

Dear Julie,

I thought you might like these notes for your archives or to publish parts in the newsletter.

Paddy Loring died some years ago, but we gave him a great farewell!! Ann Roushead (Griffiths)

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**FIRST DRAFT**

## **IRVING STEPHENS**

### **ANOTHER FORTUNATE LIFE**

#### **Part 1- The First Twenty Years**

**1933 - 1953**

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Friday September 16<sup>th</sup> 2006

*Irving was the principal of Longcraba  
Technical School.  
I was a staff member  
& he knew I'd attended  
Y1+S.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

My sister Rita had written a story of her life at the request of a grandchild who was called upon to acquire some data as part of a primary school project. My father likewise had written a short history of his life and similarly his sister Amy Dulcimer Tibbals. This statement is not to upstage AB Facey's "A Fortunate Life" but simply in a similar manner the writer regards himself as fortunate. This document is not meant for publication but as a record of my impressions and experiences with attendant details of the times. The script is rather fragmented but the chronology is reasonably sound. The intended readers are those of my family.

## **THE FIRST DECADE**

Born Irving Benson Stephens on May 25<sup>th</sup> 1933 there was a problem with the name since those canvassed by my parents were only girls. My mother had a close friend Ethel Tierney of 70 Woolton Ave Thornbury who was a parishioner of the Melbourne Central Methodist Church in Lonsdale Street where the Reverent Irving Benson was the resident minister and hence I was to bear the marks of Methodism for the term of my natural.

My father was Reginald Vivian Stephens December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1901 to March 10<sup>th</sup> 1977 born in Kalgoorlie WA and my mother was Mildred Chance February 10<sup>th</sup> 1906 to November 11<sup>th</sup> 1989 born in Walhalla. They were married at Yalloum Methodist Church on March 6<sup>th</sup> 1930. (Interestingly this was a Thursday)

My first home was at 24 Strzlecki Road Yalloum of which I have no recollection but was preceded by my sister Rita Beverley Stephens born October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1931. This was the middle of the depression and my dad was fortunate enough to have full time employment as a meter reader with the State Electricity Commission. Yalloum was an SEC township with none of the residences available for freehold and without exception all were rental. I can only speculate about the reason for this and surmise that the SEC was well aware that the township was built on several coal seams which at some future time may need to be mined. (A bore at Maryvale APM driven to 2000ft went through about 1800 ft of coal in various seams)

These were depression days. Rents in Yalloum were deducted from salaries and with salary reductions of 10%, Mum and Dad elected to move the family home to the Brown Coal Mine with Grandma (Charlotte) and Grandad (Elijah) Chance in April 1934. Jean Marion Stephens was born on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1934. Having kept my Dad's diaries I find I am missing those of the period 1931-1936 inclusive (However the entry in the front of the 1937 diary indicates that no record was kept. I must recognise that Mum made a major contribution to the diaries particularly through the war years). I remember nothing of this period although I later became aware of Grandad Chance's pride in his wood cutting ability, a photographic record of this appears on p79 of Kath Ringin's book "The Old Brown Coal Mine" although the caption indicates the date of approx 1945 which I have adjusted to 1938-1939 or more likely 1936 or 1937. As a little "Yunker" I had a propensity for a hammer which was regularly mislaid and hence the question of "where's my hammer gone Gimma / Daddy" - not knowing who to blame. One of my first activities was in toilet training where the code for this activity was to utter the action words "p" for pot "j" for job. I am left handed in holding a cricket bat and in some other activities and Dad boasts that he was responsible making me shape up left handed in cricket - late in the forties this became useful when cutting wood (since I could swing from left to right) which Dad did extensively to keep the home fires burning.

Early in 1937 Dad had sought funding to build a home in Moe but negotiations fell through. On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1937 the family moved to Hernes Oak commonly known as the "Haunted Hills" or "The Stump" to look after the home of Fred Boyes whose wife had gone to England for a period of time. They moved to 1 Fernhill Yallourn on Saturday August 8<sup>th</sup> 1937. My recollections of Hernes Oak are vague but Fernhill became a reality in terms of memory. The house was weatherboard with no sewerage and the toilet was down the back in a shed linked to the neighbour's Catchpoles who were to the north on the corner. Catchpoles had a daughter Grace (my age) and at No 3 Fernhill were the Laws with a son Douglass who was a good pal to me but a little older. The night man contrary to his title usually came in the morning before breakfast and most of us were petrified that we would be caught with our pants down, since the access to the pan was via the entry door and not via a rear panel. The latest commercial soft tissue was provided to the toilet per favour of the Sun News Pictorial which Dad had carefully crafted into suitably sized rectangles. The definition of a "humdinger" was a sanitary cart with a bell on the back. Frequently with visitors the pan would reach its capacity and Dad would skilfully skim off available fluid and filter it through the garden soil

The house was a three bedroom with an electric stove and adjacent wood heater which Dad had replaced by a Lux wood stove. We had no refrigerator or radio and made use of the Coolgardie safe in summer for cooling of food. The perimeter of the house block was fenced with about 5 wire strands which was not very substantial. We had an electric bath heater - a cylindrical tank mounted adjacent the bath which was purchased after occupancy. This served as a pre heat for water when an urgent cup of tea was required. The domestic waste water went into the main street which had a bluestone gutter and these were swept regularly by the gutter sweeper who had access to fresh water for flushing the gutter located at intervals nearby.

The late thirties saw the intermittent closure of schools due to many of the common diseases chicken pox, whooping cough, mumps, measles scarlet fever, diphtheria and worst of all polio. (I recall that Leon Melbourne was a victim of polio and had his arm in a plaster brace for a long time.). The Stephens family had their share of mumps, measles whooping cough, chicken pox and ringworm but managed to avoid the others.

Since before his marriage Dad had a 1928 BSA motorbike on which he spent a fair amount of time in mechanical maintenance. But this machine served as family transport from thirties to early forties. Many a time all five of us were transported short distances on the motor bike. Jean and I were on the petrol tank, Mum was on the pillion with Rita in front her and we hung on tightly. This arrangement defies credulity in this day and age. Mum and Dad had established a close relationship with Dick and Dorrie Allen who lived at 49 Parkside Yallourn and had a son Jeffrey who was the same age as my older sister Rita and had an affectionate jet black cocker spaniel dog called Rover who travelled regularly un accompanied from Parkside to Fernhill . (Rover regularly won the School Fair dog competition as the dog with the shortest tail.) Our cousins Eril, Lois and June with their parents Eric and Lillian Stephens settled initially at 23 Hillside? while Mum's sister Jean and her husband Bill Roberts and three children Beverley, Colin and Marilyn somewhat younger than us had all subsequently settled at 25 Strzlecki Road Yallourn and the inter action was frequent. About 1943 they moved to No 12 Strzlecki Road Yallourn opposite Yallourn High School.

I started school on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1938 at the invitation of Miss Glew the teacher. I remember little of this except to say that it must have been pleasant otherwise I would have adverse reflections. In Jan 1939 I went into grade 1 and progressed annually to grade 2 and 3 in subsequent years. Friends from this time included John Tremain, Ted Beulke, Graham Cleverly (we went to Methodist Sunday School together) Richard Mullane, Keith Collins and Julie Matthews (with whom I was madly in love). All three of us kids were regular attendees at Yallourn Methodist Sunday School).

Sunday afternoon was the family time and we had regular walks frequently with Rover, picked orchids in spring, saw the double header train pull a load of briquettes up the steep grade at Hernes Oak at about 3pm on Sunday and let the smoke puff through our hair as we looked over the railway bridge. It was indeed a very happy family time. Douglas Law and I had a bush house in the nearby gully at the top end of Westbrook Road. The baker delivered the bread to the front verandah and the milk man came around the back to deliver the milk into our billycan. It was something of a coup to wake on hearing the milky and shout "good morning milky". I must have been a mischief maker since I was sent to bed regularly for my misdemeanours sometimes without dinner which was exceptionally severe. Maps regularly adorned the walls of the kitchen as did the height and date of each member of the family. In mid 1939 I was commissioned to bring down the kindling from the shed.

Yallourn was housed in the early days by the "Staff" of the SEC and to this extent tended to be elitist. The township had a huge general store run by the SEC with a large section on either side of Broadway which led to the station to the east and became Broadway West to the west. The store had hardware at the north end and sold various other commodities southward to the butchers on the far end. I recall the shops being open until 9.00pm on Friday before the war. As kids we would go to the grocery department and request two pence worth of broken biscuits which came from a rectangular metal tin about half a cubic foot in capacity. The serve was enough for a treat for about four kids. Dad related the story of the kid whose father told him to return a bottle of vinegar to the grocer because it had too much "element" in it. On confronting the grocer the boy was corrected to say "sediment" but after something of a wrangle the boy said "I don't care what the ell e ment but that's what he sed e ment". The drapery/manchester and clothing section of the store had a "telfer" system for payment with the single cashier receiving the cash and docket from the various serving counters via an overhead suspended line. Small cassettes were "fired" with spring loading to and from the cashier with payments and change.

Dad had joined militia during mid to late 30'ies and developed skill with the Vickers machine gun in the 37<sup>th</sup> battalion. He maintained an interest in this and in 1940 undertook some extensive training programs at Nagambie Road Seymour being promoted to Warrant Officer II

I recall the bush fires of Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January 1939, was terrified by the flames which did considerable damage in the Yallourn Works Area, and I sympathised with the wallabies which ran down the streets of Yallourn to escape the fire. Heavy smoke and ashes lingered for days.

War broke out in Europe early September 1939, the Germans advanced through Holland Belgium and France, Chamberland resigned 10<sup>th</sup> May 1940 and the allies retreated at the evacuation of Dunkirk on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1940.

I had been suffering from a nasal complaint and Dr Andrews of the local SEC clinic recommended the removal of my adenoids and this took place in April 1940 – this was perhaps a major mistake since the nasal condition has plagued me all my life since. On July 7<sup>th</sup> 1940 I ventured into the wood shed to cut kindling and left the axe blade up against the chopping block and just proud of it. I fell back onto the block and slashed the rear of my right thigh which produced copious volumes of blood and required three stitches. In August 1940 a pianola arrived at our home and this was the source of much pleasure – no one in the family could play the keyboard but all it required was to pedal. Sing songs and the purchase of pianola rolls were common. To this day the pianola is housed with sister Rita at Dingly Dell Road Thorpdale. It was intended that Rita and Jean would learn keyboard and of the two it was Rita who pursued this option. It was about this time that Rita was to learn elocution. Some twelve months after purchase, the pianola developed holes in the bellows and became harder to push. It took four strong men to load it onto a furniture van.

My school report of December 1940 showed some promise:

- |                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| 1. Spelling           | 10 |
| 2. Writing            | 10 |
| 3. Transcription      | 10 |
| 4. Written Arithmetic | 8  |
| 5. Mental Arithmetic  | 10 |

I was ninth in class but suspect there must have been 8 equal firsts

When it came to arithmetic none of us were very savvy in that Mum and Dad had fooled us into thinking they were ten years younger than they actually were.

Early in 1941 Dad was away at camp for three months and some time later that year signed up in the Australian Army and was promoted to Lieutenant. Mum reckoned he looked pretty good in his uniform and so did I. I had about this time disgraced my self with an investigation into Dad's camera which he prized and which was a fold out type. I managed to open it but could not get it closed, so with brute force slammed it shut and damaged the closing mechanism. How I could have imagined there would be no consequences did not occur to me at the time.

Mum and Dad communicated almost daily by letter during his time in the Army and this continued until Dad's discharge in November 1943. Dad's salary was of the order of 13-15 pounds per fortnight which Mum accessed via the post office. Towards the end of the 30's and 40's things improved economically but the priority of the family resources was good food followed by clothing, there was no such thing as family holidays or regular entertainment and while the family were quite frugal they wanted for nothing.

I was easily led by Douglass Law who was an Anglican and the Anglican Church had a tower with a bell at the rear. This was just asking to be donged and Douglass had done it many times without being caught. The plan was to thump the bell and dash off up Church Street to avoid the Curate. On my occasion I was accosted by a resident in Church Street and wet myself as a result of the confrontation.

On December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and the British Commonwealth was at war with Japan. Dad would continue in the Army and the local community believed that Yallourn would be an enemy target because of the power industry. I recall being scared beyond belief when about this time we were discussing the war at our front gate when a squadron of fighters flew over with a great roar.

A couple of days later the Battle Cruiser *Repulse*\* (struck by 14 torpedoes and loss of 513 lives and the Battleship *Prince of Wales*\* (Struck by 4 torpedoes and loss of 327 lives) were sunk and there existed a strong feeling of fear. Both vessels arrived at Singapore just before Japan began the Pacific War. As soon as hostilities commenced, both steamed northwards to intercept a reported invasion force. While returning to Singapore on 10 December 1941, *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* were attacked by Japanese high-level bombers and torpedo planes. *Repulse* was moderately damaged by bombs early in the action and was later hit by several torpedoes. After receiving this heavy underwater damage, she sank rapidly, followed less than an hour later by the *Prince of Wales*.

With no friendly planes to protect them, both heavy ships were hit several times. *Repulse* sank at about 1230. *Prince of Wales* capsized and followed her to the bottom less than an hour later. The first capital ships to be sunk by air attack while operating on the high seas, their loss further shocked a naval world and our community already stunned by the events at Pearl Harbor only a few days earlier.

About this time there was a Sunday afternoon meeting in the town of Yallourn and it was recommended that women and children should be evacuated from the town before Japanese bombs arrived. Air raid precautions were immediately commenced, houses were expected to fit blackout blinds while cars had their headlights blanketed to a small circular hole and street lamps were shaded.

Mum had had a rough time in the previous 12 months with kids sick with a range of infections, her arm in plaster from a fracture or was it the tendon of the thumb and now early in 1942 faced with evacuation of the family.

Grandad Chance died on January 14<sup>th</sup> 1942 I suspect it was from kidney failure since he had lost one kidney earlier in a wood cutting accident. I was a bit disturbed about this since Mum had invited me to visit him just a little earlier and I had refused to go. It was late in January when I went on holiday with the Law family near the beach at Hampton

On 6<sup>th</sup> February the Allen family moved to Bendigo but the little black cocker spaniel remained with us.

February 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 fall of Singapore

Mum was courageously trying to get a house at Moe and Warragul but was unsuccessful and Dad was unhappy about the family staying in Yallourn while he was away. Meanwhile Dad was in the Army at Seymour and had spotted a house available in Avenel and Mum went off to inspect, subsequently the family packed up and moved to Avenel on March 10<sup>th</sup> 1942. On Thursday March 12<sup>th</sup> I started at Avenel State School in Grade 4.

Avenel was a new dimension it was a small country town with a pub and a couple of stores and streets lined with huge pepper corn trees. The house was pretty ordinary without electricity and the kerosene lamps were difficult to manage and we were dependent on a wood stove. On Saturday April 10<sup>th</sup> 1942 we were all away in Melbourne at Aunt Ruth's (Ruth MacLean nee Gribble Dad's Mother's sister) and the next day we were advised that soldiers from Seymour had broken into our Avenel home and effectively wrecked it. We returned home to find that things were not all that bad, clothes taken outside, honey in the cornflakes, pay book and child endowment book missing from purse, camera picked up in the town and returned. The child endowment book was picked

up in a railway cutting near Mangalore; all five of us took a walk along the railway line in the hope of finding Mum's pay book which was ultimately replaced.

Mum was pretty lonely in Avenel and spent a lot of time writing letters even though Grandma Chance was with us??. The Richardson family lived across the paddock and befriended us and from whom we purchased our milk.

At this time US military reinforcements were being transported north and had come in via Melbourne rather than risk loss through entering the northern ports. Japanese submarines had been identified up the east coast and the caution justified when midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour in May 1942. They were of 46 tons and launched from a squadron of submarines east of Sydney. Some minor damage occurred from torpedoes but one sub was blown up by its own depth charge and the other sunk from depth charges. The USS cruiser Chicago was in the harbour at the time. I was later to inspect a sub on a truck parked on the Hume highway in Euroa and was amazed at the cramped conditions of the two mariners.

US soldiers were camped on the Hughes Creek near the Hume highway and we as kids were given the privilege of travelling to school in a jeep and on occasions in a 6 x 4 army truck. This came to an end when a US soldier strangled a girl somewhere along the creek about May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1942. The Battle of Coral Sea took place on May 7<sup>th</sup> /8<sup>th</sup> turning back the Japanese from access to Port Moresby. In June 1942 the Japanese suffered significant losses at the Battle of Midway.

I got the belt at school when I was accused of climbing the gum saplings on the road to school and swinging the main branch to the ground snapping some and damaging others. On this occasion I was innocent. I witnessed my first experience of shop lifting at the local grocery store on the other side of the railway line. I entered the shop with one of my school friends who in the absence of the grocer lay across the counter and stole several packs of razor blades from under the serving side of the counter. The neighbour's cat had produced a litter of kittens and the kids had been commissioned to drown them, this I witnessed with some horror. The Spirit of Progress roared through the town twice each day and we enjoyed watching it go through. I recall standing on the station as it went thru and hung on to the station fence to avoid being affected by the bow wave – there were four locos all in blue and beautifully streamlined– Edward Henty, JC Latrobe Sir Thomas Mitchell and Matthew Flinders. (I recall their names)

Mum must have displayed an enormous amount of courage in a new environment with three young children and on her own. Being at enquiring age she was to read to all three of us during this time the "Cradleship" book which was to define where we came from, but the substance was lost on me.

Disenchantment continued at Avenel and Mum sought accommodation at Euroa (you know, "you rowa da boat and I catcha da fish" about 22 miles north of Avenel) and we moved to Holland Street Euroa on Friday May 15<sup>th</sup>. Dad had leave for the week end to assist. Holland Street house was not much better than Avenel it had electricity, a sleep out, but required floor coverings blinds, window and door repairs and a host of incidental requirements. Mum painted this house internally and re fitted doors. We had a night toilet service but the other domestic waste water accumulated to the rear of the house in a large channel where the water flowed out thru the back fence. I recall falling headlong into this disgusting bog hole. The mid year 1942 school results were encouraging in spite of the

change of schools. Rita 12<sup>th</sup> in class with 109/120. Irving fourth in class with 77/80 and Jean 6<sup>th</sup> in class

Dad returned to camp and was transferred to South Queensland and ultimately to the jungle training camp at Canungra. Letters arriving home were now airmail. Rationing\* had been introduced as a result of the war.- clothing, tea, butter sugar and petrol and were all rationed *“Rationing regulations for food and clothing were gazetted on the 14 May 1942 . Rationing was introduced to manage shortages and control civilian consumption. It aimed to curb inflation, reduce total consumer spending and limit impending shortages of essential goods. The broad reasoning behind the introduction of rationing was to ensure the equitable distribution of food and clothing. It was also hoped that a cut back on consumer spending would lead to an increase in savings, which in turn could be invested in war loans.”*

*Petrol rationing was first enforced in Australia in October, 1940, a little more than twelve months after the commencement of the 1939-45 war. No very drastic cuts in consumption were made for some time, but, commencing in April, 1941, when the replenishment of stocks from overseas supply sources was becoming increasingly difficult and uncertain, progressive reductions in the monthly allowances to civilian users were made, the basic ration being finally reduced to the equivalent of only 800 miles of running per annum. The period of severest rationing lasted from late in 1941 until towards the end of 1944, non-military consumption during these three years or thereabouts being at a rate not very much in excess of one-third of the estimated pre-war rate of 30 million gallons per month.*

Initially there was hoarding of fuel but then consumption leveled out. I recall the growth of gas producers on private vehicles and some commercial vehicles such as taxis. The gas producer was a huge cylinder on the rear of the car which burnt coke to produce carbon monoxide which was supplied to the induction system by a large pipe. I recall several instances of fire and note that these were a poor substitute. At some stage plans were made to develop ethanol from wheat and a project was commenced at Warracknabeel. in Victoria but I can find no mention of this on the internet.

Date of gazettal for coupon rationing\*

Item	Date gazetted	Date abolished	Quantity per adult
Clothing	12 June 1942	24 June 1948	112 coupons per year
Tea	6 July 1942	July 1950	½ lb per 5 weeks
Sugar	29 August 1942	3 July 1947	2 lb per fortnight
Butter	7 June 1943	June 1950	1 lb per fortnight
Meat	14 January 1944	24 June 1948	2 ¼ lbs per week

Euroa was a country town of moderate size. Our home was to the north east and we had to cross the Hume Highway and the Seven Creeks to get to the town. I joined the Euroa brass band and was issued with a tenor horn. The band room was next to the railway line and we practised at night. I cut through a paddock to go to and fro and when the cows showed too much interest in me I blasted them with the tenor horn. Later I graduated to the comet and music was read with the 1,2,3, pressing of the first second and third valve. The one march we played ad nauseam was “Wairoa”. The little black cocker spaniel Rover



came to Euroa about this time. Summer had arrived and the kids at school dispensed with their shoes which were no longer fashionable, so off to school I went without shoes.

In November 1942 I was top of the class at grade 4 level with 55/60. At the end of November the French had scuttled their fleet rather than lose it to German control. Over the Christmas of 1942 I visited the Davidson's who ran a dairy nearby on Strathbogie Road and met Jim Smith who also had a milk run. At school one day we had a couple of swallows in the room and one was perched above me on a rail which ran across the classroom accordingly I copped a measure of effluent in the eye much to my embarrassment. It was common to purchase a halfpenny worth of lollies – from the shop across the highway from the school.

The Seven Creeks ran through the centre of the township and not far from the highway bridge the creek was dammed by a barrage to provide a swimming pool which was well patronised by all three of us and at which we all learnt to swim. We quickly learnt about the effect of ultra violet radiation. Across the lane from home was a market garden run by a Chinese gentleman Jack who sold his produce around the town from a horse and cart. Mr Prideaux an elderly neighbour worked on the garden and was apparently paid in kind helping himself to the choice vegetables and then loading up his bicycle and immediately setting off to sell the goods to a general store in Binney Street. The goods (the pick of the crop) were taken out the back gate during the day while the owner was away. We never knew if gardener Jack knew of the arrangement - perhaps he did? The trip to and from school in spring was hazardous we were attacked by magpies with considerable ferocity but quickly learned not to leave home without an appropriate stick which was concealed in the bush the other side of magpie country. Invariably if the stick was present the magpies did not attack.

## **THE SECOND DECADE**

The second decade commenced with the family including Grandma Chance still at Holland Street Euroa. I had met up with Jim Smith who owned a small herd of cows and had a milk round. I kicked around the farm which was not far from home, helped with the milking and finally assisted in the delivery of milk. The milk cart was a horse drawn two wheel jinker with space for two large milk cans on the back which contained about eight gallons each. The milk was not pasteurised and a couple of hessian bags were thrown over the milk cans for cooling. I had to get up early to do the round and it was always a treat to meet the baker and purchase a couple of buns for breakfast. I used to carry a 2 gallon milk can which was replenished from the jinker via a tap. The can contained a one pint measure and half pint measure. Jim would not let me fill my can believing it to be a bit too heavy for me. Mostly the cash was left out with the billy or the personal cash exchange took place- the measure was always supplemented with a little extra. At one home I was expected to come into the kitchen get the milk billy from the table, dispense the milk and place it into the refrigerator. There were occasions when it looked like we would run out of milk and I would be commissioned to get some water in my can for mixing in the large milk cans. All the milking was done by hand and I soon learnt how to milk, but stripping out was a skill for Jim. I recall on one occasion I had not fixed the leg rope properly, the right rear leg of the cow became free and I got belted in the head with a kick. I learnt a lot about the cow cycle and calving. There was one occasion at a neighbouring farm that the front legs of the calf were pulled with a wire strainer in an

attempt to remove the calf from the mother. This was unsuccessful and the cow and calf were put down. I rode the bull calves around the paddock but the bull was given a wide berth since it had gored Jim sometime earlier. I was paid a few shillings by Jim and at its best it was 10 shillings each week. Early in the year I would take the heard of cows about 20 in all to the long paddock where there was good feed and keep an eye on them for a couple of hours for about 2 shillings.

Visiting the cattle yard adjacent the station was a regular event and early in the year about January 43 Douglass Law who was visiting from Yallourn and I were given a lamb which we took home and had fun feeding with a bottle. Eventually the lamb was taken over by the Davidsons who had a farm on Strathbogie Road. Mitta Davidson was an adult young woman of the Davidson family and very supportive, Douglass Law and I were a bad mixture since on several occasions we stayed out late and Mum was most distressed by our absence. I recall loading sheep into VR trucks for transport to market and placing my both feet on the sheep while swinging from the top of the truck to ensure we got them all in. Dad came home on the train on one occasion to observe this activity.

Mum had established a good relationship with Doris Lamont who lived nearby and whose husband was also a soldier. Mum also cut much of the wood since I was still only nine and given only to kindling.

At about midday each day we saw the largest engine ever built at Newport "Heavy Harry" 260 tons pass thru Euroa with a goods load. From time to time we would place a penny on the line to see it flattened by the train. Heavy Harry was limited to the Melbourne Albury run since it was too heavy for other lines. Subsequently the reciprocating steam engine was replaced by diesel – the imbalance of the reciprocating action was transferred to a vertical plane causing hammer blow which damaged the line in much the same way as corrugations occur in a road but with a less pronounced effect.

Late in January 43 we were as a family visiting Uncle George (Dad's father's brother) in Beechworth and this was without incident until I became rather perky with uncle and he lost his cool stripped me of clothing and threw me into a bath tub of water containing his yabbies, I was pretty upset and so were others and I soothed the situation by apologising to uncle.

On the corner of Binney Street and Railway Street Euroa was a former bank now occupied by Striblings who were estate agents or solicitors and I recall being shown the bank vault which was robbed by the Kelly gang in December 1878.

In early February 1943 we learnt of the death of Olive Halket age 16 years who lived at No 5 Fernhill Yallourn. Much speculation took place about the death but sources suggest that this was a result of a backyard abortion possibly promoted by Olive's mother. Sisters Rita and Jean commenced music lessons about this time. Mum recorded an account for one pound five shillings and eight pence as the charge for one month's electricity

There was an air raid observation post at an old garage on the Hume Highway I recall visiting this regularly and discussing the various aircraft listed on a chart both allied and Japanese. On reflection it appears that many Australians were not fully aware of the Japanese threat. From the record of the diaries it appears that family visits, letter writing and telegrams to relatives and friends were extensively employed for communication. A diary entry of early 1943 indicates a Public Service pay rise of twelve pounds per annum for men and eight pounds for women. March 1943 - Battle of Bismark Sea with significant losses to Japanese. March 1943 37<sup>th</sup> battalion to New Guinea but Dad

considered too old for the jungle. Dad as an officer had responsibility for company censorship and had to censor the letters of all personnel to remove security information. He relates that he was guilty of removing the meeting place for dates of some of his soldiers. On another occasion he was responsible for the security of a troop train and observed a soldier giving his mail to a station attendant. Dad demanded the letters which the station attendant refused to give up. Dad insisted and said that the train would not move until he had the letters. On another occasion Dad was interviewing a soldier who had wounded himself with a bullet through his foot. In order to determine if the wound was not self inflicted the question had to be asked – “did it hurt more than you thought it would?” During his time at Canungra dad went on a mission to the North to Port Douglass from where he sent each of us a coconut thru the post unwrapped with address and stamp on the outer casing. At about the same time Dad had in his possession Australian Currency produced by the Japanese for occupation of Australia but it looked too flimsy to be at all durable – they were.”The Japanese Government – ONE POUND and the Japanese Government ONE SHILLING” captured from Japanese army casualties. April 1943 Mum developed a hearing defect which was to plague her for some time. She was jack of all trades repairing clothing and footwear (it took me about two weeks to wear out a layer of boot leather). About this time we rented a six bedroom brick house in Anderson Street close to the centre of the town (I recall that one room was locked up apparently with the owner’s furniture within). Mum used a neighbour’s pram to transport the floor coverings. The neighbours on the corner of Brock Street were Parsons with son Graham about my age with whom I related quite well

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1943 Dad came home after a year in Queensland and Mum was taken to hospital with kidney problem and Grandma took over at home. Dad received extended LWOP while mum was ill and he returned to Canungra on August 1<sup>st</sup> after eight weeks. Dad went first to Melbourne and on August 2<sup>nd</sup> we went up to the station to see the troop train go thru. The train stopped for 5 mins and we chatted to Dad at the crossing and he and Mum exchanged letters. During his stay Dad had cleaned up around the house and became aware that Rover showed undue interest with the chooks on the other side of the fence and apparently dug his way through. Dad records on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1943 that the chooks were only mesmerised. I recall that Dad paid about five shillings for each of three casualties but cannot be pedantic about it. On July 15<sup>th</sup> Dad tied a mandarin to an orange tree in the back yard and I fell for the trap and took it to school and told the teacher about this amazing growth. Hopefully kids these days would be saved from such embarrassing incidents.

The war in Europe continued with successes in North Africa and Sicily was invaded on 9<sup>th</sup> July by UK, Canadian and US soldiers in an amphibious and airborne operation. Mussolini resigned on July 25<sup>th</sup> and Italy surrendered unconditionally on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1943, but the Germans continued to provide staunch resistance.

In August 43 all three of us joined Rechabites and signed the pledge. This involved regular meetings similar to scouts or brownies. In September Rita and I enrolled in Christian Endeavour.

On 29<sup>th</sup> September Dad was notified by State Electricity Commission of availability of work back at Yallourn in his old role and on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1943 he was discharged from the Army.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1943 Mum and Dad visited Yallourn and was offered a residence but declined wanting kids to finish school year in Euroa. (No Melbourne Cup in 1943). On November 9<sup>th</sup> Dad returned to Yallourn to start work and on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1943 he was offered a new house in Yallourn. About this time I recall going to the pictures to see Mrs Miniver and came top of the class at school. I remained active on the milk run Horrie Devine the furniture removalist from Yallourn came through Euroa and picked up floor coverings and other back yard stuff for transport to Yallourn. In mid December Dad was advised that the selected residence would not be ready until late January. 26<sup>th</sup> December 1943 German battle cruiser Scharnhorst 26,000 tons was sunk off Norway by HMS Duke of York and other British Warships.

**1944** Saw us still at Anderson St Euroa, Dad was home from staying at the Staff Mess of the West Camp at Yallourn but Rita was Staying with Aunt Ruth at 150 Queens Parade Clifton Hill. We had discovered the new board game of "Sorry" a game given to setbacks and Dad seemed to save the best obstructions for me. After New Year Dad returned to Yallourn.

While I have no recollection of it at any stage Dad records that meat rationing commenced on January 17<sup>th</sup> 1943 and it was to continue until late June 1948. (I rode my bike daily to get the meat from Yallourn Butchery on our re arrival in Yallourn but have no memory of meat rationing coupons- two and quarter pounds per person per week for over 9 years old and half that for under.)

Rita went from Queens Parade to Yallourn to stay at 10 Broadway West with Auntie Amy while Mum prepared for the move to Yallourn and bought 8 chooks for the journey. Dad had been busy at the new home at 60 Parkway with fly screens and the cutting of firewood in the bush opposite the house.

**Monday February 14<sup>th</sup> 1944. The events of this day I shall never forget and have reflected annually on this day.** (The days prior and those just after are best described from Dad's diary. Dad had left Yallourn on Saturday February 12<sup>th</sup> with the Carriers in the furniture removal van of Horrie Devine and arrived in Euroa about 8 pm. The next day Sunday the van was loaded for departure on the Monday. I recall the men unwrapping some underfelt and was horrified to see a couple of bottles of beer – me being a Rechabite thought this to be evil and did not bode well for our journey.

We left Euroa at about 6.30 am and headed for Melbourne with the aid of a strong northerly wind. Sister Jean and I were on the sofa strapped to the tailboard of the van with Percy Grundy (one of the removalists). We stoped in Victoria Street where Dad picked up a bicycle for fourteen pounds ten shillings and Jean and I gave it a tryout. Off to Gippsland about midday with a stop at Pakenham due to overheating and a water leak. We heard that gas producers had been banned for the day. At about 3.00pm we arrived at Damum and were horrified to find that several houses had been burnt down along with the public hall. We continued on to see further evidence of fire of enormous proportions in the Moe /Yallourn direction fanned by a strong northerly wind. At Newborough we stopped, the road through Newborough to Yallourn was cut off in heavy timber country and the Princes Highway thru to Hemes Oak to Yallourn was also impassable. Perce Grundy was concerned about his wife in Yallourn caught a lift in a car. We stayed put not wishing to risk a van full of furniture. At about 7.00pm we learnt that the Highway route thru Hemes Oak to Yallourn was safe. Both sides of the road were alight from the cemetery in to Yalourn and houses had been burnt out indiscriminately in Hemes Oak.

The fear was that homes in Yallourn had been burnt but this was not to be the case. To get into Yallourn we had to proceed east along the highway and then turn left passed the Yallourn hospital. We had to slow down on a couple of places for telephone wires across the road since poles and cross members had been burnt. It was great to be in Yallourn smothered in dust and ashes. But it was too late to unload the furniture and we slept with various relatives me with Dad's brother Eric, Mum Jean, and Rita with Auntie Amy and Dad with the load of furniture outside the removalist at West Camp. There was little chance of fire since everything was burnt except the open cut which was on fire and burnt for many days, the large Ruston Bucyrus shovel was burnt out. The family moved into 60 Parkway the next day where a new home was badly stained with dust and ash.

On Wednesday February 16<sup>th</sup> sister Jean started school in Grade 5 with teacher Ms Boldshaw while I started the next day in Grade 6 with teacher Mr Edmondson on the site of Yallourn High School in Latrobe Ave. Later that week we took a walk to see inspect the fire damage. The home at 60 Parkway was a three bedroom timber home with open fire place in the lounge, the toilet was outside even though there was provision for an inside toilet once the sewer was installed. There was no hot water service and bath hot water was provided from the copper which was boiled on Saturdays and the hot water transported by Dad to the bath. This water served several family members. It was not until March 1947 that we got a 20 gallon HWS installed adjacent the bath with an electrical booster. The fence was a 3.5 inch picket with similar gaps between pickets which did not provide much privacy. Somehow we finished up with the beaut wood Lux stove we had in Fernhill previously, since the kitchen only had an electric stove and wood heater. The garden was that of the native bush full of stumps and bracken fern roots. Some timber work edging had been provided for paths. Over the road from the new home was predominantly bush and just beyond was a swamp area with a stream. The entire bush was blackened with the fire and the swamp brush particularly filthy but the soil was good

Daylight saving ended on 27<sup>th</sup> March 44 and the days just seemed to be inordinately short. At 58 Parkway resided the Hall Jones who had a beautiful blue grey cocker spaniel called "Wonk" at least that is what we called him. At 56 Parkway was the Menadies family father John was tall and threatening and the headmaster of Yallourn High School. They had five kids Winsome (Rita's age), Rosalind (my age), Elizabeth (Jean's age), June and John. At 62 Parkway were the Phillips family with one son called Trevor. Mr (Ted) Phillips was an excellent cricketer.

All three of us kids attended the Methodist Sunday School as did the Menadies and Sunday afternoon walks continued with kids from neighbouring families and the two dogs (Wonk and Rover – both highly excited with the prospect of a walk in the bush).

In April 1944 Dad bought me a bike for 25 shillings and I was thrilled at the purchase since this provided a new transport dimension. April was mushroom time and we had several visits to Driffield for collection with various yields

The chooks had been in temporary accommodation and on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1944 Dad started construction of the fowl house. We had the advantage of the Yallourn Medical Society which I think was maintained by the SEC for employees giving both hospital and medical benefits the latter dispensed at the Yallourn Health Centre in the town square. I was plagued with impetigo which emerged as infected pustules and was highly contagious.

I had a friend at school Ken Masson who lived in The Angles and whose father was a teacher at the Tech. We were walking together along Parkway each with a stick in hand when I took a golf swipe at a rock in the gutter, missed and struck Ken in the eye which required several stitches. I see Ken occasionally these days and remind him of the king hit.

We kids had several altercations over the board game "Sorry" and Dad settled the score by burning the board. We were somewhat disgusted with this and it was indicative of his short temper on many occasions when destructive action followed him losing his cool. Such events ran to smashing furniture, throwing a pound of butter at the wall where it hung with the plate still attached and smashing my bike when I left it in the wrong place. My conflict with Dad had become so intense that at one stage Mum considered sending me to WA with her brother Percy Chance and his wife May. Dad's position was that if I went I would not come back – such was his patriarchal domination.

Dad records a story of an accident in the open cut involving runaway electric coal train where the typist erred in describing the local driver as running with his "pants down" which should have read "panto down".

In early June 1944 Dad was chatting to a neighbour in my presence when he investigated the contents of a rarely used pocket in his trousers to find a quid.

"D Day June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944 The **Battle of Normandy** was fought between Nazi Germany in Western Europe and the invading Allied forces as part of the larger conflict of World War II. Over sixty years later, the Normandy invasion, codenamed Operation Overlord, still remains the largest seaborne invasion in history, involving almost three million troops crossing the English Channel from England to Normandy in then German-occupied France. Similarly progress was being made in the Pacific against the Japanese as evidenced by Dad's discharge from the army seven months earlier.

The formwork for paths was in place and Dad commenced the arduous process of concreting by hand mixing. He adopted the complex process of laying the base concrete and then mixing a sand and cement mortar over the top about ¼ inch thick – a process highly labour intensive.

I was privileged to see a number of films at the Yallourn Theatre (a modern cinema structure) on a Saturday afternoon which included "We Dive at Dawn", In Which We Serve, Battle of the River Plate Crash Dive etc

About this time I became interested in soccer and football and attended a number of games involving Yallourn first eighteen. Dad and I went on wood chopping across the road. Mr Menadue had accumulated supplies. The supplement to the wood fire was the briquette – there were about three forms produced – the largest was mainly for domestic use and delivered in bags of 1 cwt each – the second about half the size and exported to Melbourne – the third a nut briquette manufactured for industrial grates in Melbourne. A cwt of briquettes cost . the problem with briquettes was mainly the reddish orange ash which was not good for the garden. Usually about four briquettes in the stove at night and fully closed would provide glowing embers for the morning fire. Fruit and vegetables were the order of the day and the Greengrocers were Shaws who came from Moe but had a barn like store behind the post office. Mum handled the boss well and was served with good quality stuff. I regularly transported a case of oranges or apples home on my bike and was known to polish off as many as 6 oranges after school. Dad taught us to play

cards including yankee euchre, crib and worst of all rickety kate (the devilish queen of spades). Dad taught me to play chess.

Yallourn was protected with a battery of anti aircraft guns. These were housed in concrete bunkers in a cluster of four. Clearly by 1944 they would no longer be in use. They were not very well guarded since we were able to sneak into the areas almost at will and observe the shells still in situ in the concrete bunkers. The guns were removed about September 1944. Meanwhile allied forces had raced across northern France and had crossed into Germany through the Siegfried Line.

Early in September Footscray beat Carlton by a point to knock the blues out of the final four.

On November 16<sup>th</sup> 1944 I sat for the Junior Technical School exam – this was in effect the entrance exam. Dad talked to his boss about my future and decided that University Intermediate was to be preferred before going to Tech. What a way to decide?? However I accepted the decision to go to the High School in 1945 and continued there for two years. Dad resumed 38 hr week on November 20<sup>th</sup>. On December 10<sup>th</sup> I received my SS hymn book as a prize for learning the first psalm and the apostles creed which I can recite to this day. My SS teacher was Mrs Walker. Later that week I took a paper round job for 10 shillings per week. On 17<sup>th</sup> December Dad records that he took the enamel stove to the shed – why I am not sure – was this the Lux stove ?

**1945 2/01/45.** Uncle Bob (Mum's second eldest brother Robert Little Chance) relates to us as kids the story of losing his leg in a jinker accident after returning from the first world war where he served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneers on the Western Front. His older brother Stephen John Chance was captured at the Somme in 1916 and both served as POWs for 2 ½ years in German prison camps.

Sugar was short in supply so that preserving fruit was off the agenda temporarily. Since Dad's discharge we were involved in Australian Defence League in sending copies of the local paper "Live Wire" to serving soldiers - our role was to wrap and apply stamps.

This was my first year at high school and of it I remember little to say that the female teachers were an easy cop. I was doing french in room three with a young teacher and sat next to John Tremain. I recall getting into the cupboard in the back of the room which had two airholes. Tremain would say look miss – "I put a pen thru this hole and it comes out the other" and I would oblige. On one occasion I froze when H/M John Menadue came into the room.

Advances in Europe of the Allies and Russians within 100 miles of Berlin

26/02/45 Dad took the three of us to Wirth's Circus on No 3 Oval. It was a good show, however I swung on a tent pole tie rope releasing the pole and was struck on the right side of the head. We were on foot and I was pretty groggy and on arriving at the swimming pool Dad took me to the water's edge and slopped water on my forehead. Next day I was taken to the doctor who diagnosed slight concussion with a couple of days in bed. About this time we regularly went blackberry picking at Thompson's bridge sometimes riding bikes and sometimes walking. Dad had toiled to provide extra support under the kitchen floor to support the installation of a wood stove fitted into a brick surround at the end of March. I recall a thick sheet of asbestos between the wall and the single row of bricks.

I attended the Methodist Order of Knights for the first time. MOKs were a male youth organisation based upon a ritual reminiscent of masonry using a regalia and structured meeting procedure.

In April we had the phone connected to our home but this only served the Yallourn township and the SEC area ????

About this time I recall going ferreting out at Thompson's bridge to trap rabbits. The managing of ferrets was a filthy business- they stank. There were plenty of rabbit burrows and the strategy was to mount nets over several burrow outlets and put the ferret down one burrow in the hope that the rabbits would bolt out – this they did sometimes out of the wrong holes – but there was a yield – the execution strategy was to stretch the neck of the rabbit, bleed the urine from the bladder and proceed to remove the innards. This involved slitting the gut and then if the business of removing the innards was too messy to loosen the organs and hope that they would be expelled by taking the rabbit by the front legs and swinging around your head in the hopes that the offal would be separated. Occasionally the ferret would not reappear and we had to dig them out

Hitler committed suicide on April 30<sup>th</sup> and Victory in Europe day was celebrated on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945 with a public holiday in Aust on May 9<sup>th</sup> On 03/05/45 I was admitted to Yallourn hospital with appendicitis and recall with some dread the application of the chloroform anaesthetic – breath in deeply said the surgeon Dr Andrews – how horrible – however I was soon up and back home with a wide scare and about eight stitches. About this time there was a plan to discourage the dog Rover from digging in the side garden adjacent the kitchen. Dad had padded the jaws of a rabbit trap and buried at the appropriate place. The dog was caught and yelped continuously until it woke Bob Guy a neighbour at 2 Uplands road who was on night duty to come over during the day and release the dog – not very good strategy – an electric fence would have been more appropriate. Our Neighbour then was Arch Hall-Jones who had a cocker spaniel dog called “Wonk” This dog got few outings so the Sunday afternoon walk with the Stephens family et al was a real treat for him.

On 1/06/45 Ration books issued – possibly for ?????

5/06/45 Dad performed in the local drama group with a part in “Lady in Danger” I recall him arriving on stage with a toy pistol in his left hand in order to make an arrest.

3/7/45 I played football for Yallourn High School and we were beaten by the Technical School which was predictable since the T/S had many more boys.

5/07/45 Death of PM John Curtin in Canberra. Dad had taught all three of us to various games of cards. Whist, Yankee Euchre, Crib, 500 and oh hell Rickety Kate – the dastardly queen of spades. Dad taught me chess.

During the early part of this year Mum was fitted with a clumsy hearing aid the best available at the time since this was pre the solid state era. Strapped to her leg was a huge battery to drive the system needless to say it had many maintenance problems but as time went by there were significant improvements in the technology at a price.

6/08/45 Dropping of Atomic bomb on Hiroshima,

15/08/45 Victory in the Pacific day was celebrated. The formal Japanese signing of the unconditional surrender took place on the USS Missouri on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945. In Yallourn there was a parade on the holiday 16/8/45 and a celebration march from town centre to ovals. Air raid shelters which had grown up during the war were being



dismantled. These were tunnels about six feet deep covered with cladding and about 3 ft of soil – inside they were horrible with duck boards to keep the feet dry

About this time I was playing soccer for the Methodists on a regular basis as part of the under 15 league. Our team was not very good and frequently defeated. We wore jumpers of black and yellow horizontal stripes. During the 20s and 30's many skilled tradesmen were recruited from UK to work on the Yallourn power stations. There was no Aussie rules for kids and so these workers developed the under 15 soccer competition and fostered teams from the respective churches. There were the Methodists, the Rangers, the Pressies, the Anglicans and the Catholics – I cannot remember any other teams. Two such adults I remember well were Tom Evans and Tommy Oddie and hence my introduction to soccer which continued for the next 15 years and is still of interest today in that my Grandson Kristian Zapsalis at the age of 7 (2006) is a keen participant.

I remember breakfast well. We would get kerosene tin of honey from some supplier and it would be decanted into glass vessels. Porridge John Bull Oats would be boiled in a pot for 15 minutes and then served with milk and honey for sweetening. Two rounds of "burgoo" were enough for me

29/09/45 Carlton defeated South Melbourne in what is now known as the blood bath. About this time Dad decided that my arithmetic skills were a bit short on and so I had specific practice in simple arithmetic and percentages.

16/10/45 The Hall-Jones family departed number 58 parkway for Ballarat. About this time I was befriended by Frederick James Marr of 37 Strzlecki Road who was in my class and a member of the Methodist Order of Knights as was John Alfred Tremain of 1 Meadow Lane.

About this time the concrete path had been completed under the clothes line and the path provided a place for bat tennis at which dad excelled. I was heading off to the pictures one Saturday with some friends and on leaving home the boys helped themselves to mum's precious raspberries growing on the eastern fence. Not wishing to spoil the fun I joined in the pickings when Dad caught us all I was sent to bed for the day while the others departed the for the pictures

Dad had discovered rats in the back shed between the inside timber wall and the outside cladding. On removing the inside bottom board there was evidence of a rats nests which was visited with boiling water to reveal some 8 rats

The family dentist continued to be the only one in the town that of AM Thiesen with a surgery attached to his house in Northway. A visit to him was rather terrifying in that drilling for a filling was done with the slow speed drill without any injection, the only consolation being that there were no numb after effects. My mouth opening was restricted and so he would repeatedly exhort me open widely laddie – wider laddie - this was sheer hell.

1946 The transport mode was via bicycles be it in pursuit of mushrooms or blackberries or for just a good ride to Walhalla, Coalville, Narracan, or Thompson's bridge etc. Frequently the dog Rover ran along but on a bicycle trip to Coalville on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1946 the dog became lost and in spite of a search was not seen again. We maintained contact with regular visits to Euroa visiting Parsons and Davidsons. About this time No 58 Parkway became occupied by Cecil Cain, his wife Patricia, and kids Ian about 17 Maureen about 6 and Margaret about 3. Cecil Cain became known to us as JJ this was because he complained on one occasion over the fence that he was called upon to empty

the “guzzunda” and referred to himself as “Jerry Juggler” and hence the reference “JJ” – his wife was ill in bed. Mum turned 40 on February 10<sup>th</sup> and Dad incurred her wrath with a notice on a piece of board “fair fat and forty” somewhat uncharitable!

At the end of the first term I had failed miserably in arithmetic receiving 28 % which was the class average. Fortunately this improved for the next two terms with 79 on both occasions and was awarded the Merit Certificate No 477333. Dad was very disappointed with my first term and went to see the teacher. Dad felt that I should have a handle on Pythagoras and could factorise the difference of two squares which I could recite but did not have a clue about the relevance – teacher told Dad that this was not in the curriculum at this level. I was not very co operative at school Mrs Guatta took us for history and would frequently thumb the front of the wooden desk adjacent the inkwell. Tremain and I would smear this area with ink which caused her some discomfort. The same teacher was in difficulty when it rained on the ovals at school sports – her hair dye would run down her neck. On another occasion I was under a desk when the Headmaster came in and fortunately the kids said I was away. Mrs Scherm took us for music and when angered would charge down the aisle, pick up a ruler and belt us over the knuckles, frequently we would hang onto the steel rail under the desk and in her enthusiasm she would lift the whole desk. On one occasion we went on strike in music and about eight of us were given 4 cuts each.

Uncle George Stephens visited us at Yallourn and left an electrical “shock device” with two hand held electrodes. The charge could be varied with a control – frequently we held hands with one another and shared the charge. I had several bouts of illness with flu and would have had a quick recovery had antibiotics been available at this time. Dad had commenced attendance at the Air Training Corps and was instrumental in training the young men in the use of the rifle. This involved practice on the rifle range with live rounds. I was trained by Dad in the use of the 303 in terms of aiming and handling since we had a rifle at home. I recall being taken with the ATC to the rifle range and Dad encouraged me to undertake some shooting. I was petrified about the reaction to the shot and was encouraged to hold the rifle firmly on my shoulder and take up the first pressure on the trigger and then fire. My targeting was not too bad compared with the other guys but I had the advantage of having a rifle rest. I fired five rounds on the first occasion. One day Fred and Alan Marr had come to take me off to soccer and I had made a disparaging remark about my sister’s odour in the toilet and was locked in the toilet to enjoy the odour for the next hour and a half.. Uncle George Stephens died in Beechworth and was buried in the Beechworth Cemetery on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1946. His headstone appears in the Beechworth Cemetery George Arnold Stephens 1884-1946 (Wesleyan Section Plot 155 about 20 metres NE of Rotunda) Also Ellen (Wyatt) Stephens 1877-1964.

The High School Headmaster John Menadue encouraged several students to study for an award of the Independence Order of Rechabites. I committed myself to be a TT and effectively signed the pledge and obtained a pass in the Temperance Physiology Examination. How naive I was!! Dad records in his diary of 17<sup>th</sup> October 1946 “Rita announced a trip to Warragul for the school sports. I objected as to too much sport and not enough of the more important things” So what is new!!

**1947** Uncle George Stephens owned a twin cylinder Harley Davidson motor bike and side car which Dad was to inherit and he visited Beechworth to pick up the motor bike

early in January. Unfortunately the bike developed a problem with the sprocket on the main shaft in the vicinity of Warragul and Drouin and broke down. Dad was towed into Yallourn after a harrowing trip since the toe vehicle was in too much of a hurry. I was disappointed with the problem but it did not prove insurmountable. Dad's work colleague Charlie Christopher with some delicate filing managed to replace the sprocket and key and the bike was mobile and was to prove a great asset. About this time I had a stint as a paper boy on a round near the tech. We had to make up papers in order allocating a Sun, Argus, and Age of a combination including gaps for those not in receipt of a paper. I regularly made a mess of this and was glad to give it away.

I moved to Yallourn Technical School as planned but was not promoted to form three since I lacked experience at the practical skills and was placed in form 2C with other transferees from high schools along with Richard Mullane and Alan Bliss. This in spite of the fact that I had an average of 72% and was eighth in a group of 44. On reflection I regret leaving my mates at High School. The strap was in common use at the tech. each time we were belted we put another notch in our pencil case and this became something of a competition.

The area opposite the road at 60 Parkway. was to be cleared to establish a nursery and so the timber was up for grabs I helped Dad on number of occasions get in a stack of wood and that was the finish of some lovely bush. When cleared the timber residue was burnt, this it did slowly. I remember with Fred Marr milking a 44 gallon drum of diesel left for tractor fuel and helping the blaze along. The Harley proved a great asset for collecting mushrooms at Driffield. On one occasion on a frosty morning we had gone about six miles and I could place my hand on the cylinder on arrival such was the air temperature at the time.

This year I had taken the soccer seriously playing in defence for the Methodists U15. I recall defeating St Johns in August and getting a kick on the chin from a Mussared boy *"A problem – If a bottle and a cork cost \$2.50 and the bottle cost \$2 more than the cork. How much did the cork cost?"*

Early in August 1947 Dad took his LSL (half his entitlement on double pay I think) and he and mum went off to WA for a holiday. Grandma Chance was to look after us during their absence. I was on occasions less than co operative during Mum and Dad's absence. Sister Rita had taken over the family diary and records on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1947 "Sweet sixteen and neve been kissed" The impending return of Mum and Dad caused a flurry. I recall digging in the garden by electric light at night. Just prior to Mum and Dad's return I was playing cricket for a Yallourn Under 19 team – the Anglican Church team. We were playing in Morwell and had to get there on bicycle. On the way home one of our team got a puncture and hence another team member gave him a dink while I took the bike and was to wheel it while riding my own. The punctured bike had a fixed wheel and all was going well until I came to the hill adjacent the Yallourn Hospital where we could gain some speed. Unfortunately the bike I was wheeling hit a rut and the fixed wheel pedal hit my front wheel. I went over the top of my bike and hit the gravel on my face and was taken back to the hospital where I was patched up. Mum and Dad were a little horrified a couple of days later on their return from WA. At the schools holidays I started as a messenger boy at the Yallourn Power Station in the electrical testing laboratory of the main operations building. I was to work 15 minutes per day overtime since the mail delivery involved a last minute pick up and delivery to the Main Office. The lab staff was

into all kinds of frivolity. I recall a mouse caught in the rubbish bin was challenged with connection to a 500 volt megger.

**1948** The Harley Davidson bike was put to good use mainly locally. It could take three passengers with two of us in the sidecar. The drive was on the one wheel, similarly it had a foot brake only on the rear wheel, the gears were by hand on the fuel tank and in all it was a work of art to drive and Dad managed it well. I recall trips to Walhalla and Down to Coopers Creek, Coalville, Tyers Narracan, Noogee, Willowgrove, Grand Ridge Road and tours of the Strzlecki Ranges to Tarra Valley, Bulga Park, Gunyah Forrest (where we spotted a lyre bird with tail down) Mt Fatigue, Foster, Fish Creek, Meeniyah and Mirboo North.

Over this school vacation I went with Fred and Alan Marr to Ocean Grove a Methodist Boys Camp where we slept on palliasses.

I was back at school at Yallourn T/S in form 3A I had an average in form 2C of 80.7 and was 4/54. My achillis heal at tech was free drawing and modelling. I recall being motivated in free drawing by a teacher Frank Rowe who placed a cap on the floor in an introduction to a lesson on design and the question was did it get there accidentally or was it placed there by design. Apart from the gimmick the effort was lost on me.

We always seemed to have a case of fruit be it apples or oranges and both were great for an after school snack.

Our Methodist soccer team had new tiger jumpers. We canvassed the church members to raise the cash and I recall visiting several families. One family comes to mind and it was Arnold Sambel of Mount Street who contributed ten shillings which I considered to be exceptionally generous. As a team we improved a little but remained the under dogs. On one occasion I said the referee was one eyed and was threatened with sending off.

In July we acquired a cocker spaniel pup called Trimmer bluey and grey in colour.

Yallourn Tech had a reciprocal visit to Preston T/S thru the agency of Lloyd Peel a teacher at Yalourn Tech.

About the second term vacation I was to go for a holiday to Daylesford with the Marr family and the boys Fred and Alan. We were to develop a cricket pitch on the road in front of 60 Parkway, the road was not sealed so the pitch took some spin and the wicket had to be removed with every passing of a vehicle. Dad had developed some aggression to the dog and said that he had to go. As kids we were distressed about this and decided to house the dog in the swamp and developed an appropriate kennel. Fortunately Dad capitulated about this. Maureen Cain was a regular visitor to our home. A great feat about this time for her was to visit her home loo and some one having left the lid of the pan up meant she tumbled into the pan. At this stage Maureen was not aware of the tragedy to follow. Her Dad JJ was frequently boasting of a range of things and we had suggested that he was a skite. Maureen in her lovely innocence said "I'm a kite too"

The Phillips family had moved from 62 Parkway to Bendigo and the residence was occupied by the Claxton family.

I had quite a good year at school and recall with some fear the Headmaster Bob Wiseman whose classic statement was to send the kids up to room seven for a smack. The tech was much stricter than the high school and the use of the strap prevalent. During the vacation I worked in the central workshops and was given the task of cleaning grease and dirt from machine components with kerosene. I recall looking at the clock at 2.30pm and two hours later looking again only to find it only 2.45pm such was the level of boredom. I would

have my lunch with the foreman in his office. The Workshops G/M would regularly ring him at lunch and on one occasion the foreman responded "I am having my f lunch" and slammed down the phone. Occasionally I would relieve the operator of the telephone system which was of the "plug in" type and regularly cut off the wrong conversations.

**1949.** The data source for 1949 Dad's diary went missing and so I had to refer to my own limited data. I did well in the previous year with an average of 75% and was seventh out of 36 which dad suggested by a comment in my report book that this was "not good enough". I lacked any artistic skill and therefore did poorly in Drawing and Modelling (clay). I was promoted to form 4A and was to undertake diploma entrance standard involving increased studies in maths and science. My weakness was in English. I continued to play soccer but was too old for the under 15 and joined the Yallourn Under 19's who played in the metropolitan area every second week. This involved travelling with the senior side and the return bus left Flinders street at 11.30 pm for the drag back to Yallourn where the bus did the town run for distribution. The journey started off noisy and as the liquor was consumed it declined with time until the mandatory stop. I joined the Under 17 Yallourn United and frequently played two games in a day with the U19's and later the U17. We were U17 premiers that year and I was photographed holding the cup as dressed for cricket in 1950.

My first interstate tour took place to Norwood SA with the under 19 soccer team where we were billeted by the Norwood team Alan Marr, Fred Marr and I regularly played cricket and football on the road in front of 60 Parkway. The football readily went over the nursery fence opposite and we had to scale the 7 ft fence with three strands of barbed wire. On one occasion with cricket I was bowling to Fred from the west a left hander and landed the ball outside the leg stump. Fred skilfully hooked the ball to leg and straight through the window of No 58. Pat Cain was furious and complained of glass splinters all through the lounge. Dad came to the rescue and pacified the reaction.

Early November 1949 Dad went to WA by train to accompany Mum's elder brother Percy Chance to return to Victoria and set up in or around Yallourn. The return trip was in a small two cylinder Jowett Javelin loaded with 49 gallons of fuel (before the lifting of petrol rationing) across the Nullarbor where the road was unsealed from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta. Dad relates this in some detail in his memoirs to his retirement in 1966. I completed the school year and became qualified for diploma entrance in 1950 but I had little appreciation of how to study and was yet to develop the skill. Gordon Miller Vietch was my maths teacher (the best teacher I ever had) and I was never to fail to do my maths homework nor be late for his class. The school had a site up the hill at the junction of Latrobe and Narracan Avenues, this had a classroom and housed the canteen which was run by the Cooley family or was it Mrs Riley? When maths was programmed in this room first up I frequently left my bike at the fence to be on time. A pie was threepence halfpenny and I would frequently ask a colleague for a loan of threepence and I would buy a pie being only able to contribute a half penny. I won a 30 pound SEC scholarship. I was given every opportunity to study at home with the small desk Dad had made at the repatriation hospital. Today son Greg has this at his home in Armadale after I had restored it with several coats of estapol and Greg had fitted new drawer handles.

**1950** Over the vacation I was to work at the briquette factory as a lad labourer for the duration of the factory shutdown which occurred over each Christmas and involved extensive overtime. This was a filthy environment with black coal dust in everything. The

large fan motors of the boiler house had to be serviced and I had the task of blowing out the armatures with compressed air and wrapped myself in cheese cloth with goggles. Practical jokes were rife. It was customary to throw a hat on the slow moving briquette conveyor which involved a hassle to retrieve. On finishing up I had had a shower and washed my overalls and was headed for the pay office and rounding off under the boiler house was confronted by a fellow employee with a fire hose which cooled me down and levelled the score.

I took a part in a play with Yalloum Little Theatre called "Over to Mother" but recall very little about it. Some body stole my bike from the town square an Avrom Star and Dad recovered it about six weeks later much to my relief. There were two of us still at school and costs were increasing and Dad was to commence digging trenches at Newborough with his brother Eric where new homes were being established for the development of the SEC. These homes were brought out from Scandinavia pre cut and fitted together perfectly, provided the tradesmen used some basic instinct. The ease of construction made carpenters overnight of many whose craftsmen skills were minimal. The union movement within the SEC was considered to be Communist as was the general attitude to the union movement and the peace movement.

My soccer continued and I had become a key defender at centre half for Yalloum U19 state premiers in 1950 and undefeated. In these days we played the third back game. Two defenders took the wingers while the centre half took the centre forward and the wing halves the inside forwards. We had a returned visit from Norwood in SA and won 2.-0

I did reasonably well at school and was successful in all subjects. Both Mum and Dad were encouraging – I recall learning my definitions in chemistry and occasionally I would recite these to mum and she would nod in assent "well son that sounds OK" – one such definition was Avogadro's Hypothesis which stated that "equal volumes of all gasses at the same temperature and pressure have equal number of molecules" this meant very little to mum and is of little consequence to me today. 1950 results:

Physics 1A	84	Inorganic Chemistry Th	79
Inorganic Chemistry Prac	77	Engineering Drawing 1	61
English 1	72	Mathematics 1A	68
Mathematics 1B	82	Mathematics 1C	67
Physics 1C	70	MSP Theory 1	77
MSP Prac 1	75		

1951 The little girl Maureen Patricia Cain of whom we had all become so fond died from leukaemia on January 9<sup>th</sup> age 7 years and this saddened us all.

Dad had planted up the front with beans and had sighted a rabbit nibbling the new shoots. The next step was to set a trap but the Claxton's cat took the trap home with much agro from the neighbours. Dad regularly helped Uncle Perce with the construction of a "shack" on the newly purchased block of land in Leith Street Newborough. We purchased our first refrigerator thru the SEC – quite a treat. During the school vacation I was employed by the SEC on vacation training and was initially assigned to the Yalloum North open cut where I was involved as a grease monkey on a power shovel – greasing the pulley at the top of the boom was not my cup of tea – I went on to work in the open cut and was to learn a great deal of the mining of coal and its transmission to the power station and briquette factory by narrow gauge electric trains (90 cm) - and steep haulage

into the bunkers in the first instance and then by narrow cable tippers to the briquette factory. This experience was something of an education.

In cleaning up at the briquette factory and along the loading area of VR trucks a large number of briquettes mixed with processed chips of coal known as slack were dumped at the new Yalloum tip just 400 Yards west of our home en route to Hernes Oak. Dad had acquired a multi pronged fork with numerous close tynes (I still have it today) which was useful in sifting the slack to get large pieces of briquettes (mostly the nut variety) which were carted home and on one occasion some 15 cwt was taken to Dad's sister's (Eunice Tamme) place in Melbourne in a truck which later that day was to take Uncle Perce's new furniture back to Newborough. I was amazed at this, the furniture was bought in Smith St I think and uncle Perce constructed a frame on the truck to stabilise the furniture.

All three of us went to Lake Tyers Methodist Easter Camp which was to become a tradition for the next couple of years. My school holidays were to be taken up digging trenches in Newborough. I could earn two and six a lineal foot to a depth of 18 inches. I continued to play U 19 soccer. In May my cousins, Dad's brother Eric and Family moved to Preston. Cecil Cain the neighbour or JJ as we knew him stuttered quite a bit and was not known for his generosity. One Sunday in July when we were returning from Sunday School JJ said to Rita "arh,arh, arh there what was the text today" Rita was quick off the mark and said "The lord loveth a cheerful giver" Dad too heard the response and JJ was appropriately chastened.

At the Easter Camp I met Peter Moonie whose companionship I enjoyed for some time and stayed at his home in Warragul. One of my early girlfriends was Pam Trewin of Tinamba followed by Gloria Farmer whom I have not been able to locate to this day. About this time my younger sister Jean had commenced nursing at Eye and Ear hospital. I had learnt to dance and this was rather distracting and flopped a bit at the mid year but was determined to recover by the end of the year. Early in the year I was playing competition cricket with the ANA but gave this up for study later in the year - I adopted the policy of three hours per subject per week apart from the set homework which was to be done after school and before dinner. I had strong support from home and was exempted from the dinner dishes. My efforts paid off and I did well passing all subjects. I recall the Maths IIA exam where my colleague got the time wrong and thought it was in the afternoon - he was granted a supplementary exam.

A close friend of cousin Loyal Chance was Kathleen Gwilliam who had stayed with us for some time earlier in the year and nursed at Yalloum Hospital. Rita and I were guests of at her wedding after her engagement to Brian Birmingham. I think I was a groomsman and during the breakfast I was to drive out to Driffield way as a passenger to fetch some refreshments. We were driving too fast in a large Buick in fog and ran off the road sheering off the front wheel. I was stunned and suffered concussion in the next couple of days. Dad's old BSA was brought home from Devine's at the West Camp having been left there since 14/02/44. My results for 1951 in my second year of a Diploma of Mechanical Engineering were pleasing.

Applied Mechanics 11	78	Mathematics 11A	69
Mathematics 11B	63	Physics 1B	86
Engineering Principles	89	Matriculation English Pass	
Engineering Drawing 11B	50	Metallurgy 1C	75

Graphics	74	MSP Theory 11	77
MSP Prac 11	75		

These results were particularly pleasing since I had socialised a lot with ballroom dancing at the mid year and knew I had to knuckle down for the final. I resolved that the big swat job would start 10 weeks out from the exams and that there would be absolutely no socialising. My study TT only had a short break on a Sunday.

1952 I had applied for a Teaching Studentship encouraged by the then Principal Edgar L. Scott and was successful after an interview in Melbourne, this giving me an income of about 14 pounds per fortnight. Mum was generous and I paid no board but had to provide otherwise for myself. On Feb 8<sup>th</sup> 1952 my State Savings Bank bank book shows that my balance went from 8/17/6 (LSD) to 59/17/6 (LSD) possibly due to my first cheque from Education Department. After my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday last year I had to register for National Service in the Army. My medical turned up an eye defect which I had rectified early in 1952 and was prescribed spectacles. My N/S was deferred due to my studies. Cec Cain (JJ) the next door neighbour announced that he had prepared for his mother in law's visit with a tough steak and a myxomatosis bunny.

King George VI died on Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 1952.

I went to Easter Camp at Lake Tyers with Jean and came home on the back of Peter Mooney's motor bike. I continued to play soccer with the Yalloum Reserves having passed 19 and no longer eligible for U19. In late June Dad went to the Repatriation Hospital for back treatment attributed to a service injury for about six weeks and I took over the writing of the diary in much the same style as Dad but with the emphasis on the first person.

In December I went to work as a vacation student in Yalloum Power Station Mechanical Tests section under Val Mc Goldrick the engineer in charge and learnt a lot about mechanical testing and power station in general.

My 1952 results were quite satisfying:

Mathematics 111A	73	Engineering Drawing 111B Pt 1	50
Heat Engines 1	73	Electrical Engineering 1	72
Metallurgy 11C	87	Applied Mechanics 111B	83
M.S.P. 111 Th	92	M.S.P. 111 Prac	70

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*End of first twenty years*