finish the weekly washing, Hedwig had to wash her feet and Anna went to bed to rest and Hedwig had to continue with the house chores. On payday Anna would send Hedwig to the pub to collect Ignatius's pay before he drank it all. The eldest child was a boy who was killed in the war. The second-last child, Liese, had a deformed leg when she was born. She could not work but became well known in the town as a fortune teller with cards. She became quite wealthy from this activity. Her best customers were Catholic priests. She had a child as the result of an encounter with one of them and she brought the child up on her own. The child got a good education and studied medicine and became a doctor in Warsaw.

My father Johannes Konrad Stocker was born on 18 November 1889 in Goessnitz and passed away on 5 December 1956 in Hamburg, Farmsen. His mother Alma was married and visiting her mother in Goessnitz when she met Johannes Stocker and fell in love with him. When she fell pregnant to Johannes she left her husband and stayed with her mother until she died a few years later of tuberculosis. Johannes Konrad was then brought up by his grandmother. His father went to Berlin and sent money to support them. As he prospered in the painting business in Berlin he married and brought his son from the grandmother to live with them. The stepmother was not very friendly and locked him up in a dark room for hours. When she was pregnant his father realised it wasn't going to work out and sent him back to the grandmother.

Johannes "Hans" Konrad was brought up by his grandmother and life was pretty tough. Sometimes there was not enough to eat. Sometimes he had to eat food that was infested by maggots. After school he had to sew buttons on cardboard to earn money. Though he was clever he did not go beyond the tenth year of school. He then joined the army and was stationed near Berlin and visited his father. His stepmother was much more friendly this time because he was a soldier and visiting with other soldiers. She had a daughter and appreciated the men visiting. She made him (and them) very welcome.

The war started in 1914. Hans was not on the front line but in the support offices. He most probably met Hedwig in around 1913 in Posnan and they developed a relationship. When she became pregnant, Hans arranged a miscarriage. In 1915 Hans married Hedwig. Their first child, a daughter, Inge, was born in 1918. (I was their second daughter, Irene, and was born in 1925.) When the war ended in 1918, Posnan became part of Poland. Hans was discharged from the army and they went to Stettin where he worked in the government offices.

On the back of 1918 photos of Hedwig with Inge there is a note addressed to Aunty Else from Hedwig: "We wish you a happy, healthy Christmas. You haven't heard from me for a long time. Enclosed is a picture of the two of us. Inge is a big one, a strong child and already clever. She smiles and talks all day. Hans is not

home yet and I have given up hope of celebrating Christmas with him. He is very well and in Baden. Many greetings to you dear Aunt, Uncle and Erna from your Hede Stocker."

Of Hedwig's siblings, brothers Leo, Paul and another left Posen and went to Germany. The rest stayed in Poland. Tante Agnes married a Pole, Bernhard, who manufactured fridges. When the communists took over during WW2 everything was nationalised and he lost his home and factory but they were allowed to live in the attic of their former house. From then they were poor and whenever Agnes visited siblings in West Germany she came with an empty suit-case and returned with many gifts.

When Johannes Karl Stocker died of diabetes in 1919 his big factory went to his three children. The youngest son died of tuberculosis and so the other two inherited. They sold the business and that gave Johannes Konrad money to buy the "Lankwitz" house in Berlin (which was subsequently bombed out completely in 1943 during the war).

Hedwig fell pregnant twice more and abortions were arranged. Hans and Hedwig were happy to have just one child. When Hedwig fell pregnant in late 1924 she jumped off the table to see if she could bring on a miscarriage. Then Hans made her a very hot bath and put some special tablets in it. But when all this failed they decided to proceed with the birth.

But Hans was to be disappointed because he had hoped for a boy. When I was born Hans expressed his disappointment making Hedwig cry and she took me to a back room out of his way.

One day when Hans came home from work he went into the back room to have a look at the new baby and began to express his disappointment again. Apparently I then smiled beautifully at him and won his heart. He said to Hedwig that the baby can come into their bedroom from then on.

Earliest Years

My earliest memory is of Stettin where we lived in a four-storey apartment house. Everyone loved me there and there was an old lady who lived on the fourth floor and I loved to visit her because she always gave me biscuits. I would go up and knock on her door just to get a biscuit.

When I was about three years old I stood up in my cot and looked over to my parents and saw them doing exercises. I asked if I could join them. They immediately parted and from then on my cot was in my sister's room.

I remember my mother would drop bread down from the balcony to the beggars. Some beggars didn't appreciate it and threw it away cursing because they wanted money.

When the gypsies came to a big park nearby we were not allowed to go anywhere near them. My mother told me they stole children. When my father returned from work they would offer to read his palm and asked for money.

In 1930 Dad got a promotion to Berlin and we moved there.

I had very long hair. Eventually it was cut and used as a resource in the "ammunitions factory". In return I got a very special "perm". My father did not know that this was going to happen and when he came home and saw it he was so angry he didn't talk to my mum for a week. He thought it made me look "cheap".

I used to welcome dad home very warmly while Inge was a bit aloof so my dad favoured me.

Irene (Reni) and Inge Stocker © J Szwed

Confirmation

I was confirmed on 30 March 1941 in the Dorfkirche Lankwitz Church in Berlin.

I have a photo taken in 1942 when I was in my last year of high school, in which I was looking at Joachim who was my first love. We met at school and were in the same class. He was from a rich family. One day he walked me home. It was raining and cold and I had no gloves, so he asked me to put my hands in his pocket. The next day Mum was very upset with me and gave me a severe dressing down. Joachim's mother had seen me with my hands in his pocket. Later on I asked Inge why I got into trouble and she explained that it meant I must have touched him on his body and that was not appropriate.

We couldn't finish our matriculation

because the boys had to head off to war. We girls had to work for national service for six months on a farm and then six in the munitions industry because there were no men to do this. Joachim was sent off to war and when he returned on leave we spent a day together and he was very affectionate but my upbringing prevented me from allowing too much intimacy. I was shy. Now I regret not having allowed myself to be more intimate with Joachim. (Said in 2015.)

By 1943 there were regular bombings. Every night the windows had to be completely blackened out so as not to show any lights. There was a warden who would walk around the streets at night to make sure no lights were showing. We had a bomb shelter in the cellar and we had beds down there and would be down there practically every night. Sometimes I wasn't there because I had a boyfriend and we sometimes went out. When the alarms went off you would look around to see where the bombs were coming from. There were bunkers in various places but mostly we were in our own cellar.

Irene and National Service Colleagues © J Szwed

I did my National Service in 1943/44 which was for one year, with six months on a farm and six months in a munitions factory. I did six months on a farm in East Prussia where we had to move every three weeks to a new farm. I spent weeks on my knees digging out potatoes and my knees were nearly bleeding. I had been mostly involved in office work and when I was told to milk a cow I didn't know what to do. We then were sent to Berlin for six months to work in the munitions factory.

I was chosen to work in the office because I had higher education and could do better shorthand than the other girls who then worked in the factory. The place where we were was bombed out so we were sent to another place in Czechoslovakia which was under German control. That was interesting because there were French prisoners there – very nice men – so we had quite a few love affairs going on.

My father was a government advisor with a high position but he was too old to be called up. When the war was lost he was punished because he had been a Nazi party member. He had to relearn a trade as punishment. He became a brick layer and laid bricks for two years. Then he was allowed to return to his clerical skills. His colleagues loved him because he was educated and he would do their paper work. In return they did other work for him. He eventually became their union representative.

Irene and National Service colleagues © J Szwed

During the war our house was destroyed. My mother had to crawl through a small window to get out of the rubble. There was a wine cellar dug under the lawn.

There was a friend who lost her husband and fell in love with her neighbour's husband but he didn't want her. So she committed suicide. Her villa was left behind and mum and dad stayed in her house. (The man in the affair was taken prisoner by the Russians in 1948.)

Dad was an officer when the war ended. The officers had to go to Hamburg or Munich. He arranged papers for mum to get out of Berlin but she didn't make it out. She got stuck there.

Before the Russians came to Berlin I was with Inge and we moved to Hannover. Mum was by herself at the house. Mum could talk Polish. When the Russians came she said something in Polish to a soldier on a horse and he was so pleased that he jumped off and hugged her and was kind to her. He was thinking of his own mother and happy to see another "countrywoman''.

In Hannover we were treated at the end of the week with a cigarette from the English occupation force. That's how we started smoking.

At the end of the war everyone was tired and busy looking for work and accommodation. Hitler was forgotten. That was finished. I moved with my sister to Hannover. My mother and my father went to live in an aunt's house. My parents and my sister stayed in Germany but I left.

Irene meets Mathias

I met my future husband Mathias at the end of 1945 when most of the young men had perished in the war. I met him in the office where I worked.

He came regularly from Wilhelmshaven to get permits to buy rubber for his factory where he was manufacturing bicycle tyres. He employed around 100 people and the factory worked in

three shifts.

I got to know him in the office and one day he invited me for a meal in the local pub. This became a regular date when he came into town. We became quite intimate. I fell in love with him. He said I looked like a scarecrow and then provided me with clothing and other luxuries. During the war an aunt sewed me a coat from blankets. When Matthew saw it he said I looked awful. When I told my dad he said let Mathias get you a coat.

Mathias "Matthew" was separated from his first wife with whom he had three children: Gisela, Elvira and Gunther. Matthew was still supporting them financially.

After his divorce came through I went to my dad and told him I wanted to marry Mathias. My father advised me not to do it because he was 17 years older (I was 22 and he was 39) and divorced with three children and paying maintenance. Then I went to mum and told her and said dad did not want me to marry him. She agreed with dad. She also said that "by-the-way he is a burnt out oven".

Mathias travelled with his work to France. When he was called up for military duty he tried to avoid being enlisted. Eventually they caught up with him and initially he worked as a mechanical engineer on submarines in France. Then he was posted to Czechoslovakia. When the Germans began to lose the war he joined a group of partisans to avoid the Russians and make their way back to the western part of Germany. After the war ended he began the rubber factory.

Irene Stocker and Mathias Heymig © J Szwed

Mathias and I married in Hannover on 8 September 1948. At the time of the marriage I lived at 10 Brunnenstrasse in Hannover and Mathias at 96 Hauptstrasse in Hochemmerich which is now Rheinhausen. The witnesses were the Official Hans Stocker (of 12 President Krahn St Hamburg-Altona) and Manager Herbert Garn (of 33 Diekstahlstrasse Oldenburg).

Mathias was born on 7 August 1908 in Bergheim, now Rheinhausen in County Moers. He was a mechanical engineer and was part owner of a rubber factory.

When we married we moved into two rooms adjacent to the office and slept on two corner couches, but we had everything that we needed. Mathias had a worker come in every day to clean the two rooms. When I became pregnant the lady also did the cooking.

I visited my parents in Hamburg from time to time. One day they said Mathias could buy you a better coat. When I told Matthew he took me off to Hamburg to the most expensive shop for furs (Alsterhoefe) and bought me the most expensive very fashionable calf-length fur coat. Matthew really looked after me. I also had a very fashionable expensive black stole. At one time he took me to Leipzig to buy some very expensive jewellery.

Mathias's father was Peter Heymig, born in Aachen on 21 August 1884, an upper-level manager at a smelting company, of New Apostolic religion, living in Völkingen. His mother was Josephine (nee Engels) Heymig of Völklingen, of New Apostolic religion, born in Aachen on 18 November 1885. Peter and Josephine were married on the 1 May 1905 in Aachen.

Jutta Arrives

I got pregnant and the baby started to arrive. Matthew was upset because he had to pay for the hospital upfront. Then I had to stay longer because I got a fever. When the baby was born the nurses tried to contact Matthew but he was asleep and no one answered. I was surprised and disappointed at the lack of interest. I thought spouses and parents were so excited that they couldn't be kept away. My daughter was born on 7 October 1949 and we called her Jutta-Inge.

Irene, Jutta and Mathias Heymig © J Szwed

In about 1951/52 Matthew showed me a newspaper with advertisements from several big rubber manufacturers (including Dunlop, Phoenix, and Continental) with prices much lower than he could match. So this was the end of the business and he became bankrupt. The court found that it was not through any fault of his. At this stage we were living in three rooms in a hotel.

A friend of Matthew's in Wilhelmshaven offered him a room where he could press the rubber pads for typewriter feet. I cut the rubber feet out while Jutta sat at my feet playing. Matthew took one big order to a big typewriter company and a week later the feet were rejected as unsatisfactory, so he lost their contract.

That's when he decided to leave Germany. He looked at Canada and Australia. Australia was more welcoming so that's where we headed. If you agreed to work for two years at the government's direction you had free passage, so we were off. My parents were horrified. They wanted me and Jutta to stay with them in Hamburg. Matthew was still paying maintenance on his first family and from time to time his children visited to collect some pocket-money.

Life in Australia

I was the only one of the family who migrated to Australia. My sister and my parents all stayed behind and my father didn't want me to leave. He said it was dangerous and my husband was twenty years older than me and I had a young child. My husband wanted to go and at first I said no, but later I said I had married him so I agreed to go with him.

We tried for Canada but Australia was open for two years and it didn't cost any penny, so we went to Australia on a migrant ship. It was fantastic. The people who came with us were from East Germany and everywhere. We made many friends on that ship.

We left from Bremerhaven, Germany, for Melbourne, Australia, in June 1954 on the SS Skaubryn with a boatload of displaced persons.[1] I was 29 when we came and my daughter Jutta was three-and-a-half.

We came into Port Melbourne and the Immigration Department put me and Jutta on the train straight into Bonegilla and Matthew stayed in Melbourne to look for work. After a few days he found accommodation in the migrant hostel in Maribyrnong.

Jutta liked Bonegilla because they had a chocolate truck that came every morning. They rang a bell and all the children raced out to get a hot chocolate. The Nissen huts were so cold that we would heat stones in front of the fire and wrap them up and put them in the bed. We soon joined Matthew in Maribyrnong and we weren't allowed to have heaters in our room, but Matthew bought a little electric radiator and we did toast on that a few times, which was forbidden. Whenever anyone came into our unit that thing disappeared behind the bed.

One day a man shot his wife in the laundry while she was doing the washing.

They had great Christmas parties. The Lutherans would come from the church in Footscray to pick up the children for lessons and give them little religious pictures as presents. At Christmas they took the children to the beach and gave them Christmas stockings. That was the same pastor who later started the St Albans Lutheran Church.

In Germany we had a rubber factory making bicycle tyres which employed 100 men but we went bankrupt. On arriving in Melbourne, Matthew sent letters to Beaurepaires and Dunlop saying he was an expert in the manufacture of rubber and made an appointment with Dunlop about employment as a rubber specialist. They were polite in the interview and asked him if he had his papers. When he said he didn't have them they said they could not employ him in a higher position without formal qualifications recognised by Australia, so he should go back to university. Matthew told them to get f****d and I hope that he said it loud enough for them to hear him.

Matthew then contacted the place where he did his apprenticeship in Strasburg and they sent him a copy of his papers, which gave him the qualifications of a boilermaker. He then got a job at the ordinance factory in Maribyrnong as a boilermaker.

Heymig family at Maribyrnong Hostel © J Szwed

Party time at Maribyrnong Hostel © J Szwed

[1] Mathias Heymig born August 1908; Irene (nee Stocker) born July 1925; Jutta born October 1949 - German - travelled per ship Skaubryn departing in 1954. Arrived Melbourne 1 August 1954.

Irene, Jutta and Matthew Heymig © Jutta Szwed

Matthew Heymig digging garden © Jutta Szwed

Heymig home in Clarke Avenue © Jutta Szwed

Heymig home in Clarke Avenue © Jutta Szwed

I started working at the ammunitions factory in Footscray and Mathew started at the ordinance factory in Maribyrnong. We were living at the migrant camp in Maribyrnong for two years. One lunch time there came a very busy looking real estate agent from Footscray. I've forgotten his name. He said go and buy land now because Melbourne is developing so fast that if you wait any longer you will not get any land. Go to St Albans was what he said.

Because of that silly estate agent we came to St Albans in 1956. We went from Footscray to St Albans station and walked down a very very long road to St Albans East and there was nothing there, not even the high school. At the end of St Albans East was Manfred Avenue and a small part-house. It was small, not even a half-house, with a kitchen and our bedroom and Jutta had her own bedroom. Because the agent said there was a high demand for land and we could miss out if we didn't buy straight away, and we believed him, so we all bought.

I worked downstairs in the storeroom at the munitions factory. One day one of the gentlemen from the office came down, stood next to my typewriter, and said Irene you are a waste here. They saw all my papers when I came here and could see I had two years of commercial school and I could write shorthand, which is something my father always tested me on. I was perfect as a secretary. Lovely Mr Martin said I'll bring you up to the typing centre.

So I started in the typing centre and they found me interesting because at that time there were not so many Germans there. The assistant manager called me into his office and said Irene you are very good. I will get you a special typewriter and I want you to write down where our munitions are deposited all over Australia.

I got a special typewriter and big papers and was recording where all these munitions were located all over Australia. A fortnight later he called me into his office and said Irene I am so sorry but I didn't realise you were not a naturalized British subject and therefore you are not allowed to type documents about munitions. I'm sorry but you can't do that work any more because it is highly confidential. Alright. They got a young girl, 20 years old, and I sat beside her and told her what to type. Mr Martin looked at me and smiled.

You know St Albans. The old toilet was outside for years and years. We had German neighbours, the Kopmanns. We met them on the ship coming to Australia and became friends though he was a difficult man. He had a lovely wife Margarete and their daughter was Sylvia. We had a fridge and they had a washing machine, and we shared them. They kept food in our fridge and we used their washing machine. Sometimes the clothes wringer would get stuck and we had to hit it with a stick to get it going again.

When we had grassfires along the meadows we all rushed out with sacks and were following the fire beating out the flames. When it was raining there were big puddles on the street. There was one young man who was driving the

baker's cart and he had the fun of his life by deliberately going through the big puddle near where the children were playing and splashed them all. I went after him. He was on the road and I chased him across the paddock and told him off. He never did it again.

One day Jutta told me her teacher would smack the children on the hand for each spelling mistake they made, which was a terrible thing to do. I went to the school and talked to him and told him to stop doing that, also that he should learn the proper way of pronouncing her name.

I worked at the factory five days a week and I always walked to the station. There was no bus in St Albans. At Footscray I got the tram to the ammunitions factory. I was working in the office and our hours were from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. I loved the people who were working there and I think they loved me too. They were very good. I am still in touch with the woman who was in charge of the typing centre, but they are all dying away.

For our main shopping we went to East Esplanade next to the railway station. There was a supermarket there and later in Alfrieda Street there was a German butcher – Heyne[1] was his name – and they were friends of ours. Everything was good, but I am a person who is always seeing the good part. Mr and Mrs Unger had the newspaper shop in Main Road East and we also went there.

Later there was a general shop opposite the high school and a lot of Germans went there.[2] Then they built a group of shops on Main Road East closer to home. They included a greengrocer who had a lot of continental stuff, and Car[3] the butcher was there and there was a continental delicatessen in the middle and we went there a lot.

My husband finished at the ordinance factory and got a job at the railways. He finished there when he retired at 65 years. He was born in 1908 and retired in the 1970s. They had made him a leading hand at the ammunitions factory and he was also representing the union. He stood up for the rights of the workers and one day one of his workers was being told off by a manager so Matthew punched the manager. They told Matthew to leave and that's when he got a job at the railways.

When we came to St Albans Jutta was about five years old and one of the neighbours looked after her before she went to school. The family was still asleep when we took Jutta there in the morning on our way to work and we always left her with a bottle of milk. I don't think Jutta was too happy being there but she was too young to be on her own. Later she made friends with Eva Walther[4] and would join them after school until we got home from work.

One of our concerns for Jutta going to school was about the snakes. The children would walk across the paddocks to school and we all were worried when snakes were around so we made her wear gumboots as better protection. Because the gumboots were hot in summer, Jutta would take them off and walk barefoot through the grass. Mr Walther became angry with Jutta for doing that because he said she was leading his daughter astray.

Sometimes we found snakes in the chicken shed. You would go to collect the eggs and see a snake in the nest on top of the eggs. Sometimes the rooster would be aggressive when you came for the eggs and you had to take the broom with you to keep him away. We had two ducks and my husband made a little pond for them by burying an old copper wash tub in the ground and filling it with water.

The bathroom was out in the back next to the shed and we would have a bath once a week. When she was young Jutta would share the bath with her friend Sylvia from next door. We would heat the water in a big boiler with a fire going and that was our bathwater.

There were quite a few Germans who settled in St Albans and formed a community and helped each other. They stuck together and there were several in our area. The Messigs were in Harmon Street.[5] The Tietjens were also in Harmon Street.[6] The Shwartz family were on the corner of Errington Road; they were from Hungary.[7] Elizabeth the daughter studied as a teacher and had a child but is now back in Germany living with a German man. The Schwabs were in Errington Road; they were

[1] Erwin and Johanna Heyne were living at 4 Conrad Street and their shop was at 54 Alfrieda Street. Erwin Heyne born July 1920; Hanna (nee Ripken) born August 1919; Paula born April 1941; Siegfried born August 1947 - German - travelled per Anna Salen in December 1954.

[2] Possibly the Vienna Delicatessen on the corner of Main Road East and Lester Avenue.

[3] J & E Car Butcher at 204 Main Road East. Ivan Car born December 1905; Elisabeth born October 1914; Ivan (John) born November 1934; Paula born June 1937; Elisabeta born May 1939; Alois born June 1941; Adolf born July 1942; Ingeborg born May 1944; Brigit born September 1947. Arrived September 1950.

[4] Living at 19 Harmon Crescent. Reinhard Walther born July 1913; Gertrud (nee Franke) born November 1913; Manfred born November 1939; Eva born July 1949 - travelled in 1955 under Australian German Assisted Passage Scheme.

[5] Heinz Messig born February 1927; Margot Marianne (nee Franz) born May 1930; Fred born August 1950; Gerd born February 1953 - travelled per Castel Felice in October 1954.

[6] Willy Tietjen born September 1915; Marga (nee Wulf) born December 1914; Frauke born July 1943 - travelled per ship Seven Seas departing in 1954 under Australian German Assisted Passage Scheme.

[7] Antal Schwartz born September 1920; Maria (nee Lamberger) born June 1921; Gizella born June 1921; Erzsebet born March 1950 - travelled in 1957 under Hungarian Refugee Assisted Scheme.

from Berlin with three children.[1] Mrs Schwab was a very nice person. They had a business selling German books, magazines and cultural objects.

There was also a Lesezirkel (reading circle) from Main Road East where a man with a van would deliver copies of German newspapers and magazines. It was like a mobile library and after a couple of weeks you exchanged your folder of magazines for another one.

Heymig family at home © J Szwed

Party time at the Heymig home © J Szwed

The German community knew each other and did a lot of socializing and so did we because Matthew was very outgoing. Saturday nights we used to have parties, sitting around, talking, drinking, dancing. Sunday afternoons we always had someone over, sometimes several families at a time. We did a lot of entertaining.

We met the Nicht family on the Skaubryn in 1954. They were Helmut and Gisela with two daughters Sylvia and Carola. They were fleeing East Germany because he was involved in some political affairs. They were broke and Helmut worked as a cleaner on the ship. Helmut got a job in a Sunshine factory and they would come to visit on Sunday afternoons. The Nichts had family in Ararat and visited them often and then decided to move there where they stayed for life. We often visited them in Ararat; many New Year's Eve and birthday parties, as well as trips to the Grampians. Jutta went to the movies with the girls.

We met Erich and Ilse Facklam on the Skaubryn too.[2] He got a good office job and she worked in a factory. They had one son Peter. They settled in Scott Avenue and would visit us on Sundays. Mrs Facklam became heavily involved with the Lutheran Church in Springvale. When she was diagnosed with breast cancer she refused treatment saying that it was God's will and a couple of years later she passed away. I lost contact with Eric who passed away. I wrote to Peter telling him I was at the Martin Luther Homes and he and wife came to visit.

The Redls were living on the other side in Elizabeth Street.[3] The Plechers were on the corner of Harmon Road.[4] They ended up owning many service stations around Melbourne. He was a big man who'd been a policeman in Germany.

The Lutheran Church was built in East Esplanade on the corner of Sylvester Crescent. Christmas for the Lutherans was mostly a private family occasion. They would attend church and go home for a family celebration. Pastor Seiler was the St Albans celebrant and he was the pastor in the city church for at least ten years; it's opposite St Patrick's Cathedral. There was another church close to Altona and they also worked from there. The Lutherans of St Albans used to meet at first in the old Anglican church in East Esplanade before they built their own church further down the road.

There was a man who used to come to St Albans with a big truck selling lots of continental goods that the Germans would buy. He usually arrived on a Saturday and everyone rushed out to see what he had. He used to bring special German sausages and produce. After a while the government said he wasn't allowed to do that for health reasons but maybe the local traders didn't like the competition. When he came there weren't many shops around, mostly people went to Selfs near the station.[5] They were a

[1] Fritz Albert Schwab born May 1922; Ingeburg (nee Wahl) born July 1924; Lorenz born April 1947; Katrin born August 1948 - travelled per Fairsea ship departing in 1954 under Australian German Assisted Passage Scheme.

[2] Erich Facklam born October 1925; Ilse (nee Schmidt) born November 1926; Peter born May 1951 - travelled per ship Skaubryn departing in 1954. Eric died in January 1991.

[3] Andreas Redl born June 1923; Emma Redl (nee Geissler) born April 1923; Elisabeth Redl born August 1949 - travelled per Anna Salen in April 1954.

[4] Karl Plecher born January 1913; Erna (nee Kleber) born March 1918; Heinz born November 1937; Ilse born July 1940; Jurgen born September 1942; Ursula born August 1947 - travelled per ship Johan van Oldenbarnevelt departing in 1955 under Australian German Assisted Passage Scheme.

[5] Selfs General Store, later Self Bros & Goddard, were in East Esplanade.

good store and had a petrol pump on the footpath.

Heymig family with guests © Jutta Szwed

Jutta, Irene and Matthew Heymig © Jutta Szwed

Heymigs with Neuebauers 1950s © Jutta Szwed

We got a little car, a little French Renault, which made shopping much easier because we didn't have to carry heavy bags of groceries. The car had some problems and sometimes Jutta and I would have to get out and push it up the hill. We had friends in Ararat and we would visit them but the car had trouble getting up the Pentland Hills. Matthew took the whole car apart when we were in Manfred Avenue. Unfortunately he couldn't put it all back together again and Mr Endress[1] from Auto Endress had to help him with that.

At the end of 1962 we went back to Germany for a couple of years and returned in 1965. My husband was a qualified engineer but could work here only as a boilermaker, so he went back to Germany to work as an engineer. He got a job as an engineer but it was a long distance from where we were living and he had to leave home at 4 o'clock every morning for a 6 o'clock start. He wasn't very impressed with that especially in the winter with the snow and ice. He calculated that he had been earning as much money in Australia as a boilermaker on over-time as he was now earning as an engineer in Germany, so we decided to come back to Australia. When we were in Hamburg I got a job with BP, so when we returned I started working with BP in Melbourne. I was lucky because people liked me.

Mathias passed away in August 1980 and we buried him at the Altona Memorial Park Floral Lawn. When my husband passed away people thought I would go back to Germany because my mother was there. I went for a visit but I didn't stay because I had my daughter here.

I was friendly and good looking so I never had any trouble making friends. There was one gentleman at BP, John Holden, who came to the typing centre and asked me to translate something. He started telling me about his life in the army and being taken prisoner in the Mediterranean and being a POW in Germany. He lost his wife and retired and I lost my husband and retired and then he contacted me and we became good friends. He became my boyfriend and we were together for many years. We travelled together on holidays to places like Queensland. Sometimes he would stay at my place and sometimes I would stay at his place and we were always together on week-ends. Every winter we went to Queensland. He had two sons who loved me. The oldest one still rings me every week to see how I am going.

When we first came to St Albans we

[1] Ernst and Annie Endress were German nationals who migrated in 1954 and settled in Merton Street. Their children were Ursula, Edeltraud, and Hans. Ernst was a motor mechanic and Hans also became a mechanic. Ernst died in May 1996 at Sunbury and Annie died in July 2012 at Woodend.

were in a little bungalow next door to the Kopmann family in Manfred Avenue. Then in 1959 we bought the house in Clarke Avenue that was built by Mr Milan Debevc. My father, Johannes Stocker, died in December 1956. We inherited a bit of money and we built two houses as investments. We lived in one and let the other one. When I was thinking of moving to Bulleen I sold the St Albans properties and bought the house in Bulleen because Jutta had married Nick and they had moved out there. That was in the 1980s. Now I am in the Martin Luther Retirement Village in Boronia at the foot of the Dandenongs. It's a beautiful place.

Jutta and Nick are still in Bulleen and have given me three beautiful granddaughters.

Irene Heymig, as told to Nicholas Szwed.

SYLVIA KOPMANN

Wilhelm, Margarete & Sylvia Kopmann © S Bluemel

My parents were Wilhelm August Heinrich Kopmann and Margarete Muenster, and I am Sylvia, born on 1 June 1946. We came to St Albans in 1954. I was eight years old and the only child. We came from Germany and migrated on the MS Skaubryn through the Suez Canal and it took us six weeks to get here.

For us children on the ship the journey was wonderful but for the parents it was terrible because they were so sick. We arrived at Station Pier late in November 1954 and were transported by train to the migrant hostel at Bonegilla. I can't remember how long we stayed at Bonegilla but the men were soon allocated jobs in different parts of Victoria.

My father was sent to work at the railways in Newport and that's why we ended up in the western suburbs. At first he was a labourer but then he became a clerk in the office because he was able to type. After we came down to Melbourne my mother went to work at Dunlop in Montague on the process line. A lot of the ladies went to work there.

Kopmann family at Bonegilla 1954 © Sylvia Bluemel

Voyage to Australia 1954 © Sylvia Bluemel

My father was always a skilled typist as far as I remember because in Germany he ran his own business and typing is something he did for the paperwork of record keeping. He was a miller. In the place we were living he had these milling machines milling grains of various sorts.

From Bonegilla we were sent to the Maribyrnong Hostel in those rounded Nissan army huts. Everyone settled into the work the government had given them and life progressed. When my parents had saved enough money we bought some land in St Albans and built a house.

Grade 3 Maribyrnong Primary 1954 © Sylvia Bluemel

That was probably in late 1955 and we stayed there until 1959. We were at 25 Manfred Avenue, next door to the Heymig family who had a bungalow. Jutta was the daughter and we've been friends ever since. Jutta and her parents came on the same ship as we did and that's when the friendship started. There were a lot of other people from that journey who ended up living around St Albans, so we formed a little clan. People wanted to settle close to others they could understand and relate to.

I don't know why my parents chose to settle in St Albans. I assume where to settle was something that was discussed by the people on the ship and in the migrant camps in Bonegilla and in Maribyrnong, because when people were moving to a new area they didn't want to be alone. In that sense the Germans were the same as the Italians and the Greeks in clustering together in certain areas. I suppose, too, that St Albans being close to the Maribyrnong hostel might have been a factor

When we moved into our house it was only half finished – I think they called that "lock up stage". It was made of weatherboard with a tiny walk-in hall, two bedrooms, the lounge room, the kitchen which was the hub of the house, and the laundry which was out the back. My father built on as he could afford it and my mother helped with what she could. One day she was on the ladder with a broom holding up a piece of cement sheet that dad was nailing under the eaves when the sheet slipped and hit her in the corner of the eye. She was lucky not to lose that eye. When we were building the

verandah at the front we threw all the building rubble into a heap at the front door and poured concrete over it to make our verandah base.

The power was not connected to the street when we came and the only heating in the house was a kerosene heater that was also used for cooking. There was a trick to getting the heater lit and keeping it lit. I remember the smell of the kerosene. Many years later when my husband and I were in Devon Meadows we looked after some plants for an old friend who had sold his nursery. Because we had an acre we brought all the plants to store at our place while he was integrating into a new property. There were a lot of indoor plants and we had a huge poly-house because my husband was madly into gardening. We got this kerosene heater and every night I would go down to light the heater to keep the plants warm. Every time I lit the heater the smell evoked those earlier memories of St Albans.

We had water connected to our block but that was just at the front of the property. You'd go out and get a bucket-load and bring that in. There was a bathroom but I don't remember much about it.

The little house was beautiful. It wasn't the basic bungalow that you saw around the district. My father built the house in that shape with the angled roof at the front because he tried to make it look as German-like as possible. It had the push-up windows. At the start everything was unpainted and the walls were unplastered. It was a lock up stage shell and not all the rooms had floors, only the ones we lived in. It was bare floorboards until they could afford lino. But it was lovely. We did have electricity after a while.

St Albans was lots and lots of paddocks with bungalows. People lived in those bungalows because they couldn't afford to build a whole house. They were made so that people could live and be safe in a part of the building and when money became available they built on the rest of the house. In those days that was quite good.

Willy Kopmann in St Albans East 1950s © S Bluemel

I actually adored living there because you formed friendships. The streets were unmade and there were lots of paddocks. Sometimes there would be grass fires and you would have to get the old Hessian bag and start whacking. It was a bit different to now. It was a good time to grow up because you were safe, not like now. We used to play outside all the time with the local kids. We had bikes but my bike was put together from many parts. My mum and dad used to take it on a Saturday and go up to St Albans and load the potatoes and their shopping onto it and push it home. One day the bike had had enough and broke in half. It was a home-made job with different parts welded together. It got fixed so I was back on my bike again.

Grade 4A St Albans Primary © Sylvia Bluemel

At first I went to the old St Albans West Primary School. It was a long walk going all that way. We used to go as a group and Jutta would go with me. There was safety in numbers and in those days you were safe. My parents left the house early to go to work, perhaps 5.30 or 6am, so it was up to us kids to do what needed to be done – feed the chooks, prepare the meal. We lived next to each and we looked after each other. If mum and dad came home and stuff wasn't done … watch out.

Grades 5&6 St Albans East Primary © Sylvia Bluemel

I started at the old primary school in 1955 and for a while we were bussed to Deer Park Primary because there was no room in St Albans. The Deer Park school was an old, solid brick building with the high ceilings and very cold. In the winter there was a fireplace in the corner. Next door there was a Catholic school and all we could see were the nuns' habits walking along. We were always interested to see

what was going on but we couldn't see over the wall. Because I was not a Catholic I didn't know what they did but believed they prayed all day. The school wall was very solid and rendered, like a typical convent school.

When the new St Albans East Primary School was built I started going there, and that would have been in 1956. I was in grades 4 and 5 because we had composite grades and they would grade you on how well you were learning. Language was never a problem with me because I learnt the language very quickly. I remember when we were at the Maribyrnong camp. Bonegilla had English lessons up to a point but not a lot. I went to Maribyrnong Primary School for a while when we were at the Maribyrnong camp. The kids there thought this was great because this girl doesn't understand any English, so they taught me all the bad words. You can imagine what I learnt and it wasn't funny – you thought you were speaking proper English but you weren't.

I don't think my story is any different from anyone else's because we went through the same experience, growing up in St Albans. I still have an attachment now. I remember the bazaars being held at the primary school and the pony rides.

St Albans East Primary fair 1957 © S Bluemel

My parents never went to the school. My father was very strict about my learning but he didn't want to be involved with the school itself. Though he did come to school to take photographs of the pony rides and things like that, he never went up to speak with the teachers about my educational progress. That was totally up to me. If my report card wasn't good, I was in trouble. He always made sure that homework was done, except he would teach me the German way in mathematics, for instance. The outcome would be the same but the method was different. The teacher used to say that I had cheated because you had to do it the English way not the German way. The same thing happened at the high school. There were things that I couldn't do and he would teach me the German way.

The main thing I remember is the sense of community in our neighbourhood. The kids got on really well and we looked after each other. The other thing was safety. You could take off all day and your parents didn't have to worry about you, which is totally different now. There was the freedom of being allowed to do what you wanted to do. You knew everybody, even up the street and up at the shops.

Going up to the railway station there was a little strip of shops about half-way up, after Errington Road. There was a milk bar and a baker there. I remember going up there with a girlfriend from down the road. She was a Ukrainian named Anna Kinatz[1]. She's passed away unfortunately. They lived on the corner where Manfred Avenue started. She and I became really good friends. Her mother used to send her up to the baker to get Vienna bread. One day we started pecking at the top of it and by the time we got back there was nothing left except the shell. In those days there were hardly any fences around because you just didn't do that. Her mum had a gaggle of geese. She would say "come in" when you came to their yard but the geese would chase you. The unmade roads had pot holes. They never had a car, so they had to walk everywhere just like I did, except for the bicycle.

You could sink a ship in the potholes. I remember the dunny man came to the outdoor toilets and one day the truck broke an axle going through one of those potholes and tipped over. We all stayed home from school that day. The milkman used to come in his horse and cart and we would get a ride with him sometimes. He would allow us to hop on his cart and we would go with him on his round until he headed back to St Albans.

St Albans East Primary 1957 © Sylvia Bluemel

[1] Herman and Maria Kinatz migrated in 1950/51 with children Jaroslaw, Anna, and Bohdan.

Kopmann family of Cowper Street © Sylvia Bluemel

I remember some time later there was another recent migrant – I think he was a German named Mr Schwab – who bought a van and started importing goods from Europe. There were all these Europeans living there and they wanted their own stuff. They didn't like the white bread, they wanted their brown rye bread. They also had the Continental Reading Circle. The Schwabs[1] had a place not far from us along Errington Road. They did the magazine run about once a fortnight. The magazines were old, they weren't new, but they must have been expensive to get. It was something to keep in touch with your old country. Schwab started the van with the goods and I suppose he saw an opening for something else because people would ask him if he had any German books. He started importing them and it took a long time for them to come from overseas, because they wouldn't have used air transport at the time. The magazine club was a good way to keep in contact with the world because the people read those magazines back home, particularly the Stern (Star) because that was more politically orientated. The old people used to love that one. I'm not sure if Schwab had Manchester on this van but sometimes they had beautiful tablecloths that he imported from Germany, but that might have been in the later years. As a child you weren't privy to those things that your mum and dad bought from the van. Schwab's van was a big one; it might have been an old Bedford that you could walk through. He sold anything that was non-perishable. In those days we only had the ice boxes so it was difficult to stock perishable goods. There was bread but that might have been baked locally because I know he had special breads. That rye bread was the be all and end all for them, because they didn't want white bread which my father always said it makes your teeth rot.

Three houses up from us there was a Hungarian family of Sandor Egyedi[2] and we made friends with their children too. She was English and he was Hungarian. She was a typical English rose with blonde hair and beautiful eyes; she was a gorgeous lady. They had about six babies.

We had friendly neighbours and my mum and dad grew vegetables in their garden and we passed them on, as you do. Everybody knew everyone and if you could help out you would. People had chickens so they would give you eggs and you'd give them vegetables. It was good trading. We had a washing machine and Jutta's mum and dad had a fridge but they only

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[1] Fritz and Ingeburg Schwab migrated from Berlin in 1954. Their children were Lorenz, Katrin and Olivia. Refer to stories about Ingeburg and Lorenz in St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years.

[2] Sandor Egyedi born April 1932, Hungarian, migrated 1951-53, living at 31 Manfred Avenue.

had an outside laundry. So we stored things in their fridge and Mrs Heymig used our washing machine. Mrs Heymig is a lovely person and still has a sharp memory. Sometimes mum made this bread-based broth. She would use the crusts of the rye bread and add raisins to make this thick, soup broth. One day a neighbour with a very heavy accent who was enjoying the dish complimented mum for her delicious "sick soup".

I remember the first time I saw a snake. There were no fences and as I was opening the laundry door I saw it just inside lying on the floor. That was the first time in my life that I saw a snake. I remember my dad telling me when we were going to come to Australia that Australia had snakes. I had never seen a snake except in picture. I had nightmares – everywhere you walked, everything you did was snakes. I was terrified.

I remember the walks down to the river to the swimming hole. Our parents didn't worry that we used to go off during the day and come back at night. I remember the bike rides and the houses gradually being built so that you couldn't see across the paddocks any more. At that stage we left just as things really started to develop. There was Jutta next door and an English family and the Egyedi family who lived in a bungalow too. I remember vividly the house across the paddock where there was an English family in a bungalow and they had lots of kids and a horse. The back of the bungalows were all cement sheets and there was nothing between you and outdoors except this thin cement sheet. One day the horse kicked the cement sheet and suddenly there was this great big hole in the bedroom wall. Can you imagine it? I think the kids were tethering the horse and it didn't want to be tethered.

I spent about a year at St Albans High School but I don't remember the teachers. While I liked high school there were a few issues. The first year you have to blend in. I got the uniform and that was a struggle because it was expensive. I was very proud of that uniform but I wasn't there really long enough to make any real memories. The people I went to high school with were pretty much the people from the primary school. Steve Kozlowski was two or three years above me. He was part of the group that I used to run with around the paddocks. He was from Cowper Avenue over the paddock and we still keep in contact.

Apart from the snakes, St Albans was good. We saw the changes over five years, but then we went back to Germany. My father decided that he'd enough and wanted to go back to Germany. I don't know for what reason and we didn't ask questions. That was in 1959. We went back on the MS Aurelia, which was an Italian ship that took us back all the way to Trieste. From there we took the train back to Berlin. My father decided he didn't want to stay in Berlin, and off we went again because what my father said went.

We went to a place called Drei Länder Ecke (Three Country Border) which is on the corner of France, Switzerland and Germany, the Black Forest, which is just across the road from Basel which is a town in Switzerland. He bought a customs house. Because they were living on the border, a lot of people that were working for the customs with the governments of Germany and Switzerland would live in those homes. Then they would move on and the houses became available for sale.

Father was always one of those people who absolutely wanted to have a property title in his hand. He didn't believe in having to pay things off and when he had to he wanted to be the owner. He bought this little house and it had three storeys. We lived on the bottom floor and the people who rented from us on the top floors. We lived there for a good eighteen months and then he got sick. The weather conditions are so different over there because of the cold. Because we were in the forest area we didn't have summer like we do here. He was prone to blood clots and had a blood clot that wandered, but in those days they didn't know about aspirin as a treatment. We always knew he had a heart problem that we didn't know what could be done about it. He had a really bad turn in hospital and we nearly lost our home. My mother had to go to work because he couldn't work. She went across the border to Basel and was working at the railway station in the kitchen as a kitchen hand. It was a long trek.

In the winter you were stomping through snow. For me to go to school used to take about an hour just to get through the snow to get to the station to take the train to get to school by 8 o'clock. In Europe they have longer lunch times at school but I couldn't go home in that hour so when I was got wet in the morning I was wet all day. You had to take a change of clothes with you. We always spoke German at home which is something that my father insisted and I thank him for it. When we went back to Germany it was good because I could speak German and didn't have to take English classes. That was the one plus of our return.

We stayed there about eighteen months. The doctor said to him if you want to stay alive you better pack your things and go back to Australia where the climate is better and with the condition you've got the blood would get thinner because of the warmer weather. So we packed up and away we went again.

We came back to Australia in 1960. We came back to St Albans but only for a very short time because we had nowhere else to go because our old house had been sold. We moved in with some friends of my mother whom she knew through work. They were in

Glendenning Street, the Maziarz family.[1] I think they were Czechoslovakian or Yugoslav. He was a very good-looking man and she was a beautiful lady; they had two sons if I remember rightly. We lived in the bungalow out the back, just for a short period of time until my parents could get established again. Father was lucky enough to get his old job back at the railways, so obviously they thought he was a good worker. Mother went back to work in a factory because you had to earn money again. Then father decided that St Albans wasn't for him any more. What the reasons were I don't know. I didn't ask him, I wasn't told. He bought a house in Clayton, so that was a big move. I hated it.

I was so happy that we were coming back to Australia. My time in Germany wasn't fantastic. Number one because of the education. I had started high school here and I was just getting to enjoy it. I wasn't a very good scholar but I was passable. You had your friends and suddenly you get torn away. Schooling in Europe was a different kettle of fish altogether. There are no uniforms, for a start, so you are not equal. Those people who have money dress their kids in the very best of the best. And those people who don't run around not in rags but not the best either. It was horrible. I hated it. The education here in Australia is different to the European education. History here is all English history and over there it is all European history. When I got back to Germany I ended up having to have special tuition to catch up. I absolutely hated it. When my father said we were coming back to Australia I was elated.

Moving from St Albans again was heart breaking because when coming back here I thought I would be with my friends and pick up on my schooling, but that didn't happen. After that I lost interest in schooling. I was 14 which was the school leaving age at that time. When we shifted to Clayton I enrolled in Springvale High School but because school uniforms were so expensive I wore my St Albans High School uniform, which was a no no – Springvale High would not accept it. It wasn't that different but I got into big trouble with the teachers. The prefects would dob you in and the teachers would tell you off. My parents said they couldn't afford a new uniform, so one of the teachers said we have a second-hand shop and you can have a second-hand uniform. I said no because I was too proud to do that. I said I would wear my own uniform because it was good money that my parents had paid. Anyway, I got picked up quite often for not wearing the right uniform.

I lost all interest in school and when I turned 14 I got myself a part-time job at Coles in Oakleigh. I asked the manager there if there ever was a permanent job available if I would be eligible even though I was only 14. My father wanted me to keep going to school but in the end he said that the only way I could leave school was if I got a job. I said I had a job. So I started a fulltime job at Coles in Oakleigh. I enjoyed it.

When we first moved to Clayton it was hard for me because I had no friends and I wasn't allowed to go out, not even allowed to go to the youth club, because I was too young. I think I was so angry with my parents for not having stayed in St Albans. As a young girl I had no say in the matter because you have to go with your parents. I had retained my St Albans friendship links because I wrote letters to them while I was in Germany. We kept in touch because I liked writing letters. Well, in those days you didn't have texting or email and you didn't dare use the phone not that many people had them. Letters were the way to go and that's how I kept informed on what was happening here and the latest music and things like that. When I did come back to St Albans I thought it was terrific. It wasn't to be.

I was working in Coles for two years and used to travel from Clayton to Oakleigh on the bus. You know how you get to know the people on the bus? There was a lady, Mrs Lemon, who said if I ever wanted to change my working life she had a position available in the counting house, where all the money from Myers in Chadstone would come to the office and there were machines that would count the coin and we would count the notes. So I transferred over to them. It was a good idea to do that. I worked in the office in Myers at Chadstone for about two years and than I met my husband-to-be, which would have been about 1962 because we got married in 1964.

My future husband, Peter Bluemel, was a rep for Moulded Products which was part of Nylex and used to sell contact material and plastic by the yard. Because they sold to Myers he would come and check the stock to see if anything needed replenishing. In those days it was up to the rep to work out what had been sold and what needed to be ordered. He was German and at first I thought he was aloof so when he came I used to take off into the storeroom to avoid him. Lo and behold I finished at Coles and started working at Chadstone and was sitting in the cafeteria and who walks in but this Peter. He sat down with us and had a cup of coffee and he asked me out. Even though I was 16 I wasn't allowed to go out. My mum at that stage was working for the hospital for the aged in Cheltenham and my dad was still working at the railways. I said to Peter I can't go out without permission but you can ask my father if you want, but it's going to be no. Peter met my father and I don't think they ever got on very well but at

[1] Elise and Franczek "Frank" Maziarz with sons Frank and Josef were in Glendenning Street in 1960.

least they were able to communicate. It is what it is. Anyway, Peter and I started going out.

Peter and I married in 1964. I worked at Myers and had to work Saturdays, which was awkward. We were living in Devon Meadows down in Cranbourne and Peter was working in Melbourne but not on Saturdays and for me to get to work every day was hard. Every other day of the week Peter drove to head office in Collins Street and he would drop me off at Myers in Chadstone. On the Saturday I had to make my own way there so I then decided I wouldn't do that any more, but I stayed in the city and worked for George Laurens for a couple of years, the debt collector. Pete drove me in because he worked in Collins street. I decided it was a bit far to go to the city every day and Peter changed his employer to Melbrick Sunglass Company, so he wasn't driving to the city any more. I asked for a transfer to the Frankston office, which was closer to home and on the bus line. That's where I ended up but I didn't like it. I ended up in Notting Hill behind the Monash University in Clayton. There was a factory G E Electrics making toasters and such and I started working there.

I came to visit St Albans after I got married in 1964 and we were living in Clayton. I took a drive down to St Albans in the late 1960s and I couldn't find my way around any more because it had changed so much. I knew the main street and I knew where Manfred Avenue and Errington Road were, but the houses even in our street were mansions. I remember as a young girl walking down Manfred Avenue to the main road there used to be a big paddock there with a great big shed. That shed always used to frighten us kids because we had to walk past it and we thought the boogie man was hiding in there. That shed was now blown on an angle because of the effect of the wind over the years.

I fell pregnant in 1969 with my eldest daughter. We then bought a road house in Cranbourne on the South Gippsland Highway before the highway was duplicated. It was called the 31 Mile Café because it was 31 miles from Melbourne. We bought the business with Pete's mum and dad who put their house up for sale and used the money as collateral. We bought from a Russian guy and it was the biggest mistake we ever made because the books had been fiddled and the business income was not as good as it was made out to be.

However, the café purchase was good because it came with 10 acres. We had chooks and Pete's mum was an excellent cook so we had roast chicken and she baked German cakes. There used to be a McEwans store in Dandenong with a café, and mum would supply the cakes for that café for extra money just to be able to survive. Our café opened really early in the mornings for the truckies for coffee and breakfast. Peter's mum and I shared the workload. We were open seven days a week because there was the petrol as well and you had to stay open to make some money. Peter's dad had cows and used to make his own butter. He had chickens hence our roasted chicken meals. We ended up with pigs to eat all the food scraps, so it must have been like the small St Albans farms in the earlier days. The pigs were sold to some Italians who slaughtered them and made salami.

In 1969 we were moving out of that joint. Pete and I bought a block of land in Devon Meadows, an acre of parkland for $1,100. We built a beautiful ranch style home for $14,000. When you look at the prices now ... In 1972 our second daughter was born. We were there for 45 years and then we sold up four years ago because Pete became very ill with heart problems. It was the only home the girls had ever known. It was the typical scenario of open landscape going back to my recollections of St Albans' days but on one acre of land. It was St Albans reduced to an acre where the girls could do what they wanted, climbing trees, building cubby houses, sitting on blankets on the grass enjoying their fairy bread. In a way it was my childhood reincarnated, because they had that freedom. It was excellent.

I used to tell them stories about running around the paddocks and putting out fires with Hessian bags. I remember there was one family who did have a fence around their property and they were the Oldakers[1] in Manfred Avenue – they're back in England now. They had a fence and one time someone was playing with some matches and almost set fire to the fence. That's another fire we put out with Hessian bags. You try to instill those memories in your children but they can't visualize it because they haven't lived there. It has to be experienced to appreciate it in the same way.

The people who came to Australia on the same boats have their own experience with similarities of open spaces and freedom. My girls grew up with wallabies along the road and koalas in the trees. We didn't have them in St Albans though we did have magpies. You make you own history by making friends when you were little, going through primary school together and going through high school together.

Pete didn't go to school in Australia at all because he came out in 1953 when he was 14 and went straight to work. He came to Australia on the same ship as us but one year earlier. The people that he came with formed lasting friendships till the time of his death. They also went to Bonegilla and then settled in Edithvale.

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[1] Josephine and Thomas Oldaker migrated from the UK with son Thomas c.1951. They were living at 161 Manfred Avenue, St Albans.

Kopmann family of Cowper Street © Sylvia Bluemel

Pete had an interesting tale about losing and finding connections. Some people that they met on the boat had two young girls but the families lost contact after leaving the hostel. Years later when Pete was traveling on the train he recognised the girl by the buttons on her cardigan. The two families reconnected through that chance meeting and thereafter maintained a close friendship for many, many years. That was the same scenario for Jutta and I who came on the same ship and established a lasting friendship. Those people congregated together afterwards because of the friendships that formed over those six weeks of travel. I think a lot of people stayed where they first settled. They might have changed houses and streets but they stayed in the neighbourhood. That would have been my choice.

Peter always had an interest in good music rather than rock'n'roll. When we got married we had lots of parties and always had German music. The love of music was instilled in him. We ran our own import expert business for a long time and he was in and out of Hong Kong for many years, probably about ten years because we were importing from Hong Kong. Then in 1984 he had a bad heart attack due to stress because of business problems. We got taken in by the Chinese business partner and nearly lost our house. Peter became quite ill and could only do odd jobs around the place. Where we lived in Devon Meadow there were some market gardens and he'd give a hand there for some pocket money. He had a heart problem and couldn't breathe properly but that wasn't enough to qualify for a disability pension. So I ended up going to work and he stayed at home. I had two jobs to support the family.

Pete did what he could but he did things mainly at home. He got a job with the nursery man because they knew each other from working at Moulded Products. However his love of music never ever died. He would listen to the radio and comment about their poor music selections and would often say if he could just get an hour of air time on commercial radio he would show them what good music really is. He always had cassettes, tapes and records. In about 2004 a radio station opened in Cranbourne and they were looking for presenters for ethnic music. The radio station was being built in the community centre in Cranbourne. It was before Christmas in 2006. Pete went in for an interview and was accepted. He received some training and started his music program. He had a two-hour program and at first was presenting it in English and German, which took a long time. He progressed and one of the other presenters said it would be easier to make it German language only because that was the target audience. We had relatives in Berlin so we could get music sent from there. He progressed and had two-hour

shows every Saturday and Sunday morning and an hour of English. Saturday and Sunday mornings were from 6 to 9am, then he got a drive-time program on Monday afternoon. I helped with the broadcasts by doing the phone work. We also got invitations to put on music shows at some of the local German clubs. I think that legacy of music was one of the highlights of his life in later years.

I've done a lot of volunteer work since I retired. I was with Neighbourhood Watch and used to go to all the meetings at the Dandenong cop shop. We would have speakers once a month and walk around the streets trying to spot hazards, delivering monthly newsletters to tell people what was going on, promoting safety issues.

Then I did a course on palliative care but I had to give that up because Pete's health started declining and I thought my place was at home. At that stage there were a lot of hospital visits required. Pete gave up the music program when he became ill. Then I was diagnosed with cancer and that was another journey. It was a shock but we got through it. Pete's health declined even more and required greater medical intervention because he had cardio-myopathy. We decided we couldn't stay any more on the property because we couldn't maintain it. It was a blessing in disguise when we didn't have the big property any more. My mother had died a long time ago and my father had moved to Queensland. When he got sick we brought him back down here, so there was a lot of work involved in the years between with the family including the in-laws.

Now I've gone back to voluntary work. I'm with the "phone a friend" group. I ring from home or go to Scoresby where the office is and ring people. There is a community group called Bridges and they take people to their appointments or provide busses that take you on shopping trips, there's even pet walkers. Some of it is for the elderly who can't get out on their own. I'm in the phone a friend program and contact people who are ill and so isolated they have no-one. I ring them once a week and we have a chat. It's amazing what people will tell you over the phone, because you do build up that trust of non judgmental anonymity. Fortunately we have other helpers who we can refer to if more direct help is need such as transport or mediation with authorities.

When we moved to this smaller property in June 2014 it was a blessing because we didn't have the pressure of the big property any more. We'd lived on that old property for 45 years with total freedom and there were few neighbours. After we decided to sell we didn't know where we wanted to go. An estate agent from Cranbourne was showing us some properties in Narre Warren which we always knew as a nice place with gardens and nurseries. When we were in Devon Meadows Pete really loved the garden and he had planted three white birches which is leading back to his links with Germany and the song Drei Weisse Birken, which was one of his favourites. When we pulled up to the property here, lo and behold, there were three white birches in the front yard. We looked at the house from the outside and decided this was the one. This was the first really beautiful home that we could move into without having to do lots of painting and redecorating.

A move is a big thing and it was bedlam for us at the time. Having been 45 year at the old place it was heart-breaking to leave as you were leaving behind all those memories. The house is just a house, just brick and mortar, and your memories come with you in boxes. Strangely enough on the last day when removalists came to take the last bits away and we locked up with the handover of keys, it was just a shell and when we spoke in the kitchen it was just an echo. In the end everything went smoothly. Unfortunately, Pete was here only six months.

Sylvia Bluemel nee Kopmann, 2018.

Kopmann home in Cowper St 1950s © S Bluemel

ANIELA SIUDA

Aniela Siuda was born in December 1920 during the Polish-Bolshevik War (1919 - 1921) not long after the end of the First World War (1918) in the same year that fellow countryman Karol Wojtyla was born – he was later to become Pope John Paul II. They didn't know each other but they shared the same religion and, perhaps in their early years, the same optimism for their own futures and that of their country. They were both born in a nation that had just regained its independence, but unfortunately one that would once again lose its freedom within their youth.

Historically, Poland has been a nation of constantly changing boundaries and fortunes. Many people from the neighbouring countries such as the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Lithuania, Russia, and Germany would all at some stage of each other's histories have shared some part of their life on a common land that was known by many names, one of them being Poland – the land always stays put, but the people and the names and the boundaries change. In the Poland of the 1930s that Aniela remembered there were 24 million Poles and another 11 million people of other nationalities, mostly Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Germans, and Hungarians.

The Poles are descended from tribes of western Slavs who were unified in the tenth century by a plains-dwelling tribe, the Polanie, in order to resist increasing invasions from the west by Germanic tribes. In 966 Christianity was introduced to Poland, when the very pragmatic Duke Mieszko[1] put the nation under the protection of the Holy Roman Empire. Christianity had reached Czechoslovakia and southern Germany, but not yet as far as the northern part of Germany, Poland, Lithuania, or Latvia. Mieszko's was a marriage of convenience between the Czech and Polish states, when Mieszko agreed to adopt his Czech wife's religion. Although Mieszko was illiterate he was smart enough to bring in educated people, Latin scholars, whose guidance and religion were accepted by his noblemen, and the Polish nation became a Christian nation. Though the nation has been staunchly Roman Catholic ever since its initial conversion, the religious freedom act of 1570 guaranteed that all religions were treated equally, at least in theory.

In the fifteenth century the union of Poland and Lithuania created the greatest power in Eastern Europe when the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Władisław Jagieło, became King of Poland with his marriage to the Polish Queen Jadwiga. The Lithuanian border extended deep into what is now Russia, to within one hundred kilometres of Moscow. Between them, Poland and Lithuania were covering central Europe from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.

During the sixteenth century Poland was a parliamentary monarchy, but these democratic-sounding privileges were reserved for the ten percent of the population who were in the nobility or aristocracy, whereas the status of the peasants had virtually declined to that of slaves. This independence was not to last. Austria, Prussia and Russia carried out three progressively more mortal partitions of Poland, the first in 1772, then again in 1793 taking a bigger bite out of its territory, and the coup de grâce was in 1795, when Poland completely disappeared off the map of Europe. It was the Roman Catholic faith that kept the people united and cohesive.

In 1807 Napoleon I created the independent Principality of Warsaw, but it did not last very long. The 1815 Congress of Vienna ratified the earlier division, and the Principality of Warsaw was renamed the Kingdom of Poland and attached to Russia. The attempted Russification of the core of the Polish nation did not succeed, the collective stubbornness of the peasantry in retaining their own identity and language was to outlast their foreign rulers. But it was not until after the first world war that the Republic of Poland was reborn, on 11 November 1918, and it was again a major independent European power. It remained free until 1939. So, for most of her life in Poland, Aniela lived in a free country, and within her lifetime this was the only time that it was free from foreign political domination.

Aniela was born just a couple of years after the rebirth of Poland itself, to a farming family in Wola Kopcowa, a small rural village in the voivodship of Kielce, named after its main town 176 kilometres south of Warsaw. The history of the town's freedom and servitude echoes that of the nation. The town of Kielce was founded in 1173, at which time it was owned by the Bishops of Kraków and stayed under their control until 1789. In 1795 with the third partition of Poland it came under Austrian control, and the Russians took over in 1815. The Russians stayed for over a century, so their influence on the people could have been considerable. In Aniela's family an intermarriage of Polish and Russian heritage occurred when the young woman who was to become her mother, Katarzyna Sochanska, born on 25 October 1888, married Michal Siuda, a man who may have had some Russian background, judging by his surname.

Today the town of Kielce is a large

industrial urban centre with a population of 210,000. It lies on the edge of a mountain range near the Góry Swientokryskie (Holy Cross Mountains) and the National Park. The city is set in a valley amidst gentle hills. The Kielce that Aniela referred to from her village perspective was not only the name of the neighbouring town, but also the name of administrative region responsible for governing a broad area of 3,900 square miles, with a total population of 762,000 people at the start of the 1900s; this region encompassed about eight percent of Poland's population (9.4 million at the time) and a similar proportion of the total land area (49,000 square miles) of the nation's then defined boundaries.

The region always had some industrial concerns and these expanded with the population growth in the decades after the war. The central lowlands of Poland are flat and are the most cultivated in the country though they do not have the richest soils. The agricultural plains are continuous acres of wheat and potato farms, and the fruit orchards have pears, cherry, apple and plums. The Malopolska area is somewhat higher than the central plains as the land starts to tilt towards the Carpathian mountains in the south.

Aniela's small village was located on the outskirts of the regional town of Kielce, in the region of Malopolska or "Lesser Poland". It was virtually in the middle of the country as defined by the 1918 Versailles Peace Treaty. The Kielce voivodship is a region of green valleys, gentle hills and undulating landscapes drained by the tributaries of the Vistula, and scattered villages taking their very existence and survival from the soil. The grand Vistula river starts further south in Malopolska in the heights of the Carpathians near the Czech border, wends its way in an enormous arc to the east through Kraków, and then further around up to the capital, Warsaw, in the centre of the country, before turning to the north to exit through the Bay of Gdansk into the Baltic Sea. Though modern Kielce retains its links with its rural origins, the outer Kielce of Aniela's childhood was in another world, metaphorically speaking.

Wola Kopcowa was only seven kilometres north-east from central Kielce, but this was already in the arable countryside. The village lands are on the west bank of the stream that starts further north in Maslów, only three kilometres away. The stream flows south through its own little rocky precipice and forest into the lake on the Lubrzanka river.

A typical Polish rural village in the 1930s might have a total population of about 250 families, or 900 people give or take a few hundred, and be spread out over three kilometres, each family's village plot having about an acre or so of land with a house and barn and perhaps other structures, a kitchen garden and orchard, and the domestic stock. Aniela's place was not quite as big as this, but the three neighbouring settlements within a radius of three kilometres probably were. The ideal village topography has access to fertile farming soil for crops, pasture land for stock, and also forests for fuel and building materials. However, the availability of water is the essential ingredient in establishing a village on these plains. A river location is preferable, or at least easy access to underground supplies through springs or wells. Wells are made of concrete pipes for longevity, but have to be cleaned out occasionally. A build-up of wind-blown dirt and leaves silts up the water basin. Sometimes a dead cat or dog would be thrown in by trouble makers and would need to be cleaned out. Whenever a cat went missing there was always some judicious checking on the quality of the water supply.

The rest of the farmland could be on the other side of the village or a kilometre away, which creates its own problems of security of crops. Bigger villages have bigger boundaries. The crops are reliant entirely on natural rainfall for their water supply and it is on the predictability of the weather that farmers make judgements when to sow. These tracts of land are long and relatively narrow, the lengths stretching up and down the gentle hillsides; it's a way of sharing the good and the not-so-good land amongst all villagers.

This small-farm cultivation is personally rewarding but not economically efficient; the rewards are in perceptions of self-sufficiency and independence, not necessarily in terms of economic wealth, as the plots are too small for economies of scale. The dividing line between neighbouring properties is just a narrow strip on no-man's land, the *miedza,* a strip that you're not supposed to plough over or encroach upon in any way, because this is where the arguments will start with neighbours afraid that you are trying to steal their land.

When crops are planted at different times in neighbouring strips there may be no problem, for example winter rye or wheat on one block and potatoes on the other would be okay, because the land would not be ploughed at the same time and the probability of wandering over is lessened. Land holdings could be quite small, as the originally larger inherited farms are in turn shared amongst the greater numbers of inheriting offspring.

A man with three acres might do well in marrying a woman with two acres, the only problem being that the land may be separated by some distance. But opportunities may arise for bartering exchanges and getting the equivalent acreage much closer together, or even adjacent. Such is the nature of real estate negotiations that go on in villages.

Forests and woods were once prolific above the plains but are now being tamed by felling and the encroaching farms: pine, oak, beech, and birch are the most common trees in the region, larch and fir to lesser extents. On the higher lands of the Czech boarder the spruce forests dress the mountainsides with their greenery. Rafts of logs were cut along the Vistula and higher in the southern hills then floated down the rivers to the cities of the plains and beyond, to satisfy the increasing demands for construction timbers, conversion into furniture, or shipped out as exports. The woods and forests are also timber suppliers to the villagers, as requirements for building are converted in situ from the round. Chalk lines or snap lines mark the plank lengths along the log. Men then use sharp axes to chip along these lines into the timber to give a nice clear guide for the next operation – a broadaxe is used to flatten the outside edges. This semi-converted log is then roped up and clamped in place onto large saw horses. A two-man team – one above and one below – use a long saw to cut the log into thick planks. A twelve-year-old boy with strength can earn some money for these tasks, about two *zloty* in comparison to a man's five *zloty* for a day's work. A long day's work. The boy's shorter stroke in pulling the saw may slow him down but determination will allow him to keep up with the others. Elsewhere, water-powered saw mills convert the lumber more speedily, and farmers with carts can earn some extra income by transporting logs from the forest to the mill.

The villages are spaced out over the land. The next village could be only a few kilometres or up to three hours' walk away, the nearest town may be up to thirty kilometres away. If you have a reliable bike you probably could get there in a day, otherwise even a horse would take much longer. Within a ten kilometre radius there may be a dozen villages. Aniela's village was in the centre of a triangle formed by the somewhat bigger settlements of Dąbrowa, Masłow, and Cedzyna. Such collections of villages are part of a bigger district where in the central administrative town there is a police station and probably the district priest or provost would also live there. The walk may be five or seven kilometres, but some people would traipse this distance to report to the police about persistent cruelty to a horse, for example. This reporting was impossible to keep secret in a small area, but people still reported their neighbours if something like this was witnessed. Otherwise, the locals have to settle their disputes in their own fashion, and this may require the vigorous brandishing of sharp and pointy agricultural instruments and the threatening postures of tough men confronting alleged thieves. Village life is not the romantic innocence it may appear to foreigners visiting

the urban centres and semi-rural fringes. Even a young boy walking to his mother's old village could experience territorial hazards as the parochial youth are keen to define outsiders as intruders, and there is a "running the gauntlet" quality in their confrontation of strangers, even if they wisely restrict themselves to challenging only the younger strangers.

The surrounding farming lands are poor from overuse and lack of fertiliser, and where rye is one of the main crops planted because of its survival capacity in nutritionally deficient soil. In fact rye is the crop most commonly grown in the country, followed by oats; at much lower levels of production wheat and barley are grown in similar proportions; peas and buckwheat to even lesser extent. The versatile grains are desirable crops: rye can be used as livestock feed as well as making flour for wholegrain bread (rye bread is a traditional Polish favourite); oats make porridge for human consumption as well as being fed to horses; and buckwheat is another food for animals and also made into kasha and flour. Along the banks and adjacent plains of the Vistula to the east and the south the deep black soils attest to a more fertile habitat, but families and villages further away from the river plains are stuck with what they are surrounded by. Overused soil periodically has to be left fallow, to recuperate. Weeds take over and towards season's end when the seeds have set but not yet matured the landowner waits until after a rain when the soils is softened and gets a bunch of boys to pull up the weeds, roots and all. The stacks are taken to the nearby pits and left there until they dry and the lot is burned off in autumn. The village usually has its own communal sand pit and clay pit. These earth materials are essential in building construction, particularly clay, as it is used for floors of barns and houses, and also as a render for walls.

The farming methods are built around the farmer. The horse and plough are the farmer's big machinery. Otherwise, it's the hard work of the mattock, the spade, the rake, and the scythe wielded by human muscle that converts soil and sunlight into food. The cycle of the seasons sets the pace of work in the village.

Spring starts in March, a time of ploughing, planting, of growth and renewal; with the thawing of the land comes the new season's sowing of potatoes, rye and wheat. The furrows of young plants are invaded by weeds, and another family chore is the painstaking hand-weeding of these young and as yet tender intruders, to be bundled up in the large linen canvases onto sturdy backs and lugged back to the village, to be cut up as feed for the domestic stock. Nothing goes to waste. Cows are kept for the milk, horses for ploughing and pulling carts and carriages. A poor family may have one horse and cow, a richer one may have a couple of horses and three cows. Small two-metre squares of corn are planted for convenience in the kitchen plots, handy for quick snacks of succulent par-grilled cobs. Some regions grow sugar beet, which is also a useful crop as the leaves can be used as stock feed while the beets are sold for extraction of the sugar. Washing of the beets is done by hand along the river banks. May and June are long and sunny, the greenery blooms and the countryside is beautiful. May is the time for celebrating the commemoration of the Virgin Mary. Statues in the countryside are decorated with flowers, and young people get together to visit these religious statues, sing hymns, and have a good time getting wet in the spring rain. This was their entertainment.

Spring is also the time when willows start to sprout again. Willows are very utilitarian. They were the supply of flexible branches which were woven into fences. The trees were harvested in two year cycles. The first year, when the growth was young and the branches about one inch diameter, half of them were cut for the main body of the weft. The second year growth was about two inches in diameter and used as the fence posts, spaced one foot apart. The fence lasts for two years and then has to be rebuilt. They are ideal fencing around the home to keep the chickens, geese, calf and pig from wandering away from the home property. This is an early spring job, around April. The young leaves of willow shoots are fed to cattle, while the slender shoots themselves are excellent for making baskets for carrying potatoes and fruit or berries. Children are adept at using the young wood for making whistles, popguns and musical instruments. Young boys are eager whittlers to while away the long days of looking after the cattle in pasture. The bark and roots of the willow are used for making medicine and dye for fabrics and leather.

Easter time is one of the major religious occasions in the village. Under mother's or older sister's supervision the children are involved in preparing the traditional *pisanski*, hard-boiled eggs which are decorated with a variety of designs and colours; waxes and natural dyes such as onion skin are used to produce the desired effects. The *święconka* is the ceremonial blessing of a basket of food: bread, butter and some pork was taken to the church in town on Saturday for blessing by the priest and the family would eat this on Easter Sunday.

The *przednowek* period is over when the first lot of new potatoes are dug up – then you're really living, as you indulge yourself with these tender young potatoes. Often the cow has already calved so there is plenty of milk, home made butter, white cheese, and these fresh small new potatoes quickly cooked in salted water. Delicious. The new potatoes are never

sown far from the house; they always have to be in sight otherwise they will disappear overnight.

Summer comes from June onwards, and the hottest month is July. In the hot and muggy weather it is not unusual for children to sleep in the hay in the barn, seeking the comfort of the open air and gentle breezes, lulled to sleep by the sound of beetles cruising the warm summer air and birds fluttering to their favourite roosting sites with the coming dusk. At times the adults also take their straw mattresses out into the orchards overnight to escape the oppression indoors. August heralds the coming harvest. Fields may adjoin a house or be located two kilometres away from the house. The distant farmland may be used for growing hay, expecting two crops per year. The owner asks for help from neighbours to assist with cutting and stacking the hay, then turns up with three carts for collecting the load and taking them back to the barns on their home site.

These occasions take on a festive spirit as well as hard work, as the owner brings a feast of the type of food which is in short supply in these more distant reaches. Rye, oats and hay are grown and then cut with a scythe. Corn was also grown in places and ground to make kasha. A horse and cart is used to bring the wheat and hay to the barn.

The earliest crop is invariably barley. As soon as you can't squeeze the milk out of the grain it is time to harvest some, crush it, and grind it into kasha. Pearly barley is a good grain when it is ripe and dry, and early in spring you cook it like porridge, but in late autumn when you have some plums you cook the two together for a different kind of taste. You can still enjoy this later when plums are out of season by using prunes. Dig a big ditch in the garden and throw in some dry and some green timber and set it alight. On top you have some very fine wire mesh on which you put the plums and cover it all up. The smoke and the hot temperature converts the plums into prunes. Once you have these you can have beautiful *kasha*.

Beans are grown quite extensively. They are either used fresh or allowed to mature on the stalk and used in winter for soups and side dishes. This was also done with corn, *kukuridza.* Even before the corn was fully ripe there was a feast of corn on the cob. People grew mainly for their own needs, so the small villages had separate little bits of everything growing, rather than large acres of single crops.

From a distance the fields are a pretty picture of multi-coloured rectangles with patches of rusty-red ears of rye, the bright green of oats, yellow stalks of mature hay, and always the red-brown earth where the crops have been cleared. In some parts of the country the rich black soil is admired for its fertility, but here the reddish soil is of poorer quality. In the background and sometimes marching along the roadsides the patches of birch trees watch over the fields like stoic guards. Along the streams the gentle droop and lilt of willow branches add to an afternoon's drowsiness and tranquility. The old and stately chestnuts on the stretch of central road throw cathedral arches up to the sky, while the brilliant orange-red berries of the *jarzębina,* the rowan tree also known as the mountain ash, are always a delight in summer. Girls get their brothers to climb the trees to pick the berries which were strung pearl-fashion into a necklace or crown. Juniper bushes and berries are a necessity for sweetening the air of mortuary rooms where the recently departed are lying in waiting. Not every village is lucky enough to have such an eclectic collection of trees. The beauty of the scenery belies the hard work that is required to maintain nature in the service of the populace.

In the fields they are bringing in the harvest. The scythe neatly pares a layer of stalks from the standing crop and just as neatly dumps it on the ground in overlapping swathes, later to be twisted round and tied into a small conical shape standing on its base, a mini haystack in its own right, until it is collected and stacked or set aside for processing. In some households this work is a husband and wife team responsibility. Harvest time is also the time for the clergy to tour the district with horse and cart to collect St Peter's share of the farmers' produce. Tithing is the less poetic English term.

September brings *listopad*, the falling of leaves, otherwise known as autumn. The leafy tops of potatoes are separated from the tubers and piled up in the most useless corner of the garden, usually under a tree or beside a fence, and mixed with stable straw. Pumpkins would be planted in this compost heap and would climb the fence or tree. These were great vegetables used for cooking, making a type of jam, feeding the cattle, and the seeds were dried in the sun and consumed in the wintertime. When you were hungry between meals you'd get a handful of seeds and munch on them as a snack. As stock-feed, pumpkins were chopped up fine and given to the cows. Potatoes and pumpkins are stored in the pantries and eked out over the long unproductive winter and spring before the new crops flourish. As winter approaches the potatoes are heaped into a rounded mound on the ground beside the house and covered over with repeated layers of straw and earth to protect them from freezing in the winter. The outer insulating layers freeze like an igloo and a hole is carefully cut like a little window, enough potatoes are withdrawn for a week's use and the brick of icy earth-mix is quickly plugged in; it is a cheap but effective outdoor cellar and the low temperatures keep the vegetables from spoiling as long as you don't let them freeze, in which case you only get thawed mush.

Joseph & Helena (front left) at Watsonia © J Ribarow

Ribarow family in Henry St. 1952 © J Ribarow

Ribarow family in Henry St. 1952 © J Ribarow

Christening of Teresa Ribarow 1952 © J Ribarow

Threshing the grain by hand was a demanding job. Three people could do the job nicely, four could do it even better. The implement is two long sticks, one metre and one-and-a-half metres long, joined by a rawhide swivel. The threshing team have to get a good rhythm going of swinging the rods and beating the grain stalks in a steady sequence. You start at five in the morning and stop at seven for breakfast. It is hard work when you are a twelve-year-old boy. When the grain is separated the stalks are tied into bundles and thrown into the attic of the shed. This straw is used for bedding or thatching roofs, or it is cut up and mixed with greens such as beetroot tops for cattle feed. The old replaced straw from the mattresses is used as litter in the cow shed or bundled around the mound of potatoes when they were being stored over winter. Nothing is wasted.

Winter drags on between December and March. The days are short because the daylight starts fading at three o'clock in the afternoon – it's no wonder that supper is taken early. December is the time for the plucking of geese for their down. Christmas is the other major religious occasion which also emphasises the togetherness of family. The traditional dinner of thirteen dishes for *wigilia*, Christmas Eve, was only able to be provided by the wealthier families, the less-wealthy had five or seven, some families could only put on a much more limited repast, but even the sharing of a piece of fruit between all family members was an important gesture of communal goodwill. The *wigilia* meal did not start until the first star was seen in the sky, and then the traditional *opłatek* of specially baked unleavened bread was shared with exchanged well wishes between families, neighbours and strangers. The dinner and singing of carols went on until it was time for midnight mass, or Shepherds' Mass as it is also known because they were the first to celebrate Christ's birth.

After these celebrations the dreariness of winter returns: the ground freezes, temperatures drop to fifteen degrees below zero and sometimes even twenty degrees below zero. At this temperature the children didn't have to go to school. At this temperature you couldn't see anything outside the house because of the thick layer of ice that had formed on the windows. The prudent farmer has already wrapped his house in layers of long-stemmed grasses that he has collected and dried specially for the purpose; the thick layers are tied with wire onto the walls and thus insulate the building against the freezing winter temperatures.

Winter is officially ended when the long-legged storks return from their holidays in the warmer south, as far south as Egypt. To have them nest on your property was a sign of good luck. Their arrival in mid to late March in the

village indicated that the grass would soon be green and it was time to plough the soil.

Houses and barns are built of stacked log construction jointed at the corners, with thatched roofs. They are built on the ground. Sometimes the logs are rendered with adobe, a clay mixture, to give a smooth plastered look, though inside the barns and animal quarters the log construction is still evident; open-sided cow sheds allow easy access for milking purposes. The surfaces are treated with linseed oil for weather proofing and some resistance against wood borers. The houses are usually a simple rectangle construction in its basic form, but some are built higher up off the ground than the barns; wealthier homes are of timber construction with a slate roof. Staircases to these front doors have sturdy handrails so that *babkas* and children don't fall down. A central fireplace is the main source of heating and cooking functions for the family. Sometimes there are two stoves, one being a special bread oven, and sometimes the bread ovens are built dual purpose, with an ancillary stovetop and roasting oven at the back.

The house design is simple. Through the front door the foyer opens into the kitchen and two large rooms, on either side, one a bedroom, the other a storeroom for food and other produce. The kitchen also opens to the rear yard from which the fields and trees can be seen. Daylight enters through the window and the small-panel glazed upper door. For poorer residences a common construction is one large room with a bed in the corner of the kitchen-living room. Basic but functional. The loft is used for storage and drying. Cheeses are at home here to mature. The ceiling boards of two-inch thickness can handle heavy weights and the grain is spread out here after it has been harvested in order to dry – if it were to be put in storage bins too early it would go mouldy. The earthen floor of the house needs annual attention and maintenance, part of the spring-cleaning routine.

Outside, the tall hollyhocks and geraniums growing around the entrance add their little domestic welcome of combined greenery and bright colour, as do the little *niezaponimajki,* forget-me-nots, scattered along the path border. Dandelions and daisies are the universal wanderers that delight children with making garlands and necklaces. Flowers are the decoration and celebration of the land, the home and the church. The trees behind the house offer shade from the noonday sun, and the neat stack of logs next to the sawhorse waiting for the firewood cutter promises warmth on a cool night. Trees around the house have been lopped severely and are now growing again from the stumps of large branches. In the adjoining kitchen garden the scarecrow flutters in ragged attire to the pulse of the wind but does not fool the inquisitive birds or the chickens scratching around for a few tasty morsels. From the adjacent field the faint twittering of the meadow lark is always a joyful calling. In the summertime the kitchen patch thrives with greenery and flavour. Ripe tomatoes with their distinctive scent of the vine and mouth-watering refreshment are wonderful treats to sneak when you are on your own, even better with absolutely fresh bread and luxuriating butter. Fresh cucumbers are wonderful cut down the middle and sprinkled with salt for a green feast. The small pale green ones are best for the traditional pickling with dill weed, the larger dark green versions are for fresh consumption. Over the creek bank the neighbour's onion patch is at risk from foraging boys who see nothing wrong in expropriating some; thinning out is their personal justification, but the fortuitous discovery of self-sown produce is their explanation back home. After all, the discovery of the much-prized seasonal mushrooms in the wild is always a legitimate expedition for the pickling larder, so why not for other edibles as well, as long as you don't get caught, for then it's a very embarrassing thrashing from father's belt if he is confronted with proof.

Not every hamlet would have a teacher. A village may have a small school, probably more like one classroom and one teacher, and the children from neighbouring hamlets would be expected to come here. Probably the village would only have the one small shop, which sells those essential items that are not able to be grown or made locally. Most of the food is grown on the farm but oil, sugar, salt, pepper, kerosene, matches, cotton thread and cloth and such commodities have to be purchased. Bottles and containers are brought by the shopper to be filled from boxes, sacks and barrels. The village markets are the other source of supply. What is available through God's grace is accepted. Brooms are made from birch twigs, benches are scrubbed clean with sand, and earthen floors are painted with clay to renew their surface. The makings for all these products are available for the taking from the village surrounds.

The origins of village layout are lost in antiquity: then, a horseshoe design for the core of the encampment, the centre of the village; now, the expansions are more haphazard. The streets run in seemingly random directions between properties, their development being dictated not by a draftsman's drawing board, but by acquisition of land on the periphery, and the common practice of walking the shortest path between two points, or some other equally convenient reason.

The village always has some common land, which can be used by all residents. It is usually the least productive land and therefore of not much value.

Here the geese would be taken for their foraging in the grass. The geese would have to be introduced to their daily routine of marching to the common and then returning to the safety of the barn overnight, and they learn the routine quickly enough so that they then march off on their own, waddling off follow-the-leader fashion while preoccupied with a sense of their own importance and keeping wary eyes open for any strange intrusions into their world of routine. Identification of the geese is through markings or punched holes on the webs between the talons on their feet. The village common is a gentle cacophony of sound on a pleasant afternoon – the gaggling of the geese, the buzz of bees seeking out their nectar sources, the neighing of the horses wanting some attention.

On weekends when the farm work has finished the horses are taken to graze on the common and there is a regular offer by young boys to wash the horses. Everyone knows this to mean that the horse would be ridden down to the river a kilometre or two away where the rider and steed would enjoy a dip in the river. These were gentle farm creatures who responded readily to the hand pressure guidance of their bare-back riders. Normally the boys are polite enough to ask the permission of the horse owners, but naturally enough sometimes horses and boys have their own tacit agreements.

School days start with prayers at eight in the morning and finish at one in the afternoon. The oral tradition which perpetuates country dialect is slowly making way for a more literary Polish through the education system, but there will always be a "Village Polish" vernacular. Primary schooling is six days per week for seven years. After this comes the *gimnazjum*, the high school that many country folk miss out on. Higher education is a richer family's prerogative. Village children usually miss out, ultimately for lack of money, but also for the very practical reason that children were needed to help with the farm labours.

The oldest child in the family, boy or girl, is always in demand to go to work to supplement the family income and survival. Girls tend the cows, taking them to pasture or on the roadside, chains being used to securely tether them from wandering. Also for girls, the child care jobs as nannies for wealthier families are a possibility and are a natural inclination. Boys may also be cowherds or join the men in timber cutting or threshing of the grain. Children who are born later in the family have more of a chance to get educated, and yet there is still greater argument for boys to be educated through schools and girls to learn from their mothers at home.

Women in the villages make a bit of money from working for others, such as helping out with housework for the richer families, knitting, or sewing.

Clever seamstresses make the clothes for family and paying customers; the rare availability of a sewing machine makes this work more efficient and life easier as the desire for greater productivity strains the nimble fingers and sharp eyesight. Women invite friends and neighbours to get together in teams of half a dozen or so to pluck geese for the down which will be used in making the warm doonas so prized for winter comfort. Working in the evenings under the faint light of paraffin lanterns is hard on the eyes especially when the one light source is lifted high it throws the shadow of its own base onto the table below; only at the edges can the women see what they are doing. The experienced fingers and hands familiar with the task and the company of colleagues who have regularly helped each other ease this burden. The women laugh and joke, enjoying each other's company, which also helps to make the task much easier.

Barefootedness is natural in the home and on the streets, and April to November is the season when barefooted urchins scamper home from school as soon as they can escape the confines of the classroom. In the summertime women walk barefoot to the well or spring to bring buckets of water for the house. Going to church is the right occasion to carry your shoes along the way and put them on before you enter; it saves on wear and tear. Women stop at the pond to wash their feet of the road dust before mass. Churchgoers with limited resources may operate in shifts and borrow mum's shoes when she returns so that they in turn can go. If the village is big enough to have a church there will be early, mid-morning and midday Sunday services.

Shoemaking is not a common skill, but men and teenage boys with handcraft skills can carve out sandals of wooden soles hinged with leather to bend with the foot, and then attach the hand-stitched canvas straps with buckles or button fasteners.

The kitchen and laundry is the woman's domain: daily meals, preserves, cheeses, jams, and all other food preparations and storage. The stove is of brick construction with cast iron top, oven doors and ash door. The dual system stove enables bread to be baked at the same time as a roast is being cooked, but the compromise means that only smaller batches of bread can be baked at the one time, not the six or seven that would be the family's consumption over the week. In the summer bread is baked once a week, big round loaves of rye bread that you store in the grain larder as soon as it was baked. A bigger supply is not warranted because it will dry out. In the wintertime enough is baked for two weeks as the loaves will thaw out as required and therefore last longer. Cows are milked, and the milk is separated. The cream is

sold if possible, the skimmed milk is made into cheese and also sold or used to feed the family. With only one cow the milk production dwindles during calving time, so you have to buy some. When plenty of milk is available the cheese production advances, the raw product is spooned into straw baskets and hung in the loft to dry. The nine-inch large flat rounds dry hard and shrink to half their size; they are delicious grated with a teaspoon of honey. Women are judged on their frugality and capacity to feed and clothe their families. Older women dress modestly, they wear long skirts and scarves tied under their chins. The new fashion is for shorter dresses to mid-calf length, a daring revolution. Washing of clothes is done by hand, first in hot water boilers then rinsed out in tubs. Larger items like linen sheets and heavier bedding (when necessary) are washed in the large laundry tubs and then rinsed in the river.

Vodka and the outside of the house is the man's domain.

The role of butcher is not practised very often because farm animals are worth more for their produce and cash sales through the markets. But occasionally neighbours may get together to slaughter a pig and calf between them, and then a full range of sausages and meat cuts are prepared, smoked, minced, cooked, blended and used in traditional recipes that account for every portion of the animals. Even the fat is rendered down for deep frying or in making soap. The importance of Christmas celebrations in the religious calendar are good occasions for such extravagance, and the winter cold means that meat does not spoil.

The farming community wakes and sleeps with the sun. Breakfast is at six-thirty, yesterday's leftover mashed potatoes reheated with lard and salt in the frypan and piled onto a thick slice of bread. This wasn't served up when you first awoke, you had to do some work before you earned your breakfast. Lunch was at eleven, often bread with *zupa biedna*, the poor man's soup "made with a rusty nail," a nothing soup, which means probably with bits of potatoes, a bit of onion, and maybe some milk if there was some left over. This was often the big meal of the day. In summertime the midday meal would be taken in the fields, a sandwich with pickled cucumbers, tomatoes and cheese. The evening meal at four was simpler, a slice of bread with onion and salt. Supper was at the end of the day at seven-thirty. Sundays was the big meal of the week, with a roast if one could afford it, and *gołąbki*, stuffed cabbage rolls. On the back of the stove there would be the delicacies of jam donuts, and *naleśniki,* rolled pancakes with fruit filling in the summer, or conserve of blueberries in the winter. A veritable feast. Sometimes it happened that a tough old boiler was despatched for the soup pot to make a tasty broth – after the long slow cooking the stringy carcase was fed to the dogs and the broth was enjoyed with home-made pasta. From June to the end of winter the food wasn't bad, but once the rye, wheat and potatoes were finished it was rather lean fare. Meals depended on what could be scrounged. Selling something at the market could get you a ten-kilogram container of grain, which was dried on top of the oven, ground, and made into bread. In late winter or early spring the end of last year's potatoes were old, soft and wrinkled. These would be peeled, cooked, mashed and mixed with the ground grain to bake a potato bread. The same would be done with pumpkin or whatever else would go in. It was bread-based meals and grateful for it. Groats were coarsely cracked grains cooked with lard, another simple but hunger-assuaging dish for the farm labourers.

The yards near the river are separated from the stream bank by a fence of wide pointed pickets. More imposing properties may have split-log rail fences to emphasise a family of substance. Pretty groves of trees line the banks of curved streams; the weeping willows trail their leafy fingers in the water's already rippled surface. Geese and ducks wander around, patrolling the waterways of their territory. Conical haystacks, a well in the background, and barbed wire fences with posts leaning drunkenly in every direction reinforce the image of a rural setting. Country folk are pragmatic realists – poultry such as geese and chickens are raised quickly as renewable commodities and a couple of breeders are always kept for continuity of the flock. Geese are fattened up for the family's Christmas feast, and also sold off for ready cash through the market. The young birds, in their first year, are the ones in demand for the kitchens.

Entertainment was a rare but pleasant novelty. Every village had a musician of some sort, an accordion player, or a bass, perhaps a violin or fiddle, hopefully several of these talents reside within the one village; the better-off family may even have a gramophone player and some 78s. Some villages have a never-ending band; as one member passes on another is recruited to take over the instrument, and the band plays on. Dances were held in private houses on weekends for special events such as name days (birthdays were not celebrated). Sometimes the volunteer fire brigade would put on a dance as a fund raiser. Weddings always seemed to be on a Wednesday as the priests were busy with masses on Sundays and preferred to spread their workload. Christenings were always a good excuse for a party and dance. Each parish would have an annual carnival, arranging one per season with the neighbouring parishes, drawing an audience from a distance of about ten kilometres around. If you had a horse and cart you would go.

Religious occasions or saints days were treated seriously. The church bells announce the start of ceremonies as carts bring people in their best clothes from the villages and hamlets. If your church had three bells you knew that it had a full complement of calls for religious service: the low tolling of the biggest, the counterpoint of its higher-toned partner, then finally the smallest of the trio for the brisker last-minute ringing heralding the start of the mass. One of the biggest saintly celebrations is that of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Pilgrims walk many miles to see Our Lady of Częstochowa, the Black Madonna, in the chapel at Jasna Góra, quite a distance away to the north-west. Some people walk all the way from Warsaw, a journey of nine days. The walk from the village was not as long as this, as Częstochowa is the neighbouring voivodship. Some people walked from the village, a pilgrimage of thanks for answered prayers or to plead for divine intervention. Prayers for the birth of children were not uncommon, as the extra hands of growing families was the best form of survival for a subsistence based agricultural community. The inability to have children was a great misfortune. Though Poland as a Catholic country did not have divorce, in some quarters there was belief in an old Slavic view that a man had a right to leave his wife if after seven years she had not been able to have a child. Not every villager was happy with the pilgrims' show of devoutness as the eternal village gossips complained about people neglecting essential farming chores for such pursuits of relative leisure.

Major villages and towns held regular markets for merchants and farmers. Forty stalls in the open air was a good average, usually spread out on the cobblestones of the village square, with up to fifty or one hundred in the better seasons and weather. In the heat of summer the experienced stall holders are shaded by canvas. Some of the small towns had already built all-weather buildings, big sheds with skylights that provided some respite in the rain and blustery conditions, but the poorer communities couldn't afford this. These produce markets are a movable event, as the same traders and often locals followed the rostered market days from town to village – a market for every day of the week if one were prepared to travel. Local villagers, including matronly figures rugged up well against the cold, sell their produce from baskets or sacking at their feet: vegetables, eggs, cheese, butter, chickens, rabbits, even calves and cows. The money made from selling butter and cheese is spent on sausage and meat. Cows provide milk, but cows in calf end up bringing in more money eventually, as selling the young calves brings in much needed cash. A prosperous farmer with sufficient land will have a sow, and piglets at

three months old provide more good income at these sales. The villagers with carpentry skills also offer their products: there are three-legged dairy stools, ladders, cupboards, tables, benches, and the all-wooden long handled rakes used to drag in the hay. The villagers buy the things they cannot make easily: material, clothing, kitchen utensils, coffee, tea, sweets. Young children are taken to the market as a treat, the older ones stay behind to do the farm work. If they're lucky the children may get a soda water, the toys and popguns are tantalisingly out of reach – little carts and pull-along toys, the lovely mobile elegance of the *hulajnoga,* and that traditional equestrian of the broomsticks, the hobby horse. At home the toys for the boys are made by older brothers, uncles, and fathers, while mothers and the corresponding female complement make their presents for the girls.

Theft can be a problem, usually a late night activity, and usually in the thieves' neighbouring villages where the likelihood of perpetrators being recognised is lower. Anything is at risk; stock such as horses and cattle were the biggest targets, but even cats and dogs were considered worth the chance. Cats were selected for their fur, dogs were taken to distant villages and sold off to the farmers who must have some suspicions but nevertheless part with their money; after all a good guard dog is a good precaution against thieves. The police would be on the lookout for facts about whoever has suddenly acquired a new dog and sometimes after a spate of offences they would swoop down on their motorised bicycles in a raid and cart away their hand-cuffed prisoners; on its own the crime of stealing a cat or dog was not considered particularly serious. Houses are also burgled for produce and even doonas which are a useful unidentifiable commodity. They are sold anonymously at the market. Even growing produce is vulnerable, as the distance between a villager's home and his farmland leaves opportunities for unwelcome explorers to visit, assess, and sample even quite small-sized potatoes, long before there is any inclination by the owner to harvest them. The distant fields are unfenced and unguarded except for the sentinel trees and copses at the fringes of the property keeping their own witness.

Aniela would have finished her basic schooling in about 1933 at the age of twelve or thirteen and then helped out on the farm. There must have been forests nearby as she talked of going into the woods to collect firewood. The young and agile would look after the stock when they had to be moved to temporary greener pasture; this meant getting up at the crowing of the roosters to milk the cow. At home she learnt how to knit and sew for a farming family needs: sturdy dresses, blouses and shirts were painstakingly hand stitched; the quality of output was variable as one sits before the window to capture the last of the light, or under the dim and flickering light of the kerosene lantern. Cleaning the soot off the inside of the fragile glass chimneys had to be done carefully as the expense of replacement was prohibitive. Knitting was another necessitous chore, and this is where the clever skills were developed of knitting gloves with their multiple-finger projections, and socks with their distinctive right-angle bend at the heel. Utilitarian knitting needles made of bicycle spokes extruded a tightly knitted material under the deft control of young nimble fingers. In comparison to these, the long scarves, the funny-eared children's hats, and the ordinary jumpers were relatively simple. Darning and repairing were regular evening chores when the daily farming activities had finished. A growing daughter progressed from simple alterations for younger siblings' hand-me-downs to the more complex tasks of whole garments.

The craft of embroidery is much admired and women put special effort into blouses and vests that will be worn on important occasions. Spinning the strands of flax into thread was another job for women. Looms are not common household items so the thread was sold or sent out to the weaver and linen obtained in return to make the domestic requirements of tablecloths, sheets, aprons and tough working shirts. Sheepskin coats for winter use were a desirable wish by the menfolk. This trend was set by the fierce-looking mountain men of the southern highlands, the *górale*. The shepherds and folk of the hills had found a market for their embroidered sheepskin jackets and moccasins. Women rugged up in bulky shawls for extra protection.

At 5:45 in the morning on the first of September 1939 when Aniela was a young woman of nineteen years, the Germans invaded Poland and occupied it to the east of Warsaw almost up to Lwow; Kielce was under Nazi occupation. The sartorial splendour of the Polish cavalry was no match for the modern technology of the Hitler war machine, as cavalry units charged against columns of invading tanks. Seventeen days later on the seventeenth of September the Russians took over eastern Poland. The Russians deported men and sometimes whole families to the forced labour camps of Siberia. People were afraid, the militia would come with carts and give people fifteen minutes notice before they were taken away. The armies on both sides of the dividing line wanted food and supplies, and demanded it from the people. Farmers were ordered to surrender most of the wheat they had harvested, and the Germans would jail families caught withholding it. A food shortage occurred, as food and merchandise were hidden and later bartered between merchants and farmers. Kerosene, sugar and oil were hard to get. Some views were that farmers

were better off for food than the city people because they had been able to store food. The orchards of people who had been deported were plundered by the ones who were left behind. The people had to survive how they could.

Where the Russians came to rule the towns, Russian language classes in local schools became compulsory, and photographs of Russian leaders were distributed like swap cards to the children. But the Russian attitude towards education was not unexpected, as that had been their practice in the former century.

On 22 June 1941 the Germans attacked the Soviet Union and moved into eastern Poland. Kielce ended up in the middle of the German controlled Generalgouvernment area and where there were areas of intense Polish Partisan activity; major battles occurred around the town in 1944. Where the Germans came they stopped Polish children from getting their secondary education at the *gimnazjium*. And by 1941 the Nazis were rounding up young Polish women for their work camps. The penalty was death if you refused to go.

Over the next four years hundreds of thousands of Polish men and women were deported to the forced-labour jobs in Germany. Some villagers hid in the woods to escape. Some came back and were caught. Others roamed the countryside, always on the move, hiding where they could. Aniela was one of the women selected to go to Germany and much against her will was sent off on the long train journey to the west, for on 12 March 1942 she was registered as working as a farmhand in Asendorf and continued there until 1945. The wrench from the closeness of family and the village where you have lived all your young life must have been horrendous. Both Russian and the German armies were equally adept at separating people from their families, their land and their culture. The isolated individuals and fragmented groups were always more defenceless and compliant with the orders of their oppressors.

In Germany the conscripted workers were subjected to compulsory de-lousing or disinfecting treatments, and the Poles were required to wear a prominent "P" on a yellow background as an indication of their ethnic background. Farmers could apply to have workers assigned to their farms and homes. Aniela ended up working as a farmhand around the Hannover region. Women describe this time as being very tough on them personally as they were innocent and isolated victims. Even if the German family treated them fairly they were still there against their will. Some Polish women worked this way for five years and never saw their families or villages again.

After the German army had surrendered in 1945 the conscripted workers moved from the farms and homes to the refugee camps of Germany, the former army barracks, where they received the new acronyms of DPs – Displaced Persons – what we would now call refugees. There were hundreds of these camps across the country, and in this region they were controlled by the British military. Despite the harshness of existence in these camps, for most of the deported Poles there was no going back to a home now controlled by a foreign communist dictatorship. For them the national rebirth of 1918 had been extinguished in 1939. In these displaced persons' camps two or three families shared a room, separated from one another only by a curtain wall of army blankets. Here they would wait, sometimes for years, to see what would happen to them, trying to trace what had happened to their families. Despite their problems many people were meeting partners, getting married, having children. In the midst of all the hardship people were rebuilding their lives.

At one such camp Aniela met her future husband Ziva, a man of Yugoslav nationality from Vojvodina whose name she always translated into the Polish phonetic spelling of Zywa. Young people were isolated in the harsh life of foreign lands and strangers, even if some of the strangers were fellow countrymen or other friendly nationals. They had to make their own decisions for companionship and protection far away from their accustomed family counsel. After Aniela and Ziva's first year together a little daughter was born, two years later a son; and so the growing family had already spent three years in their temporary refugee accommodation. The DP camps were not idle stopovers. People had to earn their keep, and so life was not that dissimilar to before – Ziva worked in the forests for municipal authorities but at least he was eligible for some sickness entitlements when he was not able to work because of illness. Aniela also had to continue with farming or domestic chores until her stage of pregnancy and later the childcare responsibilities excused her from such work requirements.

When these refugee families were offered the opportunity they migrated to America, Canada, Argentina, or Australia, anywhere to escape the personal grief, separations and deaths they had witnessed in war-torn Europe. Often enough the deciding factor was whichever country accepted them first.

The 1945 border changes shifted the Polish nation to the west, losing territory in the Ukraine and Byelorussia and gaining in turn from the German territories. Now it was a nation of 36 million people, almost entirely of Polish ethnicity, and with the minority groups of Germans,

Byelorussians and Ukrainians making up only 1.2 percent of the total population. Behind the satisfactory appearance of statistical homogeneity lies the harsher reality of six million dead and many more displaced and traumatised lives.

No part of the modern world is insulated from change. Many of the Polish immigrants who settled in Australia after the war retained nostalgic memories of their homeland. Separated by half the globe and by a generation of time, their rose-coloured perceptions never had to be confronted by reality. Except occasionally.

One sometimes would hear of an older man returning to the village of his youth, which he had championed as the perfect antidote to the growing anonymity of Melbourne suburbia, only to find that his idyllic little village had also been swallowed up by the suburban sprawl. The little sanctuary so long treasured in the ideal had progressed through the same rural-to-urban transformation pressures as had the Australian neighbourhood to which he had migrated. For some people it was the normal nostalgia for younger days, a friend's father reminiscing quite seriously how the wind in Poland was quite different to the wind in Australia, because despite Poland being a lot colder at least there the wind blew around you, whereas in Australia the wind went straight through you. Privately I wondered whether this perception may have more to do with his growing older and feeling the colder temperatures more acutely than in his hot-blooded days of youth.

In a slightly different perspective people who remembered migrating as young children were surprised how the broad open spaces of their childhood village had shrunk during the intervening years of their absence. And in many cases, if these migrants were recognised at all when they returned on their rare exploratory vacations, they were now identified as outsiders, as Australians rather than Poles.

For some, there was the disappointment that the financial assistance that had been sent back over the years had been spent on the type of luxuries that the sender themselves had forgone in order to support their relatives, or that the essential appliances that had urgently required that subsidy had turned out to be no more than the urgent need to subsidise a drinking problem. For others, such as Aniela, the possibility of some support for their relatives was part of a family tradition that was continued if possible. So when they could they sent small parcels of clothing and some money if they could afford it. These occasional parcels helped eke out the low incomes. Others sent medications and accessories that were difficult to obtain behind the iron curtain, such as syringes for diabetics. The Polish clergy in Australia even raised money through their congregations to support charitable programs back in Poland.

For Aniela the letters to relatives in Poland were important in maintaining contact with her family, but this correspondence was not something that her children had much to do with. When Aniela died in 1982, Helen and Joseph cobbled together in their broken Polish four letters that they sent back to the most recent writers, about their mother passing away. Nothing much was heard in response to this notification. One letter came eventually from a man, a nephew, asking for money as he was getting married and would like to buy some things. Many weeks later a niece wrote expressing sympathy and explaining that she had moved from her last address and the letter had been delayed in redirection. As a sole parent with a young child she wrote that she was struggling to find accommodation, and, though she expressed some optimism, one could imagine the difficulties of raising a child on her own. That was our last contact with the Polish relatives.

Aniela Ribarow nee Siuda and Joseph Ribarow.

Helena Vasjuta nee Ribarow with children © J Ribarow

Helena Vasjuta nee Ribarow with children © J Ribarow

STEVE KOZLOWSKI

I was born on 1 January 1944 during the war somewhere in Poland. When I asked my mother where I was born she said I was born in the forest. I said surely there was a house or hospital or something. She said no, I was born in a forest. It was during the war and every day was a struggle for survival. One day they lost me and nearly lost me permanently. They had me wrapped up in an old army coat and were running through the snow. They stopped for a breather and opened up the coat to discover there was no baby. So my father ran back and found me in the snow looking quite blue. But I survived.

My mother was from Warsaw and I think my father was from Lwow. How they met I have no idea, but people do travel. Mum spoke about some incidents in the war, but only reluctantly, because terrible things had happened and sometimes people want to forget. She told me that we were on the displaced persons' train with hundreds of people and traveling for long periods up and down the tracks between destinations and the people were dropping like rabbits. I think the German army authorities were hoping the people would die during the journey. Whenever they stopped they would lay the dead bodies alongside the tracks and move on again.

At one stop my mother jumped off the train and headed for a puddle of water because there was no water on the train. The German officer demanded to know what she was doing and she replied she was getting water for her family. He said if you go near that I will shoot you. She turned around and said shoot me. She was lucky, because he turned his back and walked away. Another time they were told to walk through the countryside. My father and his brother said they would walk ahead to see where they were going. They were heading towards Treblinka. Some 750,000 people were murdered there.

My father always said that to survive you had to have something to barter and the best thing was tobacco, so he hoarded tobacco and would hide it under his coat and trade it for other things.

One day the Germans were looking for some partisans and grilled him if he had seen any. He gave some wrong directions in his broken German and got away with it because the soldiers headed off. He survived. What we heard too was that when the parents were put into the labour camps the children were separated from them. There were not many kids. One of the stories was that they were feeding the kids a lot of Saccharine and many of them died as a consequence.

In 1946 we were in a displaced persons camp in Leiningen in the American-controlled part of Germany. I'm not sure how we got there but I presume that my parents were fleeing from the Soviet occupation of Poland. We must have been there some time because our earliest family photographs are from this location.

Kozlowski family at Leiningen © S Kozlowski

Anna & Steve at Leiningen camp 1940s © S Kozlowski

As with many displaced families after the war, we were sent to refugee camps. After Leinigen we were moved to Italy and came to Australia on the USS General Stewart, which had been one of the American troop carriers. We had become part of the great Diaspora of the International Refugee Organisation's post-war resettlement program.

We came to Australia in 1950 and we spent about two and a half years in the Bathurst migrant camp in New South Wales. From there we ended up at Rushworth between Bendigo and Shepparton but I can't remember how long we stayed there.

We came to St Albans mid 1952 because I was enrolled at St Albans Primary School in June 1952, and I have a photo of me in Grade 3A in 1953. We would walk from Cowper Avenue to the school five days per week. It was a good walk. We formed a walking bus, starting with my sister and I at our place and picking up two or three extra pupils at points as we walked along, until finally there were about thirty of us. On the way back it was the reverse and the number diminished as kids dropped out on reaching their home. It was good. You saw people from your neighbourhood and many of them are still around. One of the fellows was Harry Moakes who started the Green Gully soccer club, but at that time it was called Ajax. Harry was from Malta and came here in the mid 1950s and became involved with soccer very quickly. He's still here and turned 89 not long ago. He was the President of the St Albans pensioner club that I help run in the new Errington Community Centre. He retired recently and they elected me as his replacement.

I had two sisters, Anna and Teresa, and they are still around. Anna was born in 1942 and Teresa was born in 1946, whereas I was born in 1944, so I split the difference. I was born in Stanislawow in Poland. There are several towns named Stanislawow in modern Poland with one east of Warsaw. Mother used to say it was somewhere near the big river Bug. It might be the town east of Warsaw but other people say it could be the old pre-war province or town near

Lwow which was once part of Poland but is now in the Ukraine.

Michal & Weronika Kozlowski with children © S Kozlowski

I'm not sure why we moved to St Albans. It might have been through a first cousin who was here before us.[1] I think my father bought a block of land from Frank Mann who was a local real estate agent.[2] I think my uncle got my father to come from Rushworth to look at this block of land in St Albans. We got off at the Albion station and walked around looking for this block of land that they had no idea where it was located. It was getting dark and where we slept I don't know, but it might have been a car crate.

Car crate used as a shed © Steve Kozlowski

Anyway, the block was at 14 Cowper Avenue in St Albans. My father got a job at Wunderlichs in Albion and worked there all his life there. As with all the European migrants, you saved your money and bought a bit of timber and when you had enough timber you put up a wall frame. Then you saved some more money and did it again. When the weekend came everyone was helping each other building their homes. One had to put up the wall frame, another had to do something else. They helped each other. That's the way it worked.

When we first came to Cowper Avenue the house was probably two rooms and that was built by my father and other people. My parents slept in one room and we kids slept in the other. Eventually another room was built so the boys and girls would have separate bedrooms. Then more was added and it became a full house. I think the whole house took less than a year to build. When the frame was up the first thing they did was put a branch of a tree up on the top of the roof. That was a tradition. I could never find out why that was a tradition of the Europeans.

Houses in Cowper Ave 1950s © Sylvia Bluemel

Migrants came because they were looking for land and a new country to live in. My mother befriended a fellow and she eventually found out that he had been in the German army. He was reluctant to talk of his war experiences but eventually opened up. My mum was born in Warsaw and his unit went into Warsaw to do what they had to do. Well, she let him have it. She laid into him. After that when he saw her he'd cross over the street. He might not have done anything himself, but he was part of an army that did.

In the early years of St Albans no one would pinch anything. You could leave things outside the house or outside the shops and they would not go missing. Then we heard one time that a shop had left part of an aluminium door outside and that disappeared. That was the first time that someone pinched something from them. Occasionally a bicycle was stolen from the railway station but more so the wheels, because if you had a puncture it was easier to take the wheel than the bike. It wasn't good.

We didn't start off with a bungalow because dad build a square building. I'm not sure who he stayed with when he started building but there was an old wooden car crate

[1] Jozef and Antonina Kozlowski were living at 99 Theodore Street, St Albans.
[2] The office of Keith Mann P/L was in Main Road East.

in our back yard that we used as a shed so perhaps that was dad's first sleepout in St Albans. One started off with one or two rooms and that's where we slept while the rest of the house was being built. I didn't think of it as a bungalow because bungalows were three rooms longwise. I don't know how people lived in them. The toilets were always outside, and the dunny man would come once a week. How many times the poor guy was followed by dogs who wanted to attack him. It was not an easy job.

Our little neighborhood was the area between Cowper, Bernbank and Manfred streets. We were a very multicultural neighbourhood with people of several nationalities. In our area we had Dutch, Russian, Ukrainians, there were Polish of course, a couple of English, and there were the German people; the Italians came bit later. Sylvia Kopmann was German; she was a good speaker and very polite in her language. She lived in Manfred Avenue opposite Johnny Oldaker who was of British background. We called him Turk because of his swarthy complexion even though he was English; his parents were Josephine and Thomas.

Turk came here with his parents when he was young. When he was 15 or 16 his mum took him back to England. Fifteen years later there was a knock on my door and it was Turk looking for me. I was surprised that he knew where I was. He said he went to the local police station and asked them. Turk had married quite young but, in those years, if you were under a certain age the marriages were not recognised overseas. Turk and his young wife became separated when he went overseas, and he wanted to meet her again. I was able to trace her to Mt Gambier, and when he returned a second time he went there to visit her. Turk now lives in Leicester in England with two children, and I am still in touch with him.

The streets were unmade. The gutter was just a ditch along the road. Kenny Hovenga was a young Dutch immigrant with several sisters. One time he wanted a dink on my bike, and I pedalled while he was perched on my handlebars playing with a yo yo. One of our friends who had a car drove towards us so the bike swerved and Kenny fell off into this filthy gutter. He was laying there and got up still holding onto his yo yo. When the fireworks came the gutters were a temptation. The kids would be looking at the yucky, greeny, crawly stuff in the gutter and someone would quickly drop a cracker into it and kaboom … greeny slime everywhere.

As I said, the roads were unmade. When it rained it was mud. When it was hot it was hot. We didn't have fans, we covered the windows and accepted it. We managed. There were a couple of dams in the paddocks. Sometimes the whole family might be sitting around one of these dams, but if you went in for a swim you would go in clean and come out a covered in a film of grey clay. There was a dam near where we lived; it's now a playground. There was a swimming hole at the river at the end of Biggs Street. Once we discovered that there was a river nearby it became a meeting place for most of St Albans. Some of the swimmers were reckless because they would jump in without checking for hazards and come out with a split head. We were careful. We learnt to swim in that river and knew where the rocks and stumps were. We'd tell people where the hazards were but some would just jump off the tree without looking.

At the end of Biggs Street before the path down to the river there was Sunshine Avenue. Down where the power station is now located there was a little waterfall surrounded with boxthorns. You could sit along the top there and watch all the snakes, lizards and rabbits. Boxthorn bushes and Scotch thistles used to be along Green Gully Road and if you went off the road you probably ran into the boxthorns. That was a dangerous road going down into that gulley because if your brakes weren't good you couldn't manoeuver round the steep curves. Lots of cars and bicycle ran off the road along there and a number of people died. Young Johnny Kasjan from the high school was killed there in 1961 by a hit and run driver.

A Dutch man by the name of Henricus Van der Kruys drowned at the Biggs Street swimming hole. They lived in Main Road East around the corner for us. At that time the river was in flood and a young family friend got into trouble so he dived in to rescue her. The girl was saved but Van der Kruys drowned. The police couldn't do much because of the turbulence of the water and nothing could be done until the river subsided. They found his body two weeks later near the quarter mile bridge. They were a good family. Mrs Van der Kruys was left with 8 kids under 14 years of age to raise on her own. The community rallied some support and she went to live in a housing commission place in Braybrook. I think the daughter later received an award from Prime Minister Bob Menzies.

My parents had a veggie garden and grew what they could to sustain themselves and there was the occasional fruit tree. Most people had something in the ground and shared what they had. If the neighbours' kids were around when tea was served they also got a plate. What people had was shared. Sometimes when the evenings came and it was nice and clear one of the neighbours played the banjo and that music went right across the paddocks. You could hear it a kilometre up the road.

Bonfires were very popular. Between the Oldaker and the Crossland families there were about five vacant blocks and when bonfire night came everybody brought everything out – old

furniture, you name it, was put on the bonfire. All the families would come out and it was an outing for the night. They'd take out their chairs and sit back. The Dutch people would be playing their banjos. The kids would be cheering, the fires would be going, and someone would be dancing. That's the way it was. It was the same in Albion; they had a bonfire near the silos many years ago and that was huge. People would come from all around to enjoy the spectacle. Now people complain about pollution.

Wasyl Kewniuk was a Russian neighbour. He was a tank commander in the war and drove trucks. They had no children. He had a couple of friends who were killed at the Furlong Road railway crossing on their motor bike when they ran into a train. One of them was an adopted brother. We went to the funeral. Wasyl had a tray truck and we put armchairs in the back of this truck and we all sat there because that's the only transport we had to get to the Melbourne General Cemetery for the funeral. You couldn't do it now, you would be arrested.

Another Dutch fella had been in the Dutch army – Harry Coort[1] – who had a shop in Main Road West. He lived at the top of our street in Main Road East. His wife was Maria and he was Arie but we all knew him as Harry. He was an auto electrician and his shop was near Kerr the Chemist on the south side of Main Road West. He eventually moved to Goughs Bay near Mansfield. He's the one who taught me how to shoot. He'd been in the army and had a rifle.

Where we were there, there was nothing between us and the river. There was Cowper Avenue and then it was all empty up to Sunshine Avenue and further to the river. That used to be a dirt track. You wouldn't go there because if you got bogged or broke down no-one would go near the place. There was a stone fence there and we would shoot into that. People used guns to shoot rabbits for their dinner but I didn't want to do that so I did a bit of target practice. Coort was very safety conscious with guns. One day someone gave me an air pistol and I fired it near some people. He came up and gave me a thick ear and said never to do it again.

There was another Dutch family by the name of Elzinga with three children, who also came here from the Bathurst camp and lived in Cowper Street not far from us. He was a house painter and later managed a paint shop in Main Road East opposite the Tin Shed. They were Fonger and Sjouke but here they were known as Fred and Jill. Fred was involved with the Presbyterian church in East Esplanade. Jill worked as a cleaner and when she was working at 3AW they couldn't pronounce her Dutch name so they called her Jill. Mr Elzinga died in the early 1970s and I remember that their daughter Annie died of cancer in the 1990s at a fairly young age, in her early fifties.

Mr and Mrs Epema[2] were another local Dutch family; they later moved to Braybrook. Their son loved horses. We went to visit Mrs Epema years later and she looked at me and said "You're the one I used to chase with a broom." She was laughing her head off. We sat and talked for hours.

Kenny Hovenga had a brother Richard who the oldest of the kids. The family was from the Netherlands and like us they arrived at Sydney and went to the Bathurst Reception Centre before moving to Rushworth and then Cowper Street, St Albans. Kenny had a least three sisters and they were Wentje, Ytje and Tryntje – who went to the high school and they still come to class reunions. Richard joined the Salvation Army and learnt how to play the clarinet. A couple of times he came late at night to my place and we'd go out about midnight, him with his clarinet, me with a guitar, and another chap. We would go to someone's house about one o'clock in the morning and start playing outside their window. Pretty soon a head would pop out and "Get home you little … or I'll tell your mother." The thing was that telling your father was not a problem so much, but when they said they would tell your mother you were scared.

The Van der Kruys family were the musical mob playing banjos and that.

Towards Sylvia Kopmann's place there was an English man whom we called Turk. The mother was a very jovial person but it was bit hard to understand her at times because in England they also had different dialects and hers was a broad accent. That's where we learnt how to drive a car because Turk's father bought a little Morris Minor. Sometimes when the father was at work we would take the car out for a spin. Sometimes Mr Oldaker would take us for a run in the car and we would watch how he drove. So we were self taught. When he wasn't home we would take the car and practice by driving around the block.

Down the road were the Crossland family – Annie and John.[3] They were English and used to love drinking. They went to the pub one time and befriended somebody, a chap they called Uncle Charlie. He lived at their place for years and years. He was skinny as a rake. One day their bungalow caught on fire and I think he must have been smoking in bed. On that day Charlie

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[1] Arie Hubertus Coort and Maria Gerarda nee Nissen came under Netherlands Australian Migration Agreement. A.H. Coort Automotive and General Electrical Service was at 95 Main Road West, St Albans.

[2] Jilt and Johanna Epema migrated in 1955 with children Bauke, Anne, Jacob, Dora, Christina and Yvonne.

[3] Annie and John Nathaniel Crossland were living at 31 Bernbank Avenue. They migrated from the UK in 1951 with children Eileen and Gerald.

disappeared and we never saw him again. The bungalow was damaged but not destroyed and Uncle Charlie was never seen again. They had a horse. Their bungalow was made of cement sheeting and one time they were backing the horse near the wall and it kicked a hole in the cement sheeting. That hole was there for a while because no one had the money to buy things immediately.

There was a mob called Kinatz in Manfred Avenue who were Ukrainian.[1] The parents worked as cleaners. They were a good family but the father was very, very strict. The son grew up also with a very strict temperament. He was with our group and if someone spoke harshly towards him he would want to confront them. I always tried to calm him down. The father was a solid bloke and I think he had experienced a tough life in the army.

We had Broderick Smith in our neighbourhood. His family came here a bit later from England, probably about 1960, and their first home here was a small shed at the back of a Yugoslav family before they built their own bungalow. He became a blues musician and has played in some well-known Aussie bands. These days he's playing Australian country rock. I caught up with him at one of the high school reunions and he asked me what I was doing there. I said I was on the organizing committee and he was most surprised. Broderick was a good friend of Laurie Schwab, another of our neighbours, if I recall correctly.

Another German family was the Goettlichers. The youngest boy is still around and living not far from here in Deer Park. We still see him around. There were two brothers with good physiques so they would prance around.

Kenny Flatt was an Aussie. His father was in the army and had a 303 rifle.

Petro Kewniuk[2] – his so-called adopted brother got killed in the motorbike accident.[3] They used to have the old 78 records. We decided to have some fun target practice with the air guns, so we hung some of the records on the washing line and used them for target practice.

I enrolled in the old St Albans primary school in 1952 with my older sister Anna. In 1954 I was bussed to Deer Park because the old school was overcrowded. The Deer Park school was a brick building and later they added a portable classroom. They had an open fireplace in the main room and I remember Kenny Hovenga was nominated as the fire officer so he had to get the firewood. What we loved is when we had to miss classes. There was an old bridge there over the Kororoit Creek and when the river flooded that bridge was under water. The bus would collect us at the St Albans school and go down Main Road and Station Road which was a single lane then. When the bridge was flooded the bus had to go back through Albion and along Ballarat Road through the back way, so that was a couple of hours gone.

Grade 3A St Albans Primary 1953 © S Kozlowski

I remember years later talking with a woman at a class reunion at that school. The lady said that the school had finally convinced the Education Department to give them a portable to cope with their increased attendance. When it finally arrived and was set up suddenly there was a busload of strange kids arriving and that was us from St Albans. We were there for a couple of years until St Albans East Primary was built. We had a good chat about that.

I always wondered if the Education Department couldn't cope with us because we were foreigners. Sometimes we were roughed up a bit by the Aussie kids, but we rethought, regrouped and retaliated. After that we became good friends.

Grade 4B at Deer Park 1954 © S Kozlowski

I was at the Deer Park school in 1954 and 1955. After that I went to the new St Albans East primary school because that started up in 1956. I remember one teacher Miss or Mrs Sullivan who must have been there in 1956 because the Olympic games were on. She took us to her place during school hours to watch some of the Olympic games on her black and white television. The school used us first students

[1] Herman and Maria Kinatz with children Jaroslav, Anna, and Bohdan migrated in 1950/51.

[2] Petro and Warwara Kewniuk migrated in 1951 with children Petro and Olha. Petro junior was in Form 2A St Albans High in 1959.

[3] The two men killed at the Furlong Road crossing in 1954 were Wasil Motuk of Bernbank Avenue and Stefan Tarasiuk of Cowper Avenue.

as slave labour to set up the classrooms. That wasn't fair but we enjoyed it.

St Albans High School 1957 © S Kozlowski

I started at the St Albans High School in 1957. The high school opened in 1956 in Sunshine in an old church hall and then transferred to the new school building in Main Road East, St Albans, in the following year. We had students from the catholic school join us state school kids, and there also some students from Sunshine, Deer Park, Sydenham, Riddells Creek and Sunbury. They all came by bus or train because no one had cars in those years.

Form 4 St Albans High School © S Kozlowski

Vanda Viti and Basil Listopad[1] were in the first intake of 1956. Vanda was from Italy and Basil was from the Ukraine. Vanda became a teacher and worked around St Albans for a while. I caught up with her at several of the high school reunions but she's now passed way. I caught up with Basil in Queensland after tracking him down and heard he was in Nambor. When I saw him walking down the street, I recognised him by his gait. We started talking and had a good time-sharing memories.

Harry Moakes started off the Ajax Soccer Club by getting a group of kids together. Their ground was the one between Vincent and Oberon avenues near Biggs Street. When I joined the pensioners club Harry was the president. His nephew is Charles Venes who was in my class at school and I used to tell Harry what Charlie was getting up to. So Harry would talk to Charlie who was always asking how Harry knew of these things, but Harry wouldn't tell him. Charlie was a soccer person rather than an Aussie rules person, so when the school football sessions started Charlie would hide in the shower cubicles in the toilet block to avoid playing. One of the teachers, Doc Walsh, was awake to this ruse and would check under the door gap to see if anyone was standing behind the door. Charlie was smarter because he would hold himself up from the shower pipe and draw his legs up. This worked fine until the shower pipe broke under his weight and he was sprung. Charlie used to work after school in Foodlands near the Commonwealth bank. He would get detention which he wasn't happy with because he could lose his job. The teachers told him the solution was simple – don't play up at school. To stop him from nicking off they would lock the door, but Charlie jumped through the window. So they gave him double detention.

Doc Walsh was the sports master and organized a cross country run through the paddocks starting and finishing at the school. Eddie Hylan and I decided we were going to win so we hid a pushbike in a ditch along the way. We started with everyone else but later diverged to get the bike. I dinked Eddie and we peddled our way back to within about a block of the school and dumped the bike and ran the rest of the way. We were hailed as winners when we jogged into the schoolyard, but someone dobbed us in and Doc bawled us out. When he demanded why we did it we said we thought it was a triathlon. Eddie's sister married Jimmy Patterson who became an artist and ended up in Broken Hill. I hadn't seen Eddie for 40 years and met him unexpectedly in the Lerderderg Gorge. I didn't recognise him because he had a big bushy beard, but he recognised me.

I remember Julian Castagna from the high school. His family came from Italy and settled in Main Road West in a makeshift bungalow. His father was a brick layer who built their home in brick when other people were building in weatherboard. After high school Julian worked for ABC television in Melbourne before moving to England and running his own film advertising business in London.

He's now back in Australia and runs a winery at Beechworth. I have tried to contact him at various times but he's often away on international or interstate business trips because of his expertise in the biodynamics of wine making.

[1] Ivan and Nastasja Listopad migrated in 1950 with children Aleksej, Valentina, Vasilij , and Georg.

Tom Tscherepko[1] is someone else that I remember from high school. He was rather unconventional and so we called him Killer Tom, but I heard that others knew him as Bonegilla Tom because his father was a cook at the Bonegilla camp, and they were there for years. I knew Tom from the bodgie days when he'd turn up at school out of uniform and be sent to the principal's office. He wasn't long at the high school before getting a job in a factory that was developing commercial shelving systems. He later set up his own business installing supermarket shelving and I hear he's a keen punter and investor in racing horses. He's been a long-term St Albans boy and I'd love to catch up with him.

Victor Mahorin was a high school boy whose parents were from the Ukraine.[2] He became a solicitor and had his office in St Albans near the station. The police used to refer the minor criminal cases to him and he would charge some minor amount so that at least they were represented in court. I would go past his office occasionally and he would have his feet on up the desk that was completely covered in paperwork. Eddie Lacinski would help him with the paperwork because he was very good at that. Victor died early because of complications related to diabetes. Lacinski helped clean up all the paperwork so I guess that they were mates or business associates. He found that a number of people still owed Victor money for help that had been provided but Victor had not pursued the debts. He didn't care about that. I hear that Lacinski has written a book about his migration experiences but I haven't come across it.[3]

Slawko Muc became a dentist and is still operating in St Albans in Main Road West. He was a good friend of Leo Suszko who was also a Ukrainian refugee and he was living in Millawa Avenue near the high school. Leo was a Bonegilla boy. He worked in the meat industry and now owns a smallgoods factory and has several outlets based around Thomastown.

In 1962 I bought a Humber Super Snipe for £2 but I found sixpence in the car so it cost me £1/19/6.

The Hoods & Humber Snipe 1962 © S Kozlowski

The Hoods & Humber Snipe 1962 © S Kozlowski

I was with a group of mates we called The Hoods and we had a great time with the Humber. I parked the car in the driveway and one morning I heard all this banging and crashing and there were my mates pulling the doors off. I asked what they were doing and they said they were going to make a decent car out of it. We went across Main Road East which then was all open paddocks where the Sunshine Hospital now is and raced the car up and down the paddocks. As we were driving we saw something roll past us – the back wheel had fallen off! As we were driving down Biggs Street to the river the police pulled us up. They didn't book us but told us we were not allowed on the road and to take the car home.

St Albans from Sunshine Ave 1950s © Kon Haumann

[1] Tom came to Australia in 1950 with his father Stepan and step-brothers Victor and Wally.

[2] Leonid and Ariadna Mahorin were Ukrainian nationals who migrated with son Viktor in 1950.

[3] Refer to https://greataustralianstory.com.au/story/st-albans-then-and-now.

Dirt racetrack in Sunshine Ave 1960s © Otto Czernik

We used to drive the car up and down the road from Cowper Avenue to Manfred Street but if we drove too long the motor got hot and we didn't know about radiators. One of the parents who knew something about cars would be waiting with a can of water to fill the radiator. We loved it and drove around until the police come up and told us we weren't allowed to drive. We weren't hurting anyone and our parents knew what we were doing. I sold the old Humber eventually and made a few pounds profit.

The local policemen included Percy Mangles and Bill Betson. Years later my brother-in-law was a policeman working around Footscray. I visited one day at his station and saw photos of several guys pasted on the walls. I asked him who they were and he said they were petty criminals that they liked to keep an eye on. I knew them all!

The police knew who the trouble makers were. When something happened they knew who to get. One chap by the name of Eddie Lacinski now lives on the Gold Coast. Whenever he comes to Melbourne he always rings us to catch up. He said the police had their own methods to deter trouble makers. One day Eddie had had a bit too much to drink but instead of locking him up the police said his punishment was to go back to the police station and chop some firewood. He was a good tennis player, him and George Swadiak. They were good friends and in the same class at the high school. Swadiak is now involved with the St Albans Football Club in Kings Road.

Because of the police in the area, we used to call the place Tombstone Territory. The kids would be arguing and brawling down this end and the police would come and break it up and it was backwards and forwards. But it was nothing serious.

There was a chap named Socrates Joannou that we called Socks. His sister Androulla was in my form and we caught up at one of the school reunions.

Opposite the Tin Shed there was a Mobil Garage run by Mick Certic who was originally from Yugoslavia and came here via Bonegilla. His daughter Luba went to the high school. I used to go past the garage every day and talk to him. He used to have some stock cars and had a mechanic named Little Eddie. Mick and Little Eddie would fire up these cars and they were as loud as anything doing wheelies on the concrete of the service station. The police would come and tell him off because the neighbours were complaining about the noise and the smell and the smoke. He'd say "I'm testing my car" but he'd quieten down after they came. The family moved to Sunshine in the 1970s and then moved to Queensland.

There were two barbers in St Albans that I remember. One was an Aussie guy named Cliff Snooks who was on the corner of Main Road and West Esplanade and then moved to Alfrieda Street. The other one was Socrates Joannou's father Xenenphon who lived in Main Road East not far from the old tennis courts on Errington Reserve and was the barber in the arcade. I saw Mr Joannou many years later and he said "I know you. I used to cut your hair and you had terrible hair." We were laughing our heads off.

Muyu had a little café on Main Road West and had a juke box in there. One day we heard the juke box was out of order and you could select tracks without paying. So we went there and were enjoying ourselves selecting music when he came and told us to get out. We said "But Muyu we are only listening to music." "Yes, but you are not paying for it." He called the police and when we heard them coming we nicked out the back door.

There were about five or six different gangs of different nationalities, but they weren't the thugs of today. Nevertheless the coppers saw them as a threat because they would congregate. The police had bodgie squads. The youth groups were not violent but people were concerned because they were getting together as a group. Sometimes if a gang was congregated at a railway station the station master would call the cops and the flying squad would come down to deal with them.

There were youth gangs in St Albans and they all had their territory. The neutral ground was in Main Road East where the Arcade was, up towards the Tin Shed, Alfrieda Street, and part of Main Road West. All the gangs used to meet on Saturdays and Sundays, some Friday nights, and they would be walking around, some with their portable juke boxes perched on their shoulder playing music, getting hamburgers and coke from the arcade and having a good time. The arcade was a popular place for hamburgers and chips and that's where you went and ate. Alfrieda Street was the same in being neutral ground.

Georgie Beris was a friend of Bev

Toogood and was a good bloke who drove a big black V8. He was a bit of a boxer and as you were talking to him he'd sometimes start shaping up to you. He was with the group called The Untouchables who wore leather jackets with Untouchables written across the back. He was a genuine boxer and fought in the featherweight division in lots of Melbourne tournaments during the 1950s and 1960s. I don't know what happened to him after that.

Karl Wysniewski was the king of the St Albans bodgies. Another one was Saverio. They were all part of the local gangs. I think Karl was of Polish nationality but his father must have died as he came to Australia with his mother Maria and stepfather Jan Doroba. They lived in Albert Crescent near the railway station. Karl might have had some German heritage as his forenames were Karl Heinz, which are typical German rather the Polish names.

There was a guy named Zorro who was with the Maltese mob. We used to have a bit of a go at them because of this and that. You weren't allowed to venture into their territory. If you went in by mistake they'd give you a bit of a wallop, not hard, but enough to remind you to keep out of their territory. But the families were good people. A lot of those kids left school early, when they were 14 or 15, and went and got jobs. Work was everywhere. There was Nettlefolds, Spaldings, Monsanto, Massey Ferguson and many more. Work was everywhere, which was a good part of that era.

The groups were probably ethnic based but not entirely. Our group was five or six guys and we were a mixture. The gangs were more to try to show how tough you were, but in reality a lot of people spoke to everybody and laughed and joked. I was of Polish background but there never were any Polish gangs in St Albans; they were more towards Ardeer. The Polish boys were quieter kids.

One of the gangs used to congregate under the power lines south of the high school. They'd build a little fire and have a couple of beers and enjoy themselves.

Growing up as teenagers we enjoyed getting up to any mischief we'd get away with. There used to be a peppercorn tree near the station and I used to climb that and drop peppercorns on top of people walking past. The police would come up and say: "What are you doing up there? Get down from there!"

When we had the gates at the railway crossing the station master would turn a wheel inside his cabin and the gates would close. Whenever we were hanging around there we would jump on the gates and the poor bloke would have to put a lot of muscle into getting that wheel to turn. The whole mob would be sitting on the gate and the window would open and few choice words would fly out. We'd scatter like rabbits. It was silly but that was our fun.

At high school we had a bit of a competition with bikes because people would leave their bikes leaning against the fence. We would all climb on the bike to see how many it would take to bend the wheel. You can just image some poor kid coming back to find his wheel was bent. These days I can't contemplate doing something like that because I believe one has to respect people and do no harm.

I think it was Gary Brown who brought in some cigarettes to school. This was the first time for our mob. At the end of the school there was a fence and behind the fence there was a bit of an indentation in the ground shielded by some grass, so the kids went there for a puff. But the teachers' room overlooked that area and the room being higher off the ground they could see us. So when they bell rang they were waiting for us. We'd say "not us, not us" but the teacher would point to the smokers.

I never took up smoking but when you were roaming the streets you had a cigarette tucked behind the ear to make yourself look tough. So I never smoked but I walked around with a cigarette tucked behind my ear. I remember that Gary had a pet sheep when we were at high school, and this was what some families had in lieu of a lawn mower. Gary ended up working as a driver for Ingham Chickens at Portsea. He died of a heart attack.

Miss Bowles was the music teacher who tried to instill a love of music and singing in all her students. She tried to train us for the annual chorus that she featured as part of presentation day but some of us boys were not so keen for the traditional classics. One day she targeted our group for a practice session but we had our own agenda and started singing the chorus from "My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean". That's when she left the room.

Sylvia Kopmann wasn't too long in St Albans because her parents went back to Germany. They later came back to St Albans briefly before settling somewhere in Clayton. Sylvia and I were very close when she was in St Albans and would go to the pictures together. St Albans never had a picture theatre so people would go to Sunshine. When those people asked where do you live and you said St Albans it was "Oi yoi yoi, St Albans! I wouldn't go near there." Other people thought it was the dead end of the world and too rough for them.

I remember I went to the dance one time in the old community building in East Esplanade. The boys would be here, the women would be there, there would be different groups and dancing. Something was said and next thing it was on, pushing and shoving and yelling. A real barnie was going on. The police would come up and shut the place down: "Go home the lot of you!" Sylvia and I re-established our friendship

later in life when she returned to Australia.

Most of my classmates were migrants but there were a few Aussies. Fred Honey was in my form and he was a third-generation St Albans boy. His grandfather was Fred Stenson who came to St Albans in the 1880s and had the orchard near our favourite swimming hole. Murray Stevens was at the primary school in the 1950s and went on to Essendon Grammar. He was a third-generation local because his grand-parents were James and Agnes Stevens who came to St Albans about 1905 and their sons were well known in the area as they established several hardware and real estate businesses. There's a street named after Murray in the Stevensville estate, a recognition that not many other local kids could claim.

Robbie Priest and Colin Bell were also there. Robbie also was a third-generation local lad. His grandparents were the Lewises who had the old chook farm in Walter Street, and Robbie's father Alan played for the St Albans football club. Colin came from a large family of children who came from Traralgon in the 1940s. The father was an engineer.

Charlie Gatt is part of our pensioner club. He is of Maltese heritage and was at the high school in the 1960s. He used to be at the top of Cowper Avenue and he's still there. Gatt worked as a planner in the manu-facturing industry as a public servant with the consumer affairs department and as a parliamentary electoral officer. His voluntary work included being on the kindergarten and school committees, the multi-cultural consultative council and the migrant resource centre. At one stage he was representing the Overnewton Ward on Brimbank Council.

The Self brothers who had the super-market all lived along Victoria Crescent. They were an old established family of English origin and their supermarket dynasty started when Lewis built a small store in East Esplanade in the 1930s. The store expanded rapidly when the migrants started arriving and it became the biggest self-service store in Melbourne. Every-one went to Self Brothers & Goddard because they started selling lots of continental produce. Peter Self was at the primary school in my years and his father[1] was an industrial chemist who was related to the supermarket family.

Christa Albrecht attended the Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and was at the St Albans High School in the 1960s. They were a German family with two girls (Christa and Irene) who arrived in 1954. Christa returned to Austria and became a teacher and has been teaching English for 30 years. We keep in contact through the internet and facebook. She likes seeing the old school photos.

I joined the railways in 1961 after I finished at the high school. I did four years at the high school but didn't want to go further. I started working at the Flinders Street Station building, above the clocks. My office was behind the windows above the clocks. I was clerical. I worked there for about 30 odd years and took a break. Someone said there was better money outside so I went and worked elsewhere for 18 months. Then the railways took me back and I finished in 1994. The package came up and I took it. There were two packages. In 1984 a lot of the supervisors went and were told they could not return for so many years.

Where I worked was the electrical engineering branch. Anything electrical in the railways at that time was done by our mob. Because I did a lot of relieving I knew every section, so if a bloke didn't turn up for work I would take over his role. They offered a job to one of the fellas at the electrical workshop at Spencer, Latrobe and Lonsdale streets I think it was. They asked me to go in there for a little while until they got someone to work there. I was there for quite a while, somewhere between 10 and 20 years. To me it didn't matter where I worked. When I was in the office area I used to do the relieving all over the place. I'd go to Warragul and I'd drive there and stay at a hotel, because they gave you an allowance for the hotel. In those days petrol was not expensive. What I earned paid for the petrol over and over again.

For part of my time at the railways I worked with the fatalities section. Sometimes people were killed at the railway crossings and I had to inspect the scene and report on. There was no counseling or anything. You just did it and had to move on. That's the way it was.

I did 24 years with the railways and took the package and finished up in 1994.

My parents lived at the Cowper Street house until they passed away. My father had worked at Wunderlich and passed away years ago because he got the big C. A lot of people who worked at Wunderlich died of cancer. The council had done a survey of that area and a lot of the older people have cancer-related illnesses, because when that asbestos was floating around people were breathing it in. I used to play in that stuff.

After my father died my mother didn't want to move away from there so we went to stay with her. She died in 1992. She'd worked in a place in Geelong Road where they made cardboard boxes. They all had jobs. People from

[1] Peter Goodwin Self was the son of William Goodwin Self who was an industrial chemist. The family moved to Western Australia in the mid to late 1950s.

that era were hoarders because they thought another war would come. My mother had cupboards stacked with food.

Dr Henry Liszukiewicz told us that his parents were the same in hoarding food because they thought there was going to be another war. His parents were Polish immigrants who came in the 1950s. Henry came to Australia as a teenager without any English but was smart enough to get a couple of scholarships and studied medicine at the Melbourne University. He went into practice with Dr Igor Balabin. Liszukiewicz is a tongue-twister of a name so he was usually known as Dr Henry. He fitted into St Albans beautifully because he spoke seven languages. He died much too early, of cancer, in 1994

We moved out of mum's house in 1974 and settled in Deer Park near the shopping centre. We've been here ever since.

In 2008 I got the Prize of the Australia Medal. On one of our pensioner trips near Avenal near Euroa a double-B truck had rolled across the road and burst into flame in front of our bus. I grabbed a fire extinguisher and found the driver's hand sticking out the window and dragged him out. Ten seconds later the cabin blew up. The ambulance took him away and though seriously injured he survived. Unknown to me one of the women on the bus nominated me for that award and I had to go to the MCG to collect that. Eventually I received a letter from the Humane Society to collect the Bravery award from Government House. It was sort of scary because everything you did there was very regimented in terms of the formal procedure you had to follow. Other award recipients such as the military people were sitting with their ornate epaulettes and decoration and I couldn't quite believe I was there.

Many years after we left the Bathurst migrant camp we went back for a visit. All that was there was some building rubble but the gum trees at the main entrance were still there as I remembered. I also took the pensioner club on a bus trip to Bonegilla and parts of that old army base and migrant camp have been preserved as a migration museum. It brought back lots of memories.

Steve Kozlowski, 2018.

ALIE DE VRIES

This is the story of a Dutch migrant to St Albans. It begins with the death of Jan (John in English) de Vries who died in Ferntree Gully on the 10th April 1980. The story is about his past and starts when he was born on the 18th July 1913 at Leeuwarden in the Netherlands. He was the youngest of nine children. As was normal in this period he and his siblings assisted with the earning of incomes. Jan's mother had a grocery store which she ran with the assistance of her children; the father was seldom home, he was a property assessor and they lived in the dwelling on top of the shop premises. After leaving school he began to work in a flour mill, a trade he followed throughout his working life.

When Jan was just 16½ years old he met and fell in love with Tjitske Landstra (known as Kitty) who was just six months younger. The meeting was one of love at first sight for them both, but they did not marry until they were 21 years old which was the age they could get married with their parents' consent. Without their parents' consent they would have had to wait until they reached the age of twenty-five. Jan and Kitty married on the 23rd February 1935 at the local Town Hall and, as was the custom, sought the church's blessing after the formalities at the Town Hall had been fulfilled.

In time they became the parents of four children, Aaltje (Alie), Jan (John), Albert (who died at a very young age) and another Albert. In his early married days Jan showed his concern for children and his involvement in community affairs, concerns that were to remain with him over the years. In the Netherlands he was a volunteer organizer of youth groups and used to encourage the young people to come to him or his wife if they were in need of assistance. He was a friendly person, a good orator and able to assess other people's needs.

In 1952 Jan and his family migrated to Australia and it was on the 3rd September of that year when Jan and Kitty, together with their three children, said goodbye to the Netherlands, their family members and friends. It had taken two years of the filling in of forms, physical examinations, listening to advice, loads of correspondence, brushing up on the English language and not least of all with very many tears, the family embarked on the S.S. Fairsea at the Dutch-America Line Quay in Rotterdam. In their hearts, the thought of ever being able to return to the country of their birth did not exist. It was presumed the departure was to last for the rest of their lives. They said goodbye to the lives they had lived in the past.

Before they were allowed to board the ship, everyone had to wipe their shoes on a cocos mat that had been saturated with a disinfectant. Then father, mother and their off-spring clambered up the gangplank to seek out their cabins, at least that is what they thought.

The ship had been built of steel, but it was not the largest one they had seen. Having lived in Rotterdam for the past seven years prior to their departure many ships' comings and goings had been viewed and this city was after all one of the largest harbour cities in the worlds They were used to seeing floating cities, including huge battleships from other countries. They were also used to meeting and seeing people of all races and colours.

Once on board, they were greeted by one of the ship's crew who directed them to their designated locations. With astonishment it was discovered that they were being accommodated within a large hold and not inside a cabin. Surely, the holds of a ship were for cargo and not for human beings? The men and boys over six years of age were taken to a hold in the bow of the ship whilst women, youngsters and babies were guided to a huge hold in the stern of the ship. The allotted bunks did not have a privacy curtain; the scenario was a sea of bunks with miniscule headspace. The sleeping quarters on board were similar to a convict ship's bunks; one bunk atop another. If you accidentally sat up straight, you were certain to hurt yourself. Steel hurts so much more than wood. The lack of privacy was very difficult for the women and especially so for young girls.

Hygiene on board was poor; for example, when waiters placed freshly washed dishes onto the dining tables, they used the tea towels wrapped around their perspiring necks to dry the dishes. There was no air-conditioning on board ship. The ship's passengers did not have the comfort of a fan to cool off. Very few portholes could be opened and only one in every ten lifeboats was seaworthy. (A decade later, a waterfront union in Western Australia refused to let the same ship leave Australia's shores because of inadequate lifesaving provisions.) Insufficient life jackets were provided. This became known when an 'abandon ship' safety drill was carried out soon after sailing. In our group, there were three lifejackets short for the passengers who had been told to assemble near a designated numbered lifeboat. Apart from this shortcoming, there were more passengers than could be accommodated in the lifeboat. When the crew was asked “What will happen in a real emergency?” they replied: “Some of us will have to enter the water and hang onto the lifeboat's ropes.” This was a far from reassuring thought.

The food was shocking, one piece of fresh food (a small apple) during the duration of the seven-week voyage. Reports by migrants who had voyaged on other vessels proclaimed the goodness of their meals. The food on the Fairsea without a doubt was different, for today's soup was yesterday's leftovers.

There were 1,300 passengers on this voyage. Much later we discovered that permission had been obtained by the shipping agents for the transportation of only 1,100 passengers. The ship was registered in Panama and carried the Panamanian flag but was owned by a Greek ship owner (Onassis in fact).

The system bulk billing of the family unit of course meant a physical separation for wives and husbands. This separation was especially difficult for young families. Adult public demonstrations of affection were unusual at the time. Provision of space for luggage (except an overnight bag or a small suitcase) had been allowed and everything else had to be taken out and returned to luggage holds incessantly by the ship's crew, many of whom came from Goa.

There are memories of social evenings and games organized by the passengers to alleviate boredom; of men having arguments over seating arrangements and of seasickness once we neared the Gulf of Biscay where the sea became rough. The youngest son Albert became seasick and this lasted during the whole of the voyage and he lost a lot of weight. In turbulent weather the water of the ship's one small swimming pool was pumped out. Youths had seized this opportunity to sneak bread rolls from the dining tables and have bun fights inside the empty pool – until caught and told off by the crew.

Meal teams were divided into two sittings so everyone could eat. The first sitting gong would sound and then there was a rush of people to the dining areas. The second sitting passengers would then rush to sit and occupy the recently vacated deck chairs and other comfortable chairs for half an hour. This procedure was reversed when the second sitting gong sounded. Adult passengers displayed quite a bit of aggression over the seating arrangements and the obvious lack of seating availability for all passengers at the one time. Laundry facilities were another cause of friction amongst the passengers. The laundry consisted of a small cabin-sized room and was in use all day and most of the night, by passengers and the crew as well.

During the voyage the ship anchored near the Suez Canal whilst waiting to traverse through this canal where young male swimmers tried to climb the ship's thick mooring ropes in an effort to board the ship. Some passengers went sightseeing. Small change was thrown overboard by the passengers and youths then dived and retrieved the coins. Very many small craft were seen bobbing up and down in the areas around the vessel. The small craft contained men and displayed goods for sale such as Moroccan leather pouches and purses.

After the slow trip through the Suez Canal, we crossed the Pacific Ocean. This was the most tedious part of the voyage. The lack of ventilation on board and the boredom affected the passengers. The weather was extremely warm and humid and the voyage seemed a never-ending bore until we set our sights on the coast of Western Australia.

Everyone on board cheered up when we finally arrived at the Port of Fremantle on the 3rd October 1952. Rotterdam seemed a lifetime away.

At Fremantle the weather was also warm but bearable, perhaps caused by a sea breeze. Most of the passengers disembarked to go sightseeing, anxious to catch glimpses of their new country and extremely curious to find out what Australia was like. Not much was known about Australia and the information given both at schools and the Australian Embassy at the city of The Hague mainly covered the Australian flora, fauna, the country's vastness, the capital cities, the names of the rivers and the weather.

The writer's first impressions of Australia were ones of warmth, space, quietness and old-fashioned buildings. This was the first time we had seen buildings and shops with verandahs, a feature only observed in Wild West American movies. To our great delight we were able to buy some fresh fruit and sweets for the younger members of the family. The oranges were particularly welcome and tasted delicious. After the sightseeing tour of Fremantle, we re-embarked and the ship hauled up her anchor and sailed for the Port of Melbourne.

On nearing the Port of Melbourne, passengers started gathering their possessions and it was very obvious that they were quite jittery. Advice given by Dutch-speaking staff at The Hague Embassy had been thoroughly chewed over – advice included the inability to obtain spare parts for appliances in Australia, the unavailability of many household items; we were told Australia was fifty years behind Europe's progress and other negative advice. One thing mother took no notice of and that was that her Singer treadle sewing machine was going or she would not be.

The above advice was the reason most people had either disassembled their furniture before packing it in crates or had purchased new furniture and arranged for the retailers to have it packed in crates ready to be shipped out with them. Some crates, however, had to be sent later because the ship did not have enough space for all the crates belonging to her passengers.

Our family had furniture, bedding, loads of linen goods, kitchen appliances including dinner and tea services, clothing, books and other items crated by the shipping agents including such mundane things as clothes pegs, buckets, cutlery, a kerosene heater, blankets,

rugs and cooking requisites. Mother was worried we might have had to go camping out in the bush with kangaroos, snakes and other unacceptable animals. Fortunately this was not so, but nevertheless other migrants also had the concept of kangaroos hopping around in the City of Melbourne.

The unknown quantity, Australia, did not appeal to everyone – at least not my mother and no doubt to many other women. Perhaps some youths appreciated the adventure more than most. So many people had become unsettled because of World War Two and the future of their home country was gloomy. This lack of housing (some cities like Rotterdam had been completely gutted during the war) and employment opportunities for so many did not exist. Indonesia wanted its independence from the Netherlands; the United States (McArthur) with the support of the Australian Government implemented this. Looking back to 1946 it is only recently that Indonesia appears to be finding its feet so to speak and hopefully prospers. Indonesia's independence struggle has resulted in huge numbers of Indonesian people (in some cases the population of complete islands) migrating to the Netherlands. This contributed to those people who were already living in the Netherlands starting to look for opportunities outside their country of birth.

As stated the general knowledge about Australia was very limited in 1952 – partly because of the perception that the country's only links were to Great Britain and other Commonwealth countries to some extent, but in the main Britain was Australia's main foreign contact source. This concept of self-imposed isolation may have had its origin in the fact that Great Britain, despite being located within Europe, has never considered herself as being a part thereof. As indeed, Australia did not consider herself a part of the area wherein it was located. Australia had very little contact with other countries except the mother country for which she paid dearly during World War One.

After John de Vries' decision to emigrate, he learned that the Australian Government was actively seeking and sponsoring New Australians. By the time he had filled in the application forms to be accepted as an immigrant, he was forced by the Dutch Government to sell his home. He was told it was a prerequisite to my parents being able to be considered for emigration. The Dutch and Australian Governments had a financial agreement whereby Australia funded migrations either fully or partly. Therefore the only conclusion can be reached that the Dutch Government pocketed the proceeds of the sale of our home (minus the cost of our fares of course). The Dutch Government was even petty enough to withhold child endowment payments because "Dutch emigrants were not permitted to take any Dutch money out of the country".

Another stated requirement was that John de Vries would have to be classified as an unskilled worker; this happened after he had been denied prospective emigration status because he was 'over skilled'. A difficult to understand logic; the reverse is much easier to understand. In order to qualify as an 'unskilled' worker, friends and employers were persuaded to document false references.

The original documentation supplied to the Immigration Department in The Hague set out the following information: J. de Vries had completed a course at the Groningen University in Agricultural Science, he had a Commercial Business Diploma and was experienced in cereal, oat, flour milling, dry pet food manufacturing, plant manager in the Nederland Graanproduction N.V. at Rotterdam (a subsidiary of Quaker Oats Ltd.) and had been a police constable, had been an employee of Koopmans Factories at Leeuwarden. His activities and interests were listed as a committee member of a youth club, a long distance walking club, music, reading, fives-ball, sailing, fishing, swimming and mention was made that he'd been a resistance fighter during World War Two.

In contrast, the 'unskilled' application stated that J. de Vries was a factory worker in a flourmill and loved playing cards and was interested in youth work.

It took two years to finally obtain permission to migrate and this came about through the assistance and intervention of the Returned Servicemen's League of Australia.

Finally, after seven long and dreary weeks, the ship anchored and we had arrived at Station Pier, Port Melbourne on the 7th day of October 1952. Government officials and church representatives boarded the ship. Small card tables had been set up for them and the boarding party interviewed everyone on board. Passports were checked. Albert and John Jnr. had been included on mother's passport as they were both under sixteen at the time. The officials assured themselves that we had received chest x-rays and health check-ups prior to leaving the Netherlands.

There were two church representatives present – one was Minister Geurs (i.e. the Reverend Geurs) who was a minister of religion affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in Australia and in the Netherlands belonged to the United Reformed Church of Holland. The other church representative was Father Leo Maas[1]

[1] Rev. Leo Mass was a Dutch chaplain in Victoria who assisted Dutch Catholic migration. He established the Father Maas Scheme of Dutch hostels in Kew and Daylesford and an orphanage in Bacchus Marsh. He was made a Knight of the Order of Oranje Nassua, which was a Netherlands award akin to the OBE.

(i.e. the Reverend Christianus Leonardus Maria Maas) from the Franciscan Order of the Roman Catholic Church since renamed the Catholic Church. Both of these men were eager to counsel the newly arrived emigrants, as well as doing the groundwork so they could form their own congregations in and around Melbourne, Geelong, Dandenong and Ballarat.

After the officials had satisfied themselves that everything was in order, we were told to board a wooden train standing on a track at the end of Station Pier. This was an unusual sight and our first view of a 'red rattler'. The train was old, painted red with wooden benches, unusual windows with pull-down blinds, neither heating nor cooling; one must expect differences in strange countries, a thought that had not occurred at the time.

The journey to Bonegilla, for that was our destination we were told, took six hours with one stop at Seymour where we were allowed to leave the train. We were exhausted, hot, hungry and thirsty by the time we arrived at a railway siding near Albury/Wodonga for it had been a long day. This siding was set in a cutting a short distance south of Tallangatta Road, it was a platform guarded by some red gum trees. It was here that we had to board a bus that took us to the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre.

Bonegilla had been purchased in 1940 when the Defence Department purchased 619 acres and established Bandiana as a training camp. A number of Infantry Units were trained there. These Units went on to see a great deal of active service in the Middle East and later in the Pacific war zones. Raised locally in August 1940, the 2/23rd Infantry Battalion named 'Albury's Own' trained at Bonegilla before leaving Australia late that year for the Middle East and eventually fought at the famous siege of Tobruk. The Bonegilla Centre has also handled more than 320,000 migrant people. In 1971 it was closed, but since then its use has been reverted for army purposes and then being closed again with only a small area reserved for defense purposes.

On arrival at the centre the migrants were allotted a hut for the family's use. The hut consisted of two separate sections with a separate outer access door. The building was constructed of galvanized tin with two doors and small windows set up high in the walls. The shed was unlined and contained single steel beds, one chair and a small cupboard. The laundry facilities were housed in a separate hut and the ablution block was a decent walk away. The huts were fairly spread out, with sparse outdoor lighting, consequently a nighttime walk was scary, especially so after attention had been drawn to the presence of poisonous snakes and spiders.

The first couple of days we were happy to be together again as a family unit, which we had not been since leaving Rotterdam seven weeks ago. The discovery and use of the mess hall does not recall pleasant memories. The hall was extremely basic, even more so than the huts and was hardly functional. One section also served as a shop counter of sorts; we were able to buy biscuits and other small items to eat. The prepared food was mediocre and tasteless. After having suffered the deprivation of food during World War Two some credence must be given to the following remarks. Cabbage served should have been named cabbage soup for instance, only salted butter was available (foreign to our tastes), bread was different (we were used to soda bread), meat was sweeter and was sheep meat (also foreign) a different variety of potatoes but the main problem was evident in the preparation of the food by the staff. It was just as well that we were able to supplement our food with purchased food after settling in and receiving a small weekly allowance. This allowance was most welcome for the Dutch Government had not allowed us to take any money out of the country except for a few miserable hundred pounds.

Frequently, people from the migrant centre took a bus ride or hitched a ride to Albury where purchases of fresh fruit and personal needs could be made. The local Albury people were very friendly, helpful and never hesitated in offering car rides to Albury, thus saving the cost of a bus fare.

About one week at Bonegilla, boredom set in again. It must not be forgotten that all we had was either a small suitcase with some clothing or a large bag with personal possessions. The crates were of course not made available to us, so there was very little to occupy the mind with. Fortunately, there was a branch of the YWCA in the camp. Its staff, Red Cross volunteers, organized activities for migrants where possible and an approach was made to them about being able to keep occupied. After supplying personal details, the writer was asked to teach English to a small group of females and also John Jnr gave some help with the organization of volley ball games with the Italian single men who had arrived shortly after we did.

It was not only the children who had become restless; John senior started seeking potential employment opportunities in his newly adopted country. He had stated that he was not fussy about the kind of work on offer; anything would do to start with. The Bonegilla Centre's employment office, however, had no available jobs for him. The only positions available were for house servants. The writer was offered a job on a farm as an artisan, but my parents were adamant that this was totally unsuitable (apart from the vocation, the position was hundreds of miles away in the country). In the end, John

Senior had decided to hitch-hike through New South Wales as there were a couple of flour mills in that State. He received a reference from the Reverend J. J. Mol who was the Minister of the Presbyterian Church of the Migrant Centre at Bonegilla.

After traversing through New South Wales no job was found – there were no vacancies. Even in Sydney, a large city by anyone's standards, a labourer's job was unavailable. It had been pointed out to him that Australia was in the midst of a depression and unable to sell wheat and milled products locally or overseas. It took him three days to walk and hitchhike back to Bonegilla. Not to be deterred, John Senior decided to hitch-hike to South Australia having heard that there was also a flour mill in that State. He did reach Adelaide and mainly walked around trying to obtain any kind of work. Again unsuccessfully. There simply was no work available.

After failing to get any kind of work in South Australia he started walking to Melbourne and was nearing Norlane near Geelong when he was offered a lift by a Presbyterian Minister who was on his way to Melbourne. The Minister suggested my father should try to get a position at the John Darling & Son Pty. Ltd. flourmills at Albion near Sunshine.

The Minister whose church was located in Anderson Road, Sunshine, dropped dad off at the flour mill and also wrote down the address of a boarding house in Sunshine in case he was successful. It was here that dad was finally given the job of packer man. A packer man's job is the worst one in a flour mill environment; for as the finished flour product comes down a wooden chute, a man stands close by with an open hessian bag on top of a pair of scales. When the required weight has been reached the bag is sewn up by hand and removed, making way for the next one. After a while the packer man looks like the abominable snowman. Nowadays this job is done mechanically. Nevertheless, father was very pleased he had finally secured work, for he boasted that before immigrating he had never lost a day's work for any reason.

The John Darling flourmill is a prominent feature of the Albion skyline. It has been placed on the heritage list and is situated alongside the railway line, opposite the Albion Railway Station. It does have its own siding similar to other mills. John Darling had arrived in Australia from Edinburgh, Scotland in 1855 and dominated the flour milling industry in the latter part of the 1880s. He became a manager of the grain and flour merchants Giles and Smith and then transferred to the wheat and grain company R.C. Bowen and in 1867 purchased the business and operated it as John Darling and Son. In later years his son, John Junior managed the company. At one stage he leased over 4000 acres of land from William Taylor and combined the growing, the reaping and the production of the finished product.

Before John de Vries could start at the flourmill in Albion he had to return to Bonegilla. This time he did not mind spending some money to buy a train ticket because there was light at the end of the tunnel for him and his family. In order to leave the Bonegilla Migrant Centre the Commonwealth Employment Service had to fill in the form.

Next he secured a lodging place with a Mrs Ascher in Anderson Road, Sunshine until such time he was able to find some local accommodation for his wife and children. This accommodation was found after speaking with a fellow worker, Mr. Jozef Skwarlo,[1] a Polish migrant who had built a cement-rendered house at lot 62 Adelaide Street, St Albans (nearly opposite the first school house in St Albans), who needed to rent out part of his house. Father inspected the house and thought it suitable for his family. The rent was £3 (i.e. $6) weekly and neither bond nor key money was required.

The average weekly wage at the time was £7 (i.e. $14), but John earned more because of the overtime he worked.

The house was a terrific improvement compared to the hut in Bonegilla.

De Vries family in Adelaide Street 1950s © Alie Missen

The families occupied half a house each. The bathroom and laundry facilities were shared and a long narrow passage served as the dividing line between the families. As was common in Australia in the 1950s the ablution facility was a separate entity at the rear of the 150 feet long allotment of land.

So, just six weeks after their arrival in Australia the de Vries family travelled by train from Albury to Spencer Street (renamed the

[1] Jozef and Hilda Skwarlo migrated in 1950.

Southern Cross Station) and boarded a train to St Albans. The journey from Melbourne to St Albans took 35 minutes. When we arrived at the St Albans Railway Station (then located on the north/west side of the main road railway tracks), the family looked around quite eagerly. It was at this time we experienced a huge culture shock – this was supposed to be the destination after so much travel – the comparison between the harbour City of Rotterdam and the quiet isolated country-life setting of St Albans was vast.

Apart from the small railway station, a few weatherboard houses were visible, as was a triangular-shaped barber shop on the corner of West Esplanade and Main Road West and a bank building was spotted a few yards down the unmade road. While we were walking to Adelaide Street (no taxis at the station then), we passed a couple of shops one had a dwelling house on the side. There were some trees; one was a palm tree with lots of little birds in them, tall yellow grasses, green thistles, soil and more soil.

After settling in, the young people of the family went exploring the next few days. We discovered two churches, one paddock named a reserve, a few railway houses, a shed named a fire station, another shed named a police station, and a weatherboard hall named a mechanics' institute. The peace was ear shattering.

The differences in our surroundings took a few years to come to terms with, before being accepted as the norm. The conversion of thinking from the Dutch language into English took two years to accomplish. In due time the family members attended naturalization ceremonies held in the Old Shire Hall, Kennedy Street, Keilor. For the duration of their lives, the older members of the family felt that had one foot in Australia and the other foot in the Netherlands and made many overseas trips.

John and Kitty de Vries moved to Ferntree Gully after John's retirement, although he worked as a consultant making occasional trips to Malaya and the Philippines to assist with the installation of new mills, mainly rice mills. Kitty did not ‘go out to work'. John had always considered himself to be the family's provider. John died in 1980 of leukemia and Kitty followed him in 1999 as a result of undiagnosed stomach cancer. They had chosen to be buried together at the Ferntree Gully Cemetery.

To follow on to the story of John and Kitty another aspect of their story is that they too did buy an allotment of land in East Esplanade, St Albans, with the view in mind of building a house on the block in the near future. The land was sold to them by Harold Knowles whose home was a couple of doors away from the de Vries' land. Mr. Knowles, who was a real estate agent, sold the block for £400 at a time when other blocks were sold for about £150 per lot, because it was claimed that the block was on a Government Road and they would never have to pay for road making costs, only for footpath construction. This proved to be a 'furphy', in effect when the road was finally constructed extra money had to be paid because the City Engineer considered that a concrete road surface was the way to cope with heavy traffic.

Another Dutchman, Tony Mom who had been a telephone mechanic in Holland (a specialized course there) did a short course on arrival in Australia and was permitted to work as an electrician in Australia. With so many bungalows being built in St Albans and living on the other side of town, he used to call in at my parents' place in East Esplanade for a morning cup of coffee and cake. Tony Mom decided that he would have to move to St Albans for this is where his work was, but alas availability of accommodation was non-existent.[1] So my parents offered Tony, his wife Nel and their two children accommodation; the front section of the house my father had built with the help of Kees Kropman[2] and Anton Correlje.[3] The last two men were builders and did sub-contract work as J.A.C. Building Contractors. Mr Kropman had been a carpenter in Holland but Correlje was only capable of building framework.

One thing let to another, with other Dutch migrants arriving, settling in part-houses and communicating with each other. Others called in at my parents' place where there was always a cup of coffee or a cup of tea available and some of mother's apple cakes, shortbreads and other cakes to be had.

Dutch social club St Albans 1950s © Alie Missen

One day it was decided that a Dutch social club should be established in St Albans partly because the Dutch women were homesick and there was nothing to do in St Albans, apart from housework. Women lived in total isolation, after the children had left for school they were left on their own, more or less in a paddock.

[1] Tony Mom eventually settled at 27 Alfrieda Street.

[2] Cornelis and Alberta Kropman were Dutch immigrants in 1954/55 with children Antonius, Maria, Petrus, Alberta, Johanna, and Cornelis.

[3] Anton and Hendrina Correlje migrated in 1954 with three children. Refer to story by Yvonne Correlje in St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years.

Attending church on Sundays was the only time of the week women could dress up.

Dutch social club St Albans 1950s © Alie Missen

Meetings were arranged at the de Vries' home, a committee was formed, and weekly monetary contributions were collected from members and sub-committees were formed. Some of the sub-committees involved themselves with the presentation of plays, the creation of an orchestra and practice sessions, the forming of a choir and of course practice, a reading club where magazines and books were interchanged, coffee mornings, shopping trips for ladies, and a St Nicholas Day event which was held at the Churchill Reserve in December.

A very well-attended concert was held in the St Albans Public Hall, with Dutch girls decked out as singing waitresses attending to tables. Plays were shown in the Church of England Kindergarten Hall which had a small stage that needed stage curtains which took more than a week to make and hang. The social interaction was beneficial for all involved in this club, but gradually Dutch people integrated and assimilated with the existing community as Dutch people do everywhere on earth and the club ceased to exist. Similarly the soccer club formed just after the Melbourne Olympic Games ceased the players joining other clubs, the billiard club was moved to another location; only the card club (klaverjassen) was continued in a different suburb. Currently there is a Dutch club in North Sunshine.

My conclusion is that this true story is not only one of a Dutch migrant family but also the story of successful immigration from one end of the world to another. This is just one story

Alie Missen nee de Vries, circa 2015.

ANTON SIMIC

I came to Australia with my parents in September 1950 on the migrant vessel Nellie and we ended up in hut 15 in the Bonegilla migrant camp. I was only two years old and so I do not remember too much of the journey, just bits and pieces.

In those days you had to work wherever the government sent you, and my dad ended up in Pakenham on an asparagus farm working for Charles Tottenham and son Thomas who owned farms in Cardinia and Belmore near Pakenham. The asparagus farm where dad worked was in Wright Street, Belmore, and was managed by the Naprelac family – I think the business was connected with the AJC canning factory.

Mum and I were transferred to the migrant camp at Mildura as there was no place for us on the farm. Dad was then sent off to work in Melbourne, then he somehow got a job at SEC in Newport where he ended up working as a crane driver for decades.

Of course he made a few friends there. One of the machines they operated was a big wagon tipper. A train wagon of coal would roll onto the tipper which would then tip it over and the coal empted onto a conveyor belt that carried the coal to the furnaces. I have a nice photo of that tipper with Dad and his colleagues Wasil Federenko and Ivan Svaganovic.

Ivan Simic & colleagues at Newport 1950s © A Simic

While working in Melbourne, Dad saved enough money to buy a block of land in St

Albans at 75 Helen Street. It cost one hundred pounds which was quite a lot in those days. That was about 1951 or 1952. I don't know where he heard about St Albans but it might have been through his work at Newport.

After buying the land Dad built the bungalow. He worked different shifts at Newport and whenever he had time he would come to St Albans and work on the bungalow.

He had a pushbike at the time and sometimes would ride all the way from Newport to St Albans, at other times he would take the train. In the meantime he would regularly come to visit us at Mildura, which is more than 500 kilometers away on the Murray River.

I remember one time he had to go back to work from Mildura airport and I was in tears because I realised he was leaving. My memories of that area stop there. The next thing I remember is being in the St Albans bungalow with the kerosene lamp. There was no electricity. The bungalow was made of weatherboard with two rooms: a bedroom, and a kitchen-dining and everything else room. My parents didn't know anyone in St Albans when they first arrived so it was just the three of us at the start.

Dad and Mum had met in a displaced persons camp in Graz, which was the second largest town in Austria. Dad was from the former Yugoslavia, from a village in Croatia. Dad was of Croatian background and Mum came from the Ukraine. They met in Graz and married there and that's where I was born in June 1948. Dad had a choice of where to migrate because they asked him "Where would you like to go? Australia or Canada?" Dad chose Australia and I think it's because they wanted to get as far away as possible from the conflict. I think my Mum and I were at the Mildura camp about six months or a year before we re-united with Dad, so we weren't apart for very long.

I remember the bungalow and the open fields of St Albans. We were near Taylors Road (which was North Road at the time) and over that road it was still lots of open paddocks. That's where the Anderson farm was and the old family farmhouse has now been preserved. There was a dam on their property and in the wet weather when the stream was flowing it would cross over the road and flow through our neighbourhood. One year we had such a big flood in Helen Street that it even received coverage in the main press and television. That was probably in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

Towards the end of Helen Street near Charles Street there was a pond that was always an attraction for young boys because we would go there to catch yabbies. I was never a great fan of yabbies so if I ever caught any I would give them away, but it was something to do. They might have put a road through that pond and it did have some consequences, because that had been part of the natural drainage that ran into the old dam on the corner of Fox and Theodore street that was later filled in and is now the Conrad Street Reserve. When the big rains came the properties that were built near the old pond were often inundated. One of the houses was flooded several times and was later demolished. That was near where the childcare centre is now built.

Jones Creek in flood 1960s © Otto Czernik

There was a little Theodore Shopping Centre between Conrad and Fox streets, which included a baker, a milk bar, and a fish and chips shop. I believe a Greek man built those shops and may have managed two of them. My mum had chickens in the back yard and she would supply eggs for them. The Greek guy would come every few weeks and buy about six dozen eggs. The Theodore Fish and Chips Shop is still there.

When we came to St Albans our bungalow was very basic. There was no electricity and I remember the kerosene lamp and the old wood stove. To get water Mum or Dad would have to go to the street corner as there was a main tap there. You'd take a bucket and that's where you'd get your water. We were there on our own and maybe a year later some neighbours came and they were the Cebin family. Then there was a neighbour on the other side. The neighbours were of mixed heritage: Polish, Slovenian, Italian, Lithuanian and others.

Dad was also building a few houses in the area. He was a bricklayer as he had learnt the trade in Austria. When he was learning that trade one of his bosses said that whatever money he earned could end up as his naturalization fee, and that's more or less what happened because it brought in extra income when they were establishing themselves. So he built a few houses on his own but with Mum's help. He wasn't working with a building firm but got a few jobs through word of mouth. There were lots of bungalows around us and most people would extend their bungalow by adding extra rooms. Dad built our new home in brick and we kept the bungalow separate at the back.

We had a separate, self-contained bedroom and bathroom in the new house that we used to accommodate a few people. Newcomers were always looking for a place to board and that's what we offered for a while. At first there was a young couple and later a series of single men. Mum would do some laundry and cook for some of them but others would eat out and just come back to sleep.

Katarina & Anton Simic 1950s © Anton Simic

I think our old bungalow still exists in St Albans in someone's back yard. Ivan Popov eventually bought our bungalow and moved it to Erica Street behind the Croftbank Dairy in Main Road East. I believe he was living there with his family. Later on he moved to Taylors Lakes and then to Sydenham. He worked for the Victorian Railways at some of the railway stations and was later at their head office in the city.

At first Dad had his pushbike and the trains for transport. Eventually bought a car, in 1955 or 1956; it was a Ford Prefect 100E. We were quite proud to go to Sunday mass at the Sacred Heart Church in our car. There were not many cars in St Albans at that time and you could park right next to the church.

My mum was Katarina Kozluk from the Ukraine and was born on 15th October 1919, so she was only 30 when she came to Australia. She worked as a kitchen hand and a fruit sorter as well as helping dad in building some houses. She passed away on the 15th April 1982 with an aneurism at the age of 63 years and was buried at Keilor. My dad remarried a few years later.

I started at the Sacred Heart Primary School about 1955. As with all children of that era, I walked to school. There were older houses along Theodore Street with its cypress trees and stone fences and as you walked along you got to meet some of the people. That's how I met Silvo Zitterschlager and we still see each other at the shopping centre. One day I was throwing stones along the road for something to do and hit a house. That's how I met Mr Pitson[1] because he came out to tell me off. He had a house and a chook farm on the corner of Fox Street where the North Primary School was later built. He was an older man and one of the few Australians that I remember from the early days.

The school tuck shop was in Theodore Street between the church and the classrooms and I think Mrs O'Brien used to run that. I remember that Fridays were special because they were apple pie days and they were my favourite. You'd pay for your apple pie in the morning and receive a token as proof of payment. Then at lunchtime you'd go to the tuck shop and get your delicious apple pie. There was a milk bar on the opposite corner that we were not allowed to frequent during school hours, but when the tuck shop was full it was always a temptation to sneak across the road to avoid the long queue. You were told off if you were caught over there.

Simic family with Ford Prefect 1950s © Anton Simic

I did my First Holy Communion in October 1956 with about 80 other boys and girls. I have a photo of that group with Fr Reis and Fr Sheehan in front of the main office at the Sacred Heart school. We had our communion party in one of the rooms at Sacred Heart. I remember that it was in a side room at the Sacred Heart premises and not at the Mechanics Hall as reported by some people.

Behind the church there was a small hall where I joined the Cubs for a year or two on Tuesday afternoons. In the winter it was often approaching nighttime when we finished our meetings and walking home. I started with the Cubs when I was about ten and graduated to the Scouts. I don't remember what we did and I don't remember going out on outings. They held

[1] Arthur Edward Pitson's family came from England in the 1850s and became farmers around Melton. Arthur and his sister Lucy came to St Albans c.1940. He died in 1974 at age 80 and she took over the property.

dances in that hall on a Friday night and that was another part of the Church's provision for youth activities.

Fr Reis & Fr Sheehan 1956 © Anton Simic

First Communion group 1956 © Anton Simic

I remember the Ermstrang's "Olympic 1956" pastry shop in East Esplanade opposite the train station. They came as cooks with the Dutch Olympic team in 1956 and stayed. I'm not sure when they left but I later saw that one of the Ermstrang boys had established a cake shop in Union Road Ascot Vale. That was probably in the 1980s but I haven't seen them since.

I remember Sister Clare as a teacher at Sacred Heart; she was of one the first nuns at the school. As a young student, I remember playing in the schoolyard adjacent to the church in Winifred Street, and there was the crucifixion monument on the Arthur Street corner. The old mansion adjacent to that was where the priests lived. Winifred Street between the presbytery and the old school has now been closed to through traffic and renamed as Reis Street in honour of Fr Kon Reis. Fr Reis was a chaplain in the Australian army in New Guinea during the second world war and he established the Sacred Heart parish about 1953. The first church was built on the south side of Winifred Street and many years later they built the new church on the north side next to the presbytery. We went to that old church in the 1950s and I have nice photos of us with our car next to the church with the old cypress trees in the background. My father did a bit of volunteer work with the church along with lots of other migrant men.

My father was Ivan Mrkonjić who was born in 1923 in Croatia. He changed his surname some years after settling in Australia because people found it hard to pronounce and spell his surname. He came from a village named Simic and adopted the Simic name because it was much easier for everyone to spell. It's interesting these days because many people like to pronounce names correctly and some Aussies when I say my name is Simic ask "Do you mean Simić?"

There were quite a few Croatians who were settling in the western suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s. There was an area along Commercial Road in Footscray behind the school where a number of Croats and Serbs had settled. I think the Macedonians might have come a little later. People usually stayed a few years to establish themselves and then built new homes in Sunshine, St Albans and Keilor Downs. There is a Croatian church and community centre in Sunshine and also a Croatian social club in Footscray. The Macedonians built their church in Footscray and the Serbs in St Albans.

My father attended some of the Croatian community functions around Melbourne. There were dances held at the Kensington Town Hall and in the early days they would go there by train. Then the Croatian community established a centre in Clarendon Street South Melbourne behind the gasworks. That was about 1970. It was an old, single-fronted house but the block was long and they built a hall at the back. They had a billiard table there.

Fr Reis with communion group 1959 © M Virant

The Catholic community built their church and school in St Albans not long after we arrived here. I became an altar boy and served with Fr Reis, our first parish priest. He was a stern but likeable man. He would come once a year on visitations for home blessings, and that was always announced ahead so that you would be prepared. When he retired Fr O'Reilly took over as parish priest. Fr Reis may have ended up in Kew in the retirement home for priests.

There was a Ukrainian priest who came to the church on Sunday evenings and my mother liked to go then for Mass. That's probably where she met other Ukrainians. There was a Ukrainian community hall built in Alexina Street in the 1950s but the main church was in Buckley Street, Essendon. At Easter time we would go to the Ukrainian Church in North Melbourne but that Mass went for hours. Sometimes we would attend midnight Mass at St Albans and dad would drive us down there. The women and children would go in but a lot of men would stand around outside having a good chat. Eventually one of the priests told the men they should also come inside.

I remember Sr Charles at the Sacred Heart school and she was one of the stricter nuns as teachers. I remember Stan Bazaluk from the primary school, who lived in Emily Street. I believe Stan went on to the Catholic college in Sunbury.

My last teacher at Sacred Heart was Miss Barnard. She still lives in the district and I sometimes see her at the Keilor Downs shopping centre. Her father was Fred Barnard who was a local builder; the family were living in Winifred Street not far from the school. Miss Barnard's name was Janice and she married Dan Gavaghan.

The Barnards were strong supporters of the Catholic Church and involved in St Albans in various ways. Fred Barnard was the father and he was a local builder and very active locally in the 1950s and 1960s. He's the one who restored the old Stenson mansion that is now the Sacred Heart Presbytery. Kevin Barnard was his son and Miss Barnard's brother. Des Barnard was the manager of the St Albans Sports Club venue in Kings Park for many years. He's now retired.

The Zitterschlagers were from Taylors Road – Silvo and Mark lived next door to each other on the corner of Theodore Street. They were heavily involved with the Sacred Heart Church and the men's group. I still see Silvo Zitterschlager quite regularly at the shopping centre. He is ten years older than me and ran a motor garage in Charles Street where I always had my cars serviced. He had two sisters and Mary became a nun. Mark Zitterschlager was the treasurer or accountant for the Sacred Heart parish since it started in the 1950s. He recently passed away and the funeral service was led by Fr O'Reilly at the Sacred Heart Church.

I remember one of Dad's work mates from Newport was Ivan Svaganovic who was a fellow émigré from Croatia and Austria and also worked at the same asparagus farm where my father had worked, so that's where they got to know each other. Ivan settled in one of the original Eisner bungalows in Cornhill Street on the southern side of St Albans. He lived near the sports reserve and playground and became known for his efforts to keep troublemakers out of the reserve. Sunshine Council even gave him a hose and sprinkler to connect to the mains to water the vegetation because he was such a good ambassador for the street. It was nice that Chris Evan gave him a good write-up in the local paper after he died in 1993.

I went to the St Albans High School in 1962. It was further away from home and usually I rode my bicycle. I started in Form 1m, which was a relatively small class of about 20 students. It was something new and strange. It was interesting to experience a school without nuns and prayers – quite different to primary school – as was the novelty of moving between classes for the different subjects.

Mr Gibson and Form 1m 1962 © Anton Simic

Mr Ziemelis with Form 5 1967 © Anton Simic

Mr Gibson was our form teacher and he taught metalwork and science. Mrs Sturesteps taught German – many students took advantage of her gentleness by being noisy in class. Mr Chiltern taught wood work and I remember that I often had problems in getting my woodwork measurements as accurate as he demanded.

I went to Keilor Council's centenary in the 1960s when they were celebrating their centenary (1863-1963). Ian McNab was the mayor if I recall correctly. The ceremony was

held at the municipal offices in Keilor and they distributed a souvenir booklet and a medallion. I'm proud to say that I still have my medallion.

I remember the Kruk bothers from High School because they were triplets, Zbigniew, Edward, and John. Ziggy was our form captain in Form 1M and the others were winners in the cross country race that year. They also came on the excursion with Frank Attard and myself to Mount Martha in 1967.

High School excursion 1967 © Anton Simic

The Kruks were all lean and lanky boys and did very well in the school volleyball team and progressed to state and national levels. During the 1970s they were assistant coaches with the Heidelberg volley ball club and members of the Melbourne University Rebels team. I think the brothers went into business together and ended up running a hotel or pizza place in Melton.

Richard Wiatr is another chap I remember from high school days because he was from my neighbourhood; they were in Taylors Road near Charles Street. They were a Polish family with several children. Richard was a school prefect when I was in Form 2. He played tennis for the school and I also joined the tennis team in my senior years, playing competition with team-mates like Morris McMaster.

I was never very academic at school. I coasted through to Intermediate level (Form 4) and then found it much harder in Form 5 and did not do very well.

Morris McMaster & Anton Simic © Anton Simic

I repeated Form 5 and then went to work in sales in Coles in the city, in the mall in Bourke Street. At first I was working in the grocery department, then as an elevator operator, before going back to groceries. I was working there for a few months but in the meantime I applied for a job with the government. After three months at Coles I got a call to come over for an interview at the army establishment at Albert Park. It wasn't a tough interview, because it was more of a "Hello, we are sending you to Maribyrnong."

I liked working at Maribyrnong because it was close to home. I worked there as a clerk until about 2000. I worked in different departments and then moved away from clerical duties and became an assistant photographer. The work was with plans and maps. I used to photograph drawings and convert them into micro fiche. That department closed down some time ago and the building was demolished. It's vacant land at present on the corner of Raleigh Road and Wests Road. That's where the ammunition factory was. That's why the tramline was built there, because of the ordinance factory.

Roman Sawko was another St Albans boy who worked with the Department of Defence in the micro fiche department. His family settled near the corner of Conrad and Theodore streets near the old dam. They had a few cows and an old jalopy sitting in the yard – it must have been old because I remember it had running boards and a canvas top. They built a little milk bar on the corner of Main Road East and McArthur Avenue near the High School and the East Primary School. Mrs Sawko was running that. Later that shop changed to selling batteries and parts. Next door was the Maltese pastry and catering shop that is still there. Roman became a technical officer/engineer.

I was with Department of Defence until 2000 and retired for a year. Then in 2001 I went back to work as a driver with Australia Post in

Port Melbourne. I was driving one of their familiar red vans. As a teenager when I was out and about on a Saturday going to pictures or whatever, I would occasionally see a red postal van and think that would be a good job, and in 2001 it became my new occupation. I was there for about ten years and retired in 2013. Now I am fully retired. And even though sometimes I think I wouldn't mind working a bit more, there are no jobs available for us older people.

I moved from Helen Street to Sunshine Avenue, Kealba, in 1986. I married in 1987 and I've been living in Kealba for 30 years. There's also been a lot of changes there over those decades. Kealba is close to the old swimming hole at the end of Stensons Road and the notorious Green Gully Road where Alfred Bobek was killed one Christmas. He was in a car with a friend driving down the road when the brakes failed and they ran off the road. That area used to have a bad name because of the smelly old tip that was an eyesore and a real problem for real estate values in the neighbouring area. Now it's all redeveloped and beautified as recreation and sporting grounds. Real estate overlooking Green Gully is now very desirable and worth a fortune.

The Kealba High School was built in 1970 and then closed down and demolished in 2011. Now they want to build lots of flats on the site and the neighbours are once again worried about declining property values are objecting. I've gone to some of the meetings because I want to know what's going on.

My father passed away on 22 June 1998 at age 75 and was buried at the Keilor cemetery. He could have lived longer maybe but he liked his drink. After my Dad died, my stepmother continued living at the old home but eventually sold it. Whoever bought it built double-storey units in the back yard where Mum and Dad had built their chicken pens.

The old Sacred Heart Catholic primary school celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2004 and Fr O'Reilly held a school reunion to cele-brate the occasion. I went there and was delighted to see that Sr Clare also came with her original uniform, so it was a pleasure to see her once again.

In 2006 I also attended the fiftieth anniversary of the St Albans High School though these days it is known as the St Albans Secondary College. I was able to meet some of my old school friends and teachers that I hadn't seen for years.

Anton Simic, 2019.

Fr O'Reilly at 50th anniversary © Anton Simic

Sacred Heart 50th anniversary © Anton Simic

Sr Clare at 50th anniversary © Anton Simic

High School reunion with Bruce Alcorn 2006 © A Simic

JOE BARTOLO

I was born on the 1st of February 1928 in Malta. After primary school I attended three years of secondary schooling in a private seminary run by a Catholic order. My study was interrupted by the war and I never did go back. During the war I worked with the British air force for about four years in the Malta Auxiliary Corps.[1]

I married in 1949 and worked at the dockyards in the ammunitions sector mainly as a wireless operator on coastal ships. Malta had suffered a lot of deprivations during the war and when things finally started to settle down many people looked to immigration as their opportunity to a new life. The British were closing down the naval bases in Malta and the retrenched workers were encouraged to migrate. That was helped by the introduction of the Australia-Malta Assisted Passage Scheme.[2]

I decided to come to Australia as an assisted migrant. I was appointed as the welfare officer on the ship, so I was paid by the government of Malta during the journey to Australia. That was a help after years or war austerity. That was also the start of my welfare work with my fellow émigrés in the new world.

I had nominated to go to Sydney as my place of settlement, but when we arrived in Melbourne in 1951, I decided to stay.

I stayed with a friend in Melbourne and that was the beginning of my life in Australia.

I started working next day in a shoe factory. The owner was looking for workers so it was an opportunity and I worked there for about ten months. In the meantime I was sharing accommodation with this friend, living in one room because that was the only accommodation available to me.

In 1951, I applied for a job with the State Electricity Commission in Yallourn because they were recruiting workers for the Latrobe Valley. There was a lot of work there because they were building the power station. The job was more appropriate to my work experience and there was an extra incentive because you got to live in a Housing Commission home as part of the employment package. I was able to work as an electrical mechanic because my experience as a wireless operator in the war was considered a suitable background. After two years working with the SEC in Yallourn I wanted to experience the more challenging life of the city, so I looked for the opportunity to return to Melbourne.

Initially, I worked in the city at the Bombay Bazaar selling carpets – they imported a lot of hand-woven carpets and rugs from India. Then I moved to Buckley and Nunn in Bourke Street, which was a well-known department store in Melbourne.[3] I was working in sales rather than electrical mechanics, and this new work established the path to my future career as a furniture and furnishings retailer.

I worked at Buckley and Nunn for about seven years, working up to the position of department manager of carpets.

I had moved to St Albans in 1953, the attractions being that it was one of the only places where you could get a land and house package at a cheap price and it was on a direct line to the city where I was working. St Albans was a pretty small place but it was growing and attracting many migrants and refugees with similar aspirations to establish their own homes. You could build a small bungalow and move in very quickly, and there were hundreds of these being built all around.

Quite a few Maltese families settled in St Albans during the mid 1950s and the community soon began to organize itself. Many helped to build the Catholic church and school when Fr Reis came in 1953 to establish the Sacred Heart parish. Some drama groups started through groups led by George Attard[4] and George Cini[5] who helped establish Malta Star of the Sea. A pensioners' group was started much later.

I helped to start up the St Albans Soccer Club and used to play with the team. Keilor Council gave us permission to use the recreation reserve on the old Pinnacle Estate in Oberon Avenue. We were a team of mixed origins with players who, like myself, had migrated from different parts of Europe to re-establish their lives. Soccer was something the different groups had in common so it drew people together. I think Milenkovic, our first captain, was of

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[1] The Malta Auxiliary Corps was raised in 1939 by means of the Malta Territorial Force Ordinance. The duties of those recruited were mainly as mechanics, orderlies, drivers and cooks.

[2] The Maltese Assisted Migration Agreement was arranged in 1948, and by 1952 a total of about 12,000 people had arrived in Australia under the scheme. The peak period of immigration from Malta was in 1954–55 when over 10,000 people came to Australia.

[3] It was a competitor to Myer Melbourne and was later taken over by David Jones.

[4] George Attard's story is included in "St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives." Some of his drama productions were held at the St Albans Youth Club. He was also on the committee to establish the St Albans Community Centre.

[5] George Cini came to Australia in 1954 and was involved with drama in Melbourne's west as a writer, producer and actor. He appeared in some TV dramas including Homicide. He helped establish the St Albans Community Health Centre. He died in March 2014.

Yugoslavian background, and we also had some German, Polish and Dutch players. We would play teams from all over: Footscray, Sunshine, Werribee, Deer Park, Maribyrnong, and as far away as Nunawading. For a while we were leaders of the Fourth Division Reserves.

The club became popular and soon there was talk of forming several junior teams. We eventually moved to a new ground on the Green Gully Reserve. Harry Moakes, a Maltese compatriot, had a lot to do with that.[1] At first there was just a paddock and with the help of some German men they built a hut as a club room. It was next to the rubbish tip but it was a bigger ground with room for expansion. Now they have fancy facilities and poker machines so the club has survived and prospered. There was another St Albans soccer club that was based at Churchill Reserve.

As well as playing soccer, I joined the committee of management of the club as the treasurer. I did that for two years and then I joined the Victorian Referees Association as a referee and did that for years.

The sixties in St Albans was the time of upgrading your home and for me it also meant getting involved with the Maltese Community Welfare Association, where I became a council member. During this time I was still with the St Albans Soccer Club, I helped with fundraising for the Catholic Church, and I was also on the local school committee. Sometimes the soccer club would put on a dance at the Sacred Heart Hall which was popular with the Maltese community because we were all mostly Catholics.

Through my community work I became involved with radio station ZZZ as the Maltese community representative, doing the broad-casting and being the operator of a regular half hour program. I was on the advisory council regarding ZZZ. Then I started with 3CR as the Maltese representative. I ended up broadcasting on 3EA for fifteen years and acting as the secretary of the Ethnic Broadcasters and Telecasters group.

I have spent 35 years in supporting the Maltese community in a variety of ways. Apart for more formal positions, there was the voluntary welfare experience such as interpreting for people who were appearing in court and, because I had a car, taking pregnant women to hospital because many families did not have their own transport.

I have been fifteen years with the Maltese Community Council including roles as president and coordinator of the fete and quest committees, and fund raising for the building appeal.

In 1977 I was appointed as a Commissioner for Taking Declarations and later as a Justice of the Peace. That's when I was living in Erica Street. Running a local business is always handy when you are a J.P. because people can come to you with their papers during the normal working day.

I've kept a connection with local schools over many years. After involvement with the primary school council, I joined the advisory council of the St Albans Secondary College (previously the St Albans High School). I was also an external representative on the Board of the Victoria University of Technology. I started there about six years ago when it was still known as the Western Institute. I became an external member of the Community Advisory Council of the St Albans campus.

As for my working life, I became the manager of the St Albans branch of Tyes, a furniture retail business in Main Road. In the sixties there were several furniture stores in Main Road West, including Tyes, Payne's Bon Marche, and Pattersons. I not sure when Metro Furnishings started. I was with the Tyes company for about seven years and became the senior sales buyer for the whole group, which included about 20 stores.

In 1965 there was an opportunity to take over the St Albans business when the broader conglomeration closed down, so I did that. I have been working in the business ever since as an independent retailer. For some years I was based in the Tye's store in the Fairline building next to Unger's Milk Bar. I was working with Lew Stafrace before we established independent businesses. Lew had his Lewmar RetraVision store in Main Road West and I built a furniture warehouse in McIntyre Road. My wife Pat and I have been running that for years.

In 1989 I was a representative on the local Police Community Consultative Committee.

I became involved with the St Albans Multicultural Consultative Council in the early eighties when the St Albans Migrant Resource Centre was part of the out-posted branch of the Footscray MRC. I was elected to the position of Chairperson after the first year and was then continuously involved from 1982 to 1989.

MRC in Community Centre building, Alfrieda Street

[1] Refer to Jeff Maynard's *Frontier Suburb: A Short History of St Albans* 2014.

In 1989 I was asked by the Minister for Immigration, Senator Robert Ray, to take on the task of establishing a new regional Migrant Resource Centre as an extra to the one in Footscray. I became the inaugural chairperson and have been in that position ever since. We were based at the old St Albans Community Centre building in Alfrieda Street that had been established in the 1970s. When Gerry Hand took over as the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs he came and officially opened the centre in 1991. We called ourselves the Migrant Resource Centre North-West Region to distinguish ourselves from the Footscray MRC which was located in the inner west.

Immigration Minister Gerry Hand & Joe Bartolo 1991

I became the Keilor citizen of the year for 1991 and I thought that was good recognition for my role on the MRC and our presence in the municipality. We received a good deal of support from Council staff especially when we were working together to form elderly ethnic clubs. Some of the new elderly clubs started at the MRC and then moved to council premises, such as the new HACC premises on Errington Reserve that was a combined effort with the MRC and reps from Sunshine and Keilor councils and the Health Centre. Cr Margaret Guidice of Keilor was on our committee.

Joe Bartolo, K Thangarajah, Joe Caf, George Kostrevski
Margaret Guidice, Jan Todarovic, Remi Sarmiento

Joe Bartolo, Joe Ribarow, Pat Bartolo, Valentina Causovski

(Front) Sydney Vas, Joe Bartolo, Kandiah Thangarajah

Recollections of Joe Bartolo 1998.

Postscript:
After a decade as chairperson of the MRC, Joe Bartolo stood down from that role to encourage more sharing of management opportunities with other committee members. However, he was later nominated again for the senior position in recognition of his dedication and leadership qualities. In 2002 Joseph Anthony Bartolo was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in recognition of his service to migrants, multicultural affairs and the Maltese community of Victoria. Joe succumbed to illness in 2005 and was admitted to a nursing home. He passed away on 1 June 2005 at the age of 77 years and was buried in the Keilor cemetery.

MRC in new location in Main Road West 2000s

JILL and FRED ELZINGA

On the 1st January 2005 a Dutch newcomer to St Albans and indeed Australia in the 1950s passed away. Her name was Jill (Sjoukje) Elzinga who had migrated in 1951. Jill and her family were flown over by aeroplane from Amsterdam to Sydney, which was a new way for immigrants to arrive which prior to their arrival had been done for nearly two centuries by ship.

Let us go back to the beginning of the story about Jill whose maiden name was Reitsma. She had been born in Leeuwarden in the northern province named Friesland where the Friesian cows and horses had originated from in 1912. Jill formed part of a large family as was the wont consisting of ten brothers and sisters. By the way she was the sole survivor of all the siblings. Jill married her husband Frederick Elzinga on the 22nd of May in 1937. (His name was also Anglized from Fonger Sieberen Elzinga). In time they became the parents of three children: Annie, Gerard, and Nina.

During World War II, Fred was forced like all men and youths to work in a camp where he had to dig trenches. Jill who was a mild and gentle person, could not accept the fact that her husband had been railroaded to work for the Germans. She rode her pushbike three days running to reach the camp where her husband was encamped – this involved passing through checkpoints at various stages where Jill would be told to stop and her identity card was checked. Initially she told the soldiers that her husband was a painter and was unsuccessful in obtaining the release of her husband.

On the next occasion Jill lied and said her husband was a farmer and obtained a temporary working permit for her husband. At this time during the war, people engaged in food production were regarded as essential by the Germans.

Near the end of their three-day journey home the pushbike fell apart and had to be carried home the balance of the way. When they arrived home, Fred hid under the stairs and it was Jill who protected her family and provided food for her family during the balance of the war.

Jill and Fred applied in 1950 to come to Australia and were accepted in 1951. They came to Australia per airflight under the Netherlands Australia Migration Agreement from Leeuwarden and were accommodated in a migrant hostel at Bathurst. They were sold a block of land in St Albans (sight unseen) whilst they were still living in New South Wales. The block of land by the way was in Cowper Avenue, St Albans – it was part of a paddock with barbed wire fencing, unmade roads, with no water nor electricity. When they moved to Victoria they lived in the Maribyrnong Migrant Hostel until such time as a bungalow became available in St Albans. They then proceeded to live in a weatherboard house in Cowper Avenue, which was beautifully painted of course, because Fred was a painter.

During the late fifties there were about 160 Dutch families living in St Albans. They had already established a Dutch Windmill Theatre Group, held community social events at the St Albans Hall, and arranged fund raising events for the welfare emergencies in their émigré community, e.g. when a house burnt down.

The Elzingas were living in 28 Cowper Street near the Hovenga and Kozlowski families. Jill was a very loving and giving person. Children in Cowper Avenue used to call her the lolly lady for she was forever feeding children sweets. Her front garden was unusual in having white pebbles containing hundreds of pot plants.

In the front lounge room there were low built-in cupboards around the walls that contained her rock collection. As with most Dutch people they had a tapestry cloth on the wall containing copper ornaments – memories of her place of birth at the time.

In Holland, Fonge's occupation had been a house painter and he operated his own shop in Leeuwarden. He continued with this occupation in St Albans and one of the many buildings he painted was the Presbyterian Church. He also became the manager of a paint store in Main Road East on the north side, just past Unger's newsagency shop.

Jill worked as a cleaner in Australia. This no doubt was caused through the environment in which she was brought up. Jill's parents owned a barge that was used to cart goods from one city to another in the Netherlands. The owners of these barges used to live on board of the vessel, the children would attend a captains' school during the winter months in Leeuwarden when in the very cold weather rivers and lakes could be frozen over and become a solid block of ice.

Her fellow workers at the radio station 3AW where she was employed had great difficulty in pronouncing her name, so Norman Banks, founder of the first Carols by Candlelight event and radio announcer, named her Jill the

Peppermint Lady – yes, she liked peppermints – so that is how Sjoukje became Jill.

In 1959, Jill, Fred and their son Gerard received their Certificates of Naturalisation, so that was a definite commitment to their new homeland. Jill and Fred's children were born in Holland but grew up in St Albans.

Annie-Anje was born on 19 October 1939 and is now deceased due to cancer. She married Mr Christopher Dickson[1] from South Africa and they were living at 18 Cowper Avenue. Annie worked as a knitter and was quite clever in making things; she amassed a large collection of dolls including the ones she made. Christopher worked as a foreman. They had three children: two boys and a girl. Annie died in February 1993 (quite young, only 53) and Christopher in 2011.

Gerard Bernard was born on 24 April 1942. He started working as a painter and later worked at Sunshine Hospital as a security officer. He wed Patricia Ann Hayes and they were living in Cowper Street before building a house in Leslie Street on the western side opposite the shops. Gerard may have worked in security at the Airport at one stage.

Mina Christina was born on 29 January 1950. She wed Malcolm Barry Hempstead who was a neighbour and they settled in Cowper Street and raised a couple of boys, Darren and Damien. They later moved to the Dandenong Ranges. Malcolm died in 2005 and is buried at Emerald. Both of the sons have also died.

Fred Elzinga managed a paint store in Main Road East, which might have been the Colorbrush Paint Store. With regard to his community work, he was appointed one of the Elders of the St Albans Presbyterian Church that was in East Esplanade (which was named Circus East at the time). Other trustees at the time included John Stevens and Cliff McCulloch. Later, Fred joined the Baptist Church. He had heart trouble and died in 1972 at the young age of 57 years.

It was after Fred's death that Jill's health started to deteriorate. Yet, at the age of 65 she obtained her driving licence after very many efforts and drove her late husband's car around until she reached the age of 86. Jill also enjoyed caring for her garden and had an enormous array of plants on display in the garden. Jill died in 2005. She had reached the age of 93 years and had a beautiful soul.

Researched and written by Alie Missen, 2013.

Church Elders: Fred Elzinga, John Stevens, Cliff McCulloch

Presbyterian Church in Circus East St Albans

[1] His father's parentage is traced back to 1851 to David Dickson of Scone, Perthshire, Scotland.

KON DANILOW

My parents came to Australia in April 1950 from Germany and Czechoslovakia. My father was Konstantin Danilow who was Ukraine-Russian from a village near Kharkov, which was one of the major cities in the Ukraine, but he always said he was Russian. His parents were Gregory and Natasha Danilow. There were about five brothers and sisters in the family but we don't know much about them.

When the Red Army came through the area he absconded from the village. Him and his mate on the farm disappeared because the Red Army was picking up the boys on the farms. There were a few of them who disappeared because they knew the Red Army would send them to the front where they were likely to die. Heading to the west was the only way to get away from the Reds because they had control of everything to the east. It took them two years to get from the Ukraine to Germany because they hid in the forests and didn't show their face in the daytime and travelled mostly at nighttime. They may have stayed a while in a few places but Dad didn't like to talk about his experiences during this time because life was desperate.

When he got to Germany he got a job on a farm. He was lucky because he met a farmer who took him in. This was wartime and there was a shortage of farmers and labourers. Dad said he was the only other man working on that farm, which was in Regensburg west of the Czech border. That's where he met my mum who had come there from Czechoslovakia.

My mother Anna Heisl was of Czech nationality but German ethnicity so when the war broke out they were meant to go back to Germany. They lived in Czechoslovakia but when the war started they had to move to Germany.

Mum wouldn't talk about her wartime experiences. She was a German and was expecting a child with a German soldier. She was in the hospital with her baby son when the hospital was bombed and all the babies died. We're not sure what happened to the father but believe he died in the fighting.

I'm not sure how Mum and Dad met but it was probably in the town when people were contemplating an escape from the devastation of war. They had to make a decision whether life was worthwhile staying there or going somewhere else. There was no opportunity there in the district of forests and farms unless you owned land, which they didn't. There was no future for them there, so migration was their main option. There was also the fear of internment because he was always afraid that the Russians would be coming to collect him. I think the move to Australia was a definite escape from the Russians so that they would never capture him.

I went there for a visit one time and my father had the chance to go back for a visit but he still had a fear that something would happen to him, so he didn't go.

There was nothing left in Germany where my dad met my mother on a farm. Her family came from a place called Hutthurm near Passau in Bavaria. There was nothing left for them there so they decided to come to Australia. They arrived at Freemantle in 1950 and then got shipped off to Bonegilla. From Bonegilla they moved to Bentleigh. There was a brick factory there looking for workers and that's where my father started working.

My mother got a job in a hotel near Carlton which was a live-in position so they were apart for a while. It was a small pub where she probably did the meals, waitressing, and cleaning. She had a room upstairs. They were separated during the week and my father would come to the hotel on Friday night; weekends was the time they had together. They lived that way for quite a while and then they came to St Albans.

They were selling blocks of land in St Albans. I don't know where my dad heard about it, it might have been in the paper. They were selling blocks for £10. He organized a real estate agent to pick him up and he told me that Mr Stevens was involved in that.[1] He caught the train to St Albans. The real estate agent was waiting for him there and drove him to Taylors Road. There were two bungalows on Taylors Road near Theodore Street at the time. They were selling blocks for £10 and my dad got excited and bought one. He went back to see my mum and said it was five minutes from the station.

The following week he took her to St Albans but of course this time there was no car so he said it was downhill to Taylors Road which was known as North Road at the time. They walked for about half an hour and the temperature was about forty degrees centigrade that day, so she wasn't a pleased woman walking all that way in the heat, but he got her there. He showed her the block and she was happy with it, so they decided to go on buying that block.

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[1] The Stevens brothers of St Albans became local real estate agents in the 1950s. Refer to chapter in St Albans Settlers from 1905.

The decision was made and so they soon had the third bungalow along Taylors Road halfway between Theodore and Alfrieda Street.

Our bungalow was different to the others which were more like a skillion with a flat roof. Our bungalow was small but it had a gable roof. Dad built a lot of the bungalow himself and got other people to install the technical bits like the plumbing and later the electricity. People would exchange work and help each other out and say when you're ready I'll come and help you. After quite a few years, maybe four or so judging by the photos, my parents decided to build the house at the front of the block with helpers from all around the place. People came and said "I can do this" or "I can do that" or "I'll help you and you can help me".

Dad would never do anything to the house until he had saved the money to buy the materials. It was never on credit or a loan from the bank. You saved up so much and went and bought the wood that you could. That's how it was. Sometimes the men would be tying the timber to their pushbike to take home because they didn't have cars.

When they moved to St Albans, dad was still working at Bentleigh to keep the money coming. Then he got a job at Worsted Finishers in Ballarat Road Sunshine, which made material for clothing and they also dyed material. It was in Ballarat Road opposite the old ETA factory. He was a machine operator and was there a long time.

I was born in Australia in 1953 in the old Women's Hospital in Carlton and brought home to Taylors Road. Apparently I was an interesting arrival. Dad had taken mum to a picture theatre in the city to watch a western movie. They were in the Capitol in Swanston Street when mum started experiencing labour pains, so my father took her to the Women's Hospital on the tram.

Our bungalow had two rooms and a couple of years later my brother Andrew was born; that was in 1955. We grew up in the bungalow and enjoyed the company of chickens and dogs. The dogs were obedient to us but wild when strangers were around – everyone in the street had dogs like that. To walk past some of the houses … When it was the dunny day you had to have the dog chained up because they always wanted to chase the dunny man.

In those days as a kid you lived in a little two-roomer with the next step trying to build a house slowly but surely. Across the road we only had the fields: snakes, cows, prickle bushes, and the Anderson farm across the road. That farm was the old family farm from the early 1900s but they had a few places around the area because they had bought other farms.

We spoke German and English at home but not Russian. Dad was Orthodox and we were Catholic. We went to the Catholic Church except two or three times a year when we went

to the Russian Orthodox Church in Collingwood. Their Masses used to go for two hours and there was food afterwards.

Growing up we spent a lot of time in the front yard because it was fairly big. The bungalow was at the back and the blocks of land were reasonable sizes in those days. You could also play out in the street. We had chook pens and another little shed there where Santa used to get dressed up. They used to have this Krampus Day just before Christmas when Krampus comes and rattles on the door and punishes children who have misbehaved. Of course it was the old man who dressed up in the back shed as a St Nicholas or Father Christmas character but it was the bad Father Christmas. He used to ask if we'd been good to our parents and all this and that. He even asked my mother if she was good to her husband. He might even shape up as if he were going to give you a clip on the ear. As kids we thought he was a bit tough. We had Krampus every year as we were growing up. He would bring us lollies.

As the bungalows and houses came along Taylors Road there were a few more people there. The road never ever seemed to be finished, but we had a road.

The first family to have a TV was behind us but I can't remember their names. They were one of the rare families in the neighbourhood to have a TV. There was an empty block beside us then there were the Mikulas[1] and the Bellers.[2] We were all kids growing up together and being out in the paddocks. The Mikulas had the worst dog in the street because everyone had to run away from it. When he was on the chain he could just about rip the chain off the fence. The Beller boys were older; they were shooters and would go out rabbitting or pig hunting. There were the Soklers (Anna and Alfreda) on the Theodore Street corner. Eventually we had all sorts of migrants along the street.

We were little kids growing up together and worrying about what our next little adventure would be rather than what was happening on the computer. Should we explore the paddock or play in the street? There was a great big pond in Helen Street and all the kids from several streets around would come there because that's where you would get the tadpoles.

As we grew a bit older we used to go to the Maribyrnong River at the end of Biggs Street and Jacksons Creek going towards Sydenham. Everyone went to Biggs Street because it was a popular swimming spot; that was a fair distance from where we lived.

[1] Jan and Anna Mikula with daughter Irene came c.1950. Polish. Moved to 113 Taylors Road St Albans.
[2] Matthias and Katharina Beller were at 111 North Road. They were Yugoslav nationals who arrived with son George in 1954 and sent to Bonegilla.

We went there mucking around. People would swing off the ropes from the trees into the water. I couldn't swim so I wasn't diving in there. We went there and had good teenager times enjoying the company.

There were swimmers and horse riders down there and they used to have horse races down there. There was a stretch down the bottom where the sand was and that's where they'd race the horses.

In that time before TV we were more interested in playing cricket out on the road. Radio was a big thing. As we were a bit older that was our big thing, to get a radio, the little brown Astor. There was a TV next door and we all went over there to see what the world of TV was all about. It might have started in 1956 with the Olympic Games. I was only three at that stage. That was a Yugoslav-Polish family – there was a mixture of ethnicities in the neighbour-hood – and they were the only ones with a TV.

Slowly and surely things started changing. The biggest object was getting into the house. The palm tree was another one. When my parents built the house they planted a palm tree on the front of the street. My brother and I used to jump the palm tree. Each year as it started growing taller it used to cut our legs because the leaves grew sharp and prickly. That palm tree is still there and for me it is always a memory bank of childhood days. It's huge.

Getting the house done was a big achievement. As kids we were helpful by mucking around and making life difficult for the adults. That was a big highlight for a number of years. When we moved into the house we had people who moved into the bungalow. In those days you helped each other with a bit of caring; you had more time. I'm pretty sure mum looked after their kids. My mum looked after a lot of neighbourhood kids and got a couple of bucks in return.

At first we had no water in Taylors Road. My dad was working in Bentleigh in the brick factory. He'd come home on the push bike from the St Albans station, go to the bungalow, get two buckets, go all the way back to Biggs Street and fill the buckets with water, and push the bike back to Taylors Road. He had to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning for work because he had to get the first train that left to get to Bentleigh. He did that five days a week, six days a week.

My parents became naturalized citizens in 1958, so that was a definite commitment.

My first year at school was at the Sacred Heart in Theodore Street. That was in 1958 and I was five years old. St Albans North Primary started in 1959, so I had one year at Sacred Heart Primary School. The milk bar opposite the Sacred Heart school was run by the Vernons and I remember that because Susan Vernon was in my class.

When the North Primary started in 1959 most of the kids in the neighbourhood went there. We had a great time at school. We had big areas to play in, including games like King. I remember Mr Cunningham and Mrs Kooper (Koopu). Mr Blain was the headmaster there for quite a while. Mr Cunningham was a very popular sports and maths teacher. Mr Sutton was also there.

Geoff Snooks also started that first year in 1959 and Taylors Road was still known as North Road. He had a younger brother who was at school with my younger brother. Mr Snooks was the town hairdresser in a shop near the station. They lived in Power Street near Theodore Street in a broken-down house near the pond.[1]

Carol Anderson was also at the school in 1959; she was the daughter of Arthur Anderson of Biggs Street whose family had the farm north of Taylors Road. The Andersons had several blocks in the district. Another of the Anderson brothers was living next to our house later on. It was us, Vojak, Mikula, and Beller to the west, and on the east there was Edward Raczkowski earlier on and then Keith Anderson came in. I was about 15 when he came in. He had the only phone and was a grumpy old bloke who didn't mix with the new arrivals but he had to live with them. If you had an urgent message for your mum or dad you might ring him and ask him to pass on a message, and if it was something desperate he would come across, but otherwise he was reluctant.

While I was at the primary school, one of the main jobs that you wanted was to be the milk boy, because we used to have chocolate milk in those days. Whenever a bottle was left over you were allowed to drink it; that's probably why I ended up a bit chubbier than the other boys in my class.

Going to school was good because we had plenty of room to play and there was the footy team – there was no soccer in those days. I used to go home for lunch because home was

[1] In 1972 Clifford James and Nancy Elaine Snooks nee Steers were at 120 Power Street St Albans.

so close. We'd play King at the back of the school. King was a chasing game with a tennis ball. Whoever had the ball had to chase the other kids who were running around and hit one with the ball. Whoever was hit then had to chase everyone and hit someone else. It was also called Brandy. Sometimes the girls and boys would play the game together and when that occurred the boys played rough by throwing the ball mostly at the girls.

We had two big rocks in the corner of the schoolyard and they are still there. All the toughies used to hang around there and have a smoke or whatever when I was in grade five or six.

One day we went to Heallesville sanctuary as one of our excursions. We also went to Mordialloc, but the best story was that mum made a lovely sandwich for my lunch at the Heallesville sanctuary. I took my lunch out of my little lunch bag and an emu came and pinched it. I was crying because I was a young and hungry boy. My mum would have made a schnitzel sandwich with tomato. It was interesting what lunches kids brought to school. The Italians would bring salami and Vienna bread, and others brought their stinky cheeses. The Aussies would turn their nose up because they had their bread and vegemite. The rest of us would have our Mortadellas, Cabanas and Polish sausage.

Primary school was good then. We couldn't complain. The school was good. The teachers were good. Strictness wise, we had some tough teachers there. We used to get cuts. I believed that if you were given homework and didn't do it, you deserved the cuts.

We used to go on excursions, we had a very good football team. The first school football team was about 1964 when I was in grade 5. We played against teams from other schools such as Tottenham, Sunshine, Footscray, and Braybrook. They were along the railway line to Melbourne; we never went to Keilor or that direction.

Mrs Kooper (Koopu) had been a teacher at the old St Albans Primary School in East Esplanade before coming across to North Primary. She was a stern but friendly teacher. She married an Estonian man who came after the war. We got on well together because of a strong kid-teacher rapport and friendliness. She was always friendly and helpful.

Mr Jack Ginifer, after whom the Ginifer Railway Station is named, was a teacher at the school. His daughter Pru attended the school but I'm not sure if they lived in St Albans at the time; they might have come from Altona. Mr Ginifer became a member of Victorian state parliament representing St Albans.[1]

[1] John Joseph "Jack" Ginifer taught at St Albans North Primary in the 1950s and was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1966. He had been a councillor at Altona and Williamstown. Appointed Minister of Consumer Affairs and Minister of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in April 1982. Died of cancer in July 1982.

My next school was the St Albans Technical School, which was an all-boys school. I was there for three years from 1965 to 1968 and left when I was fifteen. We had Mr Gibbs who was an arts teacher and he was nice. He drew a nice portrait of me, which was also nice. We had very rough groups of kids because we were all wogs and didn't care too much about learning. We used to get the strap if we didn't do our homework but we didn't care, but some of the students did have minds inside them.

The teachers were tough and hard and we did what we had to do. We learnt what we had to and didn't worry too much. Sports-wise we were pretty good.

For a while I worked at Coles in Main Road East on the corner of Alfrieda Street. My mother worked there as a cleaner. Coles was the employment place for a lot of young people.

There were a lot of grassfires around, almost every year. One time we had a massive fire that came as far as the railway line where the Keilor Plains station is and we were scared our houses would burn down. We were all told to be ready to evacuate. It was in the 1960s. I was holding the hose to the house but despite lots of smoke the fire didn't reach our neighbourhood.

We had soccer and footy teams and played against other school. We had a strong generation of soccer players because a lot of us played soccer on weekends as juniors. Some were already in the next level at the school. They were in form 4 of 5 and we were in the junior levels. The older boys had started playing for senior clubs such as St Albans Soccer Club or Keilor.

There was Louey Dennis who played for St Albans, Joe Muscat ended up with Green Gully but played with Keilor and other clubs. Ernst Burgoyne was another one who played for Keilor with Joe Muscat. I wasn't a champion because I was just a young buckaroo and in the bottom group, but we did play soccer. We went to a camp in Flinders at one time.

There were several soccer clubs around St Albans. There was the St Albans club and Keilor City who were both located on Churchill Reserve on the corner of Grace Street and Fox Street. I think there was another one further down. I remember Joe Borg was involved. There was an outing in 1971 to Tasmania that my father attended. Mrs and Mrs Biewer were in that group as was a young Ciro Lombardi. My dad was on the committee in 1971. I'm sure the junior soccer started in St Albans in 1965 or something like that. I started there when I was 12 years old. Each year we would go on a trip. Fundraising included your classic selling sausages in a tin shed.

It was called St Albans Soccer Club at that time. Our parents went to watch the soccer games at Churchill Reserve. The group that is now there is St Albans Dynamo but they don't have much information about the earliest days. They took over the old club about 1982 but the old nostalgia and history is gone. It started off as mixed nationalities but in the early 1970s people wanted to form ethnic clubs. Dynamo was the Croatian side, Keilor City was the Polish side, and Green Gully Ajax became the Maltese side. Keilor City went to Maribyrnong-Polonia.[1]

My father was involved with the soccer club probably for up to ten years. St Albans Juniors started in 1965 when there were still empty paddocks around the place. Soccer was an important part for recreation for the boys. We went to soccer as kids and I remember doing first aid at soccer with Andy who was the first aid man. I did some time with St John's which was a good way to help with the soccer. When I turned 15 dad was still involved. He was still involved with the club when the Pommies were running it. He was less involved when the club became Dynamo and that was in the late 1970s or early 1980s. He was still with them in 1971 because that's when they went on the trip to Tasmania. He moved to Geelong in the late 1970s.

I started working as a chef at age 15. I like food and helped mum quite a lot. I liked the wog food and it tastes better if you pinch a taste as you're making it. Being a chef gave you opportunities to go overseas. In those days you were thinking about what you were going to do and I thought cheffing would be good. Lots of others went to mechanics and all that. I wasn't a car monkey though I later bought a Beetle.

I saw a job advertised as a chef at the Palm Lake Motor Inn. I took the train to St Kilda and walked all the way from the station because I didn't know where Queens Road was. The interviewer was the head chef who looked at my school marks and said my English was not that good and my maths was not that good, but "Your

[1] The Polonia Soccer Club was formed in 1950 in the Victorian State League. It formed two senior teams and several junior teams. Over time the name changed to Maribyrnong Polonia, Sunshine Heights Polonia, Sunshine Heights, and Western Eagles.

art is very good". He said he'd get back to me tomorrow or whatever it was. He always said to me he wouldn't have employed me except for my very good art marks. There were about five of us apprentices who started at that time.

I worked from 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the afternoon till 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock every night of the week. Sometimes I worked during the day. Being an apprentice chef you had to fit in where they wanted. I remember going past the golfers around Albert Park Lake thinking you jokers should be at work rather than walking around with a cart. I should have become a golfer because some make millions.

I worked there and did my apprenticeship for four years and stayed for another two years because it was a good job. That made me nearly 21. Then in January 1973 my mum passed away and that started a whole life change for us.

I went overseas because I wanted to see my rellos. I always said I wanted to go overseas. I said I could speak German so I could get over there. One of the chefs who taught me was in Liverpool so I had some base to get to England. So I plonked myself over there and he was happy to see me.

On the second day I was there I went to an agency and they said they were looking for a chef on the Isle of Man, plus there were a couple of young women there who were looking for jobs as waitresses. I had a work permit so I was ready to go. When I got on the boat and we landed in the harbour they started checking my papers and said I didn't have a work permit. I said I had an English work permit, but the Isle of Man has its own government and you needed an Isle of Man work permit. No one told me that.

The big boss who owned the Castle Mona Hotel had come to the dock to meet us three. He went to this bloke and said "I need a chef desperately. Can't we let him in?"

This bloke said to me "I'll give you three months from today. If you're not off the island in three months' time you are going to jail."

I worked there for three months and then had to leave. It was a good place. They had the motorbike racing, they had Liverpool week, they had Manchester week. Isle of Man was a great place to bum around in. I worked behind the bar and cheffing. At that time I was earning about £25 which was pretty high because the kitchen hands were only getting about £12. There was a lot of skullduggery going on there but I won't go into that. I also worked in Glasgow and all along the coast along there.

When I left after three months I went to see my relations in Germany and stayed with them. Life was good in that time because it was the first time I met my uncle – mum spoke so much about her brother and her other brother who died in the war. Me and my uncle developed this bond … I think he must have loved my mother dearly. He got shot in the war and was a drinker so we had this drunken bond. His family were trying to get him off the booze and he and I would go to the pub and fall in the snow. It was a real bond, like me and my dad, because I knew so much about him. I'd also see other relatives. After a while his wife and children said they were trying to get their dad off the piss and that I had better move on. We've seen the family two times since then and I stir them up by reminding them that they told me to leave.

I was a smartarse while I was travelling overseas. I remember when I was in Belgium and Ostend and the border control guards were going through my big suitcase looking for drugs. I wasn't on drugs but they were targeting anyone and anything that was strange. I had an Australian passport but was named Danilow which was a Russian name and I think they were suspicious, so they zoomed onto me and dumped everything out of the case looking for drugs.

I thought I was clever because I could understand German. After they had rummaged though my suitcase I said to the guard "You put all my clothes back properly like they were." He grabbed me by the front of my jacket and smashed me back against the brick wall and I remember the back of my head hitting that wall, which scared the shit out of me for being such a smartarse. I bent over with my sore back and packed my suitcase without another word.

When you travel you mix with all sorts and go through these border controls. There were all these Americans who were on the chooff, which I wasn't. I'd say to them the border control are looking at you, because I could hear them talking, so get rid of your weed. I got on well with the bodgies.

When you are travelling and sleeping rough at railways stations, bus stops, anywhere, you have to look after yourself. Luckily I had my chef's knives with me and I slept plenty of times in the snow and bus stops, whatever, just laying there overnight. You had money but it wasn't that much and you didn't want to spend it all on accommodation. I had my suitcase and a bag and I slept with my hand on one of my knives ready to defend myself if necessary.

I went to Innsbruck and stayed at a youth hostel. In those days you could stay at the hostel for three days and then had to leave.

People would hitch a ride on the autobahn, so I went to the autobahn and there was a long queue standing on this autobahn and there's snow and ice everywhere. Everyone's got signs – going here, going there – but the cars don't pick up that many. If there's a line of 20 they might pick up 6. Where do you go? You can't go back to the hostel because they won't take you, so you huddle up in the snow overnight underneath the bridge. The next day you join the queue again. I was lucky because I got a

lift in a Mercedes Benz and as a young fella I was most impressed. Then I realised that many people in Germany had Mercedes Benzes because they were manufactured there.

I came back to Australia because problems were occurring back here. I went in 1973 and returned in 1975. I met a woman who gave me an ultimatum – it was either her or the drunks and the chefs. So I hummed and hawed and took her. Then after ten years she left me with two kids, so I should have stayed with the drunks and the cheffing, but then I wouldn't have met Will again.

After Anita left me with the kids I was on my own for seven years, and then I met Will and we decided to get together. We had two girls and two boys and 32 years later we are still hanging in there. We both worked very hard. I was the warehouse supervisor for Just Jeans for quite a while. I started at National Starch when I was with my first wife in Tullamarine. I worked there as a factory person because I gave up cheffing. She was working there which I thought was good at the time because we could see each other during the day.

My mother died when I was 20 and that was in 1973. I was overseas when this was happening. I went overseas and saw a few relatives after my mum died. I stayed there for a couple of years and worked there. Then problems started happening back here so I came back.

After mum died, dad met a lady from Geelong and went to work at the Ford factory. He made a decision to go the Geelong when all his connections were in St Albans. What can one say? Sons and fathers don't always get along. He made a decision to sell the house in Taylors Road and I wasn't too happy with that. He went to Geelong and Ford had lots of work but he must have been a bit worried about getting that job because he understated his age by two years. After he retired at age 65 he moved back to St Albans.

Even though Geelong was a very multi-cultural community, all his old friends were in St Albans and that was the main reason he returned. He enjoyed the company of old friends and enjoyed going to the pensioners club.

Once he came back to St Albans in his retirement his social life centred around the pensioners club as his mates were there. The club was fairly big because it had a lot of New Australians there. Whatever trip they went on, Dad would be there. They went up to Darwin and somewhere up in Queensland. Wednesday was the big day for Bingo, so dad was always there. Any dance that was held, dad was there.

When he was 79 he was hit by a car and injured his head and was in hospital a long time. He got out but needed a lot of home care and because of the head injury he was under the care of the State Trustee. We all did cooking and cleaning and he even had a home help lady come in, but mostly he wanted to sit and talk to her over a cup of tea. They took away his driving licence. That was the last two years of his life and he passed away when he was 81.

I was gone from St Albans when I was 15 so I don't have too many stories about the teenage life in the neighbourhood. Some of the neighbourhood boys were in trouble with the police in their teens and ended up behind bars, but I was already working as an apprentice chef with Palm Lake Motor Inn in St Kilda. It's now the Bay View on the Park. I worked six days a week and only had the Wednesday off and my old mates were working on a Wednesday, so it was very hard to keep up with developments. We ended up having different environments as I was preoccupied with work and then went overseas.

I've had a pretty eventful life and I give great credit to my parents for that, even though dad and I didn't always see eye to eye. He was a sooky la la but a tough bloke too. My mum was the hard knuckle of the family and dad was the sooky la la, a grumpy old man, in that he'd make some poor decisions and they would argue about it. Men would have a few vodkas and forget where they were; they'd get carried away.

Some of the men had a hard time in early life but they didn't mind thumping the table of a weekend to show how tough they were and show the women who was the boss.

Dad made some silly decisions and it was mum who had to fix them, and if she couldn't it was up to me. For instance, he ordered that false brick cladding for the house and believed he would get it for free because he had agreed to have the advertising sign at the front. He was sucked in by the salesman and we had to front up with the money.

I was a young buckaroo and sometimes I had to make hard decisions. I had the reputation for being able to fix things. They'd say "Go to Kon and he'll think of something to fix things." That's why dad and I didn't always see eye to eye, because he saw things through the old background whereas I always tried to see it from the next background. Dad called me big head because if a tough decision had to be made I would do it in whatever way. There were quite a few times when I got them out of trouble and there were times when they got me out of trouble.

Will and I have had our own battles bringing up four kids. We worked very hard and had our disagreements in private but never

argued in front of the kids.

My brother Andrew went into office work in the city, as a chartered accountant in the insurance industry. He met a lady in his younger days but unfortunately the marriage broke up. We had a double wedding at St Mary's Church in Ballarat Road where Rosamond Road comes in. Then we went to the Polish centre in Sunshine behind the shopping centre – Marian Hall I think it was. My brother moved to Melton. My father lived with them for a while. Andrew's marriage broke up, then he met a lady with three kids and they had another one. Unfortunately that marriage didn't last either. My brother's health deteriorated due to back problems and now he's living in a share house with several other people. We still see him whenever we have a family do.

The North Primary School celebrated its 60th anniversary this week. I went to the celebration and met a couple of people I knew, but there were only a few from my era. Annie was an English lass and her husband was Karl who was German; his parents were Bernard and Rosa Metha who had the butcher shop in the arcade. The other fella was named Doug. I've known him for a long time because he was in my class, but we don't talk very often. I would like to arrange a get-together because if we don't do something time will run out. What photos and mementos I've got I have to give credit to my parents and to Will because we kept the photos.

We've grown up four children and have seven grandchildren. Kosti is a warehouse manager and has been involved with the St Albans Football Club since 16 years of age, which is 27 years of involvement and he's still there as trainer. He's also a trainer with the Melbourne women's football club. Kylie is successful being a mother and growing up five children with husband Christian. Michael lives in Adelaide with one son. Then we have Bec with one child and she is furthering her studies so she can give her son a better life.

We still follow the old European way, because to our grandchildren we are known as Oma and Opa.

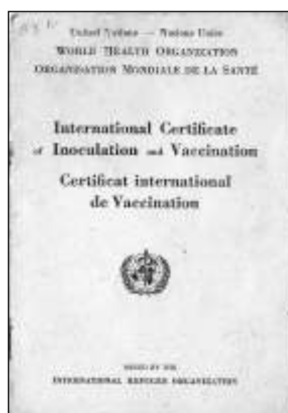
Kon Danilow, October 2019.

Kon and Will Danilow © K Danilow

WILL DANILOW

My family name was Solon, which came from Greece many generations earlier, and then it was French. Eventually the ancestors went to Holland and that's where we came from. My parents were Maria Keurentjes and Martin (Martinus) Solon from Boxtel in southern Holland.

There were two daughters who were born in Holland: myself (Wilhelmina known as Willie) and my younger sister (Gijsberdina known as Dina). My mother was pregnant when they left for Australia, so my brother (Louis Jacobus) was born in Australia.



International Certificate
of Inoculation and Vaccination

Certificat international
de Vaccination

We migrated in 1959 under the Migration Agreement between the Australian and Netherlands Governments. Dad's occupation in Holland was a railway track layer and before that he worked in the coal mines. In Australia he worked as a laborer. We had no friends or relatives in Australia. The reason we came is that dad's interest in migration was aroused by an information pamphlet that he saw in the Labour Office when he went there because of unemployment.

We left Amsterdam on the Zuiderkruis (Southern Cross) which was the last voyage of an old army ship. We left in January 1959 and got here in February; it was a six week journey,

which was still a long time. We were lucky because my mum was pregnant, so we were put in a separate family room rather than in a dormitory. Mum got really, really sick on the ship and spent a lot of time in the ship's hospital.

In 1959 we went from the Bonegilla migrant camp to the one in Broadmeadows. I had started preps in Holland and when we were in the migrant camp I went to Broadmeadows Primary. Then we went to Oak Park and I went to Oak Park Primary. Then we moved to St Albans, at first in Leonard Avenue and I attended the East Primary. From Leonard Avenue we went to Ivanhoe Avenue and while there I still went to East Primary. When we moved to George Street in 1962 I transferred to the St Albans North Primary School.

In 1962 we bought a block at 85 George Street near the corner of Charles Street. That was one of 27 blocks being developed by Broons Constructions which was a company based in Brooklyn. The neighbours were Muti and Vati (who were Ria and Fred Drehlich), then some Yugoslavs who later moved out, then there were the Borgs.

The Drehlich family was of German background and we always called them Muti and Vati because that's what their children called them and that's German for mummy and daddy.

Muti and my mum ended up working together at Footscray hospital and went overseas together, ending up in Munich. Muti went to visit her family and my mum caught the train to Holland to visit relatives. Later Muti joined my mother and they caught the plane back from Amsterdam.

I attended the North Primary School in the 1960s. Mr Ginifer was a teacher at the school and I was in the same class as his daughter Pru. He would give you the strap if you did something wrong. I used to be at St Albans East and they used to have a proper bell to sound the start of class. The first day I started at St Albans North they didn't have a proper loud-speaker bell they just had an ordinary hand bell which was hard to hear. On my first day there I was with a group in the far corner of the playground near some big rocks and we didn't hear the bell so we were late coming back. We ran back when we realised we were late. Mr Ginifer was there and said it was strap time because we were late, so come and line up. It was my first day and I burst into tears and said "But there was no bell!" He looked at me and said "How long have you been here?" I said "I come here today" so I got out of it but the other girls got the strap. Ginifer said to me "Next time stay closer so that you can hear the bell." I was too scared to venture to those rocks.

Growing up, the streets were our play grounds. There were a few magpies in Helen Street and they would swoop you; they were looking for heads, those magpies. There was a pond that was a meeting place for young children, and I'm not talking about teenagers. In those days if you were seven or nine years old and walked around those other streets your mother would never worry about you. Now you can't do it. I can remember going to the pond with my old jam jar to get my share of the tadpoles, only when they started turning into frogs I got frightened.

Dad built a cubby house for the three of us. We had everything in there and be built everything himself. We had a window and he made a kitchen in the German way with a table and bench seat that was hinged so that you could lift the seat. He made us dolls' prams and for my brother he made a little wooden gun because the boys also had to have their toys. The kids in the block loved to come and play in our back yard because we had this cubby house. They didn't buy us a lot but we had a lot because they made things. My sister and I both had a baby doll. Mum worked at Red Book Carpets and they were allowed to take the off cut wool home, so mum used to knit dolls' clothes out of carpet wool. Every Christmas sis and I would have another set of clothes for our dolls. That was the best part of our young lives. Dad even built our dolly prams. He didn't buy them, he made them. It was properly made of wood and painted.

Dad would go down to the tip and come back with a door and make something of it. We'd say don't go down to the tip but a lot of people did to find wood and tin that they brought back on the pushbike and used to build the chook shed. Dad used to collect copper and sell. When we lived in Oak Park, the other side of the river was the border of Essendon Airport and he went over there many times collecting scrap metal. There were scrap metal merchants around Melbourne buying bits of metal.

Joe Borg was a neighbour and he used to race horses at the end of Biggs Street near the river. There were no swimming pools around so that was our one spot. It wasn't a safe space but as teenagers we didn't have many places to go. It was a bit dangerous and a few people floated down the river.

My dad trusted Joe, so when I was young and wanted to go to Biggs Street I was allowed to go if Joe was going to be there. He would look after me so I was pretty safe. He would do the horse racing and there was gambling involved.

I was home when the massive fire came in the 1960s and we were told to get ready to leave. I can't remember if it was the police or the fire brigade, maybe both, who were coming around telling us to prepare to evacuate. We were at home with mum and the dog had just had a litter of puppies. The man next door was home and his name was Vati and he had a Volkswagen so he was going to take us if we had to evacuate.

Mum packed her important papers and we picked up the puppies and went to Vati's place. We were in George Street and they were in Charles Street just around the corner. We all had to get a wet towel and wrap it around our faces. We couldn't see anything and had to hold onto each other to get around the corner. We were all holding the puppies because we weren't going to leave them behind. I was 11 or 12 at the time. If the fire had jumped the railway line it would have cleaned us all out but it didn't. That must have been in January during the school holidays.

I started working at Coles when it was there in Main Road East on the corner of Alfrieda Street. I started there when I was 12, because you could start working at that age. I used to work at the milk bar closer to home but was getting only 20 cents an hour. That was on the corner of Theodore and Conrad streets. I started when I was 12 years old and in my first year of high school. The man who ran that shop actually asked my father if I was willing to work there. He was a lovely guy. They only had the one son and his name was Stefan. There was another girl, Vera from Taylor's Road, who was also working there; we were both the same age.

I used to get more by working at Coles on a Saturday morning – it was just a half day because they closed at lunch time. I actually earned more working that half-day at Coles than I did working at the milk bar for several afternoons, so I gave up the milk bar. At that stage I was at high school and didn't want to work after school because at that age you want to be with all your mates but the milk bar wanted me to be there nearly every night. Working Saturday morning earned you enough to have a bit of pocket money. I would go to Sunshine to watch Elvis Presley at the pictures and that's when I started smoking.

I started at St Albans High School in 1965 and left in Form 4 in 1968.

When I was at the high school the boys and the girls had separate parts of the school yard and they weren't allowed to mix at recess and lunchtimes. The girls were in the front section along Main Road East up to where the library was, which was the cut off line. There were teachers on standby there and you couldn't just walk across that line. If a girl wanted to go to the library during lunchtime you would have to tell the teacher and they would let you through.

The school was strict with uniforms. At the start of the year we had to wear our summer frock, our blazer and our beret. It didn't matter what the temperature was. Maybe when it got to 45 degrees we were allowed to take our blazers off, but in the street we had to have the blazers and berets on. In the winter you had your winter uniform, which was your winter tunic, your beret, your jumper, and your blazer, and you had to have your grey gloves on. That's what it was about. When the miniskirts came in was the best for us because you could have the skirt hem right on the knee. What we did was put a big elastic around our waist and hitch the dresses up. The headmistress, it might have been Mrs Gliddon, would come with a ruler and measure from your dress hem down to your knees and if it was an inch out you were in trouble. She knew what we were up to so she took our elastic waist bands with the result these frumpy dresses were down to our knees.

I only did one term in fourth form because my mother got really sick and spent ages in hospital. I left school to stay home and look after the rest of the family. I did that for about four months and after that I didn't want to go back to school. Dad said "OK, if you don't want to go to school you have to get yourself a job, as long as it's not working in a factory."

I got a job at Steelcrafts which was in Sunshine near the old picture theatre. I was a couple of months before my sixteenth birthday and I got a job in the office licking stamps. Dad was happy. I ended up in the payroll section and worked there for quite a few years. I got tired of that job and moved to Spaldings in Albion, which was where Bunnings is now located. I was in the office and Ron Irwin was the manager there. Barry Priest also worked there. I was there until I got pregnant with my first child and left after that. You had to leave when you got pregnant in those days, you didn't have a choice. I got that job through Tony Azzopardi who was the fore-man in the mouldings section. I left there in 1976 when Kylie was born. After about four months I went back to working and that was at James Hardie. Sunshine had lots of factories such as Steelcraft, Spaldings, James Hardie. Some of these were huge with more than 100 employees. James Hardie was massive and had three shifts.

I married Joseph Muscat in 1975 and we were living in a bungalow at the back of mum's house. Dad built us a bungalow because he didn't want us paying rent because we were saving up to build our own house. Just before we got engaged we bought a block of land in Bundeena Avenue. When we got back from the honeymoon the bungalow at my parents' place wasn't quite ready so we stayed with Joe's parents in Theodore Street. The bungalow was finished a couple of months after that and we moved into the back of 85 George Street. I got pregnant with Kylie and she was four months and a day old when we moved to 15 Bundeena Avenue in Kealba in the 1980s. I remember when we moved because it was only three degrees and it was freezing.

My father worked at Steelcraft for a while as a second job because he needed the money, because with mum being sick there was a lot of catching up required to cover the doctors' bills.

James Hardie was in Brooklyn near Rheems on the old Geelong Road. I had a car when I was working there so travel was not a problem, that is until my ex took the car. But I had discovered one of my neighbours was working there so he would often give me a lift and there was a lady down the road who did likewise.

I finished there because I got fed up working full time, so I went part time to Tatts-lotto, sending out batches of tickets to the news agents and then processing the tickets to identify the winners which was done manually at first. Later they went high tech and I ended up in Flinders Street selling tickets. After my ex left I went back to fulltime work and that lasted for about 30 years. That business changed hands several times and people asked me how could I stay so long in one job. I said that every time it changed hands it was like starting a new job because it was a new boss and a new system. I stayed there for 30 years. It started off as ATCO, then Tridonic ATCO, then Tridonic, which is an Austrian company that makes lighting components. When I started there were just under 100 people and ended up with 500 people in Sydney and Melbourne. CMP later bought them out and they became Custom Moulding Plastics. Sydney got closed down but a smaller workforce continued in Melbourne. I was with them for 30 years and retired three years ago. I was doing accounts receivable and payable. My job had reduced from five days to two days per week so I decided to retire. Now CMP has contacted me to come back as a maternity leave replacement, so I'm starting with them again but only one day a week.

My father Martin Solon passed away in 2002. The obituary was featured in the Herald Sun on 6 August 2002.

My mother Maria Solon passed away four months ago (June 2019) and the funeral service was at the Chapel of Repose in Altona.

I was doing a lot for mum. That's what you do and it keeps you busy.

I had it pretty tough because my mother got sick when I was fifteen. Even before that my mother worked afternoon shift and I had to look after my brother. I actually started looking after kids in the street when I was eleven. In those days it was completely different to now. Parents had to work because they needed money. When I was about eleven years old there was Fritz next door, so I had him, my brother, my sister, and four kids down the road who were of Dutch nationality, and there was Henry from around the corner. Every morning they came with their lunch and we all had to stay together. I was eleven and their ages ranged from nine or ten downwards. On school holidays that's what I did, look after children. I remember one time one of them had to get a needle so me and the whole lot went down to the St Albans public hall. I had to take one so I took the whole lot. The nurse was a bit angry with me because I couldn't hold the child's hand properly. My mother often told me when I grew up that I never had a childhood.

Before she got sick my mother was working afternoon shift and had to catch a train but dad wasn't home. What I had to do was come home from school to look after my brother. Every day I had to leave school at 3 o'clock rather than 3.30 and go home to stay with my brother who wasn't of school age. My mother would have everything ready. She would say when the clock came to 4 o'clock you turn the stove on so that when dad came home the dinner was ready. I did that until my brother started school, so I never got to walk home with my school friends like other kids did.

When I started high school it was the same. When I was twelve I started working in a milk bar. I had friends. As well as going down the river I went to the pictures and the Sunshine swimming pool with my high school friends.

I met my future husband, Joe, at the Sacred Heart dance. The Sacred Heart Church used to have a dance every Sunday night with a live band and I was allowed to go there but my dad picked me up. That's what dads did at that time, embarrass you by picking you up to make sure you got home alright. But my life was probably a bit different than people having fun. We never went out very much. Dad was one of these people … he just wanted to work in the garden. He worked six days a week and if he had a day off he wanted to work in the garden. He wasn't worried about taking us here there or anywhere. I really didn't start traveling until I was married to Joe Muscat and that was soccer related. Joe started playing soccer when he was at Sacred Heart when he was only 11 years old. He became a very good player for Ajax and won the best and fairest quite often.

Mum had the nervous breakdown and I was looking after her for four months. She was in hospital for quite a few weeks and when she came home I left school to look after her. Dad would give me the money for the family shopping. I was a fifteen year old girl and every day I would walk down to St Albans and buy the food for the dinner – let's say five potatoes, a cauliflower, and five chops. I'd go home and that's what I'd cook. The next day I'd go back and buy the ingredients for the next meal. At age fifteen I didn't comprehend the idea of buying a week's groceries and mum was in no fit state to guide me. It was lucky that I could cook a bit. That's the way it worked. As far as dad was concerned, he went to work so the women looked after everything else.

He was harsh in some ways. He could be very domineering but we loved him because he would stand up for you. He was your dad and you knew you were loved. He didn't care if I was fifteen or fifty if things needed to be done because this is the way it was. In many ways our dad was a tough nut but we were never short of anything and he went out of his way to do things for us when we were young, such as the cubby house and all the toys he made.

I started working and the roads came through and you had to pay for all that. Because

mum was ill and I was working, I used to hand my pay over every week. They used to give me money for the train fare and a bit extra as pocket money. Being sixteen and going to work I needed a few bits of clothing, so they made sure I had a little bit. I had enough to go to the pictures and have a smoke. I didn't blink an eyelid to that. I did that for quite a few years to help them pay for the road and things like that. Mum did get better.

I met Joe Muscat when I was 21 and he was 22 and we decided to buy a block of land. We had to go to mum and dad and I said I needed $250 for the block of land, which they did give me. After that they could see that we were going to get married and build our own home so they let me keep my wages. My sister was lucky because by the time her time came around my mum was better and did find a part-time job at the Footscray Hospital. When my sister started working she was able to save some money and had enough to go overseas when she was 21. I never had that chance because I never had any money.

Kon Danilow and Wilhelmina Solon 1987 © W Danilow

I never really travelled until I met Kon Danilow and we started going to places like Puffing Billy or Heallesville. We met through the group Parents Without Partners and that's when we started going on travel excursions. We were on the committee for the children's functions and organized kids' outings, which also meant the kids could bond together.

My mother was working at Red Book Carpets in Tottenham and that's where she got sick. She made friends with Flo who was an Australian woman with husband Max, who lived in Footscray. We called them Uncle and Auntie because we didn't have any. Auntie Flo was the most absolutely gorgeous woman. Her and mum became very good friends. They'd come over for lunch and mum would make the good old wog food. Uncle Max would sit there licking his lips and making the noises to go with it to show he was enjoying the food. Then Auntie Flo would make lunch at their place and she would be so proud of herself because she made a real Aussie meal by heating some pasties in the oven. I'm sorry, she would say laughing, but we are Australian. Or she would make a roast floating in lard. Mum was a good cake maker.

Mum was at Red Book Carpet for quite a while, even before my brother went to school. At first she was doing day shift then she changed it to the afternoon. That's when she got crook. She was home for a while but it was a few years before she perked herself up. She was trying to burn the candle at both ends, what with trying to run the family, doing the afternoon shift and getting virtually no sleep because she had to do the washing, cooking, and everything else. It got to her and she had a nervous breakdown.

After that she started at the Footscray Hospital and was there for twenty-odd years. She was a cleaner. In the hospital they used to use a lot of toxic chemicals as cleaning products. The ladies my mother used to work with, there was about a dozen, and ten of them got some form of cancer, including my mother. Mum got breast cancer; she didn't lose the breast but she lost the glands under the arm. A couple of the ladies passed away.

Mum said that in those days you didn't think about it, you were told to use the materials and the machines and you did it. She started off full time and continued full time until dad got sick.

Dad was working on a building in the city and fell down on some scaffolding. He was lucky the scaffolding broke his fall otherwise he would have gone all the way down, but he broke his ribs. After he done his ribs something else went wrong internally and he started getting heart problems. Then mum started working part time because he needed more care. He went back to work with the Keilor Council. He and a fellow called Anton used to replace the road traffic signs after they'd been demolished in car accidents. That was a lot easier that working on the big buildings.

Mum continued working part time at the hospital. Then my dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer and his health problems started getting worse so he wasn't allowed to work any more. For him to get a pension, mum had to quit her part-time work, which she did. She was 59 and he was 60 when they retired. By that time they had a bit of money saved up because the three children had left home.

Despite all the problems my parents had a pretty good life really. Mum said to us that we struggled but we didn't struggle too much. They always had reasonable jobs but it was never big savings. They got a campervan and went around Australia two and a half times. One time they only went up the Nullabor and up Queensland but the other times it was all the way round.

Kon and I saved and took our children on holidays. Mum said "Wait till those children

leave home and you won't know what to do with your money." We laughed, but it was true. When our kids left we had two pay packets coming in so there was a bit more money.

Growing up our kids had to use their imagination to entertain themselves rather than watching TV. They'd put a sheet over the table and that would be their tent and they would play all day inside on a rainy day. I'd make them lunch and they'd enjoy that under the table. Even now our grandchildren love playing outside in the back yard.

Kon Danilow with children © Will Danilow

My sister Dina lives three streets away and retired just recently. My sister went overseas when she was 21 and was going to travel the world. She went to stay with our Auntie and Uncle in Holland and one of the in-laws' relatives was asked to show her around, which he did. A few months later my sister said she wasn't travelling anywhere further because she had fallen in love with Jack.?? They travelled a little together to Germany and England. They got married in Holland because married couples could apply for a council house. Over there you do not buy a house on the private market like over here and council houses are the main option. When his work closed down they decided to come to Australia, so my sister came back seven years after she left. They were with Mum and Dad for a few months and then bought a house in Grevillea Street. They had a son. She went on to further and further studies and ended up with a really top job. She retired last week.

My brother left the area about 27 years ago. His marriage broke up and that may have added to his restless nature. He loved the bush and would travel around Australia working in different regions. He did come back one time for a visit but made it clear that he preferred his unfettered lifestyle rather than our suburban domesticity. He turns 60 this year but we don't know where he is at present. It would be somewhere out in the bush because he does not like the life of the big cities.

Will Danilow nee Solon, October 2019.

St Albans Post Office 1950s © G Vyner

St Albans Fire Brigade 1950s © G Vyner

St Albans Police Station 1950s © G Vyner

St Albans Public Hall 1950s © G Vyner

MARY and RONALD HOWELLS

My mother was Mary Catherine Dodd who was born in Nyngan, New South Wales, in June 1927 and grew up around Carrathool. During the war she was working in the Sydney Ladies' Club in Hyde Park, Sydney. She was a waitress and made some very good friends there. She said the club was popular with the ladies from the properties who used to come in and have afternoon tea. When she left to get married, one of the ladies even gave her a wedding present, a set of silver napkin holders that I still have.

My mother met my father Ron Howells in front of Luna Park in Sydney. Apparently she was waiting for the gates to open and this sailor came wandering up and started speaking to her. That's how they met. They were married for 52 years. I never heard them argue. They never had a fight.

My father was Ronald Howells from Wales in the United Kingdom. He was always known as Taffy – no one ever knew him as Ron. He was from Hirwaun in South Wales, which was a coal mining area. Apparently he and his father were working in Coventry during the war and when he turned nineteen my father enlisted and ended up in Sydney with the British Navy.

Mary and Ronald met in Sydney in 1945 during the war and he proposed to her. She said Yes, so when he was released they decided to come down to Melbourne and get married. I think they chose to settle down in Melbourne because of work possibilities. He was working as a first class machinist in Coventry and started working with ICI Nobels in Deer Park as a fitter and turner. He worked with them for the rest of his life until he retired in 1990.

After the war the men on that British naval ship in Sydney had the choice of staying on the ship and going back home to England or to stay in Australia or go to Canada. Because my mum said yes to his marriage proposal he stayed here. He worked as a fruit picker in some orchards until they came to Melbourne. He and his mate Les started off as fruit pickers until they made their way down here to Melbourne in 1948. My father got a job at ICI and he and my mum married at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. My father wasn't a Catholic and he wasn't religious. Because he wasn't a Catholic they had to get special permission to get married at St Patrick's and that's what they did.

They lived in St Kilda for a while and then moved to Altona by 1949. My father worked with a man called Bill Slee who was originally from Adelaide and was working at ICI with my father. Mr Slee had just finished building a house in Altona and said to my parents they could rent if off him until they could save up enough money to buy something of their own. My father, being a handyman, helped with finishing the house and then moved in.

My mother started working at Kraft Cheese in Port Melbourne. She was working on the production line and one day the boss came up to her and asked her if she would like to work in the office as a secretary, but my mum never had an education. She came from New South Wales from the bush and she never went to school properly. I'd say she was asked because of the way she looked, that the boss wanted someone pretty in the office. My mum refused. She said she didn't have the education to be able to do that. She hadn't even completed her primary schooling. She grew up in New South Wales in Carrathool which is near Hay. Her parents were Oliver Dodd and Angela Egan and her grandparents were Michael Dodd and Blanche Ledwidge.

Angela Egan & Oliver Dodd © G Vyner

Mum's father Oliver Dodd was a shearer and worked on several properties, so they never actually stayed in one place permanently. They went from a Burrabogie property to a South Burrabogie property and another place, and so on. This was a regular annual routine. Life must have been pretty tough because at some stage

they were living along the riverbanks of the Murrumbidgee in a mud hut with a dirt floor. In the Carrathool book where we went to a family reunion there is a map with the Dodd Track which marks the path that the Dodd children took to school. My mum never went to school there for some reason, perhaps she was too young, and her mother was a teacher anyway so maybe they did some home schooling.

My grandmother Angela Dodd (Egan) was born in Junee and grew up in Wagga. She was very well educated and could play the piano and teach; she was very good. I miss her. She was very handy, craft wise, and I take after her. If there's a craft going I want to learn it. Once I've learnt it, that's it, I go onto the next one.

Oliver & Angela Dodd with Mary © G Vyner

Because my grandfather Oliver Dodd worked from property to property, none of the kids received a good education. My uncle Mick ended up being a mechanic, so I presume he got an apprenticeship after the war. Uncle Pat just worked on properties and drove a truck. Auntie Nell was the youngest, the baby. She's the only one who had a good education because she became a nurse down here in Melbourne.

For some reason, nursing as a profession seems to be in the family. My aunty was a nurse, my cousin was a nurse, another one is with aged care, another one is doing massage therapy; there are several in that nursing area.

Going back in history to my great, great grandmother, Margaret Maloney, when she came out from Ireland, most of the people on the ship got measles and even the doctor died. It's recorded that she and her sister Mary were nursing the people. That was in 1837. Mary ended up marrying Joseph Cox whose first wife died on that voyage.

Margaret Maloney was born in 1816 in Balingard, County Limerick, Ireland. She sailed to Australia with her sister Mary on the Lady Macnaghten from Cork Harbour in November, 1836. In 1838 at age 35 in Campbelltown New South Wales, she married John Dodd who was a convict aged 36. He was born in 1803 in County Roscommon, Ireland, and was convicted in March 1824 at age 22 years. He arrived in NSW in 1825, worked as a herdsman, and was given a conditional pardon in 1841. Margaret and John Dodd raised seven children between 1845 and 1858 and I am one of their descendants. My mother Mary Catherine was the daughter of Oliver Luke Dodd and Angela Egan.

My mother worked at Kraft before I was born. She got pregnant before me and lost the child. I was born in 1950 so she must have left Kraft not long after starting there. She got married in 1948 so must have worked there for a year and a bit. Then after me she had another baby and lost it. She didn't work after that because she was looking after me as she didn't have anyone to call on to baby-sit me because all her family were up in Sydney and New South Wales. That must have made it very hard for her, because when I was born I had whooping cough then a cyst on the back of my leg.

When we moved to St Albans I got tonsillitis, measles, and chicken pox. I remember having to leave school one time because I was sick and mum having to push me home in a pram. Between Allan Witt and I, if there was a disease going round we shared.

When my parents saved enough money and were looking to buy a block of land somewhere, St Albans came up as a possibility. I presume land was advertised for sale and that's why they came to St Albans. I don't think they knew anyone here. They moved here in Christmas 1955 so they had lived in Altona for seven years. Everyone in our little block in Theodore Street moved in about the same time. Near us we had the Bonnici, Witt, Colgan, Grant and Wojcicki families.

Machine workshop at ICI Nobels in Deer Park

With my dad working at ICI in Deer Park, St Albans was quite close. That was handy for him because he used to ride a pushbike to work until he got a motorbike. He never had a car licence. He had a car once but he never had a car licence. Apparently they refused him for some reason and my father was not a patient person, so he decided not to apply again. Everyone in St Albans more or less knew him as riding

a motorbike with a sidecar.

He was always known as Taffy. If anyone asked for Ron at work they wouldn't know who you meant because dad was always known as Taffy. If you're a Welshman you are Taffy.

We settled at 66 Theodore Street in a bungalow dad bought from George Eisner. In the mid 1950s that was just a dirt road with open drains and it remained a dirt road for over a decade. There used to be an avenue of Pine trees further along the road. Father Reis used to collect the pine fronds for Palm Sunday.

I remember we first moved to St Albans when I was about five. I remember playing cricket out on the road with Robert Witt from next door and Sandra Brown from up the road. I remember the potholes, I remember the Self brothers' little fruit store in East Esplanade, and I remember a man coming around with a van selling fruit and veggies. I remember helping my father digging the stump holes in the front yard when dad was extending the house.

My father's friend Les who came down from Sydney with him settled along McIntyre Road in North Sunshine. He could get his hands somehow or another on some dynamite, so our job was to bang the holes into the rocks with a star chisel. That was our job. When they were digging the foundation there were some very big rocks that had to be blasted out. St Albans was known for its rocks.

Being aged five and living in the bungalow, I had to share the bedroom with mum and dad. Our bungalow had only a bedroom, a kitchen, and a bathroom. It was a typical St Albans bungalow. As I got older I wanted my own room and then my Auntie came out from Wales so they had to build another bedroom and a lounge room. Auntie Irene came out in the late 1950s, so we were probably living about three years in the basic, three-roomed bungalow. Auntie Irene didn't stay very long and when she left I had my own bedroom.

Theodore Street looking south © G Vyner

Theodore Street looking north © G Vyner

My dad built the rest of the house all by himself. He bought a book on how to build a house, drew the plans up himself, and got them approved. Then with the help of the neighbours he built it. There were the Bonnici's, the Wojcicki's, the Colgan's, and the Witt's and Terry's Uncle Richard Vyner might have helped because he was in the same block before moving to Erica Street. It probably took my dad a year to complete half of the extension. He added a bedroom and the new kitchen and that might have taken a little over a year to complete. My father was very fussy: if something was one millimetre out he'd put a sliver of wood underneath to make sure it was level. When my Aunty went back in 1960 he built the other half of the house, the front half, because then my father's mate from Wales was coming over and living with us for a while. That's why we had to get the front half finished.

Because my dad worked with ICI, they had a program where he could borrow money and repay them and that's how dad financed the house extensions. The repayments must have come out of his wages. He could borrow the money and when he paid it back he could borrow more. So ICI helped with the finance for building our house.

My mum worked at the Sacred Heart school tuck shop. She would come daily, starting mid morning and working through lunch time and going home after that. I used to help at lunchtime serving kids with their ha'penny worth of lollies – you could get eight chocolate bullets for a ha'penny.

Mum worked in the tuck shop with Mrs Mary O'Brien who was from Liverpool. Apparently the O'Brien's weren't Catholics when they came out but they converted. They lived on the corner opposite the school. Their eldest daughter was a teacher, Maureen O'Brien. She married Francis Leckie and her sister Ann married Patrick Leckie, so two sisters married two brothers. Ann now lives in Werribee.

Mum worked in the tuck shop until 1961 and after that she went to work at Taubman Paints, when I was eleven. Mum went to work at Taubmans because we needed the money, but mum didn't want to work away from the area while I was still in primary school. Once I went to St Monica's she thought I was old enough to travel on the train by myself.

My mum also did the Catechism at the Sunday school when she started at the Sacred Heart and Bereavement after she retired. Mum got Diplomas for her training with the church. She used to get an invitation every year to go into St Patrick's for a special service.

If there was something happening at the Sacred Heart, my mum was there. When the parish held its first ball she was there in the kitchen with the Freeland's, Mary Aitken and Mrs O'Brien. Mum wrote a bit about herself in the Sacred Heart history book and mentions becoming a Reader and then a Special Minister at Mass.

The only time I remember dad joining anything to do with the church was when someone organised a charity barbeque night based on Bob Dyer's Pick A Box. That was the only time I remember him joining in. I went but got sick afterwards and haven't liked barbeques ever since.

Mary O'Brien, Mary Shanley, Mary Howells, Mary Smith

Doreen Freeland, M Aitken, Jack Freeland, M Howells, M O'Brien

Thanks to my mother I got into the school choir even though I couldn't sing. I got in because my mother worked in the tuck shop – the other children didn't appreciate it though. One year we sang at the Williamstown Town Hall and when I was climbing up on stage for the performance I happened to walk up the wrong aisle and was in the wrong spot for my voice, so they weren't happy with me again. We had to sing a song called "Water Lilies".

Fr Sheehan and Fr Reis & First Communion girls 1950s

The neighbours in Theodore Street all seemed to have arrived at the same time so they all helped each other. Robert Bonnici's grand-father came out from Malta and he taught me to play draughts. We were sitting on the stumps of our house as it was being built playing draughts. I don't remember the Bonnicis' house being built so they were probably there before us but they were the first to get a television and I remember that. The Mullengers were down the road from us and Mr Mullenger would shoe horses in his little blacksmith's workshop. I've still got the horseshoe that I got from him from years ago.

My mother made some friends through work though I've forgotten their names. She was working at Taubmans paint factory when I was thirteen in 1963 and she made a very good friend in Jackie. They stayed friends until mum passed away and Jackie passed away a couple of months later.

Dad wasn't one for socializing. Mum liked a bit of socialising but dad didn't. However, Dad had a friend in Croydon and we would go and visit them by train. We'd catch the train into the city and then another train out to Croydon and stay there for tea. Then we'd come home later at night and walk home from the station. So when I got my driving license my mum said she would get hers too. She got it first time.

Dad retired in 1990 and after that he would retreat to his shed and you would only see him at mealtimes. It was a good shed because it was 25 feet long, big enough to fit a car but the car never got into the shed. He would be stripping and cleaning his motorbike. He would pull things apart and then wash everything in turpentine. That was my job. He gave me a metal bucket with turpentine and I would have to sit down and wash and scrub everything and he would put it all back together again. I don't know why, but he was always pulling it apart, always. Terry reckons it was because the motorbikes were always leaking oil. If it wasn't that he would be making his own parts, being a fitter he had the machinery to do it. He bought a lathe from ICI when they were chucking out an old one. That's also when he did some woodturning and made some nice salad bowls. He also loved crosswords and I'm sure he solved many of those in his shed.

There was an ICI club over the road from his work and dad would go over there every night, never to drink, but only to play snooker, billiards or darts. He ended up winning quite a few trophies and that over the years. After I got married he and I won some trophies as partners. That club is now called the Deer Park Club. There was nothing like that in St Albans when we came here. The ICI Club had two full-size billiard tables, a dart room near the bar, the bar, a function room that didn't get used very often, and the bowling club. That club was his main leisure recreation. He was not into physical sports. He said the reason he joined the Navy was because he didn't have to walk.

Dad would go the ICI club every night and be home just in time for tea. On weekends, breakfast was at 7 o'clock, morning tea about 11 or 11:30, lunch at 1:00, afternoon tea at 4:00, tea at 6 o'clock, and supper at 9 o'clock. Lunch was usually a cooked meal as well as at teatime. There was always a roast on Sunday. My father wouldn't eat salads or tomatoes. He was British, brought up on a diet of meat and three veggies and that was it. Mum would have to cook lunch for him to take to work. Monday was leftovers of the Sunday roast, Tuesday was rice pudding day. Mum would always cook a little extra for the evening meal for dad to take to work in his little pot. That was the routine.

He was also a woodworking shed dweller. If he wasn't at work he was in his shed. He made some nice cabinets for the house. He also made some art-craft models such as the little wooden canon that I still have. We have lots

of salad bowls, because he was a metal fitter and turner but he also did some wood turning.

Taffy & Gwyneth Howells on motorbike © G Vyner

Most weekends he would spend stripping down his motor bike and cleaning it. He had a Russian, a Yamaha, and a BSA Bantam. He loved riding his motorbike and would even ride down to the St Albans shopping centre just to buy his Tattslotto tickets. They didn't have a car until I got my licence, so whenever we went visiting it was mostly on the motorbike and sidecar: dad on the front, mum on the back, and me in the sidecar. We even went interstate like that. One night dad was out spotlighting and hit a tree stump and bent the front bar for the sidecar frame and had to make rough repairs to get back home. One time on the way back from Pine Grove we broke down in the middle of the night in Keilor near the church on the hill. I don't remember what was wrong with the bike but I think we walked home in the dark.

His other passion was fishing. He would go miles up and down the riverbanks trying to catch a fish and occasionally falling in.

My dad passed way at home in 2000, just after my fiftieth birthday. He made it for my fiftieth birthday and for mum's birthday, and then passed away in June 2000 before his 75th birthday. He had cancer. They told him he had cancer at Christmas time and he said he was not having anything done about it. Mum reckons the doctor misdiagnosed the condition years beforehand. We think he might have had prostate cancer but they only diagnosed him with lung cancer and it was too late then. We buried him in the Keilor cemetery.

Mum got her driving license when I got mine. After my father died my mother's placid nature changed a bit and she even had a mild road rage incident in the shopping centre when someone cut her off, so she got out of the car and told them off. This would have been in her seventies. She wasn't one for confronting people early on, but later on if she felt like saying something she said it.

Miss Maureen O'Brien taught me in Grade 1 in one of those classrooms along the back of the school where the preppies were. Sr Teresa and Miss O'Brien were in that block of classrooms. I had a Miss O'Brien in the Altona school and that's why I remember the name.

I remember Sr Marion and Sr Charles from the Sacred Heart school. Sr Charles could be tough if she thought you were out of order – "I'll go and tell your mother" – because they all knew mum was in the tuck shop. There was also Sr John, but she was the principal and didn't teach. She's the one you were sent to to get the strap. It was a nice thick strap and we were scared of it which was probably its main purpose.

I wasn't a scholar. I wasn't very good at maths or English. My father was very good at maths and tried to teach me his way but the teachers wouldn't allow me to do it his way. When I got to Sr Marion's Grade 6 class we did sewing. Because my mother had taught me, I could use patterns and everything. That was my last year at Sacred Heart before we headed off. They had just built the new schools at Altona.

Once I finished at Sacred Heart school I was sent to St Monica's, which must have been in 1964. St Monica's was a Catholic school in Footscray and I was sent there because I could do sewing and read patterns. They got me a job as a dressmaker-machinist with Miss Amy Duckworth in Yarraville. A dressmaker is better than a machinist. A dressmaker can do patterns whereas a machinist can only sew. Because mum could sew I learnt that and could read patterns. I used to design my doll's clothes when I was little, but because I didn't have very good education I wasn't good enough to go on to better schools to do dressmaking. But I must admit I learnt a lot from Miss Duckworth.

Miss Duckworth won awards for her bridal ware. She would sell her dresses to a shop called Reenie Rose in the city. She had a garage in the back of her place and there were a few of us working in there. If you wanted a bridal dress made you would go to her and she would measure you up and we would make the dress in the back. There were about a dozen of us working there. We had a huge cutting table along the back wall and six machines. We had machines but everything was more or less hand-sewn. Because I was good at it, I got to sew the lace onto the bridal dresses. The only problem was I was prone to blood noses, which is not good when you are dealing with satin and lace. I was there for about five years.

Allan Witt used to work at the abattoirs at Footscray. He would meet me at the Footscray station and walk me home every night. Of course we met Terry and he would walk me home every night as well.

After my time with Miss Duckworth, there was a shop that opened just up the road in Theodore Street, near Conrad Street, where the milk bar and the fish and chips shop are. There was a shop there that made bikinis. It was over

the road from home, so I quit my job in Yarraville and got a job across the road.

Terry Vyner & Gwyneth Howells © G Vyner

I got together with Terry Vyner in 1968 when I came back from Europe. I remember the day that Terry and I went into town after getting engaged. I took the day off from work and had to walk by the factory to go into town to get my engagement ring.

The bikini shop moved to where the Bingo place is near the St Albans Hotel and became Ada's Jeans factory. We made jeans and bikinis. I worked there a few years and then one Christmas we all got a letter saying don't bother coming back in the new year because the factory is closing. I have no idea why they closed. Then I went and worked for Eastcoast Jeans in Maribyrnong and the same thing happened there. One day they called us all into the kitchen and said: "Right. You, you, you, you. Go. Do not talk to anyone, do not take anything. Go." We were out the door. I remember our manager, he'd made the move down from the country to bring the factory up to make a profit, which we were doing, and he got the sack. He got the sack that morning and we got the sack that afternoon.

When Terry and I got married after a couple of years we went up to Albury to live. There was the Lee Jeans factory there where I got a job. Terry ended up driving trucks inter-state up there for Walker and Sons.

Gwyneth & Terry Vyner © G Vyner

When we came back to Melbourne I was making backpacks in Somerville Road Sunshine and worked there for 21 years. I finished up two years ago so must have started in 1997. I quit when mum got ill. In any case, I was already at retirement age because I was 67.

My grandmother Angela Dodd lived in Carrathool, Wagga, and Junee. In later years when my grandfather Oliver Dodd got too old to do sheep shearing they moved down to Warrnambool where he looked after a property down at Beaufort. They finished there when he got too ill and went down to Warrnambool, and that's where he died in 1964. I was 14 at the time. After that my grandmother went up to Shepparton to live because her eldest son Michael was up there. She lived there until she passed away in 1979.

We were quite separated from other family. Mum never found out about her little sister dying until a month later, because my grandmother lived in Carrathool, my aunty that passed away was in Sydney, and of course mum was in Melbourne, so the communication never got through. Mum was always upset because of never getting told early. She had no one to rely on until her little sister Nell did her nursing down here in Melbourne. Then Nell married a taxi driver and they moved to Hurstbridge.

Gwyneth Vyner nee Howells, October 2019.

Gwyneth Howells and neighbour 1950s © G Vyner

The motorbike of Taffy Howells © Gwyneth Vyner

Sacred Heart school and tuck shop 1950s

Sacred Heart school parade 1950s © G Vyner

Students of Sacred Heart school 1950s © G Vyner

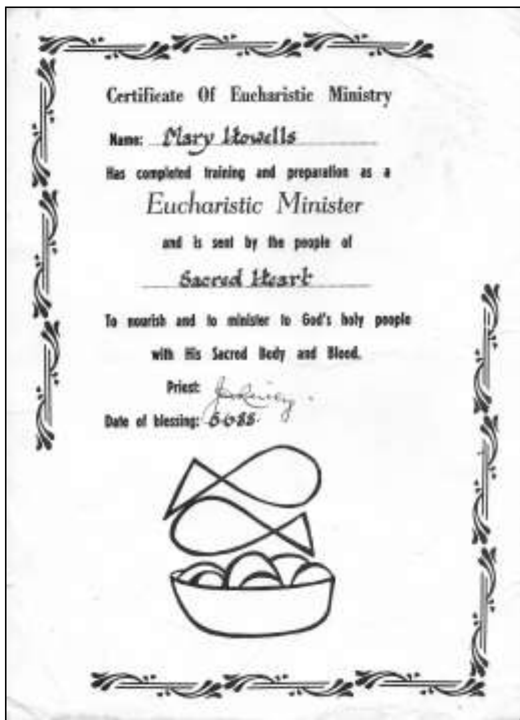
Sacred Heart school parade 1950s © G Vyner

Sacred Heart parishioners 1950s © G Vyner

Sacred Heart school parade 1950s © G Vyner

Sacred Heart Parish in the 1950s © G Vyner

Sacred Heart bus excursion 1950s © G Vyner



Certificate Of Eucharistic Ministry

Name: Mary Howells

Has completed training and preparation as a

Eucharistic Minister

and is sent by the people of

Sacred Heart

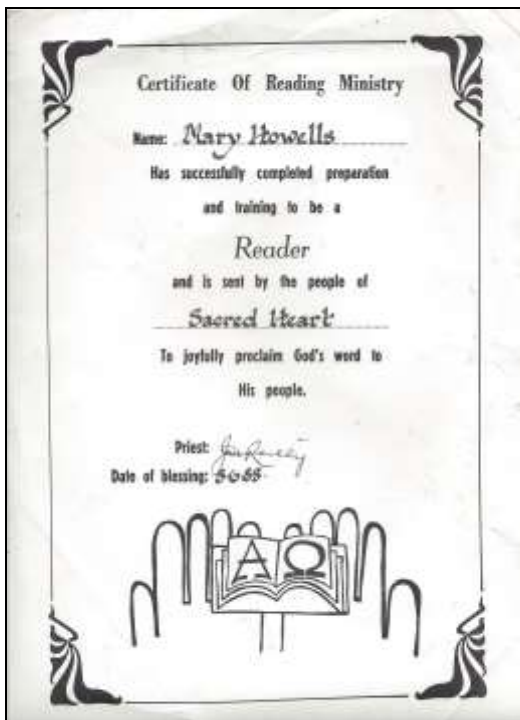
To nourish and to minister to God's holy people

with His Sacred Body and Blood.

Priest: [signature]

Date of blessing: 5-6-85

Mary Howell Certificate of Eucharistic Ministry © G Vyner



Certificate Of Reading Ministry

Name: Mary Howells

Has successfully completed preparation

and training to be a

Reader

and is sent by the people of

Sacred Heart

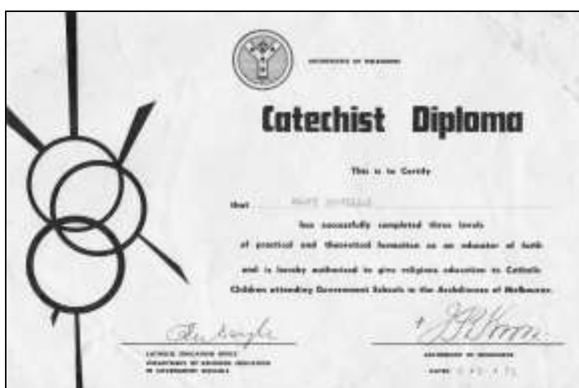
To joyfully proclaim God's word to

His people.

Priest: [signature]

Date of blessing: 5-6-85

Mary Howell Certificate of Reading Ministry © G Vyner



Catechist Diploma

This is to Certify

that [illegible]

has successfully completed three levels

of practical and theoretical formation as an educator of faith

and is hereby authorised to give religious education to Catholic

Children attending Government Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

TERRY VYNER

I was born in 1952 at Rutherglen and lived in Chiltern until I was seven years of age, so I'm a little Aussie country boy by birth. I have a convict in my family background and that is William Page. He was first sent to Tasmania and later he came to Victoria and married in Melbourne. He was my great, great, great, grandfather. Unfortunately we do not know much about him.

I believe the Vyner family came to Victoria in the early 1880s. The big mystery is whether we are related to Sir Thomas Vyner who was Lord Mayor of London in 1693. There was an article about that in the newspapers in the 1930s[1] but we've never been able to trace our family back that far.

We know more about the local lineage of the Vyner family and any Vyners in Victoria are probably related. My grandfather was a gold miner and that is why they were living in Rutherglen because gold was discovered in the district.

Four generations of the Vyner family 1937

My grandfather was Richard Vyner and his father and grandfather were also named Richard Vyner. My grandfather was lucky to have survived his gold-digging days because he nearly died twice accidentally. In 1905 he fell down a mineshaft into a pool of water when a ladder-rung broke; he was knocked unconscious but was rescued by his mates.[2] A decade later he was crossing a flooded river to get to work when the boat capsized and he would have drowned because he couldn't swim but his mate saved him.[3] That was at the Black Dog Creek Crossing and it must have been a dangerous

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[1] Argus 9 June 1934 p17

[2] Benalla Standard 18 July 1905 p1

[3] Rutherglen Sun and Chiltern Valley Advertiser 26 October 1917 p3

spot as grandfather rescued a boy from downing at that same crossing a couple of months later.[1]

Richard Vyner (my grandfather) married Olive Trueman who came from Christmas Town up there. Richard and Olive married in 1909 in Chiltern Valley. They moved to Chiltern and raised ten children. The only memory I have of him was when he was sitting on a rocking chair on the verandah in a white singlet and black trousers with braces. It's clear as a bell in my mind, I don't know why. The house was in two parts: there was a lounge room and bedrooms, and the kitchen was separate. There were two wells beside the house. That might have been their second house because an earlier one burnt down and my grandmother was lucky to have escaped with burns to the head while rescuing some of the children.[2]

The Trueman's came to Victoria in the 1880s. John Trueman was from Manchester in England. He married Jane Catherine Isaacs and their son Alfred Percy Frederick Trueman came to Majorca (near Maryborough in Victoria) about 1882 and married Eleanor Ruby Shuttleworth. They had lots of children. Their daughter Olive Trueman married Richard Arthur Vyner in 1909 and their son Albert was my father.

My father Albert George Vyner was born on 30 September 1915 in Chiltern Valley near Rutherglen. He was known as Bert. The whole family was based around Chiltern at the start. Apparently dad came to Melbourne to learn a trade. He lived in Collingwood before the war and he probably started off as an apprentice boilermaker or welder. He enlisted in the army in March 1942, but because he was a welder they kept him at work making war materials. He used to make those oval huts and army tanks.

My mother was Catherine May Richards from Yarraville, whose parents were Robert Richards and Ellen McLaughlin, both born in Yarraville. Cath, as she was known, was born on 24 August 1916. I think she met dad at a dance somewhere in Yarraville. They married in Flemington in September 1942.

My mother worked at Dickies Towels in Yarraville. When we moved to St Albans she worked at Waltons in Footscray near the station. She worked in the office at Waltons so I presume she was in a similar position at Dickies Towels.

Marriage Bert Vyner & Cath Richards © T Vyner

At Rutherglen my father was the green-grocer and the night man. He delivered the groceries and drove the night truck. He was a Jack of All Trades and worked at what he could. I don't know that my mother was working at that time because I had four brothers and two sisters so she was pretty busy with raising us.

Bert was a labourer in Chiltern and moved down to Melbourne about 1942. His occupation in Melbourne was a boiler maker welder. After he got married they moved back to Chiltern and had seven children. They were living in Chiltern Valley in 1949 with his parents and then moved into Chiltern itself. By 1959 when I was seven we moved back to Melbourne, which was the house at 8 Vista Street. It was a two-bedroom house for a couple with seven children.

When we were living up in Chiltern my dad was working for a bloke named Miller who was fairly big with Uncle Bens and the wool stores. He had a son who wanted to go to the university down here, so Miller bought a house in Vista Street but didn't realise how far away it was from the university. The son wasn't happy being so far away and said he was moving to Melbourne. Miller asked my dad if he was interested in buying the house, and that's what my parents did. We came here in 1959 when I was aged seven.

We moved to St Albans in 1959. My parents came to Melbourne for the work, because there was little future for the children up in Chiltern. We were at 8 Vista Street near the high school. The old house burnt down and was rebuilt, so it's different from when we were there. It was just a two-bedroom house and there were nine of us living there. One of the bedrooms had

[1] Rutherglen Sun and Chiltern Valley Advertiser 26 December 1917 p2
[2] Argus 29 August 1934 p5

four bunks for the four boys. My younger sister Glenda used to sleep in a cot in my parents' bedroom, and my older sister Frances used to sleep on the lounge; she had to wait for all of us to go to bed before she could get to sleep of an evening.

When I was growing up my father was working at Standard Steel in Market Road, Sunshine. I saw him there one day welding this really large steel beam and saw that he was really good. When you weld you have a slag layer formed on top of the weld. His weld was so perfect that the slag was rolling up as he welded. It was beautiful to watch. Our godson is almost as good but these days the technology and materials have improved.

I had four brothers and two sisters. My oldest brother Les did an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner and then joined the navy. Colin was next oldest and got conscripted to Vietnam; he was mostly a storeman with the railways before and after his national service.

Then there was Barry who worked at a saw mill up at Gunbower; he had several occupations and at one stage was with the railways working on signal boxes where they control and adjust the tracks; he then worked for a sporting goods place and even worked as an insurance salesman. This was fairly young in his life and then he eventually became a truck driver.

He married Barbara and they lived in Melbourne, then Narbethong, and their final move was to Wodonga.

Albert Vyner with sons © Terry Vyner

My elder sister Frances was still going to school when we came down here, but when she left school she worked for Electrolux in their office in Elizabeth Street. Frances met her future husband when he would bring my brother Barry home for visits from the saw mill. They got married at age eighteen. She married Gary Alfred Lord and they had three children (two girls and a boy). The family is now living back at Wodonga.

Then there was myself, my younger brother Kenneth and my sister Glenda.

(Front) Frances and Glenda Vyner © T Vyner

We lived in St Albans for some years but when the kids were old enough most of the family moved back north. I'm the only one left in St Albans. Ironically, we started off here with a family of nine in two bedrooms, and when my parents went to Wodonga, they were on their own in a house with five bedrooms.

I used to have enormous wars with my sister Frances because she was left in charge of us younger kids and I must have resented that. She's three years older than I am. I was seven when we came here and mum and dad had to both work to support us so Frances must have been eleven or twelve when she had that responsibility. She'd have to start cooking tea and wanted help with that but I wanted to go out and play.

Frances left home when she was about 18, married and moved up to Wodonga, then Corryong and finally back to Wodonga; her husband was a truck driver. When we were growing up my older sister Frances used to terrorize me. Mum and dad used to work and Frances would be left in charge of looking after us younger kids. We used to have some enormous wars but I love her now. I used to be scared of her but not anymore.

My oldest brother Leslie joined the navy and left home and was gone. He did his apprenticeship with Richardson Gears in Sunshine Road as a fitter and turner.

My second oldest brother Colin ended up in the railway as a storeman. Colin was in Beachboro in Perth when he died.

The third eldest, Barry, was a salesman in a sports store who then became a driver.

My younger brother Ken was a wool classer and a plastic injection moulder and finished his working life at Borg Warner Albury as a machine setter. He passed away two years ago in Wodonga. Kenny always had long hair and a beard.

Glenda was still at school when the family moved to Wodonga. She ended up marrying Brian Ralston.

I don't think we had a bad life in St Albans even though we might have missed out

on a few things.

Mum's kitchen was always hot because it had a combustion stove that had to be going for us to have hot water. We never had any air conditioning or anything like that. I came into the kitchen one afternoon and my dad's sitting at the table with some slices of bread, no butter or anything, and he's putting dog food on the bread. I thought to myself we must be in a really bad way, not realizing that dad was preparing that for the dog. We had a Golden Labrador at the time.

When we moved into St Albans the house had a back fence. We had the big power lines behind us in a big open paddock and only half a fence down the side because there was an empty block next door at that a time and they were waiting for that block to be sold before they had to pay for that half of the fence. When I was in trouble with my sister I would run around that half fence to get away from her.

When she was home with us I think her job was looking after us. When Frances married and moved to Wodonga she was working for a place called Lampson Paragon manufacturers of paper and printers. These days when she wants a bit of R and R away from Wodonga she comes and stays with us. She calls it a cruise.

I started at the Sacred Heart Catholic primary school in Theodore Street. My sister Frances and Gwyneth Howells were best friends when they were there and that's how I met Gwyneth. I can remember Sr Teresa and Miss Barnard who I had for a short time, and Sr Charles. I remember Sr Charles because she used to throw chalk and dusters at us.

When I was supposed to be in Form 1 I went to what was the St John's College in Braybrook. I used to wag school a lot and that year went to school for only 52 days. I used to go swimming in the river down the bottom of Driscolls Road or at Arundel in Keilor. I got expelled from St John's and then went to the St Albans Tech in 1966 and was there for two years in Forms 2 and 3.

Mr. George Gosefski was the maths and science teacher, and Mr. Poiser was also a maths teacher. When I'd walk into his class he'd ask if I was going to learn anything. I would say no, so he would send me off to work in the garden. Miss Walls was an arts teacher who used to wear miniskirts. I liked her. Mr Lacy was social studies. Mr Tamber taught us technical drawing.

I liked the tech because at times you were with the woodworking, sheetmetal and the machine shop. That was something I was interested in. I didn't like school, but when I wanted to leave school after Form 3, my mum said I wasn't leaving school until I got a job.

St Albans Technical School © T Vyner

I wasn't a good student, which I'm regretting now. I didn't like school my whole life until I got to Form 2 and the St Albans Tech school. From the Catholic school I went St John's College in Braybrook/Maidstone which was run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. I wagged school so much that year that I missed out on those fundamentals of arithmetic and I was struggling from there on.

St Albans Tech School Form 3C 1967 © T Vyner

By the end of Form 3 I disliked school so much I said to mum that I want to leave school. She, being rather smart, said "You are not leaving school until you can get a job." As it happened I was just about to turn fifteen which would have been the end of school for me anyway.

I applied for an apprenticeship with Victoria Railways as a fitter and turner, which I got to my surprise. So I left school and really ended up back at school, because the first year in the railways was in a classroom where you learnt all about the hand tools, measurements, and a little machinery, because they had a fitting shop with lathes and mills.

Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon we spent at a bench with a 1 foot 1 inch square block of cast iron. First you had to make one side perfectly flat, then you had to make all the other sides one foot square and flat, using hammer and chisel, file and scrapers. Mondays

and Fridays we were in the classroom doing the theory part of it. That was the first year, in 1968.

Each six months after that they moved you to a different part of the workshop so you got experience doing all the jobs. I was moved from North Melbourne to Spencer Street and learnt how to do different things. For the last two years I ended up at the Dynon Road diesel sheds, which I absolutely loved because I became a diesel maintainer rather than a fitter and turner. I worked on brakes, electrics or mechanical items. At various time you might strip down a V16 diesel engine or a whole locomotive right down to the chassis and then you had to completely rebuild it. They were huge workshops.

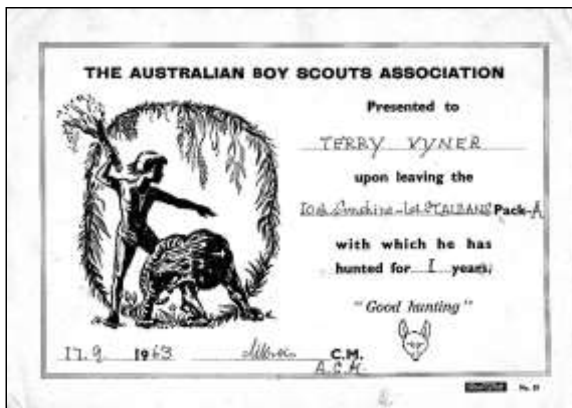
Towards the end of my apprenticeship there was an engine called X35 that had caught fire. They brought it into the workshop and the first thing you had to do was strip it. Because it had caught fire all the wiring was destroyed because all the plastic had melted and it was like a solid block and that would have been 200 kilometres of wire to replace. The first job was taking that out and I came home stinking of burnt plastic. I was at Newport when they brought in the wreck of the Southern Aurora. We had to dismantle that.

Apprenticeship class Newport 1970s © T Vyner

We were one of the first of the short apprenticeships. I started in 1968 and should have finished in 1973 but because they had shortened the time for apprenticeships to four years; we did a four-and-a-half year course, and after that it was four years. I finished in the middle of 1972 as a fitter and machinist. When they gave me my indenture papers to say I was qualified I quit, and I have been driving a truck ever since.

Unfortunately for the railways, while I was doing my apprenticeship I would go with my brother or my brother-in-law on the weekend or on my holidays and learnt all about loading and unloading trucks and driving. They were probably making four times a week more than what I was getting in a fortnight. I thought that's the job for me. I was married by then so we needed the money.

As a young teenager I joined a few activities on Errington Reserve but I couldn't do anything strenuous because of my health problems. I joined the Boys Scouts in 1963 and was with the First St Albans Pack. The club house was around the corner from home in Percy Street.



THE AUSTRALIAN BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION

Presented to

TERRY VYNER

upon leaving the

[illegible] Pack-A

with which he has

hunted for I years,

"Good hunting"

17.9 1963 C.M.

A.C.M.

I remember dances at the Tin Shed on Errington Reserve with Mrs Cameron leading the show; she had the sports store across the road for years and years. The dance teachers were Mr and Mrs Reeves and they would give lessons for ballroom dancing. That was in the late 1960s. All the boys would sit in one side of the hall and the girls on the other side until the music started and then you had to find a partner.

I was never into sport because I have a chronic lung disease. I had pneumonia as a child which damaged my lungs. Our house was around the corner from Dr Balabin's office so he was the family doctor and I used to see him fairly regularly. When we came back from Albury there was Dr Bevz.

Actually, I did get involved in sport one time. Jimmy and Bill Knowles started a baseball team at Errington Reserve which was across the road from our street. I think the team was called the St Albans Tigers. I fronted up with my older brothers Barry and Colin who wanted to be part of that, but I wasn't big enough or strong enough to play. I used to go to the practice sessions and hang around. The tennis club was on the corner of Percy Street with two courts and a little playground next to it. I never went very far with that because I was a bit small. That would have been in the 1960s before the Vietnam war.

The Charewicz family lived in a house right next door to the high school tennis courts, and I think Richard still lives there to this day. They were of Polish background and came here in the fifties. The children include Richard, Zbigniew, Paul, Eddie, Amelia, Teddy, Tolley and George. They were mostly who I hung out with. Peter Los used to live on the Oberon Avenue corner just across the road from the high school tennis courts. The Perry's were in Walmer Avenue.

Gwyneth Howells and I started going out and we got engaged when I was an apprentice at the Railways workshop in Newport. Gwyneth was working in Yarraville and would get on the train at Seddon and we'd meet at Footscray and travel home on the train. We started from there.

When Gwyneth and I got married after a couple of years we went up to Albury to live.

My family was in St Albans between 1959 and 1972 at least. They were still here when I married Gwyneth.

I finished at the railways mid 1972. At the time my brother was earning in one week twice as much as I earned in a fortnight. I would be with him on weekends and holidays and liked the lifestyle. It was hard work and you could be away from home for a long time but it was also good. It paid enough for what you had to do.

I drove fuel tankers for a while. I started with ESSO when I finished my apprenticeship. I was looking for a job and walked in to see if they had any vacancies and they were looking for a driver. I was there from 1972 to 1975. I started off delivering packaged oils and grease and graduated to bulk black oil which was for ships and factory boilers. From there I went to fuel deliveries and then on to jet fuel to Tullamarine and Avalon airports. One day I had an argument with the afternoon shift boss about where I was parking my motorcycle on the terminal, which was the end of that job. Then Gwyneth and I went to Albury so it must have been about 1975.

I ended up driving trucks interstate up there for W S Walker and Sons. I was driving a semi trailer between Melbourne and Sydney. The Walkers were general carriers and I was with them for a couple of years from 1975 to 1977. The father owned a saw mill at Corryong, so when I wasn't driving between Melbourne and Sydney I was doing fence paling, post and railing deliveries to housing estates and new empty shipping pallets. My travels included the areas of Wodonga, Shepparton, the Riverina, Griffiths, Sydney, Newcastle, and Wollongong.

From 1977 to 1980 I was with Borg Warner Australia which was based in Albury. My job there was a machine setter in charge of the section that anodized the aluminium valve body that controls the shifting of gears in an automatic transmission and I was also training employees working on the various stations on the valve body line. They were making type 35 automatic transmissions for Ford cars.

As an interstate truck driver you had to keep a log book but you wouldn't state you'd been working 14 hours, you'd say 12, and the loading and unloading was extra. Nowadays they clamp down on that stuff. Some drivers might have had two or three logbooks back in the day. Nowadays logbook records are inter-linked federally so they can monitor that situation. They say there's a chain of command responsibility but it's still put on the driver to be there at a particular time and place.

They have time slots that means you are booked in, say, to unload at a particular spot in Sydney at 6 o'clock. If you are not there on time they make you book another time slot and you might have to wait the whole day with that load before you can get off again. I was a driver for 46 years. I had a break for five years when I was with Borg Warner in Albury. We moved to Albury in 1975 and left in 1980 when I started back with Golden Fleece.

These days interstate work is paid by the kilometer and if you were waiting for a load to come home or wherever they send you, you are paid nothing and have to feed yourself. Driving a truck is bad for your health because you are sitting down for up to 14 hours per day. On top of that you are either loading it or unloading it. My health problems made working as a truck driver quite hard at times. You'd be up in Queensland in the heat or over in Western Australia. In those days you had heavy tarps to cover your load and that did a lot of damage to my body in the early days. I was about seven stone nothing at the time and a full truck tarp is really, really heavy. That's what did the damage to my back. With the hours that you do with the trucks I reckon I've worked two lifetimes.

Goodyear Highway Heroes Award © T Vyner

I nearly died in a truck crash. I was on my way to Sydney and I made it to Yass and ran into a truck that was broken down on the road and my truck burst into flames. A couple of men pulled me out of the fire. It happened on the corner of the Barton Highway and the Hume Highway. The ambulance came and I nearly didn't make it because they had to revive me twice. We nominated those men who pulled me from the fire for a Highway Heroes Award. I suffered third degree burns to twenty-five percent of my body and spent a fair bit of time in hospital, but I survived.

I was with Golden Fleece in Spotswood between 1980 and 1988 as a fuel tanker driver.

That depot has since been pulled down. During this time I started working on weekends as a coach driver with Firefly Coaches in Maidstone. I would take country charter tours for day trips to the Alpine areas.

Dad passed away in 1981 in Wodonga at age 66. Mum passed away in Wodonga in 1987 at age 70.

Catherine and Albert Vyner © Terry Vyner

I started part-time and went full-time in 1988 when Caltex/Golden Fleece implemented retrenchments and I was retrenched. I was then employed fulltime with Firefly Coaches carrying passengers from Melbourne to Sydney and Adelaide and return. I was with them for five years overall and finished in 1991.

I worked for MAN Australia for a while down on Cherry Lane, Brooklyn, as a vehicle assembler. I used to install the brakes and hydraulics on bus and truck chassis. That was from 1991 to 1994, when I went back to driving interstate for Graeme Spargo Transport in Bacchus Marsh. I was mainly travelling to Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and sometimes to Perth. I finished there in 1998 after my crash and moved into office administration with Aus-Den Repairs in Sunshine where I was part of the office manage-ment for a truck and bus repair business. After that I went back to Spargo Transport in 2001 but at this stage was doing local deliveries rather than interstate transport.

I moved to Kilmore Transport Services in Altona in 2003 and then SRM Transport in 2008 in Laverton North. I finished there in 2016 and that was my last fulltime job as a driver was with Qube transport doing local and Country Kmart deliveries, retiring in June 2018.

These days I am retired and involved with the Westvale Men's Shed and either repair or make craft accessories for various community groups wanting a bit of a helping hand. The Men's Shed is currently involved with the school across the road. Their students come over to the Men's Shed and they are building a chicken coop.

I'm into model aeroplanes as a hobby and was making and flying gliders. I was a member of the Keilor District Model Aircraft club and would go to Mount Hollow back at Ballarat. I've always been interested in planes and that's why I joined the air cadets. I joined the air cadets with one of my friends from down the road, and that was Paul Charewicz, just out of interest in aeroplanes. That was before I started work so I was probably in tech school.

Terry Vyner at RAAF Sale shooting range © T Vyner

After I got married, I met Ted Arnup and he was also into model aeroplanes. At the Keilor and District Model Aircraft Society (KADMAS) we would build models and try to fly them but we mostly crashed them. That was a weekend activity.

I had a couple of accidents with the powered planes and became a bit disenchanted because we couldn't afford the expense of replace-ment. The radio-controlled models worked on a line of sight principle, so if you could see it you could control it, but if it got out of range it would keep flying until it crashed or run out of fuel.

The Keilor club would hold competitions and you would go all over the place looking at planes. I was particularly interested in gliders and second world war aircraft. I've always been keen on Spitfires, as most people are. I've sat in a Spitfire at Avalon but never flown in one. I would go up to Ballarat and my friend Ted could get access to the hill that you could approach from any angle so it didn't matter which way the wind was blowing, because you need to land into the wind. You'd do your loops and rolls across the face of the wind.

I had success with flying gliders but not with the powered planes after a couple ploughed into the ground and became splinters. I have the kit for a Red Baron's Fokker DR1 triplane that I would like to put together some time.

One of the boys from my apprenticeship years was Panayes Tzortzatos – we called him Peter Tortoise. He built the chopper you see in the photo from a 1967 Triumph Bonneville motor cycle. I don't see him too often, but when I do see him it's like I saw him yesterday. He's of Greek background.

Peter "Tortoise" Tzortzatos © Terry Vyner

I became interested in hot rods during the time I was doing my apprenticeship. Another apprenticeship friend of mine, Stan Kaminsky, built a T Model Roadster and to this day it's my idea of what a hot rod should look like. Because we worked in the railways we could make some things. Peter Tzortzatos was in my apprenticeship year. He was into motor bikes and Stan was into hot rods. I couldn't afford to build a car at that time because we'd just got married and were trying to build a house.

Years later, after 1981 when we'd moved into our house, I was at work and a bloke said to me he had to change the engine in his 1972 GS Falcon. He was looking to sell the old engine for $100. I bought the engine not knowing what I was going to do with it so I put it in the back of the shed. Up in Wodonga my father had come down with cancer, so we used to go there every weekend to see him.

One day going up there I broke the windscreen on my car and was having it replaced by a backyard operator when I saw a chassis lying at the back of his shed. I knew what it was and asked him what he planned to do with it. He'd had aspirations to build the car but hadn't got around to it, so I bought it for $100. From that it grew.

I found the body at Springvale through the Trading Post. It was expensive but came with the mudguards, running boards and original fittings, windscreen posts, basically everything you need for the body. That cost me $7,000 which Gwyneth graciously allowed me to buy. I enlisted the help of Gwyneth's cousin-in-law, George, to strengthen the frame and adapt a few bits and pieces, but I'm trying to keep it as close to the original as possible. We did that in Shepparton. It's almost ready to go on the road.

I'm a member of the Northern Suburbs Street Rods Club which is based in Thomastown. We have our annual Rod Run up at Lake Mulwala, Yarrawonga. It's great. We used to hold the annual event at Bright, but the accommodation got too expensive.

I'm also into motorcycles and we have two. I've had motorbikes nearly all my life. I had a Yamaha DT 250 trail bike and an XS 650 road bike, which is like a Triumph Bonville but it's a Yamaha. I've had a K1 750 Honda and a 750 Honda Super Sport. I was in the BMW motorcycle club at one stage. I have been to Perth and back via Broken Hill and Mildura on that bike. I have also ridden it to Brisbane and back. We also have a BMW F650GS which is my wife Gwyneth's bike and that has been to Adelaide and back home via Mount Gambier.

Terry Vyner, November 2019.

Terry and Gwyneth Vyner © G Vyner

ESTER KOOPU

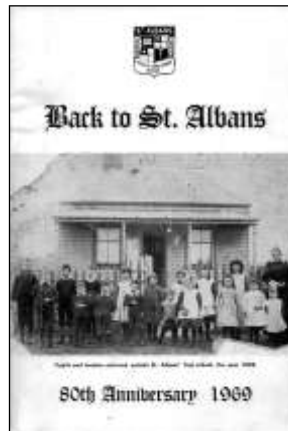
1928 A Model Ford Roadster © Terry Vyner

My father was Eduard Olaf Koopu, known as Eddie, and apparently he was one of the cooks at the Bonegilla migrant camp. Dad migrated to Australia in 1948 and after the Bonegilla camp he was working in Heyfield in 1951. He was awarded a certificate of merit from the State Governor (Sir Dallas Brooks) for saving some-one from drowning. He must have met my mother in Heyfield when she was working there as a primary school teacher.

They came to St Albans around 1952. At first they lived in Walmer Avenue in a house with two sections for two families; that house still exists. At this stage my father was working for the tramways.

The railway station at St Albans was on the northern side of the crossing with the big wooden gates that had to open and close every time a train went through. The hardware store in East Esplanade was owned by the Stevens brothers. The Coles store was on the corner of Alfrieda Street and Main Road East from the early 1960s.

Mr Trice was the man who changed our toilets; I remember the streets they lived in but not their names. Mr Marshall delivered the briquettes. I remember him because he was Joy Marshall's father. The milkman used to deliver milk with a horse and cart in the early hours, which was our wake-up alarm in the mornings. The greengrocer used to drive his truck around and deliver groceries and soft drinks.



My mother was Zena Yvonne Koopu, who was the first librarian at the old St Albans State School in West Esplanade. My father was from Estonia but my mother was an Aussie girl. Her father was Charles Burge who was born in Traralgon and whose parents had emigrated from Cornwall in 1874; they trace their paternal family heritage back to Cornwall in the early 1700s. When Grand-father Charles died the mayor of Melbourne read the eulogy, as he was the head of the Masonic Lodge for country Victoria (he lived in Wonthaggi).

My mother did her teacher training in the late 1940s and was posted to Heyfield by 1950. She probably met my father there in 1951 and they married in 1952. They must have decided to move to Melbourne soon afterwards as she obtained a transfer to Port Melbourne in May 1952, which is probably when they came to live in St Albans.

Mum was at the St Albans primary from

1952 to 1955 and 1959 to 1982. In the 1960s at the old primary school she argued that libraries encouraged children to improve their learning and become independent thinkers. She wanted to more than double the number of books in the library to bring it up to the minimum recommended standards because school numbers had been expanding. In 1950 there were about 100 students, nearly all being of Anglo-Australian heritage. By 1954 there were over 700 students and probably 90% of them were recent migrants, otherwise known as "new Australians".

Citizens of the world, St Albans Primary, The Sun, 1956

In the late 1960s the teaching staff at St Albans primary included more obviously "ethnic" names: Bajzik, Bognar, Jaciow, Obranczka, Vojtek and Temisanovic. Vanda Bognar (nee Viti) and Dusan Temisanovic were former students of the school and had also attended St Albans High School, so they were truly locals.

We first lived at Lot 6 Walmer Avenue in the early 1950s then built a bungalow at 57 Alfrieda Street. When building their bungalows, the owners placed a tree branch on the highest peak of the roof before the roofing iron was put on, signifying 'good fortune' – very unlucky not to do it. Mr Ciro Lombardi, the former Mayor of Keilor, was living opposite us.

I remember Mary and Nevil Thurgood who were in Millawa Avenue on the corner. Mary Thurgood was my godmother and I used to go to her place to get dressed for any school dances as it was close to St Albans High School.

Then in 1970s we moved to our new home at 24 Douglas Avenue, which was the first house near the tech school in St Albans West where the Stevens family sold their farmland and that area became known as Stevensville. We were the first house built in that estate and the technical school came into existence later on. There was a chook farm on Gum Road and we got eggs from there – boy was it smelly. The town water tanks were installed south of Taylors Road on the Stevens' farm and remain today.

We used to find floating volcanic rocks in that area so there was speculation where they came from. There was a crater in one of the paddocks that was good to explore though old maps indicate it had been a small quarry rather than a volcano hole. I think that was where they later had problems with the sinking village.

I remember the old school days: milk in bottles, ink wells with dip pens, school desks with tops that lift up, hats, gloves, and getting the strap from teachers. We were all talking through language barriers. Everyone worked hard and we shared different cultures at school with the other students. I believe this still exists today yet with a different floating population.

The scout hall on Errington Reserve was an old tin shed and the scout leaders included my dad and Mr Krois who was from Slovenia and had two sons.[1] Dr Balabin was another migrant from the 1950s. He was from the former Yugoslavia and was popular because he spoke several languages. His surgery was in Main Road East opposite the house where the Haynes lived until a few years ago. Dr Balabin died a decade ago but his surgery is still there with different people.

I went to St Albans High School from 1968 to 1973. So many of us are still around. Mrs Maria Dobes was our volleyball teacher; she was of Czechoslovakian background and came to St Albans in the 1950s.[2] Mr Alcorn was an English and History teacher as well as being a minister in the Anglican church.[3]

At St Albans high school we had to line up on the stage and the measurement of our dresses were taken by teachers with a ruler to ensure uniformity, along with the check of our green beret and grey gloves. No plain stockings were allowed.

The high school cleaners (for years) were Keith and Bess Haynes and Carmelo and Mary Axiak. The Haynes lived down the road from the school and their son – Ray Haynes – was a player for the Footscray football club. Their other son became a shipwright and worked on the Williamstown docks. Of course they had other children. Every student knew "the Haynes" because of their connection with the school and support for the local football and cricket clubs.

The manager in charge of teaching forensic science at a university in Sydney was Tamara Sztynda who started at the high school in the late 1960s and ended up with a PHD from Melbourne University. I think the head of the psychiatric hospital wards and the officer in charge of the Art Gallery went to St Albans High. Erica Collins, the lady who went on to design the

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[1] Jakob and Magdalena Krois were Yugoslavian nationals who migrated in 1950. Cheryl, Leo, and Ron Krois were at St Albans High School in the 1960s

[2] Refer to chapter about Maria and Leo Dobes in *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, 2004.

[3] Refer to chapter *in St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016*.

"Hoppers" brand kids jeans went to St Albans High School in the 1950s; now she is retired of course. In Form 2 one of my classmates was Alex Andrianopoulos who became a local councillor and then a local MP and in the 1990s was Speaker of the House in state parliament.

I remember that St Albans people who were getting their Australian citizenship were given a tree to plant. Australia's change to decimal currency occurred in 1966. I believe that some of the decimal currency was stored in the old ammunitions magazines at Deer Park waiting to begin circulation in the area.

Man landed on the moon in July 1969 and we had the day off to watch it in on television in the classrooms at St Albans high.

We had the Hair musical in 1970 that was organized by the Musical Activities Committee and was the start of the annual MAC show. I think Stella Pulo from Kings Park was in that MAC show. She did drama at Melbourne Uni and ended up on stage in New York.

I remember the debate about changing the school uniform to black cord trousers and long white socks with a dress. Also deciding whether to build a circular concert stage.

The naming of Kealba occurred in 1970. A competition was held at St Albans High School for a name for the new school and suburb within the area, and it was our class that won. We selected "Ke" from Keilor and "Alba" from St Albans to name the new High School being built. We were sharing our school with them initially.

My mother had occasion to work in Albion primary school but returned to St Albans; e.g. Stevensville, Movelle, and St Albans North are the schools I remember she taught in. Mum worked until 1982 and then she and dad went into retirement in Werribee South.

Ester Boyd née Koopu, 2019.

Zena nee Burge and Edward Koopu

RONALD FISHER

Ronald Fisher was one of the first doctors who had an office in St Albans. Ronald William Douglas Barnard Fisher was born on 16 March 1903 to Allan Gibson Fisher and Harriet Ellen Barnard who had moved from New Zealand. RWDB Fisher's ancestors on the father's side are from Scotland in the 1730s. George Edward Fisher (1839-1926) and Margaret Mary nee Gibson (1839-1928) migrated to New Zealand in 1863 where Alan Gibson Fisher was born in 1865. He joined the Salvation Army, married Harriet Barnard and they moved to Canada and England before returning. By 1903 they had moved to Brunswick, Victoria, where their younger son Ronald was born. They travelled to England several times and had apparently intended to settle there but returned to Australia due to ill health. The family was in South Africa in 1916 so young Ronald must have moved around a lot in his early days.

Ronald William Douglas Barnard Fisher (L) & family 1912

In 1919 RWD Fisher registered to start medical studies at University of Cape Town. He might have finished his studies at Melbourne University as in 1924 he was listed as a student at Queen's College, Melbourne.

In 1925 he married Doris Lucy Dutton of St Kilda.[1] They moved to Winchelsea where Fisher established a medical practice. In 1927 they moved to Sunshine where Fisher commenced practice at the corner of Withers and Langbien Streets.[2] He was soon advertising that he would visit St Albans every Tuesday and could be consulted at Mrs Magee's premises.[3]

Fisher stayed in Sunshine for almost a decade before leaving the district in 1936:

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[1] Argus 21 March 1925 p17
[2] Sunshine Advocate 26 March 1927 p4
[3] Sunshine Advocate 14 April 1927 p4

After nine years in Sunshine, Dr. Ronald W. D. Fisher has disposed of his practice to Dr. John Dorman, of Neerim South. During his stay in Sunshine the genial doctor has been a most estimable citizen and, besides undertaking the many duties appertaining to his profession, has found time to interest himself in public and social activities. He is a lover of horticulture and was for a time President of the Sunshine Horticultural Society. He was also Medical Officer to Porcelain Potteries employees' Sick Fund, Deer Park football club and the I.C.I. football club. Dr Fisher came from Winchelsea to Sunshine and founded his practice here. He intends to take a holiday for five or six weeks before resuming practice at Riversdale Rd. Camberwell. The Sunshine people extend the best of good wishes to Dr and Mrs Fisher in their future surroundings. [1]

Doctor Fisher was a man always on the move. In 1937 he and Doris had settled into Camberwell Road, Kooyong. In 1943 they were at Riversdale Road, Canterbury.

In 1945 Fisher was Wing Commander of 1 Medical Receiving Station near Darwin in the Northern Territory. It was a mobile surgical unit that was formed in 1942 and worked with RAAF and US personnel. In March 1946 Fisher (C.O. of RAAF Hospital) was in Melbourne at the Show Grounds with the Minister for Housing (Mr Barry) to ascertain if they were suitable for emergency housing and nurses' quarters.[2]

In 1949 Fisher was in Castle Street Ivanhoe and in 1954 in Cheeseman Avenue Elsternwick. In 1958 he was at Queens Road Albert Park and in 1959-1963 he was in Tonimbuk East, Pakenham. Doris Fisher nee Dutton died in 1961. It appears that she did not have children.

Donald Fisher then married Irene Gladys Ridgewell in 1962 and in 1967 they were at Manningham Road in Lower Templestowe.

Dr RWD Fisher died on the 28th February 1971 at Lower Templestowe aged 68 years.

Section Officer Langley, Wing Commander Fisher, Matron McRae, Coomalie Creek, N.T. 1945

[1] Sunshine Advocate 1 May 1936 p2
[2] Age 28 March 1946 p4

DANIEL WISE

Dr Daniel Wise of Sunshine is significant in St Albans' history in the 1950s as he sponsored a number of doctors to work on a regular basis in St Albans, whereas in earlier decades there was only an infrequent visiting service with a doctor coming from Sunshine (refer to article about Dr Fisher).

Daniel Wise, originally known as Daniel Wajcberg, was another of the Polish-Jewish medical practitioners who came to the district after the war and established their practices amongst the growing population of European displaced persons. Their multi-lingual skills were in high demand for decades because "foreign" languages soon dominated local discourse.

Daniel Wajcberg was born on 24 March 1911 in Czestochowa, Poland, to Saul Wajcberg and Chana Bursztyn.[3] Daniel studied medicine and received his qualifications in 1936 from the University of Pisa in Italy. He married Estera Kolin in 1937 in Czestochowa and they must have left soon afterwards for Australia, as in 1937 he was on the New South Wales' list of unregistered foreign doctors.

Wajcberg changed his name to Wise and moved to Victoria. He was registered as a medical practitioner in 1939 and started at the Murrayville Hospital in May[4] and then the Warrnambool Hospital in July.[5]

He established his private practice in Nyah West about 1940[6] and appears to have settled into the community fairly quickly. He was appointed as the local medical officer for returned soldiers under the Repatriation Department[7] and also addressed community groups, such as giving talks on first aid to the Country Women's Association.[8] In one case he gave evidence in an alleged murder case,[9] in a less onerous one he was available when a regional hospital needed urgent access to an anesthetist. After five years of settlement in Australia he applied for naturalization in 1943.

In 1945 Dr Wise sold his Nyah West practice and moved to Stawell, staying there till 1949. In February 1949 he exchanged medical

[3] www.myheritage.com/site-family-tree-278998851/wise
[4] Ouyen Mail 24 May 1939 p1
[5] Ouyen Mail 5 July 1939 p6
[6] Register of medical practitioners, Victoria Gazette No. 18; 31 January 1946.
[7] Age 13 August 1940 p10
[8] Weekly Times 31 August 1940 p31
[9] Herald 21 January 1941 p3

practices with Dr Graeme Paul Jeffree of 31 Sun Crescent Sunshine – Jeffree went to Stawell and Wise came to Sunshine.[1] Dr Wise brought a number of doctors into his Sunshine practice, some of whom stayed only briefly. Dr Karl Andermann was with Daniel Wise in 1952 and worked in St Albans. Dr Richard McCullagh came in 1953 and formed a business partnership with Dr Wise. Dr Peter Frajman (q.v.) joined them in 1953 and worked partly at St Albans from Main Road West. Dr Leslie Rosenbloom from England started with them in 1954 but didn't stay long.[2]

In 1953 Dr Wise moved residence to Woodland Street, Essendon, while continuing in his medical practice at Sunshine.

1954 was a year of some extra change, because Dr Wise also commenced a medical practice at Harley House in Collins Street.[3] He left Australia in March that year for a six-month tour of England, the Continent, and America for post-graduate studies.[4]

In October 1954, Daniel Wise resumed his practices in Sun Crescent, Sunshine, and in Collins Street, Melbourne. He died unexpectedly on 1 April 1955 at age 44 years – the circumstances of his death are not stated. His funeral service was held at the Chevra Kadisha parlors in Carlton and his remains were buried at the Melbourne General Cemetery. The Sunshine Masons' Lodge recorded their condolences for their "Esteemed Brother".[5]

Daniel Wajcberg/Wise and Estera "Edka" nee Kolin had raised three children: Ruth, Naomi (Nikki), and Saul. Estera Wise moved with her children to Armadale in the late 1950s, but their later family life is unknown. Estera died in 2008 at the age of 95 years.[6]

The McCullagh & Wise medical partnership was dissolved and Dr John Brook (q.v.) took over the St Albans practice in Main Road West in February 1956,[7] replacing Dr Peter Frajman who moved to Altona. Dr McCullagh died in 1960 so that may have been the end of the partnership between the Sunshine and St Albans practices. However, other doctors established themselves from those St Albans premises.

On reflection, it is interesting to note that McCullagh & Wise seem to have sponsored several Jewish overseas-trained doctors to work in the district. One wonders if Dr Wise mentored fellow émigrés as a settlement strategy for refugee new arrivals, based no doubt on his own experience. In Germany, Jewish doctors were being targeted by the Nazis as early as 1933, so it is no wonder they were trying to get away.

[1] Argus 16 February 1949 p2
[2] Sunshine Advocate 4 May 1954 p1
[3] Age 21 February 1954 p2
[4] Sunshine Advocate 12 March 1954 p2
[5] Argus 4 April 1955 p13
[6] https://www.myheritage.com/names/estera_kolin
[7] Argus 11 February 1956 p5

PETER FRAJMAN

The Frajman family were of Polish Jewish origin and migrated to Australia in 1937. David Chaim Frajman (see photo) was born in May 1897 in Szydlowiec Poland, and his father Pinches Frajman was born there about 1855. David Frajman arrived in Melbourne in January 1937 on the Largs Bay. He was a tailor by trade and established his home and business in Barkly Street, St Kilda. He appears to have been self-employed as "D C Frajman".

David was married to Tauba Frydman, who was born in May 1898 in Szydlowiec Poland, and traces her lineage to Abram Aron Frydman from the 1850s. David and Tauba married in Warsaw and their children were Sarah and Pinchas (Peter). The family was fortuitous in emigrating before the start of WW2 when Germany invaded Poland.

Tauba's occupation in Melbourne is listed as a machinist, so they probably ran a little family tailoring business in St Kilda. David volunteered with the local Citizen Military Forces about 1939, however there are no details of his service. David died in 1983 and Tauba in 1987; both are buried at Melbourne Chevra Kadisha in Springvale.

Pinchas "Peter" Frajman was born on 28 July 1927, so he was ten years old when he came to Australia. He studied medicine at the Melbourne university, graduated in 1951, and came to St Albans in 1953. Lorna Cameron, who came to St Albans in 1949, remembered him:

> *In 1953, there were two doctors in Sunshine; one of these opened a branch surgery in Main Road West, which was staffed by Dr Frajman, a young Jewish migrant who had come to Australia from Europe during the pogroms of the thirties. After a couple of years the principal died suddenly and, due to a business technicality, the St Albans partner was prevented from practising here any longer; he has since had a life-long practice in Brooklyn and Altona. In the next few years three doctors set up local practices. These practitioners were catering for a community of 1,000 people and could not cope with the demand as the town increased tenfold over the next decade.* [1]

The Sunshine partnership that Lorna referred to was the practice established by Dr Richard McCullagh[2] and Dr Daniel Wise at 31 Sun Crescent. They expanded their business into St Albans, probably because there was a growing demand as European migrants started settling in the district in considerable number. In an earlier decade Dr Fisher (q.v.) would visit once a week and consult patients at Mrs Magee's store in Main Road West, otherwise people had to go to Sunshine or Footscray.

Dr Andermann was with McCullagh & Wise in 1952 and based at St Albans; he left in 1953 when he was appointed Deputy Super-intendent at the Ballarat Mental Hospital.[3] In 1953 Peter Frajman commenced with McCullagh & Wise and worked in Sunshine and from the corner of Main Road West and Glendenning Street.[4] The other local doctor at the time was Zygfryd Atlas (q.v.) whose clinic was in Main Road East; he started about 1955.

Unfortunately Dr Wise died unexpectedly in 1955 and the business partnership was then dissolved.[5] Frajman commenced a new practice in partnership with Dr John Lewin at 57 Blyth Street, Altona,[6] on the corner of Sargood and Blyth streets.

Peter Frajman and his wife Catherine moved to The Esplanade in Seaholme, Altona, and stayed there about a decade. They might have had two sons: Michael and Russell. By 1967 they had moved to Waiora Road in Caulfield though Dr Frajman continued with his work at "The Clinic" in Blyth Street. He must have continued working at his Altona medical practice well into the 1980s as during this time he was a Member of the Board of the Altona District Hospital.

Frajman was popular with many of his patients and some of them have noted their likes on Facebook in contemporary times:

- *Dr Frajman was just beautiful – he looked after me what I was a baby. Mum and I spent lots of time in the surgery which was on the corner of Blyth and Sargood Street. Dr Leyden was rather stern but a very good Doctor. I can remember when they moved into the "new" surgery which has been renovated a few times.*
- *Dr Frajman always had his pipe in his mouth even when he gave up smoking.*
- *Peter Frajman was a close family friend and the old man used to call him Penicillin Pete because it didn't matter what was wrong with you he always give you a shot of Penicillin!*
- *Dr Frajman – an amazing, caring man.*

[1] Lorna Cameron in *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives* 2004, p23.

[2] McCullagh was of Irish background married to Sybil Allnatt, migrated in 1952. Dr McCullagh died in 1960.

[3] Andermann was of Jewish background from Berlin and migrated in the 1940s. He qualified as a doctor in Florence and re-qualified at Queensland University. He married Liv Emilie Andermann.

[4] Sunshine Advocate 6 February 1953.

[5] Dr Daniel Wise (Wajcberg) was born in January 1911 and died in April 1955 at age 44 years. He was of Polish Jewish background born in Czestochowa, Poland, and migrated to Australia in 1938.

[6] Argus 11 February 1956

JACK ROGOZINSKI

Jack Rogozinski was a Polish national who came to St Albans in the 1950s and worked as one of the longest-serving health professionals in the district as a dental surgeon. Jakub Rogozinski was born on the 3rd December 1920 at Leczyca in central Poland. His parents were Rachel Szatan and Chilmer Rogozinski, whose parentage is traced to Myer Rogozinski of the early 1800s.

Jack finished his schooling in 1939 and was intending to study electrical engineering in Warsaw. When war was declared in November 1939 Jack was conscripted into the Polish army, was captured by the Soviets and spent two years in the Russian camps. In the meantime, his mother Rachel was interred in the Lodz ghetto and possibly died there in 1943. After being released from the Russian camps Jack served with the British forces in the Middle East and Italy before being demobbed in England.[1]

Jack Rogozinski left England and arrived in Sydney on 23 August 1947. By 1949 he had moved to Millswyn Street South Yarra, from where he applied for Naturalisation.[2] In that same year he enrolled at Melbourne University and studied dentistry. He graduated in 1954 and started his new profession at the Royal Dental Hospital in Melbourne, thus becoming known as Doctor Rogozinski. By 1956 he was in Nicholson Street Fitzroy and then in 1958 he started practicing in St Albans.

Rogozinski's first location in St Albans was in a house at 37 Main Road East between the railway and the Arcade. The house was owned by Wolodymir and Margarete Kutscherjawy, a Ukrainian-German couple who arrived locally in the 1950s. Rogozinski established his dental clinic in the front room of the property. It was well placed opposite a small but expanding shopping centre that many people would have passed daily on their way to the train station. He became popular with the St Albans residents because he spoke several languages, as did many of the newcomers.

St Albans in the 1950s started to attract a few medical people because of the increasing population. Dr Peter Frajman was a Jewish migrant who was working in Main Road West; he migrated in the 1930s, was at St Albans in 1953, and relocated to Altona for business reasons. Dr Zygfryd Atlas was here in the mid 1950s and was working from Main Road East; he was of Jewish faith and worked for the Polish underground by disguising himself as a German; he was the doctor at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. Dr Igor Balabin took over Atlas's practice and stayed for 50 years; he was a Yugoslav national who migrated in 1951. These professionals were multilingual and thus able to communicate with their many 'new Australian' compatriots. German was often a common language. Evelyn Mullenger, a third-generation Aussie of Anglo background, tells a lovely tale of studying German when she was working for Rogozinski so that she could communicate with clients.

In 1961 Rogozinski built a dental clinic with attached residence on the corner of Main Road East and View Street opposite the tennis courts on Errington Reserve; however, he did not live in the attached accommodation but rented it out. At this stage he was living in Leonard Avenue, St Albans, with his wife, Tosia, and their two daughters. Tosia Theofila Rogozinski was born in 1935 in Lodz, Poland; her mother was Fela Jablonski. Tosia must have been a very private person as nothing of her history in the district is documented on the public record.

Dr Rogozinski was a supporter of health services in the western region. He served on the governance board of the old Sunshine Hospital from 1958 to 1967 and acted as mentor to many young dentists starting their careers.

Tosia Rogozinski nee Jablonski died in 1965 at the age of 30 years. Jack moved to Princes Street, St Kilda, so that his mother-in-law could help with raising the two daughters. However, he continued his local practice and his involvement in regional activities. He was the chairperson of the Western Suburbs Dentists' Association from 1965 to 1981 and he was a member of the St Albans R.S.L. Sub-Branch when that was active in the 1960s and 1970s.

Dr Rogozinski retired from his St Albans practice in 1992, at the age of 70. A farewell gathering was held for him at Keilor's Ultima Reception Centre with well over one hundred people attending to honour his service to the community, acknowledging his status as the best-known and longest-serving dentist in the district.

Jack Rogozinski died on 18 February 2006 at St Kilda at age 85, and was buried at the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha cemetery.

Rogozinki's old dental clinic still exists in St Albans in its original construction from the 1960s. It is now known as Dr Igor Cernavin's Dental Surgery.

Reference: Chris Evans "Farewell to Dr Rogozinski" The Advocate 10 June 1992.

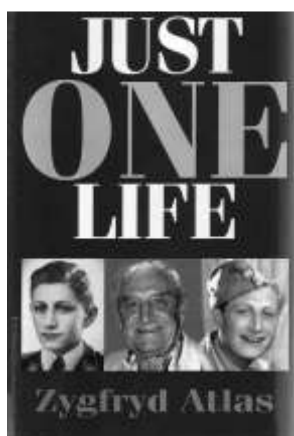
[1] In 1941 an agreement was reached between Stalin and the Polish government for Polish soldiers in Russia to be released so they could join the new Polish army of General Wladyslaw Anders. Many served with the British forces in the Middle East, Egypt and Italy.

[2] Argus 11 February 1949 p13

ZYGFRYD ATLAS

Zygfryd “Ziggy” Atlas was born on the 25th September 1920 in Poland, the son of Claire Tendler and Samuel Atlas. He was of Polish and Jewish background and when the German army invaded Poland in 1939 he and his family were constantly evading the attention of the military and their targeting of the Jewish population. During the war he became a member of the Polish underground army while working for the Germans as a cleaner where he stole weapons. He escaped from the Lwow ghetto by disguising himself as a German officer.

Siblings: Nusia, Zygfryd & Dzunia Atlas © Z Atlas



Atlas has written a book about his life in Poland and his survival during the war. The book is titled “Just One Life” and was published in 1999. Atlas comes across as a flamboyant extrovert with very positive attitudes about his capabilities, which were undoubt-edly instrumental in his survival. He was a holocaust survivor when some of his family were not so fortunate.

Atlas arrived at Port Melbourne on 21 August 1946. He was lucky in having his married sister, Nusia, already living in Melbourne, so he joined her family in Brighton, and that was the start of his integration into a new life. It took him eight years of work and study to qualify as a medical practitioner, so his experience is at least indicative of what other professionals had to undergo in regaining qualifications.

His first offer of employment after arrival was inflating tyres at the General Motors factory in Fisherman’s Bend; he quit at the end of the week. Then he worked for some time for his brother-in-law as a photographic assistant. During this time he inquired through the Veteran’s Rehabilitation Scheme about admission to Melbourne University’s medical faculty. In the meantime he started selling clothing door to door. He was robbed at the first house he visited but was successful for the rest of the day.

He soon received a letter saying he’d been accepted into the medical faculty and the Veteran’s Scheme would pay the university fees. Because of overcrowding at Melbourne, the course was being conducted in Mildura, so it was off to the bush. As a 27 year old, Atlas was soon enjoying sports and the social life and occasionally having to work for some income. The good times took their toll and he failed one subject, so he had to repeat the year. He passed it second time round so it was back to Melbourne.

Zygfryd Atlas at Mildura Campus © Z Atlas

Back in Melbourne he applied for a job as a ticket collector at Flinders Station and left after experiencing hostility. A friend offered him a job as waiter in a restaurant, which he accepted reluctantly, working three or four nights a week. One night he was told that he would be the entertainer for the evening, so he became a singing waiter with a repertoire of Italian and Russian songs. For sports and recreation he joined the university polo team and the Australia Jewish swimming championships.

During his third year studies he was in a motorcycle accident that took months to recover and left some permanent injury. His next job was washing dishes at Wachtel’s, but at least a meal was provided. He took a job as a salesman in Myer’s Emporium basement but soon lost that for giving “preferential treatment” to migrant customers. He met Janina who remembered him

from Wachtel's – they married in the St Kilda Synagogue and went to live in Brunswick.

Atlas passed his fourth year exams with honours. Sadly, Janina left him for one of his war-time mates in Sydney.

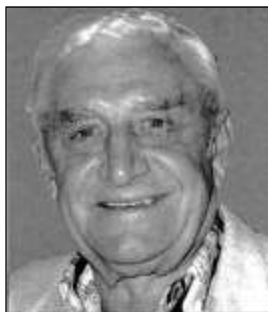
Atlas started working as a driver with the ambulance service. One night he experienced severe nausea but was pressured to work by a supervisor. While responding to a call his condition worsened and he was rushed by ambulance to the Royal Melbourne Hospital with severe food poisoning. He quit his job as a consequence.

The final year of medicine required six weeks' work in a hospital, which for Atlas was the Alfred. Here they found his multi-lingual skills were an asset and put to use. The hospital rotations continued and included time in the Children's, the Women's, and the Fairfield Hospital for Infectious Diseases. He had completed the course.

Notice of Zygfryd Atlas having passed his medical examinations appeared in the newspaper in December 1954, so it had taken him eight years from his arrival in Australia to qualify.

It's said that Dr Atlas started his practice in St Albans in the early 1950s though he did not write about this work. The earliest he might have started would be in 1955 and Dr Balabin took over the practice in 1958, so Atlas was probably gone by them – some people recall that he had moved to Altona.

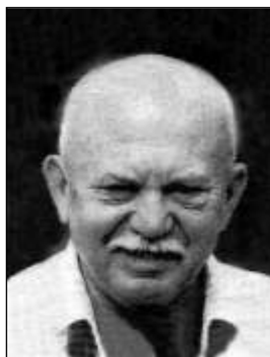
Zygfryd married Gila in 1959 and in 1963 they were resident at Millers Road in Altona. Between 1967 and 1980 they were living in Toorak Road in Malvern. Their children include Amit, Ronnie and Charis. Other details are unknown.



Ziggy Atlas passed away peacefully on 26 August 2014 at age 93 years and was buried at the Springvale Botanical Cemetery. Ziggy and Gila had been married for 55 years. Gila Atlas passed away on 2 November 2015 at age 77 years and was buried at the Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

Reference and photo credits: Zygfryd Atlas "Just One Life" published by Rocham P/L, Caulfield North, 1999.

IGOR BALABIN



Dr Igor Balabin was one of the post-WW2 European immigrants who made a major contribution to the settlement of the St Albans community, because of his continuous fifty years of service as a general practitioner. Igor Balabin was born in 1924 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and graduated from the faculty of medicine at the Bonn University in Germany while in his mid twenties. He migrated to Australia and arrived in Melbourne on 8 December 1951.

He came to Australia at the relatively young age of 27 years to start a new life. Though already a qualified doctor he discovered (as had many others) that his professional qualifications were not recognised in Australia, though his skills were put to use, because when he was at the Benalla migrant hostel he worked as an orderly in the hospital.

After completing his two years of work for the government he moved to Melbourne in 1953 and enrolled at Melbourne University to repeat his medical studies. He graduated again in 1957.

He married Nina Traumanis in 1955, and they raised three daughters: Mary-Anne, Tina, and Irene. Nina Traumanis was of Latvian background and came to Australia in 1949 at age 21 as a displaced person.

Dr Balabin moved to St Albans and in August 1958 started working as a General Practitioner in a clinic from his home, the practice becoming known as the St Albans Medical Centre. He took over the practice from Dr Zygfryd Atlas (q.v.) who had started the practice in the mid 1950s.

Living behind your surgery and consulting rooms has some advantage, such as being able to enjoy lunch at home in your own kitchen. It also has some disadvantages, as people wanting medical attention would knock on the door after hours and on weekends whenever they wanted to see a doctor. Despite putting in long hours each day at the surgery, there was always a larger unmet need within the community.

Balabin also supported his extended family from his home. Michael Traumanis was a nephew from north-eastern Victoria who was struggling with his studies. Balabin encouraged Michael to come and live with him and go to St Albans High School. Michael arrived in the middle of year and worked very hard, passed, and went on to became a veterinary surgeon.[1]

[1] Recollections of Barry Rayner, St Albans High School.

In 1970 the Balabin family established their new home in West Essendon, which provided an easier separation of private and professional life and where they have lived ever since.

Since he started working in St Albans, Dr Balabin had devoted a lifetime of professional service to the people of St Albans. As well as mastering the English language, he was fluent in a number of the European languages, especially in the Slavic tongues and German, also being able to converse in several others. His daughter recalls that he spoke four European languages fluently and another four adequately. This was a bonus for the many European migrants who settled in St Albans, especially for those whose English language skills were restricted, as many people would have experienced in their early settlement period.

Dr Balabin passed away on 8th June 2005, at the age of 81 years. A funeral service was conducted for him at Fawkner Memorial Park where his remains were cremated. One of his milestone achievements was that he had delivered more than 2000 babies over nearly fifty years of medical practice.

The State Member for Keilor, Mr George Seitz, tabled a glowing reference in Parliament:

> *Dr Balabin worked tirelessly in St Albans until the age of 81. He did not retire. He still had patients he looked after. His was committed to his clients and particularly his old clients that he knew from Europe. He spoke several languages. He was committed to the western suburbs area and the suburb of St Albans. He deliberately chose to practice in St Albans because he thought that at the time that he settled there in the 1950s it needed a medical practitioner who could communicate and understand the language of the people. He was able to speak many of the Slavic languages as well as Hungarian, as he and his wife had a Hungarian background. He was able to practice for the whole community up to the day he passed away. This sort of service from a family GP who was dedicated to that position and the area is an amazing achievement.* [1]

His passing was also noted by the Western Melbourne Division of General Practice:

> *Dr Balabin, who practiced for 47 years in his St Albans Medical Centre, was also well known within the local community. He has the honour of being the longest serving GP in the Western Suburbs. Last year he received an Award for Meritorious Service in the Community under the Victorian Awards for Excellence in Multicultural Affairs.* [2]

Nina Balabin passed away in May 2015.

Reference: Jennifer Grant "Doctor busy to the end" Brimbank Leader 28 June 2005 p3.

[1] Parliament of Victoria Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) Legislative Assembly Fifty-Fifth Parliament, July 2005.
[2] The Western Melbourne Division of General Practice, Annual Report 2004 – 2005, 14 June 2005.

HENRY LISZUKIEWICZ

Dr Henry Liszukiewicz was born 15 July 1936. His parents were Donat and Michalina who were Polish nationals who arrived in Newcastle in February 1950. Henry was aged thirteen and spoke no English. He started his Australian education at the Marist Brothers' College in New South Wales. When the family moved to St Albans he continued his studies with the Christian Brothers in Yarraville and later at Victoria Parade. He became a naturalized Australian citizen in 1956.

Henry must have done well in his secondary studies as he was awarded a couple of Commonwealth scholarships. He then studied medicine at Melbourne University and graduated in 1961, starting his professional life at St Vincent's Hospital in East Melbourne.

Bernie Kokot remembers Dr Henry very well because they were neighbours and became friends, including some delightful escapades:

> *One time, with the assistance of then across-the-road teenage neighbour, Henry Liszukiewicz, we constructed a monster (6 feet high) brown paper kite. It managed to get so high on that roll of string that it encroached upon the landing path of aeroplanes on the final descent to Essendon Airport. We lost visual sight of our kite (it broke away) until an Aviation Authority person located us at our Scott Avenue "launch site" and advised us of altitude limitations for kids' kites. That is a true story.* [3]

In 1962 Henry married Marysa Toms in St Patrick's Cathedral. The couple then stayed with his parents in St Albans until their own house was built in Wilby Court behind the High School. Unfortunately, Henry's father Donat Liszukiewicz died in 1966 at the age of 63 years and was buried at the Footscray cemetery.

Henry Liszukiewicz became associated with the medical practice of Dr Balabin in Main Road East.[4] Balabin started his practice in 1958 and attracted a loyal clientele because of his multilingual capacity, and Dr Henry added to that:

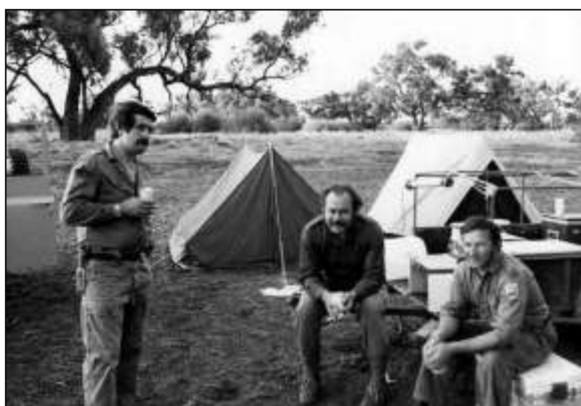
> *Fluent in seven languages – Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, German. Byelorussian, Croatian and English – Dr Liszukiewicz became immensely popular with the local post-war settlers from central and eastern Europe. He also became Dr Balabin's partner in the practice.* [5]

Henry's community interests included sport and education. He was a member of the local

[3] Recollections of Bernie Kokot in St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016.
[4] Dr Igor Balabin (q.v.) passed away in 2005.
[5] Chris Evans, Advocate 9 February 1994.

Polish-Catholic congregation and looked after the Polish library at the Sacred Heart Church in St Albans. The Polish nuns from Aberfeldie held Polish language classes there from the 1950s and Fr Krasoscki conducted a Polish Mass on Sundays for many years. Henry also volunteered as the team doctor for the Polonia Soccer Club. A favourite hobby was fishing with his old St Albans friends. Bernie Kokot recalls:

> *We used to go camping and fishing. … The Dawidowicz family are kin to Dr Henry and each year we acknowledge this in tribute in a Memorial fishing trip of which the Doc was always involved with us in the 1960s to early 1990s.* [1]

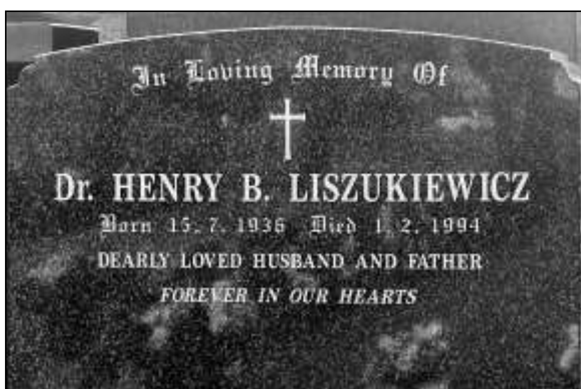


Jeff Brundell, Dr Henry, Wishi Dawidowicz 1977 © B Kokot

Dr. Henry Bronislaw Liszukiewicz died on 1 February 1994 at age 57 years after an 18 month battle with cancer. A funeral service was held for him at the Sacred Heart Church in St Albans, led by parish priest Fr O'Reilly. More than 500 people attended the service, which is a great tribute to the respect people had for him.

Dr Henry's mother Michalina Liszukiewicz died in 1999 at the age of 88 years and was buried at the Footscray cemetery.

Henry and Marysa Liszukiewicz had three children: Mark, Michael, and Caroline.



Headstone at Footscray Cemetery

Reference: Chris Evans "Dr was a leader and a friend" The Advocate 9 February 1994.

[1] Recollections of Bernie Kokot in St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016.

PATRICK O'BRIEN

Patrick Aloysius O'Brien was born 22 June 1922 at Garnett Hill, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland. His parents were Patrick Aloysius O'Brien and Mary Catherine Dobbin and trace their ancestry to James O'Brien of Limerick, Ireland, in 1771.

Patrick O'Brien senior was a doctor in France during WW1 and as Casualty Surgeon in Glasgow during WW2 was asked to examine an injured Messerschmitt pilot who turned out to be Rudolf Hess, Deputy Fuhrer of the Third Reich, who had flown to Scotland on a personal mission to meet with H.M. King George VI in a doomed attempt to end the Second World War.[1]

Patrick O'Brien junior studied at Glasgow's St Aloysius College from 1928 to 1939 and the Anderson Medical College from 1939 to 1940. He then relinquished studies to volunteer for the Royal Air Force and was commissioned in March 1942. John O'Brien, Patrick's son, says:

> *After five months with 602 Squadron (City of Glasgow) at Redhill, he joined the fleet-carrier H.M.S. Furious and flew his Spitfire off her to Malta as relief. He operated with 185 Squadron at Hal Far until. February 1943, by which time the siege had been all but raised, and arrived home as Flying Officer (since September 1942) to become Instructor in an Operational Training Unit. After six months with 131 Squadron at Culmhead in Somerset he was promoted Flight-Lieutenant and posted to Training Command for Instructional Duties until released in May 1946.* [2]

John O'Brien says his father saw active service as a Spitfire pilot and flew offensive operations against the Luftwaffe and the Regia Aeronautica in North Africa. Patrick O'Brien was demobbed in 1946, having served in both the Malta and France theatres of war. After resuming studies Patrick graduated as a medical physician in 1950.

His future wife, Josephine Bernadette McElroy, passed her examinations and became a licentiate of the three Royal Scottish Corp-orations in 1947, i.e. Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.[3]

Patrick and Josephine O'Brien, with their two young children (John Alexander and Josephine Patricia) left London on 22 November 1951 on the Strathnaver bound for Melbourne, Australia, because of his appointment to a Short Service Commission (four years) in the Medical Branch of the Royal Australian Air Force.

The O'Briens arrived in December 1951 and the RAAF station in Laverton became their Australian home. In 1955 Patrick O'Brien had the rank of Squadron Leader at the Point Cook base, working in the School of Aviation Medicine.

O'Brien resigned in January 1957 after six years of service. The RAAF wanted to re-appoint him to compile a Manual of Aviation Medicine for Aircrew.

In 1958 he applied for enrollment in the RAAF Reserve in the General Air Force Reserve and was promoted to Squadron Leader. His residential address was 45 Cherry Street Werribee and his business address was Synnott Street Werribee.

In 1958 the O'Briens were also listed at 34 Victoria Crescent, so they must have moved to St Albans later in that year.

In 1965 P A O'Brien (physician) was listed at 34 Victoria Crescent, St Albans, and J B McElroy (physician) was listed at 34 Victoria Crescent. Same in 1970.

Squadron Leader P. A. O'Brien ceased to be a member of the Air Force Reserve in 1977 on reaching the retirement age.

Phillip Cini who was a classmate of Kitty O'Brien remembers the family well:

> *I remember Dr O'Brien coming to the home in a red 63 Wolseley. He served in Malta during the Second World War as a Spitfire pilot and ever so often he would go to Malta and have a reunion there. He was good friends with my dad. I remember him telling me that at one stage the air raids were so intense that he couldn't land and was running out of fuel, but by a miracle he was able to land his Spitfire safely back home. They were precarious times. If there ever was a time that Dr O'Brien was intimate with information was when he told me his friends used to go out and gamble and have a good time as if it was their last day on earth. Being a pilot was the most dangerous thing on earth – well it was just as dangerous as being in the army. Well, while his friends were out having a good time O'Brien would stay in the barracks and pray the rosary hoping for the war to end. That's what I remember him telling me.* [4]

Patrick Aloysius O'Brien died of cancer at St Albans on 29 September 1998 at age 76 years and his remains were buried at Macedon.

Josephine Bernadette O'Brien nee McElroy died peacefully at Keilor Downs on 25 May 2012 and a funeral mass was held at Sacred Heart Church. Her remains were buried at Macedon with her late husband.

Patrick and Josephine were long-term local medicos about whom surprisingly little is recorded locally. Their children include John (aka Alec), Josephine, Penny, Judy, Kitty, Sue and Paddy.

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[1] http://www.whitehorselawyers.com.au/WHITEHORSE/LAWYERS/ABOUT%20JOHN%20O%27BRIEN

[2] http://lib.militaryarchive.co.uk/library/WWII/library/Old-Aloysians-in-the-World-War-1939-1945/files/assets/basic-html/page96.html

[3] Edinburgh Medical Journal

[4] Recollections of Phillip Cini in *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 Years 1956-2016.*

BOHDAN UMRYSCH

Bohdan Stepan Umrysch was born on 14 January 1911. He was of Ukrainian nationality, possibly from Stanislawow. His wife was Irena Anna (nee Tuszynska) of Ukrainian nationality who was born on 17 September 1919. They arrived in Melbourne per USS General Black on 25 June 1949 with children Georges Achilles and Marta Maria.[1]

It is not known where the Umrysch family had initially settled in Melbourne. Bohdan had studied medicine at Cracow but his qualifications would not have been recognised in Australia and he would have spent at least four years regaining certification in Australia.

By 1963 the family was living in Mooltan Street, Newmarket, and they were all dutifully occupied: Bohdan as a doctor, Irene as a laboratory technician, Marta as a teacher, and George as an assistant.

Apparently an American CIA operative visited Australia in 1965 and was interested in members of the Australian-Ukrainian community, with several persons of interest in Melbourne:

> *There are about 35,000 Ukrainians in Australia located in and around Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and a small group in Canberra. They are organized into all kinds of parties but maintain representation in one overall committee. According to A/2 the various groups could quite easily be unified into one group, with the exception of the Bandera followers.*[2]

The reference to Dr Umrysch is brief:

> *Former CP member. Studied medicine in Cracow. He has a son who wrote to the Soviet Embassy requesting permission to go to the Soviet Union for permanent residence. He was turned down because he is not a former citizen.*[3]

It is not stated why the CIA (and also presumably ASIO) was interested in Umrysch but it was probably the Communist Party or Anti-Bolshevik links. The authorities were interested in people who were writing critical letters to local media and international networks about political rights and freedom, and that was the case for Umrysch who raised concerns about human rights in the Soviet bloc. In Australia it was the aftermath of the Petrov Affair from 1954 when Vladimir Petrov of the Soviet Embassy in Canberra was ousted as a KGB agent.[4]

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[1] They were listed under the Polish spelling of “Umrysz”.

[2] Memorandum For The Record 28 June 1965; debriefing notes declassified and released by CIA.

[3] As above.

[4] Petrov contacted ASIO and offered evidence of Soviet espionage in Australia. The defection was arranged by Michael Bialoguski, a Polish doctor and part-time ASIO agent. Robert Menzies held a Royal Commission and was swept back into power as PM. No one was ever charged and no major spy ring uncovered.

References to international spies and espionage may seem fanciful but they did exist amongst émigré communities. V. L. Borin's auto-biographical novel about DPs in Melbourne during the 1950s refers specifically to activities of communist agents.[1] (He makes a passing reference to the migrants of St Albans, but it is nothing significant.) Interestingly, a couple of St Albans DPs from the former Soviet bloc have mentioned being watched or approached by foreign functionaries, and others had expressed fear of coming to the notice of such people in case of retribution towards extended family left behind the Iron Curtain.

Umrysch started his political endeavours fairly early. He was an inaugural member of the Australian branch of the Antibolshevik Nations Bloc when it formed in Melbourne in 1953 and was chairman of the executive committee:

> *A first conference took place on March 6, 1953, in Melbourne, at which the Australian branch of the A.B.N. was founded. Representatives of Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Cossackia, Slovakia, Hungary, Byelorussia and Ukraine took part in the conference. The following persons formed the executive committee: chairman — Dr. Umrysh (Ukraine); members — Dr. G. Todoroff (Bulgaria); Mr. A. Bagun-Berzins (Latvia); Mr. S. Rutenfelds (Latvia); Mr. A. Kolodko (Byelorussia); Mr. Z. Urmeesy (Hungary); Mr. S. Gornal (Slovakia); control commission — Mr. Wiliunas (Lithuania); Mr. Doebrenty (Hungary).* [2]

The Central Committee of the ABN met in Munich and apparently they had a "Military Commission" which may be the reason for some of the international scrutiny.

In 1954 Umrysch wrote "An Open Letter to Dr Evatt[3] from a New Australian" as President of the Antibolshevik Nations Friendship Society in Australia. He writes:

> *Although I am a poor migrant, as all migrants are, nevertheless I am proud, as hundreds and thousands of us are proud, to be a political migrant. We are spokesmen for our fellow countrymen, who are not able to raise their voices in defence of justice and truth, being denied the right to self-expression behind the Iron Curtain.* [4]

In this letter Umrysch chastises Evatt's inaction as former President of the UN Assembly with regard to the "annihilation" of churches and deportation of millions to concentration camps in the Soviet territories:

> *As a former President of U.N. Assembly you have had ample opportunity to demonstrate your particular interest in the justice and rights of many individuals who suffered injustice during your term and after. …*
>
> *Did you ever during your term as a President of U.N. Assembly ask Mr. Molotov or Vishinski about Katyn, where 8,000 Polish soldiers were slaughtered to death. After all these Polish chaps fought not only for Poland but for England and Australia as well, and in addition at the time when Molotov and Ribbentrop were on friendly terms. Australians of Polish descent would be interested to know what kind of protest you raised in order to defend the principle of pure justice.* [5]

In 1968 Umrysch, writing as secretary, had an article in "Our Front" which was a bi-lingual Ukrainian periodical published by the Ukrainian Antibolshevik League of Melbourne and Canberra. His letter was addressed to the International Conference of the United Nations on Human Rights, and he wrote as a citizen of Australia representing the Ukrainian Liberation Movement and the Ukrainian Antibolshevik League of Australia:

> *We being citizens of Australia and representing-Ukrainian Liberation Movement and Ukrainian Antibolshevik League in Australia, convey our sincerest greetings to this Honourable Assembly in the defence of Human Rights in the World. Being originally from Ukraine we draw the attention of the Honourable to the fact that the Ukrainian SSR Pseudo-Government and judiciary authorities disregard Human Rights and they pretend to promote by being signatory to the Human Rights convention. …*
>
> *We ask Australian Delegation to demand from Ukrainian SSR in the name of Human Rights to set free Yuriy Shukhevych as the most flagrant instance of violation of Human Rights in Ukrainian SSR.* [6]

The life of Dr Umrysch has not been recorded in local history, though some remember him as being somewhat haphazard in his office paperwork but compassionate in his attention to his patients and in issuing medical certificates.

By 1972 he was working from 147 Main Road West and later at 394 Main Road West. He developed health problems and people remember him using a walking frame when going shopping. George Umrysch was in the A.C.T. in 1977 and back in Newmarket in the 1980s where Irene Anne Umrysch was working as an estate agent.

Dr Bohdan Umrysch died on 18 June 2009 and was buried at Fawkner Memorial Park. Irena Umrysch may have celebrated her 100th birthday at Kalyna Care, St Albans, in 2019.

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[1] Vladimir Lezak Borin *The Uprooted Survive* 1959.

[2] ABN Correspondence, Monthly Bulletin of the Anti-bolshevik Bloc of Nations, Vol. 4, No. 1/2, Jan/Feb 1953.

[3] Evatt was leader of the Australian Labor Party and Leader of the Opposition (1951-1960), Attorney General and Minister for External Affairs (1941-1949), and a judge of the High Court of Australia (1930 -1940). It's said the Petrov Affair lost him the 1954 election.

[4] The New Times, Vol. 20, No. 20; Melbourne 22 October 1954.

[5] As above

[6] Ukrainian Antibolshevik Bloc of Australia and New Zealand, Our Front Political Journal No. 2, Year 1 May-June 1968, p18.

JOHN BROOK

Dr John Christopher Michael Brook's original family name was probably Volodarsky, which is of Jewish and White Russian or Ukrainian origin. Dr Brook was linked to the medical practice of the Wise & McCullagh partnership in Sunshine and St Albans. Dr Daniel Wise (q.v.) may have been a mentor for several young Jewish doctors who worked in St Albans during the 1950s. Their St Albans' consulting rooms were on the corner of Glendenning Street and Main Road West, next to Kerr the Chemist.

Little is known about Dr Brook's background or his work history in St Albans despite his having worked locally for some fifteen years. He started working from the Main Road West clinic, having succeeded to the medical practice of Dr Richard McCullagh in early 1956 after Dr Wise passed away unexpectedly.[1]

At one stage Dr Brook started promoting the formation of a local youth group and younger patients were asked to volunteer for this, but nothing permanent appears to have resulted.

The electoral roll listings show that Dr Brook was at 103 Main Road West between 1960 and 1970. When he came in 1956 the population would have been 5,000 and when he left it was about 20,000 which was because of the migration settlement after the war.

In 1972 Dr Brook's residence was in Box Court, Bentleigh, with Frances Mary, who may have been his wife. Dr Brooks died in East Bentleigh on 20 April 1974 at age 47 years, quite a young age. The death registration papers indicate his father was Maurice Volodarsky.

Dr Brook's mother was probably Anna Norah Rosen who was born in 1896 in Smyrna, Izmir, Turkey. She married Maurice Volodarsky.

The National Archives of Australia records show that Anna Norah Volodarsky arrived in Melbourne on 6 March 1951 as a stateless person. With her was Evelyn Cassandra Volodarsky, a stateless person of White Russian heritage born on 13 January 1929, who was possibly her daughter. Neither Maurice nor John are included in these NAA listings. Evelyn had singing talents and in the early 1950s was featured as a "new-Australian" vocalist on the popular 3KZ radio program Swallow's Parade.[2]

Maurice Volodarsky was born in Kremenchuk, Poltava, Ukraine, and died in Darwin on 19 January 1957. His occupation was listed as an engineer and John Christopher Michael Brook was listed as being his son.

In 1958 Anna Nora Volodarsky was residing at Goodrich Street, Bentleigh, and was working as a teacher. She died in Oakleigh on 21 September 1959 at age 63.

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[1] Argus 11 February 1956 p5
[2] Age 28 February 1952 p1

KARL ANDERMANN

Dr Karl Andermann commenced practice in 1952 in partnership with Dr Daniel Wise of Sunshine.

Andermann was born on 14 May 1913, was of Jewish background from Berlin, and possibly emigrated in the 1930s. He qualified as a doctor from Florence University circa 1938, and was working as a doctor in India during the 1940s. He married Liv Emilie Lieberman in 1940 before moving to Australia. He repeated his medical studies at the Queensland University in 1951 with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. He was registered as a medical practitioner on 12 February 1952.[1]

He and his wife must have moved fairly quickly to Victoria as Andermann was in St Albans in May 1952.[2] He might have been hoping for a routine existence, but this was disturbed at the end of the year when he and Mrs Andermann were injured when their car was hit by a truck.[3] This must have been an unusual event as locals of that era assert there were few cars in the district.

The Andermanns' stay in St Albans was about one year at most, as in April 1953 Dr Karl was appointed as Deputy Superintendent of the Mental Hospital and Receiving House at Ballarat.[4] In 1954 he was listed as the Medical Officer of the Mental Hygiene Branch of the Department of Health and his work and residential address was at the Mental Hospital at Learmonth, Ballarat.[5]

In June 1961 Karl Andermann attended an International Conference on EEG and Human Psychopharmacology, in conjunction with the World Congress of Psychiatry, at Montreal Canada. He was there as an Australian representative but it might have been a stepping stone into the United States. That same year he was a member of staff in the Department of Experimental Psychiatry at Hillside Hospital, Glen Oaks, Long Island, New York. During the 1960s he was still listed in the Australian Register of Medical Practitioners with his work location being New York. In 1966 he is listed as the Supervising Psychiatrist, Children's Unit, Creedmoor State Hospital, Queens Village, New York, and was a Member of the New York Academy of Sciences. He seems to have specialized in the disorders of young children and published a number of articles through medical journals during the 1960s.

Dr Karl Andermann died in July 1969 at age 56 years, so he is another of the doctors of St Albans who died at a fairly young age.

Little is known about his wife, Liv Emilie C Lieberman. She was born on 7 May 1914 in Berlin to Hans E Lieberman and Margaretha Becker. She died at age 75 years on 18 November 1989, in Jamaica, Queens County, New York.

[1] The Handbook of the University of Queensland, Brisbane 1953.

[2] Sunshine Advocate 16 May 1952 p1

[3] Sunshine Advocate 12 December 1952 p11

[4] Victorian Government Gazette 268, 29 April 1953 p1702

[5] Victorian Government Gazette 587, 23 June 1954 p4361

EDWARD SEMINI

Edward Semini and his family were from Malta and came to St Albans about 1950. Edward was rather unusual as a migrant settling in the district. Whereas most other new settlers from the early 1950s arrived with a couple of suitcases and with very few other possessions, he brought his hand-crafted bungalow with him on the boat. Desperation or ingenuity? Probably both, but isn't that a wonderful example of make-do determination that characterized many of the post WW2 migrants coming to St Albans.

Edward Semini first came to Australia in May 1948. He was in his early 30s, a fitter by trade, and he was looking for a home for his young family who were to follow. They were looking to migrate because very little work was available in Malta. He was in NSW and stayed about seven months looking for accommodation around Sydney, but could not find anything suitable for his wife and two children. The best he could find was "a dreary room in Wooloomooloo, Sydney, at £2 a week" so he returned to Malta and built a prefabricated home:

> *Materials were easier to get there so with the help of two friends he built a house with a bedroom, kitchen and bath-room, shipping it on the Asturias and came back with it. It is of wood with an iron roof and the timber of the packing case will be used for the floor. It cost him £100 to build, and £5 to bring here.* [6]

The prefabricated structure was a one-ton collapsible bungalow made by himself out of weatherboard and corrugated iron and packed into a crate 13 feet long and 4 feet square.

He came back to Australia with his house and disembarked at Melbourne in September 1950. He had been sponsored for work by a firm in Sunshine and his plan was to live in his prefrab bungalow while he built a big concrete home for his family – the Sunshine firm had promised to supply the cement and stone.[7]

Nothing is ever simple, and the prefab home was held by Customs pending clearance. The building was held because, according to Customs officials, Semini had no documents to indicate its origin or value and therefore Customs agents had to inspect it and assess its value. Semini settled into a boarding house in Fitzroy and grappled with regulations.

The building inspector for Braybrook Shire doubted whether he could issue a building permit

[6] Herald 29 September 1950 p5

[7] Age 30 September 1950 p4

for the structure because it was too small. Their regulations required that a prefab should have at least two rooms of 140 square feet floor area each apart from kitchen, bathroom and laundry. The kitchen had to be at least 120 square feet, and the whole house 750 square feet. Walls had to be at least 8 feet and 6 inches high.[1]

Semini bought a block of land in Millawa Avenue near Station Avenue, St Albans. Keilor shire council advised that he would have to get a permit to assemble the structure if the plans were satisfactory, but they would have to be passed before occupation could be authorized; however, he could use it as a tool shed.[2] Thankfully, common sense prevailed:

> *Some of the troubles of the 33-year-old Maltese migrant, Edward Semini, concerning the prefabricated home he brought from Malta are over. It was cleared by Customs yesterday. The small crated house will be transported this morning from the railway goods sheds at Montague to Mr. Semini's newly acquired block of land at St Albans. Customs authorities had retained possession of the home since it arrived from Malta with Mr. Semini in the Asturius on September 24. There is still no guarantee that Keilor shire council will authorise Mr. Semini to erect the building for residential purposes so that he might be near his job at Sunshine. He is at present living at a Fitzroy boarding house. He hopes to live in the prefabricated home until he can build a concrete home on the site. Then he would bring his family here, he said.* [3]

It might have taken Semini a couple of years to build his permanent home of stone and concrete, as it appears that his wife Carmela and their two children joined him in October 1952. Their son Richard, born in 1939, started at the local primary school in 1952 and went to work in 1954. He might have liked the open spaces of St Albans at the time as he had been looking forward to the family getting a cow.

The family's settlement experience was brightened momentarily when in 1953 Edward won a £5 consolation prize in the Kraft Recipe Contest.[4] Was it his wife's recipe?

Their daughter's name is missing from the St Albans Primary School register, so she might have attended the Sacred Heart primary school. Jimmy Knowles remembers Antoinette Semini being a member of the tennis club in the 1950s and marrying Henry Blum.

Carmela Semini died quite young, about 50 years of age, in December 1967. Her remains were buried at Keilor.

Edward Semini died at age 86 in March 2005 and was buried at Keilor in the same grave as Carmela. His death notice refers to him most politely as a "retired gentleman".

[1] Herald 29 September 1950 p5
[2] Age 10 October 1950 p2
[3] Age 12 October 1950 p7
[4] Herald 11 December 1953 p13

VALENTYNA HORIACZKO

Valentyna and Sergiusz Horiaczko migrated to Australia in 1949 when Valentyna was aged 44 and Sergjusz was 53. They were of German and Ukrainian heritage and had three grown-up children: two sons, and a daughter who was in the USA. They were an older couple, relatively speaking, as they were born around the turn of the century, compared to many other arrivals who were from the 1920s. They made their new home in a small bungalow near the railway station.

Sergiusz was a process worker who later became a foreman at Nettlefolds in Albion.

In August 1954 Valentyna won first prize in the Tattersall's £10,000 Cash Consultation. This must have been particularly delightful as it was the first ticket she had bought since Tatts came to Melbourne. The result was published in the Argus and both the Herald and the Age printed articles with photos. For the Herald it was front page news:

> *"MEIN GOTT!" shouted Mrs Valentyne Horiaczko, in a muddy unmade street in St Albans, when The Herald told her she had won £10,000 in Tatts today. She tried to speak in English, then lapsed into her native German as she attempted to confirm that her ticket "Valentyne" had really won. She was on the way home to her small weatherboard cottage in Marsden Street — a street not even on the map — after buying a stringbag full of groceries. She took her scarf off, waved it, waved her string bag, then dropped them all in her excitement. "Wonderful, ach wonderful," she gasped. She and her husband – now working at a screw factory in Albion – came from Hanover three years ago as migrants.*[5]

Valentyna died in April 1969 at St Albans at age 64. Sergiusz died in August 1982 at age 86.

Valentyna Horiaczko and her bungalow 1954

[5] Herald 20 August 1954 p1

ERIC ROY ALAN

Eric Roy Alan was of Polish-German ancestry who came to St Albans during the 1950s and established the popular bicycle shop in Alfrieda Street. St Albans Cycle & Sports Store was the go-to place for all your cycling needs. That's also where Kuc the watchmaker and jeweller was working for years before branching out on his own.

Eric's name at birth was Erich Adalbert Polotzek. He was born on 21 April 1924 in Stolarzowice, Tarnowskie Gory, Silesia, Poland. His parents were Theophil Poloczek and Zofia Sorychta – their children included Paulina Maria (1920), Erich Adalbert (1924), Johannes Ferdinand (1930), and Adolf.

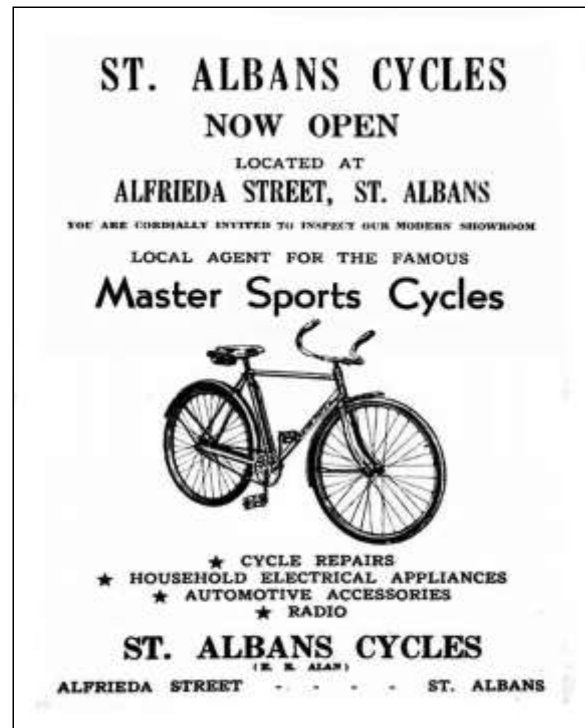
Eric's life in Poland is not documented, but one can speculate that as a teenager he was caught up in the war and escaped to the west, because he ended up in Sherborne, England, where he worked as a motor mechanic. This is probably where he Anglicized his name to Eric Roy Alan. He left from London in July 1950 as an unaccompanied 26-year-old. He arrived in Melbourne Australia per Strathaird on 10 August 1950. His work destination was Rootes Ltd of Fishermans Bend, Port Melbourne, which was assembling the British Hillman Minx vehicles.

Eric moved to St Albans in the early 1950s and established his cycle business in mid 1954, so he was one of the early migrant entrepreneurs in the district:

> *St Albans Cycles opening 1st June. Located at Alfrieda Street, St Albans. You are cordially invited to inspect our modern showroom. Local agent for the famous Master Sports Cycles. Cycle repairs. Household electrical appliances. Automotive accessories. Radio. St Albans Cycles (E. R. Alan) Alfrieda Street St Albans.* [1]

Eric Alan married Helen Barbara June Osterman, who was Australian by birth, having been born in Melbourne on 6 June 1935. Her parents were Bror Sven Osterman (1904-1993) and Rosalyeen Alvina Aylett (1911-1965). Bror Sven Osterman's family was from Finland and Rosalyeen Aylett's family was from England.

Eric and Helen had at least two sons but details are not available in the genealogical records. Helen was already an Australian citizen, and Eric applied for naturalization under the Nationality and Citizenship Act in 1955.[2]



Evelyn Mullenger recalls that Eric Alan served for many years on Keilor Council, including a stint as the Mayor of Keilor:

> *People like Eric Alan were well known. Eric ran the bike shop in Alfrieda Street. I don't know a lot of his background except that he spoke the languages; he spoke English very well when a lot of other people were still struggling to learn English. Eric had a mechanic fixing bikes, because bikes were a major form of transport for people. They took their timber home on their bikes, rode the bikes to the station; the bikes were their lifeline for many people who were living a long way from the station. So many migrants were needing their bikes and needing them working, not having any sheds or means of fixing them. I suppose he established a very big business in Alfrieda Street which was basically a bicycle store. He became a councillor, and built the big house on the corner of McIvor Road and Alfrieda Street.*

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[1] Sunshine Advocate 28 May 1954
[2] Argus 7 February 1955 p15

Helen Alan established a gift shop in Main Road West just past the railway line, selling nice vases and ceramics. It was just a small concern and she worked there on her own.

In 1961 Alan was featured in a Herald and Weekly Times' article about boxing promoters, the implication being that he was the local promoter of a German boxer who was the reigning German Federation Champion, matched to fight at Festival Hall with one of Dick Lean's squad, a recognised boxing promoter of the time. Alan would obtain tickets for bouts at Festival Hall and arrange for some of his St Albans business colleagues to join him ringside.

Eric Alan (L) with boxer Willi and Dick Lean (R)

The 1960s were a time of change in local politics when Keilor was proclaimed a City, and the rapidly expanding populace of St Albans wanted more local involvement:

> *In 1961 when the Shire of Keilor was being proclaimed a city, the St Albans Ratepayers and Owners Association objected because they thought St Albans deserved a better deal. Their proposal was that the municipal offices should be moved to St Albans … so that it would be more accessible to where the majority of residents were living. One of the problems for St Albans was that when it came for election many St Albans people found that they had not been registered on the electoral role and thus were not eligible to vote. Keilor shire had qualified to become a city because its population had grown from 18,800 in 1957 to more than 30,000 by the end of 1960 and a lot of this growth had been around St Albans. St Albans had 90 shops to Keilor's four, a direct rail link to the city, four garages to Keilor's one, five schools to none, and a population of 17,000 compared to Keilor's 7,000.* [1]

Eric Alan was one of the local business leaders who rose to the challenge by nominating for council and was elected to Keilor Council in 1965. He was appointed Mayor and filled that position during 1968-69. By 1970 Eric and Helen were Alan living at 72 Alfrieda Street, which is the corner of McIvor Road. (This property was later bought by the Puli family and they used it for their real estate office.) Eric was appointed as a Justice of the Peace in 1966[2] but may not have continued long in this jurisdiction as he was removed from the listing in 1970.[3] It is not known why this occurred.

In 1975 the State Government sacked Keilor Council and appointed Mr Kevin Holland as the administrator to run the council's affairs.[4] In 1976 Alan achieved publicity in the Age in a personal protest about the sacking of council.

Eric Alan in Mayoral regalia 1968 © Brimbank Council

Eric Alan moved to Drysdale by 1977 and was still there in 1980 at Bluff Road, St Leonards. His occupation is listed as a merchant and he was managing a jewellery shop in Geelong. Eric and Helen may have separated as there is no trace of Helen on the electoral roll there.

In 1980 Helen Barbara Alan was living in Kenmore, Queensland, and working as a sales representative, and there is no trace of Eric on the electoral roll there.

Eric Roy Alan died at age 70 years at Coolangatta, Queensland, on 18 January 1995, and was buried at the Tweed Heads Lawn Cemetery, Tweed Shire, New South Wales.

Helen Barbara June Alan nee Osterman died at the age of 81 years on 1 March 2017 at Macleay Island, Queensland, Australia.

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[1] Age 7 April 1961. The population figures for St Albans may be somewhat overstated.

[2] Victorian Government Gazette No. 11, 9 February 1966, p550.

[3] Victorian Government Gazette No. 74, 5 August 1970, p2711.

[4] The state government sacked the council in July 1975, making it the first council to be axed in Victoria. Kevin Holland was appointed to run the city, which he did for the next five years until new elections were held in August 1980.

JOHANNES FERDINAND POLOTZEK

Johannes Ferdinand Polotzek was born on 24 May 1930 in Stolarzowice, Poland, and was of German nationality. He left Genoa, Italy, arriving at Melbourne on 24 January 1959. His destination was 40 Alfrieda Street, St Albans, which was the home of his brother, Eric Roy Alan (q.v.), who had migrated from England in 1950.

Johannes Polotzek, who became known as John, might have come as a tourist, but he stayed for the rest of his life in St Albans.

John eventually built his weatherboard home in Collins Street, St Albans, just one street away from his brother's abode. He was a single man and started to attend some of the local dances, at first with his brother Eric and sister-in-law Helen, as it was an opportunity to develop some companionship. He married Nyoli Sofia, though when this occurred is not known. They may have had a son.

Johannes and Nyoli became Australian citizens in the 1980s and John was appointed as a storeman with the public service (aviation) also in the 1980s. Little is known of their life in the district, so they are another family about whom there is not much recorded and little reported.

In 2001 Johannes was interviewed by a local paper. He was aged 81 years at the time and was still optimistic:

> *John Polotzek has been living on an old-age pension for 20 years and says it's getting harder and harder to get by.*
>
> *"I manage better than others because I own my own house but everything is getting more expensive, there is no doubt," Mr Polotzek said.*
>
> *The 81-year-old has been living in St Albans for more than 50 years and believes people struggling on welfare are attracted to the area because of its lower living costs.*
>
> *"The rent is cheaper and the Vietnamese shops mean you can eat for cheaper," he said. "There are a lot of people who are unemployed and on disability pensions. You see them around and think 'why aren't you at work?' "*
>
> *Mr Polotzek said there was a large population of new Australians and young families who would also get government assistance. "It was always a European area, but then all our children grew up and moved away," he said.*
>
> *"St Albans was dying but the Asians have brought it back to life, but there are still a lot of people here who struggle to get by."* [1]

John Polotzek of St Albans, a resident for 55 years, passed away in July 2016 and was buried at Mt Macedon.

Helen & Otto Czernik 1950s © O Czernik

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[1] http://www.news.com.au/national/you-see-so-many-struggling-to-get-by/story-e6frfkp9-1226025105355