

1952 – Aleksander and Olga Kukiel



Aleksander Kukiel was born in Ralowce, Poland 9 March 1924. He had been working as a farm labourer in his own country. He was taken as a prisoner by German soldiers to Germany in 1943 for forced labour and while in Germany was forced to make shoes and boots for Germany soldiers. Nik (Aleksander's son) remembers the story of Aleksander talking about the time he brought home shoes to his mother (Olga). In 1945 Aleksander at age 19 was a single man in the American zone registered on the list of Foreigners and German Persecutees. He met and married Olga about 1945.

Olga Kukiel was born in Poland in Czerniaty in August 1923; her maiden name is Laszuk. Olga had a younger brother Fyedia (George) who was 7 years younger than her. In 1943 Olga and her brother Fyedia (George) were taken from their parents and taken to Germany. While in Germany Olga and Fyedia (George) were forced to work in a factory where the factory was bombed. Nik (Olga's second child) remembers the story Olga told the family how she searched and searched for her brother in the rubble, her only family member, and how relieved she was when she found him. This was around 1943 when Olga was 21 and Fyedia (George) 13.



Olga and Aleksander met in Germany and after marriage she gave birth to two sons while in Germany: Ivan was born in July 1947 in Düsseldorf, Hamburg, and Nikolaj was born in January 1949 in Hanover. After the war, Olga and Aleksander decided to emigrate overseas as they did not want to return to their old home-lands because they were occupied by the Soviet Dictatorship. In 1950 the family was in Naples awaiting transport to Australia.



The family was listed as being of White Russian (Belarus) nationality; on arrival in Australia, they were listed as Polish-Byelorussian. Their stated Australian connection was a Polish friend or relative named Jozef Wiesztort who had settled at the Nika Lapko¹ station in Morgan South Australia. Jozef and Maria Wiesztort were Poles who had emigrated to South Australia in 1949. Jozef was a farmer and stayed permanently in SA.

The Kukiels arrived in Victoria in April 1950 on the USAT General Black III. Aleksander was allocated work with the Victorian Railways at Spotswood where he was employed as a metal worker as well as railway maintenance, drove a front-end loader (non-hydraulic powered by cables) as well as working with explosives.

Olga and the boys were sent to the Department of Immigration Holding Centre at Mildura, so the family were separated after arrival. In late 1951 they were at Spotwood. In mid-1952 they had settled at 41 Henry Street near the corner of Arthur Street; their near neighbours were the Sikorskis² and across the Arthur Street intersection were the Goralskis³ who came a bit later.

The Kukiel's third child and only daughter was Zoya (Joy), who was born in Melbourne. She became a typist and was a bridesmaid at Luba Szwed's wedding.

Olga's brother, Fyedia (George) Laszuk, was with Michal Szwed (unsure if they met on the ship or were friends from their original village) in Germany. Fyedia emigrated to England first, then with the support of Aleksander and Olga he later emigrated to Australia. There were more family connections as Aleksander and Olga were godparents to a couple of the Szwed children.

Olga Kukiel died in February 1999 at the age of 75 and was buried at Fawkner Memorial Park.

Aleksander Kukiel died in February 2001 at age 76 and was buried at Fawkner Memorial Park.

Ivan Kukiel married Robyn Lynette in 1970 and they lived in Canterbury. Ivan died in 2019 at age 73 years.

¹ Nikalapko was a sheep station along the banks of the Murray River near Cadell, SA.

² Franciszek and Magdalena Sikorski were at 39 Henry Street.

³ Henry and Emila Goralski were at 41 Arthur Street.



Olga and Ivan Kukiel, Henry Street



Kukiel & Szwed families celebrating



Aleksander and Olga Kukiel 1950s



Nik Kukiel in front of town's water tanks 1950s

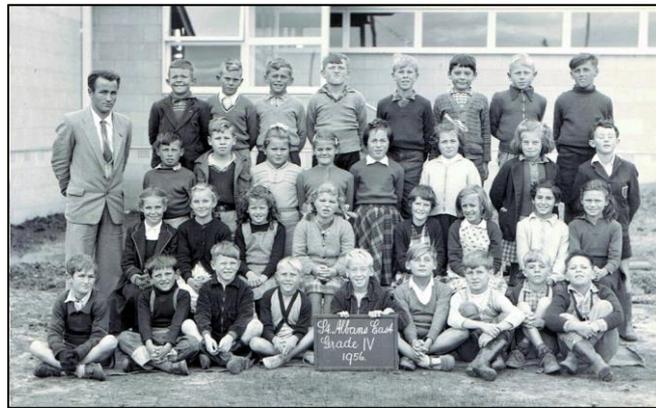


Ivan & Nik Kukiel, Henry Street 1950s

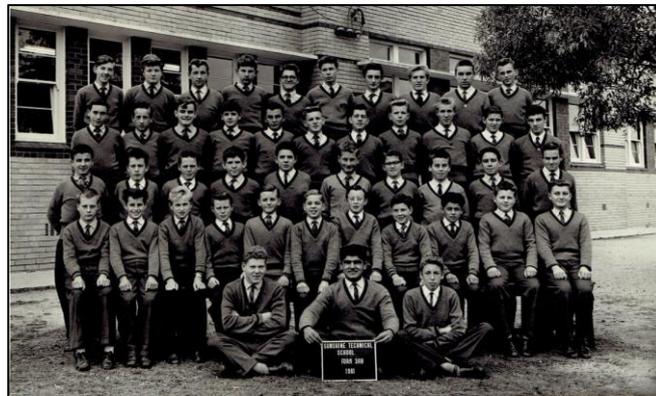




St Albans Primary School Grade 1B 1953



Grade 4 St Albans East 1956



Ivan Kukiel (back right) Sunshine Tech 1961



Aleksander Kukiel and his new car