

IAN McDONALD MILL : GEOGRAPHY TEACHER 1958 - 1960



Ian McDonald Mill was born in 1922 in Avoca Victoria. His parents were Alexander George Mill (1898-1941) and Grace Tynan (1890 - 1988). The Mill ancestry goes back to 1752 in Thurso, Caithness, Scotland. Jas Mill emigrated to Victoria in 1870 at age 22 and worked as a carpenter.

Alexander George Mill married Grace Tynan in 1921. She was born in Kamarooka Victoria in 1890 to William John Tynan and Alice Jane Dennis. William Tybnan ws born in 1858 Liverpool, England, United Kingdom. Alice Dennis was born in 1867 in Raywood, Victoria, Australia.

Ian McDonald Mill had three brothers: Alexander James (1923-1995), Alan William (1924-2004), and Keith Graeme((1927-2021).

Ian McDonald Mill enlisted in 1941 as a 19 year old. He had finished his leaving certificate and had obtained honours in History and English. He was single and working as a clerk. He served with the CMF 1941/42 and with the 2/4th Australian Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers overseas in New Guinea 1942/44 and Borneo 1945/46. He advanced his clerical skills by studying shorthand and typing. He was courtmartialed and fined for missing morning parades and malaria medication. He was awarded the ASM medal and RAS Badge for his service to his country.

After being discharged from war service, Ian Mill trained as a secondary teacher. In 1948 he married Marie Louise Antoinette Phillips, who was also a teacher. In 1949 they were based in Caulfield West and Kew before moving to Sunbury in 1954. In 1955 they moved to Bardsley Street, Sunshine, and the City of Sunshine became their base in the 1970s.

From 1958 to 1960, both Ian and Marie Mill were teaching at St Albans High School. He had obtained a B.A. and Dip.Ed. qualifications. In 1959 he was Form Teacher of 2A and House Master for Wattle.



Staff of St Albans High 1959, Mill in back row second from left.

Vanda Viti, one of the inaugural students at St Albans High School, remembered him fondly:

"Mr Mill was great. How wonderful of him to spend his Saturdays taking our softball team to play in competitions around Melbourne. He was a good Geography teacher too. I still know how to read a weather map: the cold fronts, the warm fronts, the highs and lows."

During the 1960s, Ian and Marie were teaching in country areas. In 1963 they were in Robinvale (Mallee) and in 1968 they were in Kyabram. In 1972 they returned to Sunshine and were living in The Esplanade at Maidstone. He was now a Principal and she was a Teacher.



The 1970s revealed new leadership opportunities for Ian Mill as he became involved in municipal affairs and community action. During the 1970s he was very active as a councillor for the River Ward at Sunshine Council and was secretary of the council caucus. He was elected Mayor 1975 and 1983. He became one of the main leaders of the Western Region Council for Social Development (WRCSD) that was part of the Australian Assistance Plan established after Gough Whitlam and the Australian Labor Party was elected in 1972. Mill had connections with the Communist Party, the Labor Party, local government representatives, and various community and ethnic networks in the region:

"Mayor of Sunshine Council, Ian Mill, a member of the communist party, became president of the RCSD – and a strong advocate for the AAP. Unlike most other

RCSDs, especially those outside of inner urban areas, the Western RCSD also had strong representation from both sides of politics, the trade union movement, and ethnic communities."

The WRCSD provided funding for the creation of the St Albans Community Centre. Local people with links to the WRCSD at the time included Kamal Dutta, Georgina Lialios, Howard Brown, George Seitz, and Joe Ribarow. Sunshine Council also supported the development of the Community Health Centre and local federal member Jim Cairns (Deputy Prime Minister) worked hard to establish a long-promised local hospital, not to mention the Victoria University.

In 1985 Ian Mill received the OAM in The Queen's Birthday 1985 Honours List for Service to the Community. He was also a Justice of the Peace. His last term as Mayor of Sunshine was in 1989. Ian and Marie Mill later retired to Maryborough.

Ian McDonald Mill died in 2008 at age 86 and was buried at Springvale, Greater Dandenong City, Victoria.

Marie Louise Antoinette Mill nee Phillips died in 2021 at age 95.

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Marie and Ian Mill in retirement in Maryborough.

Article written by Joe Ribarow
School photos from Nick Szwed archives.