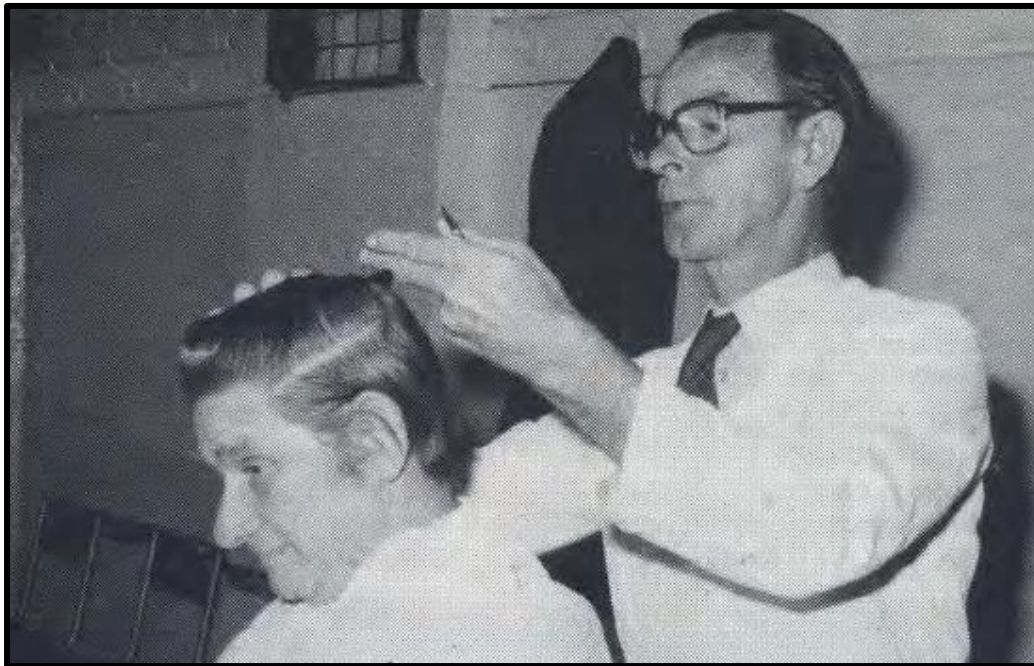


IMAGES OF YALLOURN

THE BARBER OF YALLOURN - MR WALTER (WALLY) LACEY



This photograph will bring back many pleasant memories about life and times in Yallourn. The picture shows Mr Wally Lacey, a most popular barber in the town for some 40 years, cutting Ray Cordell's hair.

The photograph was taken in 1981, not long before Mr Lacey closed his shop in Yallourn and relocated to new premises in Rutherglen Road in Newborough. Those who remember Mr Lacey will recall his great love for the outdoors and the game of chess (which is mentioned in the article below):

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/sites/default/files/pdfs/1981%20SEC%20Contact%20%207%20July.pdf>

VERONICA LACEY LOOKS BACK

Wally's daughter, Veronica, has kindly assisted this website article by forwarding information about her family and also her recollections regarding growing up in Yallourn. Veronica was born in December 1945 at the Yallourn Hospital; and is one of seven children born to Wally and his wife Susannah. Veronica's memories add another colourful chapter to the social history of Yallourn.

Note: All members of the Lacey family were actively involved in the various organizations of the town; and a list of website links has been added, at the conclusion of the article, to give younger readers an idea of the cultural and sporting life of Yallourn in earlier times.

THE EARLY YEARS OF WALTER LACEY

Walter Lacey was born in 1915 on a farm at Haddon (Ballarat). At the age of 14 his father, a mine manager, died whilst working in Malaya. Due to the widespread hardship caused by the Great Depression, Wally, like so many other young children, during those austere years, was forced to leave school and seek employment.

Despite the challenging times and the scarcity of work, Wally was fortunate to undertake and complete an apprenticeship in hairdressing in Ballarat. Little did he know, at that time, that it was the beginning of his career as a hairdresser, which would last for more than half a century.

On completion of his training, Wally set up a business in the south-western Victorian town of Ararat and he worked there for seven years. His next stop 'along the way' was at the Flinders Naval Base (later to be renamed HMAS Cerberus) where he honed his 'short back and sides' skills on hundreds of men (mainly sailors) involved in Naval duties.

WALLY LACEY ARRIVES IN YALLOURN

Veronica stated that Wally arrived in Yallourn during 1940; and worked initially, as a barber, for Mr. O'Shannasey. The shop was located on the upstairs floor of the building situated on the corner of Broadway and Centreway.

With so many men living in the camps at Yallourn, Wally was always busy; and he made many new friends and learnt much about life in Europe when speaking with the men who came into the O'Shannasey's hairdressers. It is no secret that some amazing topics are breached, via the barber's chair, and Wally's days would have been far from boring.

A clever man once wrote....

"Therapy is expensive ...get a haircut instead!"

Indeed...Wally was a good listener and he learnt a lot via the views and anecdotes of his customers. More than that, Wally was a man who also offered 'free of charge' wise counsel and timely advice to many.

When Mr O' Shannasey retired, Wally took over the business. Veronica believes that Mr Ivan Larsen, a highly respected piano teacher, occupied the room next door to Wally in those early days of Yallourn.

WALLY ENLISTS FOR WAR TIME DUTY

With the outbreak of World War: II, Wally (Service No: V505282) enlisted at Yallourn and served as a member of the 6th Field Ambulance between 1942 and 1945. He saw action in New Guinea and New Britain; and the history of 2/6th Field Ambulance can be read at the following link to the Australian War Memorial: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U57441>

Following the cessation of hostilities, Wally was discharged on November 13th 1945 and he 'came home' to Yallourn and set out to rebuild his life. Like Bill Fleming (see: <http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/32068>) and thousands of other returned war veterans, Wally was resolute in the way that he 'knuckled back down' to civilian life and work after the disturbing horrors on the front line.

A NEW SHOP IN CENTREWAY

In the period 1930-1950, the population of Yallourn virtually doubled and by 1956 had peaked (at approximately 5800+ residents). The consequent construction of more business premises in the town permitted Wally to move into his new shop in Centreway (between Arthur Oliver's Bike Shop and Pettigrew's Auto).

There will be some readers, who can remember Wally's shop in Centreway. There was a small lobby to the shop where cigarettes, tobacco, lighters, combs, hair oils (e.g. Brylcreem), razors, blades and other items (even chess sets) were on display and for sale.

The shop was also renowned for the vast display of pipes for sale from basic models to very expensive and exclusive brands. The work area featured wooden chairs against one of the shop walls where on a busy day, men and boys would sit and wait for service. While waiting, men chose to chat quietly while others opted to read a magazine (eg The Australasian Post) from Wally's well-worn collection.

Football was a common subject in the barber shop discussions; and fishing, rabbit shooting, gardening and, of course, the 'Gippsland' weather were also topics of conversation.

Who could forget the moment you were invited, by Wally, to step up to the large, heavy-duty, padded, barber's chair (with large footrests) for a haircut and face the large mirrors on the other side wall of the shop?

SOME LOCAL NAMES TO REMEMBER

With the increasing clientele in that post-war era, Wally employed a hairdresser named Eddie Elterman. Eddie had migrated from Estonia and was later to rent the ladies' hairdressing salon next door.

Eddie was just one of many to work for Wally. According to Veronica, her father's first apprentice in 1953 was a well-known Yallourn footballer, Max Kerr. (Max would later on establish his own successful business in Morwell.) Others who worked for Wally, at the Yallourn barber shop, were Jim Donnett, Barry O'Brien (apprentice), Ross Young (apprentice), Nino Manducci, Sebastian, Carmello, Chris Cartwright and several part-timers employees including Michael Strachov and Michael Andriczak.

WALLY'S LOVE OF OUTDOORS

As is well known, Wally enjoyed a wide range of team sports. He played cricket for St John's CC (1951 & 52) and was also a keen badminton and tennis player. Unfortunately, Wally's commercial commitments eventually held sway over his sporting interests and he stepped back from his Saturday involvement in local teams.

Wally was an adept rifle shooter; and Veronica remembers that her father often went rabbit hunting with his cherished fox terriers. (Wally's mother and Sue's brother were also keen rifle shooters). His other pastimes included surf fishing, along the Ninety Mile Beach and lapidary (ie collecting, cutting & polishing gemstones).

WALLY LACEY AND THE YALLOURN CHESS CLUB

Wally had a great passion for the game of chess; and some readers will remember the front window of Wally's barber shop where he displayed various chess sets.

He was also a driving force in fostering the advancement of the Yallourn Chess Club along with fellow Foundation Member Arthur Alexander; and for many years Wally was the Honorary Secretary of the club.

Wally was recognised as an accomplished chess player and winner of many trophies including Club Champion; he also played a pivotal role in generating interest and recruiting new members to the chess club.

Veronica remembers that, initially, intra-club competition nights were held at the Church of England Hall; before shortly thereafter relocating to the Eastern Hostel (where many New Australians resided).

Through the game of chess, Wally became firm friends with many of the workers at the Eastern Hostel (and nearby camp) and he was always keen to listen to their stories about their lives and families in Europe. The long-term club members of the Yallourn Chess Club included: Eddie Wagner, Peter Matwijew, Guenther Laengst and Bran Gompelman.

A younger star of the chessboard was John Szabo (of Yallourn Soccer Club fame). John was a player of phenomenal potential but his academic studies curtailed his time at the club.

The YCC held regular tournaments throughout Gippsland; and often members participated in tournaments organized by the Melbourne Victorian Chess Association...

"GIPPSLAND CHESS CLUB Leader Shield Presented... The annual presentation of the Leader Shield to the winning team in the Gippsland Chess League took place at Yallourn last week. This trophy, which has to be won three times in succession, has been won twice by Sale, Yallourn, and Traralgon, whilst Wonthaggi, Orbost and Thorpdale have each won it once. Players were the guests of the winning club, Yallourn, and there was a large attendance of enthusiasts from all centres." Source: 'Gippsland Times' October 17th 1949. Page: 6

One of the most memorable and highly anticipated events on the calendar of the Yallourn Chess Club was the visitation by International Masters and National Champions.

INSPIRING OTHERS TO THE CHESSBOARD

The famous French physicist, inventor and mathematician Blaise Pascal once said that... *"Chess is the gymnasium of the mind."*

Wally would have agreed wholeheartedly with that quote. Wally not only played chess but encouraged youngsters to 'take up' the game; and the Yallourn Chess Club conducted 'beginners' lessons and arranged a competition at Yallourn High School in the 1960's. There was also a chess club at the Yallourn Technical Junior School (Newborough Campus); and it is known that some of the boys purchased their chess sets at Wally's shop.

Furthermore, Wally believed that chess was a powerful agent for changing the lives of people; and one of the major projects of the YCC, was to travel to Coburg and organize a chess competition for the inmates of Pentridge Prison.

Such 'missions' not only underlined Wally's love of chess but indicated his concern for those less advantaged.

Note: When the Eastern Hostel closed, the Yallourn Chess Club moved to Ronald Reserve, Morwell to become the Morwell Chess Club; and in more recent years has been renamed the Latrobe Valley Chess Club.

1960 - THE YALLOURN FESTIVAL

A lasting memory of Veronica's was when her father and other chess club members entered a float in the 1960 Yallourn Festival. The creative float caused a deal of comment and with members' children dressed as chess pieces was a highlight of the parade. Veronica remembers that she and her sister Winifred (the only girls on the float) were bedecked to represent a black queen and a white Queen in that unforgettable town procession.

LEAVING YALLOURN AFTER FOUR DECADES

With the demise of the town in the late 1970's, local enterprises slowly 'ground to a halt' but, in his quiet and determined fashion, Wally kept the doors of his Yallourn shop open until 1981. Wally's determination to continue trading, despite the closure of other shops in the town, was admired by many locals.

Wally Lacey will always be remembered for 'keeping on keeping on' until the 'death knell' of Yallourn; and Veronica stated that the family was extremely proud that he was one of the last traders to leave Yallourn.

Wally transferred his business to Rutherglen Road in Newborough; and it was no surprise that many of his former customers chose to visit their 'friendly barber' from Yallourn for a trim, a shave or just a 'good -old fashioned chin-wag.'

THE PASSING OF WALLY LACEY

After a very short illness, Wally passed away in 1985 at the age of 70 years. His funeral was attended by many of his friends, former customers and, of course, members, of various sporting clubs of Yallourn. Wally had led a remarkable life and his 'final farewell' was a touching affair for the people of Yallourn. Wally is buried at the Yallourn Cemetery.

SUSANNAH (SUE) LACEY

Susannah (better known as Sue) was born in Mininera (near Ararat) where her father was a farmer and shearer. Her mode of transport to school was by horse and gig. She worked as a tailor in Ararat until she married Wally and, as mentioned above, moved to Yallourn in 1940. Sue was busy caring for three children - David, Rose and Gwen during the war; and the arrival of Veronica, Winifred, Julie and Robert in later years kept Sue on both 'day shift and night shift' on many occasions.

All the children attended Yallourn Primary School (4085) and Yallourn High School (except David, who attended Yallourn Technical School).

Sue Lacey was an energetic, thoughtful and generous person who gave all she could to her own family and the others in the town. Sue took a deep interest in the welfare of the schools and students and was, for some time, the Secretary of the Yallourn Technical School Mothers' Club as well as a member of the Yallourn High School Mothers' Club.

"An auxiliary of the Yallourn Technical School Mothers' Club was formed in Morwell at a meeting held in the Scout Hall last Thursday afternoon, when there were seventeen in attendance. Also present were the Principal of the School, Mr. E. R. Scott, and Mesdames S. Flanigan (president) and Mrs. S. Lacey (secretary) of the Yallourn Technical School Mothers' Club. Mr. Scott addressed the meeting on the need for an auxiliary in Morwell, and outlined its aims and objectives."
'Morwell Advertiser' June 5th 1954 Page: 1

LIFE LINE COUNSELLOR

Veronica was justly proud of her parents and still marvels at what her mother did to improve the lives of needy families throughout the district...

"My Mother taught Religious Instruction to two generations of children at Yallourn Primary School and other local schools. She had a heart as 'big as Texas' and was one of the 'inaugural' volunteer counsellors when Lifeline was formed in Morwell. I don't know how she did it but Mum never seemed to tire in aiding those in trouble and trying to find ways to enhance the lives of those on 'struggle street'..."

Sue was well-known for her little 1966 white Mini-Minor regularly transporting friends (or anyone needing a ride) 'here and there' around the town and district. Veronica has lasting memories about her mother's motor car and she wrote...

“Mum’s ‘white mini’ has become a family heirloom because, believe it or not, the car is still housed in the family garage. It has not been registered for some years but the family may eventually register the vehicle under the Club Permit Scheme for older special interest vehicles.”

THE LACEY CHILDREN – SCHOOL DAYS & SPORTS CLUBS

The whole-hearted participation of the Lacey family in the sporting clubs of Yallourn is a story in itself. The children’s enthusiasm for sports and games sprang from their parents’ love of outdoor life and their appreciation of the intrinsic value of community involvement.

As is well known, living in Yallourn presented all children with many options to ‘join-in, have fun and make new friends’ and the Lacey children embraced sports and games with unbridled enthusiasm. Veronica is grateful for the opportunities offered to her and the family in Yallourn...

“Our family was involved in tennis, badminton, netball, hockey, rifle shooting, cricket, softball, soccer and athletics and in later years, the Yallourn Little Theatre, Yallourn Film Society and ballet also captured our interest.

We were so lucky and our lives were fun-filled and lively times. There is no doubt mum and dad were kept very busy taking us to our various sporting venues and other activities and we owe them so much for helping us to have such happy lives growing up in Yallourn. At Yallourn High School, Keith Hollingsworth was the instigator of many students becoming involved in athletics and thanks to him, Gwen and Win excelled in shot putt and discus.”

As can be seen in some of the photographs on this website, Veronica was also a member of the Yallourn Athletic Club and enjoyed field events particularly javelin and discus.

Note: Younger readers may be surprised to see the long list of sporting and cultural organizations that existed in the town of Yallourn ...

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/groups>

SWIMMING AT YALLOURN

The 'Lacey's of Yallourn' loved swimming and all were members of the Yallourn Swimming Club (Yallourn Swimming and Life Saving Club as it was formerly called). Wally taught his seven children how to swim at a very early age in the 'old pool'; and later the children developed their strokes and techniques in the 'new' Olympic Pool. Veronica still possesses her Bronze Life Saving Medallion, which was awarded to her in 1958.

Like so many other children of the town, Veronica will never forget the excitement generated throughout the town with the opening of the 'modern' Yallourn Pool in November 1959. Photographs of that historic day can be found on this website.

A LOVE OF HOCKEY

Hockey was a sport of 'major importance' to the family with Veronica and Julie being long-time players with both collecting Club and Association Best and Fairest Awards along the way, as well as both becoming administrators and coaches in later years. Furthermore, both were selected for Latrobe Valley representative teams on many occasions and were also made Life Members of the Latrobe Valley Women's Hockey Association. Veronica was also awarded Life Membership of the Yallourn Hockey Club in 1978.

Winifred moved to Melbourne in her late teens for work, where she joined Kew Hockey Club and progressed to play in their A Grade team as 'goalie' which confirmed the high standard of hockey in the Latrobe Valley.

Robert Lacey played hockey for the re-formed Yallourn men's team and was selected to play for Latrobe Valley at Country Week. While Robert was an adept hockey player, his greatest love was football; and he was a member of Yallourn-Yallourn North Senior XVIII premiership team in 1993. The coach that season was Gary Young and the club enjoyed a 35-point victory over Trafalgar in the MGFL Grand Final. Robert was awarded Life Membership for his service to the YYNFNC; and it is known that he is still actively involved with the club.

BADMINTON

Veronica and Julie Lacey were also members of Yallourn Badminton Club. Veronica remembers that Arthur Brogan and Arthur Oliver were stalwarts of the club and deserved lasting credit for their contribution to the game of badminton in the town and beyond. Other well-known members of the YBC were: Peter Griffith, Jill Grant, Bob Bourke, Harold Park, John (Jumbo) James, Faye Whitmore,

Alan Robinson, Eric Warfe, Sandra Slatter, Loris Gore, Judith Humphrey, Dot and Brian Langdon, Dave Graham, Leon Melbourne, Joan Henderson and Steve Agius.

Veronica, as well as the two 'Arthurs', were awarded Life Membership of the YBC in 1983.

THE HISTORY OF THE LACEY HOME AT BOOLA CRESCENT

The family lived in several residences/rooms in Yallourn including 11 Maiden St and 23 Narracan Avenue (1941-1946) with regular moves required to accommodate the increasing number of family members. There was much excitement when the family was allocated a newly built home at 10 Boola Crescent into which they moved in 1946.

Wally landscaped the entire large block and it was a work of some splendour and a 'labour of love'; and the results were spectacular. Veronica added...

"... the front garden featured two rows of manicured pencil pines either side of a staircase and tiered rock-walled garden beds. The side and back gardens contained a vast orchard, vegetable garden, chook house (of course), shed & garage. "

It was well known, in and around Boola Crescent, that Wally and Sue were dedicated gardeners; and the family were regular exhibitors in the Yallourn Annual Horticultural Show (which was usually held in the Fire Brigade Hall).

One of the features of Wally's back yard was a full-length concrete 'cricket pitch' which ran the length of the clothesline. Wally loved cricket and all the children 'got into the swing of things' in the summer months with their own special brand of 'Test Cricket.' Looking back, Veronica remembers that the Boola Crescent cricket matches were terrific fun but 'pretty fierce affairs' in the 'old' days.

LEAVING BOOLA CRESCENT

For the majority of residents, the decision of the SECV, to 'bring the shutters down' on Yallourn, was very difficult to bear; and the relocation of families presented a plethora of challenges for the SECV and the residents

As the clock ticked down on the closure of Yallourn, the demolition and removal of the houses of Yallourn gathered pace; and, in 1980, the Lacey dwelling at 10 Boola Crescent, was lifted and transported to a new housing development at Yallourn Heights. In the interim, the family resided at 5 Northway pending the refurbishment of the 'old Boola Crescent' house

Following the obligatory re-blocking, re-connections and restorations, the Lacey family moved into their 'new' home at 7 Fairway Drive; and it was another exciting chapter in the story of Wally and Sue Lacey and their seven children.

In bringing this article to a conclusion, readers will be amazed to know, that at the time of writing this article for the Virtual Yallourn website, Sue, who is 98 years of age, still lives in the same house at Fairway Drive.

According to Veronica's calculations, her Mother has dwelt in the same home for 73 years. That has to be a record of some kind in the history of Yallourn!

OTHER LINKS TO ARTICLES & PHOTOS RELATED TO THE LACEY FAMILY

Throughout her written notes for this story, Veronica has been most humble about her life achievements in sport but it is well known that she was an enthusiastic sports person, a loyal club member and an exceptional hockey player.

The photographs below, of Veronica, her sisters and other Yallourn sporting identities, will give readers some idea of Veronica's commitment to the various clubs of the township.

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/4947>

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/25046>

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/32978>

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/5197>

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/32977>

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/23477>

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/23478>

<http://www.virtualyallourn.com/node/4934>

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU & BEST WISHES

The Lacey Family of Yallourn is quite a tale; and a special 'thank you' is extended to Veronica for her patient help in clarifying and verifying certain aspects of this story. Veronica also provided some of the photographs, which Julie has posted with this article on this website.

Readers, of the Virtual Yallourn website would like to extend their best wishes to Sue Lacey and trust that she is well and in good spirits in her 'home from Boola Crescent.

Finally, 'Home is where the heart is' and Sue Lacey and her children have no doubt where that is.

This story was written by Roger Spaul and was presented and posted on the Virtual Yallourn website by Julie George in May 2019. Further stories and photographs about the Yallourn Chess Club and its members would be greatly appreciated by Julie. Thank you.