

BUPA Pottsville Beach presents

Our Stories

As told by Frank, Marjorie and Bernice



Compiled and edited by Owen McGoldrick

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BUPA Pottsville Aged Care, Pottsville Beach, NSW, Australia.

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Once Upon a Time...

There were three fair dinkum Aussies who lived in the BUPA Elder Care in Pottsville, NSW, Australia. This brave trio volunteered to share their life stories with Owen McGoldrick, a Yank who had moved to the Tweed Coast in 2013.

Bernice Gunton, Frank Crighton and Marjorie Dillon met with Owen from January to May, 2014, in tape recorded meetings to explore, reminisce and capture the memories each had on the pivotal chapters of every lifetime: childhood, school, love and work.

If there is a philosophy to the selection of the stories it is this - that losing your hat on a railway line can be as important, to the individual, as the day the Japanese bombed Darwin. Perhaps not in terms of world history, but as an indelible personal memory in which the story has deep meaning, even to the historian from across the pond surveying the cultural values of the times. In short, nothing is insignificant.

Especially if it is remembered.

CHAPTERS:

EARLY DAYS

SCHOOL DAYS

WAR DAYS

WORK DAYS

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

TUCKER

RECIPES

AUSTRALIA



Frank Crighton



Marjorie Dillon



Bernice Gunton



EARLY DAYS

Marjorie: I was born in Wickham, a suburb of Newcastle, NSW, on the 16th of September 1933. My earliest memory is of the day my brother was born. Mum was upstairs and I was told to stay downstairs. Later I was allowed up to see my baby brother. I asked my mum, why has he got such a red face? And she replied, because the doctor brought him in his Gladston Bag.

When I was 6 or 7 I developed pneumonia. The last thing I remember was leaving the house wrapped in a blanket and being carried out to the ambulance. They took me to the Royal Newcastle Hospital but I don't remember a thing that first week. My mother and brothers came to see me often and when my dad was home from sea he came to visit me but when he left I cried so much all the other kids in the ward started crying so I soon became very unpopular with the matron. She told my dad not to come and visit me again. As I was there for 6 weeks I missed him very much. In those days, you had to stay in bed all the time, they never let anyone get up or even walk a few steps so when it came time for me to go home I got up and tried to walk but couldn't move. The matron said very coldly, *Of course you can*, and made me walk to the next bed but my legs were like jelly. Then we had to walk to the tram which was a block away. All the time my legs were shaking and trembling. We had to walk two blocks to get home. I wished my dad had been there as he would've carried me. However, my legs eventually returned to normal and I was soon running everywhere again.

I remember getting a lovely new hat to go to church on Sundays. It was very pretty, pale blue with little pink flowers and blue ribbons. I was so happy to wear it to church the first time. I walked home with a friend and she suggested we cross the railway lines instead of the High Level Bridge, so I nervously followed her and halfway across, my hat blew away on to the railway line.

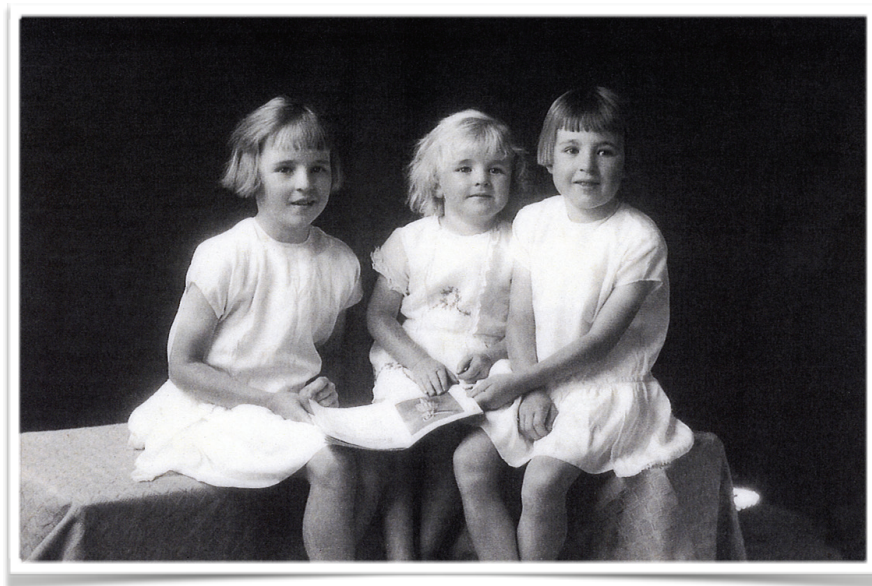
I was afraid to go back for it in case a train came, so I lied to my mum and told her my hat blew off on the High Level Bridge. It wasn't until she was old that I told her the truth.

I was 9 years old when we moved to Speers Point on Lake Macquarie about 1 hour by bus from Newcastle. The war was still going, but at Speers Point it seemed far away. I began to attend Boolaroo Public School. Boolaroo and Speers Pt. were small towns where everyone knew everybody's business. I really loved Speers Point, there was so much to do and see there. My friends and I would go to Speers Point Park everyday in the summer. The park was large and full of beautiful, large shady trees, picnic tables and a kiosk, and nearly always had a small carnival with merry-go-rounds and stalls. The lake baths were at one end of the park and we spent most of the day swimming and diving. I first learned to swim in that lake and we'd only come out for lunch and go home about 4pm in the summertime. In the winter we went up the hill and played on grassy slopes and lit an open fire and baked jacket potatoes till they were black, they tasted so good.

Bernice: I was born in New Zealand on September 5, 1923 in a little town called Huntly, in the coal mining district south of Auckland. My grandparents came over from Ireland on a ship called the HMS Arethusa and a copy of their sea diary is in the Turnbull Library in Wellington.

I was three and my father was working at the Huntly Hotel. It was a local pub, and he came home at lunchtime, which he always did, and said to my mother- *Have those kids ready, there's a photographer at the pub grounds doing photos and I want a photograph of them.* Just like that. My father wanted a photo of us for his family, though they never really took much interest in us. I can remember mum dashing and bathing us, washing our hair, sorting out the clothes she thought were suitable. She never, ever bought ready-mades from the store for us when we were children, she always made all our clothes. So mum took my two sisters and I into a tent on the town square.

The photographer had this big chest which had a velvet cover on it. I can remember him asking us to sit here and sit there and he put me in the middle. I was always piggy in the middle (being the middle one of seven children). The photo was taken and we went home and waited for a week before it turned up. My mother received one photograph... that's the one sitting on the dresser.



My mother called me Tess, for Treasure. She was a lovely little lady, just a tiny thing, so kind and gentle. She taught me how to swim. I could swim before starting school. We lived where there was a lake and she'd take us out for a lesson. I remember her holding the back of my bathing suit and I would doggie paddle.

The Waikato River had a very fast current that ran right behind our house. To get to where we wanted to swim we had to walk a mile. Mum wouldn't let us go unless she was there with us. I used to love to be in that water. I was like a fish, always the one that was slow to get out.

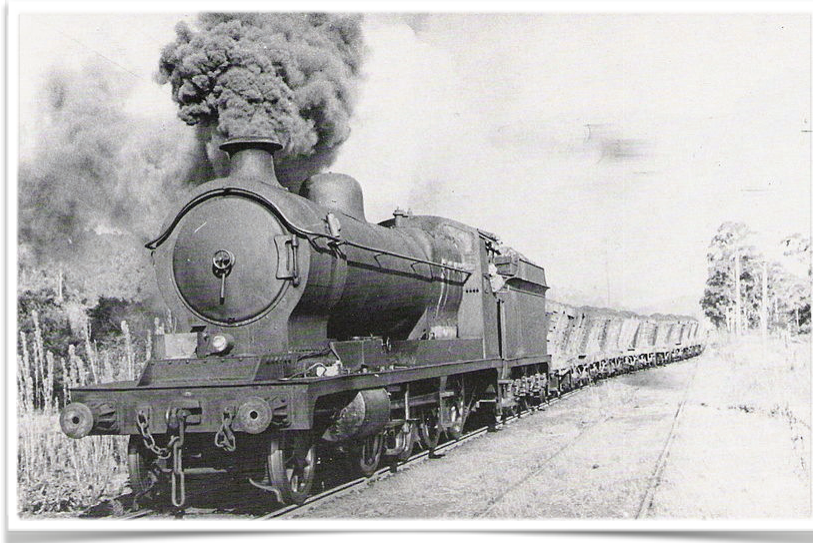
She'd say- *We have to go now so I can start dinner!* Later, they drained the river and opened up the Arapuni dam. The Waikato then became a fast flowing, very narrow channel of water. We'd still go there but the swimming was never the same again.

Frank: I was born in Maitland in the Hunter Valley on February 23, 1928. My earliest memory is of being in the Maitland Hospital with dyptheria when I was about 5 years old. Dyptheria was a deadly disease in those days, you were kept in isolation. My fear was greatest at night being all alone in a hospital at such a young age. I had a good childhood but those times were tough. We were poor and my parents were very strict, it was hard to outlay the money for a pair of shoes. One day mum bought me a new pair of shoes for the first day of school. We had a mini flood and that attracted all the boys to the big cement drain. I was there mucking around with a few of me mates and when I got home mum said, *where's your shoes?* It hit me that I took 'em off at the drain and forgot to pick them up. Well, she got the ironing cord and flogged me all the way back to the creek, now and again letting go a ripper... Lo and behold I found me shoes!

In Maitland if we went out anywhere we had to walk. We often went to Rutherford, which was 6 miles down the road, to visit friends. On the way there you had to pass the orphanage and that used to scare the hell out of me. I would cross over to the other side of the road till we got past the orphanage. I was afraid of ending up there if I ever lost my parents. It was always at the back of me mind.

My father worked for 44 years on the railway as a guard. He wasn't a man of big stature, only about 5'6". He worked all shifts and in those days we didn't have enough money to buy a motorcar, so he had to ride a pushbike from Cardiff to Port Waratah, a suburb of Newcastle. It would take him 2 hours to ride to work. It was nearly all uphill going to work and mostly downhill coming home.

When he was working on the coal trains that ran from the mines to Port Waratah, the driver of the engine would go *toot toot toot* when he was coming up to our place.



We lived right next to the rail line and that's when I knew my dad was going to drop off some coal. He'd kick it off the van in the rear of the train and I'd go out to retrieve the coal and bring it home.

There's two things of my father's you should never touch. His gold watch and his razor - an open cut razor. When he retired at the age of 60 the railway people came and took what was left of his uniform and his gold watch and that broke his heart. He treasured that watch. That made an impression on me.

Mum was a hardworking kind of a woman. We didn't have a refrigerator or washing machine, we had ice chests. My mum was very strict with cleanliness so everything had to be spot on, washing all the time, full time. In the early days she used to give me sixpence to go to the movies on a Saturday afternoon and always made sure that I was well dressed.

One time she bought me a Panama hat, I'll never forget it as long as I live. Mum dressed me up to go to the movies and I had to wear me Panama hat. You had to walk, of course, and I walked across the railway line, down through me auntie's paddock, and went down the road that goes under the Royal Hotel which was a highly favored gathering place for pigeons. After I walked past the hotel, I got down to the movie theatre and everyone's laughing at me, and I wondered what it was. They pointed at me Panama hat. I took it off and there were pigeon droppings all over it. That was a shocker!

Bernice: In the cold, rainy weather, we'd come home from school soaking wet. There was always soup on the coal range, we'd get a slice of cheese from the cutting board on the veranda, sliced with a wire, and a bowl of soup. Mum would dry our clothes off in front of the stove. She'd know where Nora and I had been. *If you go to that Smith's again I'll box your ears!* Smith's was a local car dealer and we discovered that a couple of old Essex cars kept in the back of the showroom, if you got in and pressed the self starter, they turned over. But that was as much as you could get out of it. Nora and I would always attempt to get the car to go but it was *no go*. I was about 10. I always wanted to drive a car. I couldn't wait to drive.

Our cousins were real country bumpkins, we never admitted they were related to us because we used to go to the local movies on a Saturday and they had permanent booking of the two front row seats in the dress circle. No one else got those seats and when they played "God save the King" which was big in those days, our cousins would never stand up, they were the only people sitting down. We all stood up for GSTK, and we'd say - *Those neighbors of ours, what an ignorant lot!*

Aunt Nellie used to come into town on Fridays and she'd bring eggs and butter and cream for the local chemist and neighbors and give it to them. My mother would say- *Yes, but Nellie never drops anything off at my place because they think my husband is a waster.* Well, that's what she thought they thought. You can't put thoughts into other people's minds.

Frank: There was a fella who sold ice cream to all the kids in my neighborhood. He'd come every Sunday with a horse and chariot and he'd ring the bell, you'd run into the house and say, The ice cream man's coming! The small cone was worth a penny and the larger one was a twopence. You'd go out and there'd be a line of kids on the street all with their pennies, you'd say I'd like three penny ones, thank you, and he'd go to scoop the ice cream. He used to lick the inside of the scoop so he could get the next one out. So we gave him a nickname. We called him Lick a spoon.

During the week he used to sell rabbits. He'd shout - "*Rabby, wild rabby, clothes props, butter with no coupons.*" Clothes props were the forked branches that held up clotheslines. No one asked him where he got his butter because in those days there were rations and you had to have a coupon issued by the government in order to get butter.

Jimmy Waugh was a Chinaman in Cardiff. He had a big, beautiful commercial garden and a creek used to run through it. One day my sister and I were playing in the yard and we saw Jimmy hollering and I said to my sister, There's something wrong with that fella. He was holding a hoe and shouting in Chinese. When I got over to him there's a big black red bellied snake pinned down and he was trying to get my attention to come and kill it, which we eventually did.

His famous saying was *Wha choo want?* Jimmy had an old horse and cart and he'd go from Cardiff to the Newcastle markets, about 8 miles up hill. He'd start off at 3 am in the morning and go to the markets in Newcastle to sell his produce. Coming back it was all down hill. He'd stop in front of the billiard room in Cardiff. Next door was a fish and chips shop and he'd sit down and eat. I'll never forget his old draft horse.

He used to put a nose bag on the horse and feed him oats. I learned from Jimmy that the way you stop a stubborn horse who keeps walking away is to throw dust in his eyes. But he loved that horse and was a terrific old bloke. Everyone loved Jimmy.

Marjorie: Mum wasn't a very affectionate person, dad was the affectionate one. She was a quiet woman, but smart. Mum loved us and always looked after us well. Her father was a coal miner and she came from a family of 9 kids. As mum got older she softened a bit, and we became closer. We talked about a lot of different things, every subject you could think of.

My father, Tom, lived in Port Pirie, SA. Due to unfortunate circumstances his parents were separated when he was a boy and he and his brothers went into foster homes. He used to see the big sailing ships, schooners and fourmasters, and when he was 15 decided to run away to sea. He became a cabin boy on one of the ships traveling to the Pacific Islands. When he was a sailor he used to be away for weeks on the local trade to Port Kembla or to New Zealand and it broke my heart to see him go.

Dad loved the sea and of a Friday night, after a couple of beers, he would get out his small port with mementos in it. (This was after he left the sea). The three kids would gather around and he'd show us photos, postcards and knuckle dusters and tell stories of his adventures on the high seas. Knuckle dusters were knobby rings that went across three fingers like brass knuckles. They were worn for self protection in case you were attacked when off duty. People would wait for the sailors to get off the ships because they knew they had money.

In 1949, when my dad was 47 he developed pains in the chest. He saw the local doctor who thought it was indigestion but dad wanted a cardiograph. He was told he had to wait 4 months and he said – *A man will be dead by then*. One Saturday morning in April I walked past his bedroom and heard a snoring sound coming from the room. Mum said, *Quick Marjorie, run next door and have Mr. North get the doctor*. She thought it was the death rattles. The doctor came and said there was nothing he could do. The autopsy showed dad had died from a clot of blood which went to the heart, a coronary thrombosis.

I was 15, my brothers were 18 and 12. We all cried and I made up my mind to look after my mum and be there for her for the rest of her life.

Bernice: My father was a publican. He had a gambling and drinking problem. His family had plenty of money but they didn't give it to him, they knew where it went. My granny lived with us and she was a little lady and had an independent income. Most everything we had came out of granny's pocket, not out of his. My mother used to say that Archie Quinn, the bookmaker, lived off the fat of our land. My father would often be at the bookmakers. Archie had a men's hairdressing place and he was very good friends with my father, he knew he was a source of income.

But we were well fed, well clothed and well educated, although my father, if he'd had his way, would've sent me away from school when I was ten because he thought I should be earning some money. It would've been like that in England in those days, and he was an Englishman.

He told me once, *I've arranged for you to go to your Auntie Lizzie's, that was his eldest sister, you'll do housework for her and she'll give you a pound. When you get the pound give it to your mother.* When mum heard this she said - *No you won't do any such thing. You can go to work for your Aunt Lizzie but the pound stays in your pocket.* He never provided for us. He used to go to all the race meetings, was always away from home. My father left us on my 18th birthday and we never kept in touch with him.

I used to sleep with my granny. She was Irish and she knew Irish history back to front. I just loved her. Her name was Julia O'Donnell. Everybody called her little granny.

My mum was out visiting one of our rellies and I went to see my friend Nora and didn't get home till 5'o'clock. Granny said - *Where've you been?* I said it doesn't matter where I've been. She said *Listen!* and took me by the ear.

I'm in charge when your mother's not here and you'll do as I tell you. I've never had one of my grandchildren talk back to me and you're not going to start.
And I never forgot it.

I used to walk her home when she didn't live with us anymore, she lived in the farmhouse with my Aunt Nell, that was my mother's eldest sister, and we were walking home and I used to always have her arm in mine. She was only a little lady, and I started to cry and she said - *What are you crying for?* I said I don't know what I'll do when you die. She said - *You'll do the same as all the others, life goes on regardless.* Granny always had Irish sayings but she didn't have an Irish accent, she was 16 when she came from Ireland, through an arranged marriage.

Frank: Cardiff had a monstrous picture theatre and it was all timber. Every Saturday afternoon, if my mother could afford the sixpence to get in, we'd go to the movies. We used to love cowboy movies, Abbott and Costello, The Glenn Miller Story. Half an hour before the movie started there'd be a pianist there playing all the latest songs and at intermission the piano would rise up from the floor. If you had a request, you'd write it on a piece of paper, take it down, place it on the piano and then he'd play the song.

I woke up one morning and my mother came in to the bedroom and said, *You won't be going to the movies for a long while.* I said why not? She said - *It burnt down last night, went right up in flames.* And that would've been a big, bloody fire, only a half mile from our house too! Mr. Edwards was the man that owned it and they built a new one made out of bricks. By that time I'd grown up and left town.

Dancing was very popular because it was the only form of entertainment you had besides the picture show. We used to have to walk everywhere. In later years I danced seven nights a week! There were no busses after 10 o'clock so wherever you were dancing you'd walk home as a group, miles and miles. We'd go to the dance at the Palais, there'd be a group of us.

The dance would finish at say, 11 o'clock, and we'd walk seven miles from the Palais to Wallsend. We'd walk that seven miles and think nothing of it, singing songs.



I joined the boy scouts and got kicked out of that because I started smoking. You wanna know what started me smoking? I started smoking pieces of cane from a cane chair! Then I graduated to tobacco and cigarettes. I used to thief them from my father. I smoked on and off for 50 years.

The Hunter River runs through the town of Maitland. In those days, hemp was a natural thing along the river bank. You used to pull it out and throw it away to get access to the river to fish and today, of course, it's marijuana. In those days it was marijuana too but no one knew what marijuana was! If they'd known a lot of blokes would've gone mad over that stuff! I've never smoked it, no way, but I've locked up a lot of blokes because of it.

Marjorie: With the food coupons we received you could buy butter, meat, flour, tea and clothing. Everyone got ½ lb butter a week for every member of a family, so when we ran out and I wanted a sandwich after school, mum would say, *No butter, but you can have golden syrup or beef dripping.* Saveloys and meat pies were cheap then. We often had savs on a Saturday, they tasted much better in those days as they still had fat in them, and so did sausages. We only had chicken at Christmas and Easter as lamb was cheaper and more available.

We had a milkman that would come around and he'd fill up the billy can. You'd put the billy can out front on the veranda. There would be cream on the top and the can would be kept in the shade but the milk would still be warm in the summer. Or mum would send me to the Milk-o's house to get a pint of milk and on the way home I'd eat all the cream off the top. I loved cream.

One day mum went to town and she said - *Now don't let that fire go out* because you always had to keep the fire going in the stove to cook dinner. I forgot about it and when I went in and looked it was nearly out so I thought- how am I going to get this going again? I knew that mum often put kerosene on the stove to start it so I leaned over and tipped a bit of kerosene on it. A big flame flew up with soot and everything and burnt my eyebrows and eyelashes. I had lovely, long, curly eyelashes and now they were all burnt and ginger colored! So I cut the eyelashes off thinking they would grow back, knowing I'd get in a heap of trouble for putting kero on the fire. But they never did grow back the same way again... strange.

We didn't have the sewer on in those days, only sanitary pans, and the lavatory was down in the backyard, no toilet paper, only newspaper. If I had to go at night I was quite scared, it was dark and secluded.

Our laundry only had a fuel copper and tubs, and no hot water service. At that time you had a hand wringer and glass scrubbing board, but no washing machine. There were no refrigerators, everyone had an ice chest. The ice man came about twice a week so if you ran out of ice it was difficult during the hot summer to keep food fresh.

After the war when fridges became available my mum was the first to buy one, I think it was called a "Silent Night." Soon lots more electric appliances were becoming available, it was great, and it wasn't long before a lot of new cars came on the market around 1947-48. Before that, the doctor was the only one in Speers Point who had a car.



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SCHOOL DAYS

Bernice: My mother came from Irish stock and they believed in a proper education. It was very important. I went to a convent school in Huntly, New Zealand, and I loved the nuns, just idolized them. But my second older sister said - *I hate the lot of them*. I said Why? She said - *Because they give you the strap*. But I didn't mind because I never got the strap.

I always topped the class. I didn't make the effort but I used to be very good at arithmetic and my hand would go up every time and they'd say *Oh, you keep pushing yourself!* But I was ambitious and wanted to do well. I wanted to prove to my father that I wasn't just stupid.

We didn't have school uniforms. In high school you had to wear gym dresses, navy blue, and pleated, you wore a sash around your waist the color of the class, it was like a tunic. We were told to behave because if you were caught misbehaving, you knew you'd let down the school, because everybody knew what school you were from by the color of your sash. I was a good girl though, I never got in trouble.

There used to be two of us, Nora and myself. She was my school pal. We were always the nun's favorites. When it was school holidays the nuns would send word for Nora and I to go visit them. They'd have us go and polish the brass in the church.

Frank: I was raised Presbyterian. My mother wasn't religious but she was a believer. We kids went to three Sunday schools every Sunday. We went to the Presbyterian first, then over to the Methodist, which was across the road, then come home and have dinner, and afterwards go to the Salvation Army on Sunday afternoon. I loved it.

In those days Catholics and Protestants were poles apart. We'd taunt the Catholics on the way to school and they'd taunt us. We'd sing "*Catholics, Catholics, sitting on a log, eating maggots out of a frog.*"

They'd sing "*Catholics, Catholics ring the bell, Protestants, Protestants go to hell.*"

We'd sing "*Protestants, Protestants, brave and bold, oughta be, oughta be dipped in Gold.*"

We didn't like each other but we never brawled over it. The teachers were always the winners of fights. They got the last laugh and the last whack.

Marjorie: When I lived in Wickham I attended the Catholic school. My mum bought me a new raincoat that was black and shiny new. The first day it rained I wore it to school and hung it in the cloakroom with all the other coats. When it was time to go home it wasn't there, someone had taken it and left an old worn one in its place. So I had to wear the old one home. My mum was furious and the next day she went to see the nuns and they said someone had taken it by mistake and would ask for it to be returned. It never was.

After a short time my mother took my brother and I out of that school and sent us to the public school in Wickham.

When we moved to Speers Point, I went to Boolaroo Public School. The day I started, mum couldn't find a bobby pin or a ribbon to tie my hair back so I went to school with one side hanging over my face. When they introduced me, I stood in front of the class, feeling embarrassed. The next day I was able to pin my hair back, but a few girls told me they liked it the other way best, like Veronica Lake, the movie star. But I pinned it back just the same.

I really enjoyed Boolaroo school, all the teachers were nice and they had a good library so I soon became an avid reader, reading “Anne of Green Gables” and any book by L. M. Montgomery. We had a short story competition and my brother and I tied for first place, we had our stories read out before the Assembly.

When I was in 5th class, our teacher, Mr. Archer, was the headmaster, so he would often be out of the class, doing office work. Mr. Archer would read us a lot of poems, Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson. We liked “The man from Snowy River” And so we didn’t do a lot of other schoolwork. It was a good year.

When the teacher was away from the classroom I used to draw in a book. My friend Patty was a ballet and tap dancer and she got me to design and draw her dresses for performances and soon I had a whole exercise book full. I had ideas of becoming a dress designer or model as I was very interested in fashion. However, the dream never came true. Most of my life was spent as a wife, mother and homemaker.

Frank: I went to Cardiff Public School. The class size was about 30 students. If you didn’t pay attention some of the teachers would throw the chalk at you. After a while, I transferred and went to Central Junior Technical School. I hated it. I was always getting into trouble, always doing detention after school. So I went back to Cardiff Public school and became dux of my class, top dog in studies and tests. There were two systems. First was primary school; they were the state schools, you could take a bus to them. Then there were the secondary schools where you had to take a train because they were further away and there were less of them.

When I turned 14 years and 8 months, which was the golden age, you could leave school. I got my QC, a qualifying certificate, which means you’d completed primary school, and hightailed out of there.

Bernice: Nora and I would go home everyday for lunch. Sister Luke, the school cook, had this little fox terrier called Bobby. She'd say - *Go to the local butchers and get the meat for Bobby.* When we went to get the dog's meat, we used to call in to the chemist shop where you could weigh yourself for free. Usually you had to pay a penny. We both weighed 4 stone 7, I can still remember that. I used to love to go and weigh myself. One day as we left the shop the chemist said - *Now don't come here everyday, once a week is plenty!*

One day we went to see Mr. Knight, the butcher and he said - *Here comes the dog meat,* meaning Nora and I. He thought he was being funny. We didn't tell Sister Luke, but I told my mum when I got home and she said *You're not to go there anymore, he's being very rude and you're not to go back.* We had to tell the sisters we weren't allowed to go anymore.

There was an old nun, Sister Leo, she was a sick old lady and I felt sorry for her. She used to keep an eye on us at playtime and my brother was a little boy and a tattler. One day he said to the sister, *I feel sorry for you because all the boys call you "Stiffy."* And she said - *Don't you worry, sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me.*

The system in New Zealand was different types of high schools, so you had a commercial high school or a high school that was purely academic. Boys went to a high school that was more practical, woodworking or mechanics, things like that. I went to a commercial school for secondary school. Typing, bookkeeping, shorthand. I was no good at shorthand but was good with numbers.

Frank: On Empire Day all the schools would come together and march for about a mile down to the picture theatre and we'd all sing the patriotic songs. The theatre used to show a film on the history of Australia and England and all the recent events. Once the film was over you could go home so it was a half day. Empire Day was a good day.

I remember Wattle day. Of course, that's the national flower. Wattle day was celebrated at school, and you wore a wattle sprig on your shirt. It was a highlight because you were given sixpence to buy your lunch and we'd get battered Sausages cut in half, rolled in butter, and then fried. But those holidays are gone, you don't see them anymore, unfortunately.



"I honor my God, I serve my queen (or King), and I salute the flag."

That was the Pledge. And it was all conducted around the flag pole. The pledge was every Monday morning. I could never forget that pledge, I've done it too many times.

We had plenty of courtships at school and after school. If the boys had any competition for the same girl we used to run around the oval to work it out, "I'll race you around the oval" We'd race for her affections and whoever won took the girl. Not that she knew anything about it.

Bernice: We got a love of reading from my mother, she was a great reader. Mum didn't have much time but she spent her spare time reading. My father had a great collection of books, where he got them from I don't know, but they were Charles Dickens books and they were bound with a suede sort of leather which makes me think they were the original first edition.

He wouldn't let us read them, we weren't even allowed to touch them. He didn't read anything but the *Best Bets*, which was the racing paper, that was all he ever read. The principal of the local high school was a drinking mate and my father told him to come and get the books, the National Geographics and the Charles Dickens books, regardless of the fact that we hadn't read any of them. I used to be intrigued with the National Geographics and still am.

Frank: I remember a teacher by the name of Toby very well. He was six foot six and he had a cane as thin as a pencil that made you never want to come back for more. Trams used to run by the school. If you got into trouble he'd say come outside and face the tram lines and bend over. He had a feather duster with a cane handle and he'd cane you across the buttocks. Terror!

In those days you'd elect two or three boys to be school prefect and you could never get along with them. They wanted to be known and appreciated and if they caught you doing anything wrong, like smoking behind the toilets, you were put on detention. So the prefects wanted brownie points. I'd say it's still like that in Australia today.

Marjorie: I played sport at Boolaroo. I loved to run and jump and was pretty fast, often coming first in races. I realize now how wonderful it is to be able to walk and run as I'm now on a walker. Mobility is a blessing we take for granted. After Grade 6 I started high school in 1945 at Hamilton Home Science High in Newcastle. The first year everyone had to do the Home Science Course, which included cooking, sewing and art. They had a house with a bedroom, dining room, and kitchen and taught you how to make a bed, set the dining table properly, vacuum, and cook. Mum said I should do the business course the 2nd year which I reluctantly agreed to do. But I was no good at shorthand and not much better at typing. When I turned 15 my Dad said I should leave, just before the Intermediate Certificate. He said girls don't need the education like boys do, they get married and have children, so I left. But getting a job wasn't easy.



WAR DAYS

Marjorie: During the war when we lived in Wickham, we had to black out our windows every night and the air raid warden would come around to check that he couldn't see a chink of light. I was in Catholic school and one day the nuns told us we had to carry a bag with toothpaste and a brush plus soap and facewasher, because we may have to be evacuated. Then one day the nun told us the Japs were coming and we had to go home at once. I had to walk a mile to go home and I was scared, I think I was about 8 years old. Halfway home the air raid siren started, I was terrified by then. We had been told if planes came over we had to throw ourselves in the gutter. I just kept hurrying home and I was ever so pleased to see my mum again. The Japs never appeared.

Some time later the Japanese Midget subs came into Newcastle Harbor as far as the Steel Works. One night the B.H.P. was shelled but they landed on the steelworks dump and most never exploded. My father decided that the city was too dangerous, being a major port for coal and steel, so we moved to Speers Point on Lake Macquarie.

Frank: I had an uncle that got gassed in the First World War and died, and I had a cousin, who lived only a couple doors from us, Alex Rowe, who got killed in the Owen Stanley Ranges in New Guinea fighting the Japanese.

Early in the war I was a paper boy delivering the papers and had first hand knowledge of any news. When I delivered the papers people would say *How's things?* and I'd say things like the HMAS Sydney was sunk, or something that had happened the previous day. I used to bellow out the topic of the paper headlines when the trains stopped at the station. I sold me a lot of papers too!



Bernice: I joined the New Zealand Air Force in 1942. I was working in a bookshop then and didn't care for it very much, there was no future in it and I was ambitious.

Huntly was in a coal mining district and, like all small towns, everybody knew everybody's business. The war began and my oldest brother had gone overseas with the Air Force and there was an inducement for women to join up. I thought if I joined the Air Force they might bring my brother home sooner.

One day after a tennis game I said to my girlfriend, I'm going to join up and she said- *Oh I will too!* We went to the place where they were registering and after an interview took a pledge. There were quite a few girls that soon realized they didn't like it and went home. I was the youngest of the lot, I'd just turned eighteen.

Early in my service I got cold feet and told my mother I didn't want to stay anymore. She said- *That's bad luck, you're going to have to stay. You can't just leave - you've sworn an oath that you'd give them your service!*

Marjorie: During World War II tobacco was scarce and dad liked a smoke. You could only get a packet if you got your weekly order from the grocers and mum used to get her groceries from the corner shop. One day the grocer delivered her order and said the tobacco hadn't come in yet. However, earlier in the day she'd seen that the tobacco truck *was* parked there. Now, mum was not a big woman, only about 5 ft 3 inches tall, and she appeared to be quiet and mild mannered, but I knew differently. Around lunchtime, when she knew the shop would be full of people, she decided to pay a visit and took me along for moral support. When she asked for her tobacco, the shopkeeper denied that it had come in, so she knew he was keeping it for someone else. Mum kept hassling him and said she wouldn't shop there anymore so he finally produced it and handed it to her. By this time she was in a temper so she threw the packet back at him, vowing never to deal there again. We marched back home and within a half hour the grocer appeared begging her to accept the tobacco which mum grudgingly did, only because she knew dad would not be too happy without his smokes.

Frank: We'd go to the dance halls in Newcastle and watch the sailors and the Yanks street fighting. As I've said before, the relationship between the Aussies and the Yanks wasn't real good. The communities in and around Cardiff put on dances to entertain the troops which often went well into the night. There was a 6 o'clock closing at the pubs where quart bottles of grog were sold with the famous stopper on top of them. Grog was known as "Dutch Courage" because with a little help you'd get up enough courage to go up to the girl you fancied for a dance. Now the soldiers had bottles of grog hidden out there. The bottles were worth about 9 pence empty and me and my five cousins would go to these dances, not to go in and dance, but to get there early, take up our positions in the scrub, and watch where the soldiers hid their grog.

When the dance was in full swing, we'd go and knock off the tops, pour all the beer out, and take the empty bottles down to the pub the next day and get 9 pence each for them. We were making bank. And we never, ever got caught. The funny part about it was, we'd sit there and watch the Yankees come out of the hotel and they'd say *It's gone...I know who took it, them Aussies took it!* So then it'd be on! There were some big blues I'll tell ya. That was a part of the war, but it was all done in a jovial manner, jovial because we never got caught!

Bernice: I was sent to a place called Hobsonville, which was the base for amphibious planes. Located in Northern New Zealand, it was the only flying boat base. We were called WAAFs – the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. The first three weeks I was in the mess serving up food and didn't like that one bit, it was considered demeaning. Then one of the corporals spoke up for me to go into the stores in the engineering section issuing special tools and equipment. They had the tin bashers there- where they knocked the bodies of the plane back into shape again. They'd come up and give me a little token with a number on it and I took the tool off the board and issued the tool. I worked on a shift with 50 men, there were 3 girls and we worked around the clock.

When we went down to Hamilton from the base in Auckland, there was a housing shortage and the Air Force took over private hotels for the women. The hotel we were staying at was just over the hill from where I worked. Every night I used to go dancing but we wouldn't have too many leave nights, so we'd have to pretend to stay in. My hotel room was upstairs. I used to climb down the fire escape and sneak out the back gate. We all used to do it. The superintendent was at the front and she had a corporal in an upstairs room who used to spy on us. She'd watch to see if you were coming or going. I had one friend who loved to dance and she would always go with me.

Her room was across from mine and we practiced walking along the hallway in this old hotel during the day so we knew where the boards creaked. I would sneak out with my dancing shoes under my arm and leave my issue shoes in the hotel shrubbery. When I got to the dance, I had certain partners that I danced with, there were quite a lot of civilians. We weren't in uniform, of course, we had gotten ourselves toggled up after leaving our uniforms at the hotel.

If you were on weekend leave, you'd sign yourself out. I'd make sure that I went home one day, and on the other day I'd flit off to Auckland with my girlfriend and we'd meet up with some Yankees. She had a sister in Auckland and we'd go stay there. Her husband worked in the volunteer fire brigade, this saved him from going into the service, and he always used to say, *I couldn't stand to kill anybody*. I said, well somebody has to do it! He'd bring home some Yanks and we'd share them out to dance with. There was always somebody that suited you, we'd say who we liked. It was hard to get used to at first because the Yanks did a one-two step and we did a two- two step. Eventually we got used to it and did their style of dance.

I loved the Americans, I really did. They were so polite and generous. I used to take them home and my mother would make coffee. Some became my friends in civilian life because I didn't drop my friendships after the war. I had a couple of unrequited loves too. One fellow was very keen on me but he was engaged to a girl, she was a nurse, and I didn't want to break up their romance. He's a doctor now.

Marjorie: Some of the older girls used to go out with the Yanks. There was this one girl, she dressed beautifully every time I'd see her. I was about 11 waiting for the bus in Newcastle, and oh, she was gorgeous! She usually had on a tight, black skirt, a black blouse with long dark hair, stockings and ankle straps in high heels with a gold chain around the ankle, that was the fashion in those days, for some, and I'd watch her get on the bus and was just fascinated by the way she looked.

Everyone talked about her in the town, they always did, they talked about everybody. Well, later on I saw this girl and she'd been married to, you know, just an ordinary guy, (*chuckles*) and when she came out of the house she had a house frock on. I was a bit shocked to see that.

People sort of looked down on the ones who went out with the Yanks, the Aussie men didn't like it so everyone was a bit against it. I'd often see an American soldier down at the park with a girl. You'd see them kissing and cuddling under a tree on the river bank.

I didn't like the Australian uniforms much. The Yankee uniforms were a beige color, very smart and crisp. I liked the slouch hat the Aussie's wore but the uniforms were thick like a serge, or wool, I don't know how they wore them in the summer! There weren't many Australian soldiers around, they were all away fighting in the Pacific. With the Americans on leave and most of the Aussie men away, it did create some problems!

After the war, my friend Jean introduced me to her uncle who had just returned from working on the Burma Railway as a POW. She asked him to show me his chest, so he pulled up his shirt, and I was shocked to see every rib sticking out, he was so thin. But after a few months of good tucker his body was back to normal again.

Bernice: I went on leave once when my granny was sick. She'd had 3 bouts of pneumonia and I remember going on weekend leave and seeing her just lying in bed. It was very upsetting, I wished I'd never gone because there wasn't anything to be done for her. I gave her a kiss and Aunt Nell said - *We'll leave her now so she can sleep.*

My oldest brother was in the Air Force with the New Zealand 75th squadron. I loved him dearly. He was the one I used to pick mushrooms with as a kid. His name was James and we always called him Sonny, but he didn't like to be called Sonny and when he joined the air force, he told people his name was Jimmy.

As a young boy, his room would be festooned with model airplanes made of balsa wood and they would hang from a string. He wouldn't let anyone in that room in case they damaged the planes.

Sonny was a radio man and was killed just before turning 21. He was in a bomber going over Hamburg and they were shot down. I loved that brother, just loved him. When I heard he was killed I went to bed and spent an evening and a day crying. I couldn't do anything else.

He was buried in a place called Sage Memorial Cemetery, it's a serviceman's cemetery in Germany. There was one survivor, the tail gunner. His name was John Dixon, and he was the only Englishman in the crew. I wrote to him as soon as I found out the news. After the war John Dixon's family wanted to emigrate to New Zealand and my mother sponsored them. She guaranteed they had a place to live. I promised my mum I'd visit Sonny's grave one day. I've been on two world trips, but haven't made it to Germany yet.

After the war everyone I knew was leaving to get married. All the girls on the base were older than me and they were all engaged and waiting for their sweethearts to come home. It looked as if I was going to be left on my own so when the Air Force offered me permanent leave I accepted it. The oath of service only applied for when the war was on. I didn't know what I was going to do and was worried that I wouldn't get work. But my fears were to be unfounded.

Marjorie: When the war ended in Europe in 1945 there was to be a celebration on the streets at Boolaroo and my girlfriend was going with her mother and she asked me to go too, so I asked Mum, but she said no as it was in the nighttime and she thought my friend's mum wouldn't be able to watch us all the time. I cried my eyes out but she wouldn't relent. Once my mum made up her mind that was it, *Cry all you like, you're not going!* So I had to stay home. The next day everyone told me what a great time they had. That made matters worse.

Frank: By the time the war finished I was working at Cardiff Railway workshops and we all went home, of course, and they shut the place down and that night everybody, and I do mean everybody, the whole population, went into Newcastle and danced and screamed and got drunk for a couple of days. There were thousands upon thousands that marched up and down the streets of Newcastle. I was one of them.

WORK DAYS

Frank: I worked in the coal mines for about 18 months when I turned 21. The Stockrington #2 Colliery was in a little town called Minmi. The ceilings in all the houses in Minmi were only 4 ft. 6 inches high because all the people that lived there were miners who came from England, Scotland, Wales and so on, and they were only 4 ft. 6 inches tall themselves! It was a tiny, tiny town. And of course there were 2 or 3 mines there. Solid in coal.



Miners died of coal dust in their lungs. In those days there were two ways to work a mine. It was bord and pillar or long wall. If you worked on bord and pillar, you'd take more dust than if you worked on a long wall. Machines known as shortwall machines cut the coal on the floor of the seam and this coal was hand filled and then transported to the rope flats by wheelers in charge of the horses. The skip was a wooden box on wheels and I would hook them along the wire and send them to the top of the tunnel.

I was always told if your horse plays up and won't go, get out, there's something wrong. Horses have a sixth sense for danger. So this one day, I was having lunch with the wheeler and the wheeler's horse that brought out the skips started acting very strange. The wheeler said - *There's something bloody wrong here* and I said "Well I don't know, I've never experienced this." he said - *There's definitely something wrong... let's go... now!!!* So I flew up the chute, he followed me, so did the horse and we heard this almighty roar.

A set of 3 skips that hadn't been hooked on properly got loose and came racing down the pit at a helluva rate. When it came to the flat where we'd just been sitting, it hit the rail points, flew up and brought the roof down. That was a terrifying experience, I could've been killed. But the horse knew! We were always told the horses know when there's imminent danger.

Bernice: It was easy to get a job after the war. First of all I worked at a big department store, Hooker and Kingston, in Hamilton, NZ. All the shops were in a straight line and they called it the Golden Mile because it was generating a lot of income. Inside the store they had a suction system called a Lamson tube. There were no cash registers so they'd put the docket and money in the tube and it was sucked to the upstairs offices, where they'd get the change and send it back down the tube, in a little wooden container, and it was a very quick method. This was in the 40's and 50's. It was the same in Australia.

Then I went to work at another department store, a men's outfitters called Hallenstines where I worked in sales analysis. I remember the men who worked there were all very courteous. They weren't allowed to smoke and I used to keep watch to see which ones went into the back room, the stock room, for a smoke. They were all smokers, they were good men though, not selfish. I smoked but I didn't smoke at work, not until I went to the insurance company in Auckland. It was a big city. First of all I went and worked for an American company. I'll never do it again, they've got a funny attitude. There was a young girl that worked there, she was a junior. They had a factory office and a secretary's office and a gate with a fence between the two and I went to work one morning and the company secretary called me into her office. She was an old maid, and she said to me - *Miss Winstanley, if you come early to work you are not to associate with the young ones*, because I'd been talking with this girl and somebody had reported us. I said I'll talk to whoever I please, and she said - *Well, we don't like it*. And I said, well then I'll hand my notice in, and I did.

My mother said, *Tess, don't do that because you'll get a reputation for shopping around and changing jobs.* But I had no trouble getting work. I'm not sure that they liked me, but they respected me. That's when I went to the Yorkshire Insurance company in the accounting department. I was very good with numbers and liked that job.

Marjorie: When I turned fifteen I went looking for a job. I wanted to be a shop assistant but couldn't get a job doing that, so I settled for an office job at the Newcastle Co-op store, sorting dockets, which has to be one of the most boring jobs in the world. One day they sent me to work on the milk token counter which was my first time handling money. About mid-day a lady came in and placed a £20 pound note on the counter and ordered some tokens. I gave them to her and asked her for the money and she said she'd already given it to me. So I thought I must have put the £20 in the till and gave her the change. However when the till was counted it was down £20. I was very upset, but fortunately they never asked me to make up the money, which was good because I only earned 1 pound, seven shillings and sixpence a week. I worked at the complaints counter at the Co-op store which I liked very much. Not many people liked it but I did. *I've been overcharged* was a common refrain and you had to take the dockets down to the office and sort it out.



After a while I couldn't stand docket sorting anymore and I went to work at the C.W.S., the Co-op Wholesale Society, where I worked the switchboard. After about a week I got quite good at it, there were little plugs that you connected to departments which lit up, and lines for incoming and outside calls. You just had to be careful you connected them to the right department. Sometimes I would get a small shock in my fingers from the plugs, but I really enjoyed the work, especially as you could knit or sew during a slack period.

Later I went into the main office working on a bookkeeping machine sending out statements. My father died at 47 years of age while I worked there and my mother became a widow. My brother and I gave her all our pay and she gave us back an allowance. She also received a small pension for herself and my younger brother Ted.

Frank: During the war I worked for Cardiff Railway workshops; they repaired locomotives and built the first of the C class engines. Then I went to work for Amos Fogg Buslines as a busboy and progressed from busboy to bus driver. I left there and went to work as a taxi driver for quite a while and then joined the police force. You had to go to Sydney to see a doctor who made sure you were fit to join the force. I walked in and he tested me and he said open your mouth which I did and he said - *Nooo, you're finished, away you go* and I said, What's wrong? He said - *You have big tonsils*. I said thank you and went straight back to Wallsend to see my doctor and he said- *how'd you go?* I said, not good, my tonsils are too big. So he got me a specialist appointment and I got me tonsils out and within a month I was back down to Sydney and the doctor said - *I told you I don't want you, you've got big tonsils* and I said, no I don't, I got them out. He said - *well, if you're that keen to join the job you're in!* So he passed me as medically fit. I was 27 years old, 11.5 stone and jumping out of my skin.

One time in the police force we got a call that the silent alarm was going off in the Friths store. It was 1 am in the morning. We hightailed it out of the station as fast as we could go with no sirens.

I went to the back and my sergeant went to the front of the store. They were in there. I couldn't see anything so I came back around to the front just in time to see my sergeant get a hell of a flogging. The bloke pushed the door and pushed me back and ran down the street. I fired a couple of shots at him and the only thing I hit was a bloody telegraph pole! The firearms we had in those days were not accurate. So if I wanted to fire here, I'd aim over there. I had an old Browning brevete and every 12 months you were taken, en masse, with other police, to a firing range where you were put through tests to gauge your ability. The instructors from the armory in Sydney were there and you had to go through certain stances; on your stomach, on your knee, standing up, quick fire, single fire. My turn come up and the instructor said *Right-O, fire 6 quick shots at the target*. I said right. So bang the first one went and then I held the brevet up again to fire the second shot and the instructor went *Chop* and hit me on the wrist, the gun went up in the air, and I let fly, "What'd you do that for?" He said - *If you'd have fired the next one, you'd have probably killed yourself*. I said what? He said - *The first one never left the barrel*. I said how could you tell that? He said - *I could tell!* So we took all the bullets out of the chambers and flipped it up and had a look and the projectile was halfway up the barrel. So I had to hop in me car and went to a gunsmith and he rammed the bullet back. The ammunition that we were using in those days was produced by the armory in Sydney. But from that day on we never, ever used the bullets from the Sydney armory. We bought all new bullets.

When I first started out in the police force we would enforce the 6 o'clock closing of the pubs. The men got off work at 5 and had one hour to chug their beer. Then a new rule came in and the pubs would close at 8. Then 10. Now they have a problem if they want to close at 3 am...ridiculous!

But one of the funniest stories is when I was a policeman in West Wallsend. We didn't have a car, we had a motorbike with a sidecar, a Triumph motorcycle. You used to have to get dressed up in jodhpurs and leggings, gloves and a leather cap. We didn't have helmets; the leather cap was made so it wouldn't blow off when you were doing a bit of speed.

My sergeant was Kevin James McDonald. He was the finest man I ever met in my life, a wonderful bloke, a big, burly man and he rode in the sidecar. Now that was a sight to see. We had orders from our inspector that we must go around to check on every pub in our patrol and put in a full report the following day. So he says to me - *Come on mate, we'll go out to Killingsworth*, a little town that had two or three mines that were defunct but there were still about 40 houses and a hotel.

To get there you could take a shortcut through the bush on a gravel road and he said to me - *C'mon Billy* (he always called me Billy) and away we went through the bush and before we got there, there's an old rickety wooden bridge, and we're going over this bridge, it was making a helluva racket and all of a sudden people are coming out of the windows and doors of the hotel with the belief, I later found out, that they thought the pubs were still closing at 6 o'clock and the publican is standing out the front shouting - *Come back ya silly bastards, it's a 10 o'clock closing!* We couldn't get everyone back and the boss and I went in and had a couple of beers ourselves. I never forgot that, it was one of the funniest things that ever happened to me. Killingsworth is still there but the coal mines are finished, there was a big explosion in one of the mines, and one of our distant family relatives died in that explosion.

Bernice: I had 3 jobs at one time. My husband was very badly disabled from the war and he had a full disability pension. I worked at the racetrack on Saturdays and every race day I sold tickets and paid dividends at the racetrack. There were a lot of crooks around. You could tell them as soon as you saw them and a lot of the people were blotto. They were down heeled because they chased after all the races.

It was nothing to handle thousands of dollars, you worked like mad but got paid good money. We made \$70 a day and that was good money then. On Saturday nights I'd come home and my husband would say *Give up that job and stay home, I want you to quit that job*, and I said listen mate, when I go out to the races I bring money home with me, when you go out to the races you leave money behind, and he had no argument. I used to love all the people and crowds and the busy-ness of the races. But it was very hard to keep the money balanced up. After every race you had to tally up. The *overs* was any money that came up showing too much money in the till and the *unders* were ones that tallied up as underpaid. You'd have to pay that money back out of your own pocket.

The boss would try to say you'd ripped them off, that was common. One time I paid this chap about \$80 and he'd just left and this other man came up and said - *Is this your money darling?* I said no but I know who dropped it. So he gave me the money, it was a wad of notes. Then the bloke came back and I returned his money. The supervisor came up to me later and said - *Mrs. Gunton, did you give somebody some money that was dropped on the floor?* I said yes and he said - *Don't ever do that again, bring it to me*, which I thought was grossly unfair. Now the racetrack had mechanics who were there to fix the machines because the machines were always breaking down. After the race meeting was over they all congregated with the beer that they'd bought with the overs from us. We weren't allowed to keep the overs.

Frank: I remember there was a little pub and two or three wheat silos in Albert, a tiny town in the middle of the wheat belt. This was when I was stationed in Hay. At harvest time they'd do a fair amount of business and there was a sign that read: "Eat at Brooksies...50 million flies can't be wrong." Mr. Brooks was the proprietor. The Rabbit Trap Hotel had a dirt floor and about 300 rabbit traps hanging all around the balconies.



When I was in Tullamore, I had to issue what they called track rations. This was about 50 years ago. You've heard of a swaggy? A swaggy is a person that's on hard times. Swaggies weren't just products of the Depression years -they were homeless travelers walking on the highways and byways of the states, picking up work wherever they could find it. They lived an idyllic life. No job, no family and they'd put a roll blanket on. They'd roll 'em up, put a tie on and sling it over their shoulder. Swagmen would walk from town to town and when they ran out of supplies they used to come to the

police station and ask for track rations. Now it wasn't easy to give it to them. They had to prove to me where they'd been, where they were going and if I was satisfied they were fair dinkum swaggies, people down on their luck, I used to issue a voucher. They'd take that to the local store and cash it in for food. There was *No cigarettes or liquor* written on the back of the voucher. So when they'd go to the local store the grocer would call me up, I'd say *yes*, and the swaggy would get \$20 worth of food. And that would last him another 3 days until he went to another police station.

One morning I walked out to my garden and found it beautifully weeded with the weeds jacked up in the corner. I knew old Nigel had been there. Nigel was a swaggy who passed through my bailiwick. He was a fellow who was a genuine worker. Once a year, he'd want his track rations but he'd always do my garden up beautiful. I'd let him have some tobacco because, you know, that was the thing he loved most.

Marjorie: Years after we'd re-located, the Boolaroo school was closed. They found out the ceiling dust was full of lead because of a nearby industry which had started to work with lead in it's manufacturing processes. My husband worked there in the Cadmium plant and had to be tested every week for lead. Half the population of Boolaroo worked at this factory in those days. Growing up it always smelled sulphury when the smoke was coming out of the chimney and you'd see a yellowish liquid going into the river. They eventually discovered that the soil in Boolaroo had become contaminated and there was talk of resurfacing the topsoil but I'm not sure if that ever happened or not.

Frank: I was with the service 33 years. I retired on February 23rd 1988. You had to retire then because you'd turned 60. At the time I was the officer in charge at the Lismore station and didn't want to retire at all. I was getting very close to being promoted to Inspector, which I'd sought for years. I was fit, had come up through the ranks, but because I was getting close to retirement, they wouldn't promote me.

I'll never condone crime. If I see it, I'll always do something about it. But being in a place like this (BUPA Aged Care) you don't get out much to see the crime!

Marjorie: After I married I thought I would try for a modeling job. Jansen swimwear had a competition so I entered and made it to the last 20 models. We all had to go to the Jansen factory in Sydney for an interview. Each contestant chose a swimsuit to model, one piece swimmers in those days, and at the end of the interview one of the judges said to me - *You're married aren't you?* I said yes and he said - *What if you get pregnant?* (You had to sign a one year contract). I was dumbfounded. I didn't know what to say so I didn't get the job.



LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Bernice: We always had all the mums at the dances. The mothers used to sit around watching to see that you weren't dancing with some unsavory character. After the dance we'd take the bus. The back seat used to be full, people wanted to sit on the back seat so they could kiss.

I first met my husband, John Charles Gunton, playing tennis before the war. We played doubles. He was 13 years older than me, but we had no romantic aspersions at this time, I knew him only casually. Originally from Tasmania, he was seeking work in my town after having worked on the Tarraleeah Hydro Project. Everyone called him "Ches" because of his chestnut colored hair. I was an A grade player playing for St. Anthony's Parish Tennis Club. Every little town in New Zealand had a tennis court. The fellows would often pay for milkshakes for about five of us girls after a game. Tennis was a big thing in both Australia and NZ, the hub of the social life, along with Bowls.

War broke out and since Ches was in New Zealand at the time, he joined the NZ Army with the 8th Army NZ Engineers. He was shipped first to Fiji, then to the Middle East, and eventually, at the end of the war, to Italy where, in one of the final battles, he was severely wounded. He was repatriated to New Zealand and spent a number of years in hospital having reconstructive surgery on his leg and arm.

After the war I was coming back from a funeral on the bus and my future husband was sitting behind me, he was on a temporary release from the hospital. He took hold my arm as I got off the coach and said - *Do you remember me?* and I said yes. *Will you come have a cup of coffee with me?* and I said, Well, this bloke next to me wants me to go have a cup of coffee with him! And he said - *You can have a cup of coffee with him some other time.* And he took me home in a taxi. I was boarding with an old lady at the time, a Mrs. Tyre.

He asked me where I worked and I told him. The next day he forgot what insurance company I said I was working for. Shortland Street in Auckland had all the insurance companies on both sides and he went to every one of them asking if I was working there. The last door he walked through was mine. Eventually he got in touch with me and, you won't believe it, but on the first date he took me to a country race meeting. He came and picked me up in a taxi, and later told me that he'd once lost £19 at the races. I said, well if you want to be friendly with me you won't be doing that anymore! From then on we progressed and I actually agreed to marry him before he took me home.

There was a saying in my family that Australian men make very good husbands and I found this to be true. My husband was very good to me, but a man of few words. He never talked about the war. He always said that anyone who talked about the war didn't do anything in the war. So I never quizzed him about it. He died in 1979 of his disabilities and I never remarried.

We had one beautiful daughter together, Angela, who I cherish. Angela has been a fantastic daughter, I couldn't have better. If I had had five children as I should've, they wouldn't have made up for what Angela's been to me.

Marjorie: I was only 15 when my friend suggested we go to a dance in Cardiff and was very surprised when mum said I could go. That started one of my favorite pastimes, dancing, which I continued to do for the rest of my life. One Saturday night they'd have the Church of England dance with a five piece band and the next week the Catholic church held a dance. So we went dancing every Saturday evening.

It cost 1 shilling, and a threepence to get in and they'd have this beautiful supper, the ladies from the church would make teas, cakes, and sandwiches, just lovely.

And the boys used to stand on one side and the girls would be sitting down waiting, wondering if they were going to get a dance. There was kerosene and sawdust in the corners of the dance floor and if you wanted your shoes to be a bit slippery you'd rub them in that. You could slide across the floor more easily because that was the sort of dancing we were doing - waltzing.

Most people met the person they were going to marry at the church dances. I met my husband Denny at a dance when I was 15 and he was 21. He was really a beautiful dancer and taught me a lot of steps. He danced seven nights a week. After the dance he said - *I'll see you home* and I said all right. So he got on the bus and sat next to me and never got off at Boolaroo, which is the suburb he lived in. I said, aren't you getting out here? He said - *No, I'll see you through to your ride home.* I said how are you going to get back home? He said - *I'll just walk,* and I thought well, it was only a mile but still, at that hour of the night! He gave me a kiss and we started going steady together.

Denny would take me to the movies and we'd sit upstairs in the Dress Circle and he'd buy me a box of Winning Post Chocolates. One summer night we were sitting on a bench in Speers Pt. Park kissing and cuddling when he suddenly said *we should get married* and I said yes. We became engaged on my 17th birthday and were married when I was 18 at Boolaroo Catholic Church. The week before we married I got cold feet, I wasn't certain I wanted to be married to him for the rest of my life, because that's how it was in those days. But I went ahead with it as everything was all planned, we had arranged everything and paid for it ourselves. So on November 24, 1951 we became husband and wife and stayed together through thick and thin for 62 years till he died aged 84 from lung cancer in 2013 here at BUPA Aged Care in Pottsville. I miss him very much and always will. We have three beautiful and caring sons together and I am very proud of them. We have nine grandchildren, three great grandsons, and two loving daughters in law.

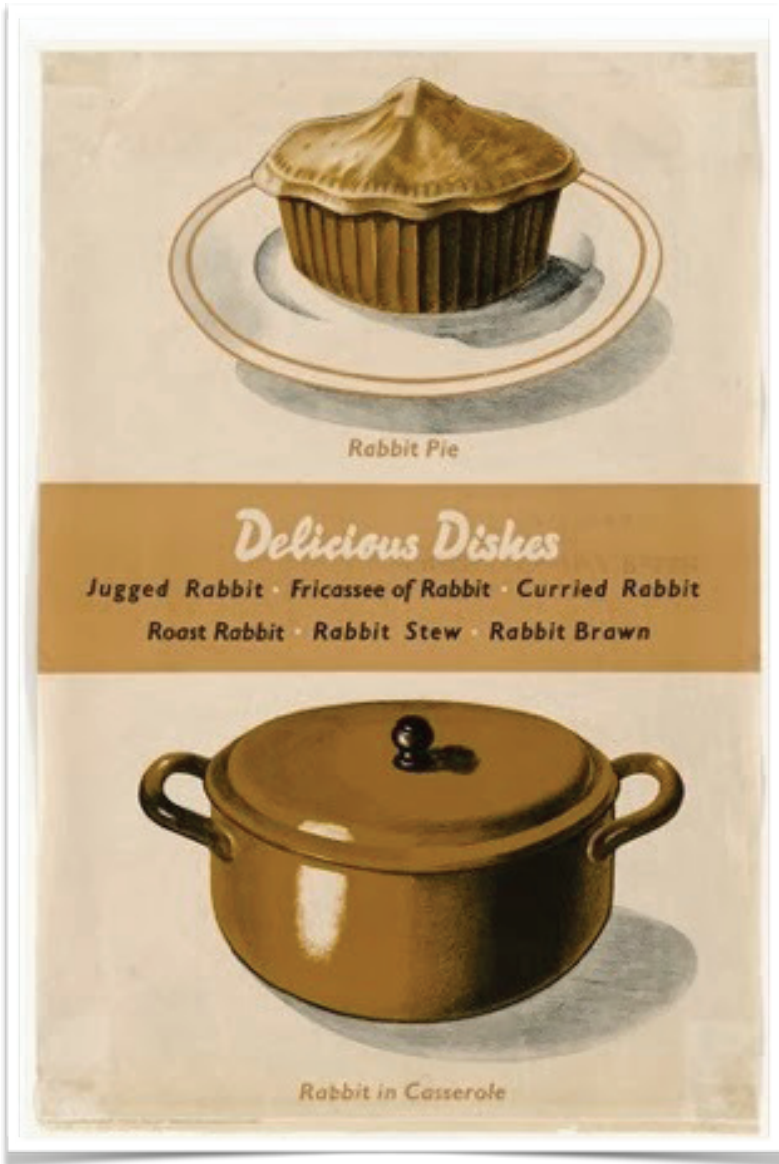
Frank: I've been married twice, the first one didn't work out. I'm still with my second wife, Doreen, we've been married 60 years. Doreen worked in a cake shop, Moores Cake shop, in Wallsend. I first met her at a dance, and couldn't keep my eyes off her. She was a very sweet girl, very vivacious, always well dressed, and a lovely dancer. I'd go to every dance with her. She left the cake shop and went to work in a café called the Spot. This was when I was driving a taxi. I used to go in there and order, I can still remember to this day, steak, eggs, sausage, chips and onions. And I'd help clean up the dishes so that I could spend more time with her before taking her home, usually at an ungodly hour of the night.

We dated for a couple of years and then got married in Wallsend, a big affair, and went to Katoomba in the Blue mountains for our honeymoon. That was a popular spot for a honeymoon in those days, everybody went to Katoomba. They had a scenic railway, and it went straight down the mountain. I said C'mon Dory we'll have a go at this and she said - *No, I'm not going, no way*, so I said I'll go on my own. I got on and it went down fast. There were 6,450 steps back to the top and I walked every one of them. I got sick the next day and went out like a light. It was a case of quinsy - inflammation of the tonsils, and they just blew up...out to here. For the first week I didn't even know I was in Katoomba, I was that sick. The doctor visited me twice a day and he said to Doreen - *I don't know whether you married a man or a monster*. Gradually I got well and we had to leave because we were running out of money. Then I joined the police department and I'm still waiting to go on my honeymoon!

We had our first child, Warren, at the Mater hospital in Waratah. I went up to see Doreen and there was another woman in the room with a cloth curtain around her, she screamed and I said to Doreen, what in the bloody hell is wrong with that woman? She said- *the same thing that's wrong with me, she's having a baby*. So I said I'm out of here and went down the lift and the nurse met me downstairs and said *Where are you going?* I said I'm going home and she said, *You better get back up there, Doreen just had a baby!*

So I missed the birth coming down the lift. Warren's now detective superintendent with the Federal police in Canberra. My children are all hard workers, they don't drink to excess or anything like that. I really love kids. I've got 5 children, 9 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. My children, of course, are now all grown, and they are the pride of my life. They've always respected their parents and are true to their beliefs about family.





Bernice: I could talk all day about food. When I was a little girl we used to pick mushrooms. We'd put them in with a knob of butter in a pan. When the butter melted you'd take them off and that's how we ate them.

Frank: When I worked in a coal mine, I had to take the bus. We'd watch for mushrooms, especially in the wintertime. You'd see mushrooms growing and ring the bell, hop off and go to pick them and walk the rest of the way to the colliery. They always had a brazier going on a 44 gallon drum. You'd get one of the shovels, the No. 7 shovel, get it hot, and put the mushrooms on top of the shovel. We'd cook them as soon as we got there.



Marjorie: My family had a large fig tree which I loved to climb and we'd pick the figs and mum would make fig jam. We also used to make blackberry pies and jam. I'd go up the hill and pick berries in February and get plenty of blackberries. We'd put them in the oven and blanket them with sugar. It's still my favorite pie, a blackberry pie with cream.

Frank: Most people used coal stoves for cooking in those days. They were wonderful in the winter for the heat, you could dry your clothes in front of the stove. But in the summer it got very, very hot in the kitchen. Meat was scarce and rations were big in those days. Those were the war years.

Bernice: We had plenty of meat and there was always a pot on the stove. My father had a garden and mum had one too. You didn't dare go into the old man's garden, everything would go to seed before he'd let you in. It was a commercial garden.

My two brothers and myself would be invited to our cousin's farm. It was virgin land that they acquired when they came over from England. We'd go dig up the turnips, load them in the conache, put the horse to it, and my brothers and I would ride around distributing the turnips. Our house was right next to a boarding house with 30 boarders. We'd sell all of them.

Marjorie: In those days a garden was a necessity, not a leisure activity, most everyone had a vegetable garden.

Bernice: My granny came from Ireland and she was a wonderful gardener and a wonderful cook - she could cook anything. She would have jugged hare. Have you heard of jugged hare?

Owen: Jugged... hare. You mean a rabbit in a jar?

Bernice: Jugged hare is a hare preserved in a stone jar. It had a big cork on the top, a custom inherited from the gentry in Ireland. Not everyone could afford the meat in the old country. Rabbit hunting is illegal now but we used to eat quite a lot of rabbit. You couldn't buy a rabbit in New Zealand so we went out and shot them.

Owen: What's the difference between a hare and a rabbit, does anybody know?

Frank: Hare is bigger and stronger and tastes stronger too. I can't speak for New Zealand but in Australia there were rabbits everywhere. Someone brought a few rabbits over from England and that became 600 million rabbits and countless hares. We used to hunt 'em and shoot 'em and skin 'em and eat 'em.

Then there was the Myxomatosis, (Gov't eradication campaign starting in 1950). You didn't want to eat them after that because you didn't know if you were going to get sick. But I like rabbit, rabbit's good food.

Bernice: I like rabbit too. My mother used to braise it.

Owen: Does it taste like chicken?

Frank: It has a taste all it's own.

Marjorie: They get very dry if you bake them in the oven. It's better in a stew. You make them like any other other stew, such as Irish stew, with onions and vegetables.

Owen: Any other unusual food groups?

Frank: I used to love sheep brains. My mother would make them in milk.

Bernice: No, no, you floured them. First you scalded them to take the membrane off.

Frank: My mother used to do all that. The butcher would have a sheep's head there in the shop, he'd put it on the block and go *whack* with his cleaver and open the brains up.



Bernice: It was a specialty, you could always get brains. We dipped them in batter. You can't buy them anymore, I've tried to.

Marjorie: I haven't seen them for years.

Frank: My father used to hunt for bronze winged pigeons as a young man, he said they were the best thing you ever tasted. Bronze winged pigeons only feed from the seed that falls from the wattle tree. When I went out west I used to see them, especially in the winter, but could never get close enough to shoot them and I've never tasted one.

Owen: What about that Aussie staple, lamb?

Marjorie: There was plenty of lamb and it was a lot cheaper and readily available. It's only in the last ten to twenty years that it's become expensive.

Frank: The problem in those days was getting tender meat.

Marjorie: Well it was mutton, I suppose, in those days. My son told me that before they get two teeth, they're a lamb, and after they get two teeth, they're a hogget.

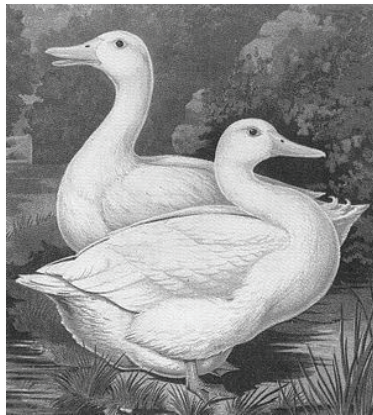
Frank: That's right. Hogget was a tender meat. It's beautiful meat, hogget. When we lived in Hay it was a custom for the local farmers to leave a hogget on your porch, dressed and ready. Standard procedure in the bush. There was a meathook and a gamble on the veranda and you'd wake up in the morning and there it was, a hogget on the hook. The local butcher didn't think bloody much of it! I'd cover it with a calico bag and let it cure for 2-3 days. Then take a bandsaw and make short loin chops, leg chops and neck chops for stew.

Bernice: We always had pet lambs and were never told when they were going to be for dinner. The kids would notice the lamb was missing and the old man would say - *It's gone to the meatworks.*

People slaughtered their own animals. Most had chooks running around the yard. My mother used to slaughter the chooks. She'd put a chicken on the chopping block, hold it by the legs, and chop it's head off.

Marjorie: I cleaned a chook once, that was enough for me. It's unpleasant cleaning them, plucking all the feathers and... the smell. I like to eat chicken but prefer getting them already dressed. I remember one time my parents fattened up a duck. The children all cried when we were told the duck had to go. Then my dad had it hanging on a line with the blood dripping onto the grass. We cried as we ate it. It was really good though!

Frank: I raised Muscovy ducks and cross strained them with Aylesbury ducks. We had a big home and I must have had thirty ducklings running around in a big yard. One day I was out there and noticed some ducklings were missing , quite a few, and I couldn't work out what was going on. Doreen was hanging clothes on the clothesline and I heard her yell out something. I said what's the matter? She said - *I know where your ducks are going* and I said where?



She pointed to the drake and the bloody drake was grabbing a duckling and swallowing it whole. One went in his beak and he'd swallow it and go for another. So we had that drake for dinner the following Sunday.

Owen: Don't mess with Frank's ducklings! Let's talk about bread.

Bernice: Mum only baked bread on Sundays. We got store bought bread Monday though Friday, but not weekends. That was her time to bake bread. Brown bread fresh from the oven, a simple delight. The best bread has a crust that's burnt. It tastes sweeter.

Marjorie: I remember bread was delivered by horse and cart pulled by a baker with a large draft horse. I was only little and absolutely fascinated by the horse's feet with all the long hair on those hooves. The baker called out "*Bak-o*" and he came in a sort of cart with a basket and a big, lovely horse. The cart had a lid and the bread would come out and it smelled wonderful.

Frank: Your mother would give ya two bobs. *Go down to the bakers and get two loaves and doooon't take the middle out of it...*because we used to take a handful out of the middle of the loaf and eat it on the way home. Bread was sold in raised tins called high tops. There was a ringed loaf that was joined together, and you'd split it in two for a loaf, and there were the round tops. Full loaves. Half loaves. "I'll have a loaf of this and a half loaf of that." I'd give the baker a token and a half token. You didn't always have money so you bought tokens when you could and paid the baker in tokens.

Owen: How about liquid refreshments?

Marjorie: Mum used to buy a stone jar of ginger beer for us to drink and a jug of yeast, which looked very much like beer, amber colored with a creamy top or head on it, I loved it. The yeast was full of vitamin B.

Years later you could make your own ginger beer. You got a plant and added water and sugar to start it off. It was just a funny looking thing and then after a while you'd bottle it in beer bottles, corked, and put it under the house in a cool spot. Every now and then you'd hear one go off. They would explode on a hot day. But the kids used to drink ginger beer quite a bit. A lot of people made it.

Bernice: We were allowed the occasional shandy, lemonade with a little beer but I don't like beer too much.

Frank: I've had two beers at the end of each day for most of me life. Can't drink it anymore though, my stomach won't let me. I drink the occasional white wine.

Owen: What did you all do to satisfy your sweet tooth?

Marjorie: We were occasionally allowed a penny or a half-penny to buy a couple of lollies, one for a half penny or two for a penny. The lollies and chocolates came in a big jar, stacked on the counter of the corner shop.

Bernice: Mum wouldn't let us have lollies. She said it was bad for your teeth. We never got sweets so we had to make our own. But she would sit at the stove and make toffee. I loved my toffee.



Frank: Everyone made toffee in the old days. It looks like honey when it goes brown. Beautiful.

Bernice: I remember going over to my friend's house on Sundays and her parents used to lie down for a nap and they'd say *Don't touch the stove!* Because they knew we would. The first thing we did was get in the sugar to make honeycomb toffee. When the toffee was almost cooked you put in a pinch of bicarbonate of soda and it all fizzed up and became sort of fluffy, we liked that.

Frank: Saturday was baking day. You'd get up at 6 am to get your breakfast and mum would start to bake at 7 am and go to 7 pm Saturday night. In the afternoon the cakes would come out. Sundays you had a big starched white tablecloth on the table and a baked dinner. We'd have a blancmange or bread and butter pudding for dessert. Most Australian women, going back quite a few years, spent all Saturday afternoon baking. After the mid-day dinner, the rest of the day was spent baking bread, puddings or scones.

Marjorie: I remember one time mum and I were expecting an afternoon visitor, and we decided to make golden scones. When we went to add the milk we found it had gone sour, but we used it anyway. The scones rose really well and when our visitor came we served them with a cup of tea. He kept saying the scones were the best he'd ever tasted. Every time he praised them, mum and I started to giggle, it took us all our time not to laugh out loud.

Frank: See, those days are gone. Saturday baking or the old type sweets like blancmanges, or custards...that era is gone because the oldies who used to make them are gone.

Marjorie: I still make a lot of the old authentic recipes. The only people that still bake those things are the people that grew up with them.

Older women, I suppose, like myself. (*laughs*) But all my sons and their wives still use a lot of my recipes.

Owen: Well, I have an idea.

Frank: What's that?

Owen: Let's put some of those old-fashioned recipes in the book.

All: Good idea!



RECIPES

Irish stew

"The country's built on the sheep's back."

6 neck chops trimmed of fat, 1 large onion sliced, 2 carrots sliced, 2 sticks celery sliced, 2 potatoes sliced, 1 level teasp. salt, pepper to taste, small bunch parsley, water to cover chops, cornflour to thicken later.

Place chops in large saucepan with the onions and cover with water. Add salt and pepper and bring to boil, simmer for one hour, then add carrots and celery. Simmer gently for ½ hour more or until chops are tender. Let cool and skim of fat. Bring to boil again and add two sliced potatoes. Mix cornflour with water and gradually add to stew. Chop finely one small bunch of parsley and add, stirring well until the potatoes are cooked and serve with a green vegetable.

Jugged Hare

"From the landed gentry of Ireland."

1 young hare, slice of bacon ½ inch thick, 2-3 sprigs of thyme, 1 onion, pepper and salt, ¾ cup of flour.

Hang the hare for a day or two, cut into suitable pieces and wash well. Take a jar, wide-mouthed stone jam jar is suggested, and put hare in. Add bacon cut into cubes, also onion, thyme, pepper and salt; add water to the flour to make a smooth paste, and add that to the hare, then add more water till all is just covered. Tie a cloth over lid of jar, and place in a saucepan of hot water; boil 3 to 4 hours, according to age and size of hare.

Rabbit Curry

“Wild rabby. rabby, clothesline props, butter with no coupons.”

1 rabbit, 4 or 5 ozs. cooked rice, 3 ozs. butter, 2 onions, 1 apple, $\frac{3}{4}$ pint stock, 1 tablespoon curry powder, 1 tablespoon flour, lemon, juice, salt.

Wash rabbit, dry well, and divide into joints, slice apple and onion. Heat butter in saucepan, fry rabbit a light brown and remove; put in onion, fry a deep brown, add curry powder and flour and fry 10 minutes. Put in stock, and, when boiling, replace rabbit, add apple and salt, cover and simmer $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours. Before serving, add lemon juice; pile rabbit on center of dish, strain sauce over, and make border of rice.

Mushroom pudding

“Earthly good.”

$\frac{3}{4}$ lb. flour, 6 ozs. butter, 1 teaspoon baking powder, cold water, 1 quart, mushrooms, salt and pepper.

Wash and peel mushrooms; make a stiff dough of flour, baking powder, salt, butter and water; line a pudding basin with the paste; put in mushrooms, pepper and salt and a little butter, moisten with a little water, cover the top with pastry; tie in a pudding cloth and boil 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

Scrambled Brains

“You can’t buy them anymore. I’ve tried.”

2 sets sheep’s brains, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon chopped parsley, 1 oz. butter, pepper and salt.

Soak brains in salt and water for 15 minutes, wash and remove the skin.

Put into saucepan of boiling water and simmer for 5 minutes, then drain well. Beat with a fork, add egg, parsley, butter, pepper and salt. Return to fire and stir till thick. Serve on toast, or put into ramekin dishes, sprinkle with breadcrumbs and put into oven for a few minutes and brown slightly.

To Pluck a Fowl

"Let Dad do it."

Hold the bird in the left hand, pluck feathers from one side, holding the bird fast by the leg, then by the wing. Do not scald bird before plucking, this breaks the skin, but if the feathers are difficult to remove, pour hot water over them and proceed to draw. First cut head off, then place bird on it's breast, cut a slit in the skin at the back of neck, pull neck out, and cut as close to the body as possible. Put finger in around neck, and loosen skin around the crop, then pull it out; then put fingers down as far as they will go and loosen inside. Cut a slit at the back of the bird between the vent and the tail, put fingers in and loosen entrails. Put hand right in and draw out; cut vent out, rinse inside of bird out, and singe but do not blacken the bird. Take gizzard and liver, removing the gall bladder from the liver; cut halfway through the gizzard, removing centre, and wash well.

To Truss a Fowl

"Let Mum do it."

Fasten the vent over the tail and fill the neck with forcemeat; if to be roasted, cut legs off about 1 inch below knee joint; push thighs well up into body, push pinions round to the back. Run a trussing needle or skewer through the first joint of the wing, then through the thigh joint, through the body, out through the other thigh joint and wing, and tie round at the back.

Tie ends of the legs, tail end of the bird, by running a needle thread through the side of the tail, twisting round the legs and tying at the back. After putting forcemeat in neck, pull skin well over to keep it in place.

Bronzewing Pigeon, Roasted

"It's very difficult to shoot a Bronzewing pigeon."

Pigeons, bacon, salt and pepper, tomato sauce, croutons of fried bread.

Draw and truss birds as directed, cover each breast with slice of fat bacon, roast in brisk oven 20 to 30 minutes. Baste frequently, and a few minutes before serving remove bacon and allow breast to brown. Remove trussing strings, replace the bacon, and serve each bird on a crouton of fried bread, sprinkled with salt and pepper.

Roast Duck

"We had that drake for Sunday dinner."

Truss bird as directed, and stuff body with sage and onion stuffing; roast $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours, according to age; serve brown gravy separately. Apple and tomato sauce are served separately; potatoes, tomatoes, or green vegetables may be served separately.

Tasty Turnips

"From the conache."

6 or 7 young turnips, 2 ozs. grated cheese, 1 oz. butter, 2 tablespoons milk, pepper and salt.

Peel turnips and boil till just tender, drain and cut in thin slices, and spread a layer in a shallow, well greased pie dish;

coat each layer with grated cheese. Pour over a little milk, put dabs of butter on top, and bake in a hot oven till a nice brown. Serve in same dish.

Spring Soup

"Gardening was a necessity, not a leisure activity."

1 pint second stock, or thin gravy, 4 ozs. butter, 3 lettuces, 3 cucumbers, 1 pint green peas, mint, onion and parsley, 1 tablespoon flour, salt and pepper to taste.

Cut up lettuces after washing well, pare and slice the cucumbers; add the peas, mint, onion and parsley. Put all in a saucepan with butter, and simmer for half an hour, then add stock, and simmer for two hours; thicken with a small lump of butter rolled in flour, season and serve.

Pea and Ham Soup

"A match made in heaven."

1 ham bone or bacon bones, 1 cup split yellow peas, ¼ cup barley, 2 onions chopped, 4 cups water or stock, 2 carrots sliced, 2 sticks celery chopped, 2 leafy celery tops chopped, 1 small bunch parsley.

Place ham bone in boiler or large saucepan; add dry split peas; add 4 cups water and barley; add 2 onions; bring to boil and simmer for one hour. Add carrots and celery; simmer for another 30 minutes or until peas and vegies are thoroughly cooked. Taste for salt and add some if necessary. Then add celery tops and parsley and cook for another 5 minutes. Remove ham bone and serve, remember to stir soup often while cooking or it could stick to pot and burn.

Golden Scones

"Sour milk is best."

3 cups wholemeal flour, 1 level dessertspoon butter, 1 heaped teaspoon baking powder, 1 level dessertspoon golden syrup, 1/2 cup boiling water, 1/4 cup sour milk, a pinch of salt.

Put butter and golden syrup into a basin, pour the boiling water over them, and stand basin on stove till all is melted. Sift salt and baking powder with flour, stir into the butter and syrup, add the milk, and knead all together; turn out on to floured board, press out to 1 and 1/2 inch thickness without using rolling pin; cut into circles, bake 10 minutes in a hot oven.

Fig Jam

"From the fig tree in our yard."

7 lbs. figs, 6 lbs. sugar, 1/2 lb. preserved ginger (optional), 2 pints water, juice and rind of 2 lemons.

Wipe the figs and cut off the ends, then cut into small pieces, cover with half the sugar and allow to stand overnight. Next morning peel the lemons as one does an apple, and cut up rind into small strips, squeeze the juice out, and cut up ginger fine; add rest of sugar, water, ginger, lemon juice and rind to figs, and boil 2 hours.

Blackberry Jam

"We're jamming."

2 cups blackberries, 1 ½ cups sugar, 1 ½ teaspoons balsamic vinegar.

Wash blackberries to get rid of any bugs or leaves. In a saucepan mash the berries with a potato masher. Stir in the sugar and bring to a boil. Stir in the vinegar. Allow to simmer for 15 minutes or until it begins to thicken. Remove from heat and transfer to a bowl, cover and set in the fridge until cooled. Transfer to a covered jar.

Serve on hot buttered toast or anything else you're keen to have jam on.

Blackberry Pie

"With cream on top, still my favorite pie."

4 cups fresh blackberries, ½ cup sugar, ½ cup all purpose flour, 1 recipe pastry for a 9 inch double crust pie, 2 tablespoons milk.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Combine 3 ½ cups blackberries with the sugar and flour. Spoon the mixture into an unbaked pie shell. Spread the remaining ½ cup berries on top of the sweetened berries, and cover with the top crust.

Seal and crimp the edges, and cut vents in the top crust for steam to escape. Brush the top crust with milk, and sprinkle with ¼ cup sugar.

Bake in the preheated oven for 15 minutes. Reduce the temperature of the oven to 375 and bake for an additional 20 to 25 minutes, or until the filling is bubbly and the crust is golden brown. Cool on wire rack.

Honeycomb Toffee

"It gets all fizzy."

2 tablespoons golden syrup, 2 tablespoons sugar, 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda.

Boil syrup and sugar for 10 minutes, remove from fire, and stir in soda quickly; while still bubbling, pour on to a greased baking dish.

Ginger Beer

"Careful, the bottles might explode."

5 quarts boiling water, 1 and ¼ lbs. sugar, 1 oz. whole ginger bruised, 2 lemons, ¼ oz. cream of tartar, 1 large tablespoon brewer's yeast.

Pare lemons as thinly as possible, strip off every particle of white pith, cut lemons into thin slices, removing pips, put sliced lemon into earthenware bowl with sugar, ginger, and cream of tartar, and pour in boiling water.

Allow to stand till lukewarm, then stir in yeast and leave in a moderately warm place for 24 hours. Skim yeast off top, strain carefully, bottle, tie down corks securely, and in two days it will be ready for use.

Strawberry Water

"Avoid King Brown snakes when picking strawberries."

1 lb. ripe strawberries, 3 pints cold water, ½ lb. sugar, juice of lemon.

Remove stalks, crush fruit with wooden spoon, sprinkle over the sugar, and let it stand 3 or 4 hours. Pass the pulp through fine sieve, add to it the lemon juice and water, stand for 2 or 3 hours, stir frequently then strain and use.

REFLECTIONS ON AUSTRALIA

Owen: Marjorie, what do you love about Australia?

Marjorie: I love the beaches and the lifestyle. The people are very down to earth and most are friendly. I've travelled quite a lot around Australia and when my husband and I went to England, we had a delay of a few days in London before our flight. I couldn't wait to get home and was so relieved to be back on Australian soil. I really thought then that Australia is the best country in the world. I still feel the same way although things are not as good as they were.

Frank: I'm fortunate, I suppose, because being a policeman you were moved every six or seven years to another bailiwick and I saw a lot of New South Wales. Australia to me is the greatest country in the world. A lot of people save up money and go to Bali and all these places before they see their own country. I love the bush. As a young fella growing up we lived near the bush. When I went west in the police department I saw sheep shearing, rabbits and rabbit traps, fish traps, a way of life that people had to accept. You'd go to a man's place and he's got 30,000 acres and you ask, How can you manage 30,000 acres? He says - *I've got 28,000 sheep!* These are the things that bind you to the country. And I love the country. The weather is famous and the people are great.

Owen: Bernice, what's unique in Australia that you can't find in any other country?

Bernice: The people speak too quickly. (*laughter*) They're very boastful, and they've got to win at everything.

Marjorie: There used to be an Australian drawl and sayings like "fair dinkum" that you don't hear as much anymore. And it *has* gotten faster.

The Americans and the English speak faster. Everything's speeding up isn't it? (*chuckles*)

Bernice: There's so many wonderful countries but I chose to be here in Australia of my own free will for my retired years. I like the nice, hot weather when we get it, and I've met some lovely people here, Frank included. I'm very happy in this establishment (BUPA aged care) as long as I don't fall and break my hip.

Marjorie: I think Dorothy Mackellar's poem says it all.

My Country (an excerpt)

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror-
The wide brown land for me.

Frank: I can't think of a poem but I can think of a song. I like the words to The Cootamundra Wattle.

The Cootamundra Wattle by John Williamson (excerpt of the song)

And the Cootamundra wattle is my friend.
For all at once my childhood never left me,
'Cause wattle blossoms bring it back again.
It's Sunday and you should stop the worry,
Come out here and sit down in the sun.
Can't you hear the magpies in the distance?
Don't you feel the new day has begun?

Can't you hear the bees making honey,
In the spotted gums where the bellbirds ring?
You might grow old and bitter cause you missed it,
You know some people never hear such things.
Hey it's July and the winter sun is shining,
And the Cootamundra wattle is my friend.
For all at once my childhood never left me,
Cause wattle blossoms bring it back again.

Bernice: Waltzing Matilda is my favorite poem. The song is practically the Australian National Anthem but it's sung in New Zealand as well. Kiwis and Australians have their differences but get them in a group and they'll all sing this song together.

Waltzing Matilda by Banjo Paterson (excerpt of the poem)

Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,
And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled:
"Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda, with me?"

Down came a jumbuck to drink at that billabong.
Up jumped the swagman and grabbed him with glee.
And he sang as he shoved that jumbuck in his tucker bag:
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda, with me."

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda, with me.
And he sang as he shoved that jumbuck in his tucker bag:
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda, with me."



