

MOUNT ELEPHANT ONCE HAD TREES

A life shaped on the Western Plains of Victoria

Josiah John 'Jack' Rawson

... a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith.

John Stewart Mill *On Liberty*



Mt Elephant near Derrinallum, Victoria

First Published in 1996
by the author
16 Thoona Grove
Greensborough
Victoria 3088

Contents

Preface.....	3
Chapter 1 Boyhood in Derrinallum and Beyond	5
Chapter 2 The War Effort: a tiny, unheroic contribution	20
Chapter 3 Life in the Australian Regular Army to 1965	26
Chapter 4 More Regular Army: the New Guinea Years and on to 1975.....	34
Chapter 5 A Score of Years in ‘Civvy Street’	47
Appendix 1 A Brush with Security.....	59
Appendix 2 A Letter to the Australian	61
Appendix 3 The Official Complaint (or Redress of Wrongs)	62
Appendix 4 Three Short Stories	68
Appendix 5 Petra, The City of Ancient Monuments	76
Appendix 6 The Poison Letters	77

Acknowledgments

My son, Richard, and my granddaughter, Fiona spent many hours on a word processor and on printing draft copies to help put this book on the way towards completion. They were a marvellous help and I am very grateful.

My son-in-law, Patrick Miller, took over from them. A multi-talented person, Pat processed thousands more words of mine, attending expertly to the many requirements of preparing the book for printing. He encouraged me, among other things, to flesh out some of the contents. I came to rely heavily on his advice. He has shown me a measure of generosity that places me heavily in his debt.

My daughter, Robyn was a thorough proof-reader. Don and Mavis Rogerson did many kind things for me. Lowell and Joyce French provided me with some background material and I also drew on Pamela McGregor and Lynton Oaten’s *Mount Elephant a history of the Derrinallum and Darlington District*.

My thanks to them all.

This electronic version does not include the Index contained in the printed publication because it was simply too difficult for me to do. Some of the original illustrations were not available to me and I have used different illustrations on a small number of occasions. However, although some other format changes have also been required, this version contains a faithful copy of the text included in the printed publication.

Richard Rawson, July 2006.

Preface

I decided years ago that it may be a worthwhile task for me to write some kind of an account of my life, entirely lacking in any kind of distinction though that life has been. I shall be relying heavily on my memory, although I do have some details of my army record. Not for a moment do I claim to have an infallible memory.

Whether it turns out to be worthwhile will depend a great deal upon the receptivity of those that will be willing to read it, their receptivity, it seems to follow, being dependent very much on how it appeals to them. Is it sensible, I wonder, for me to put on show some of my inadequacies—a strictly limited writing talent and intelligence, for example—in the perhaps vain hope that members of the family at large, and others, will derive some pleasure and some little insight into the past from it? Sensible of me or not, I mean to go ahead with the task. I dedicate the following to my darling wife, Elizabeth. Most of the time, I shall be referring to her as ‘Betty’ or ‘Liz’. As for me, sometimes I’m Jack and sometimes I’m John in this narrative.

Perhaps there may be found on this earth people who welcome the arrival of old age. I do not. On the other hand, I have been able for some years now to contemplate my own extinction without experiencing the spasm of fear that used sometimes to accompany such rumination.

My opinions on death, and so many other aspects of life, too, have been influenced heavily over about half my lifetime by, but by no means only by, my admiration for the great English philosopher, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970). Bertrand Russell was, too, pre-eminent in mathematics and logic (the science of reasoning), and wrote marvellously well on sociology, politics, psychology and many other topics, winning the Nobel prize for literature in 1950. He was, as I am wont to say, the greatest person of whom I have knowledge. He was my absolute hero. I wrote to him in 1964, expressing my admiration. His reply may be found among my possessions.

I recall seeing him years ago on a television program, when he was asked, ‘Lord Russell, do you fear death?’ ‘Not in the slightest,’ was his reply. And in my heart I simply knew that he was being truthful. I hoped then, and still do hope, that I, if aware of my impending demise, face my end courageously. Spinoza had this to say:

A free man thinks of nothing less than of death; and his wisdom is a meditation not of death but of life.

It need hardly to be said that much of his work was beyond me; his mathematics, especially, are far beyond me. Philosophy is difficult, too, and I am simply not clever enough to master it. But I have plodded away for a long time, learning a little bit here and a little bit there. In the process, I came across the opinions of other great philosophers, too, reading, for example, Plato, Berkley and Locke. (A great book on the subject is Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy*.)

Though of little education myself, I nevertheless believe, from the reading I have done, that no process of education that omits the study of philosophy can be regarded as anything like complete. I quote from Bertrand Russell’s *Outline of Philosophy*:

What passes for knowledge in ordinary life suffers from three defects : it is cocksure, vague and self-contradictory. The first step towards philosophy consists in becoming aware of these defects, not in order to rest content with a lazy scepticism, but in order to substitute an amended kind of knowledge which shall be tentative, precise and self consistent.

I am a humanist, an atheist and I believe very strongly in socialism. I may be accused of placing too much emphasis on my opinion of religion. In reply, I have to say that religion has been protected, often in the most cruel manner, for centuries. If anyone could doubt that it is protected in modern society, I suggest that person should try criticising religion in a letter to, say, a newspaper. My experience has been that such letters appear only rarely. For years and years, Mother Teresa, of the Catholic faith, for example, has been written about, and spoken of, as the epitome of goodness, of saintliness. No doubt she had her detractors but, particularly because of the power of the church, few editors, few publishers, would be prepared to publish any kind of criticism of her.

I recall reading an opinion that hard-line opponents of contraception (they are usually, as well, hard-line opponents of abortion), would never condone contraception even if, say, both prospective parents had syphilis, and any child born of the union would be syphilitic and destined to die at an early age. Mother Teresa, almost without doubt, is such a person.

At last, however, public criticism of her has actually occurred. Christopher Hitchens an English journalist, in 1994, produced a documentary film entitled *Hell’s Angel*. Now he has written a book, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in theory and practice*. And a full page article headed ‘Saint or Hell’s Angel?’ appeared in the Melbourne

Sunday Age of 10 December, 1995. It seems probable that she is by no means above criticism. So perhaps the opinions of free thinkers are, little by little, being given more exposure. I hope so. Indeed, the *Sunday Age* has published a number of letters from me criticising religion in recent times.

The two principal objections that I have to any religious belief are that it is both not true on the one hand, and enormously harmful on the other. As Bertrand Russell has pointed out, there are several major religions and they disagree in important respects. It follows, as a matter of simple logic, that not more than one of them can be true. 'Aha!' Christians may say, 'Ours is the true religion.' True? (A belief is said to be a true belief when it corresponds with fact. If it is a fact that God exists, then if one has a belief that there is a God, it follows that it is a true belief.) As for the harm religion does, and always has done, it is only necessary to look around the world, as it was, as it is. Perhaps in some areas it does a little good, but it seems to me to be a blight on humanity, a product of human ignorance and the fear of death, understandable, perhaps, before Copernicus and other astronomers, before Lyell and other geologists, and before that very great man, Darwin (another hero of mine.) Bertrand Russell again:

The principles of the sermon on the mount are admirable, but their effect upon average human nature was very different from what was intended. Those who followed Christ did not learn to love their enemies or turn the other cheek. They learned instead to use the Inquisition and the stake, to subject the human intellect to the yoke of an ignorant and intolerant priesthood, to degrade art and extinguish science for a thousand years. (*The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*)

Returning to the question of 'Truth', I should mention that the pragmatists have another way of looking at it. Bertrand Russell wrote that the following was William James' conception of 'Truth':

A belief is to be judged true in so far as the potential consequences of its adoption are good.

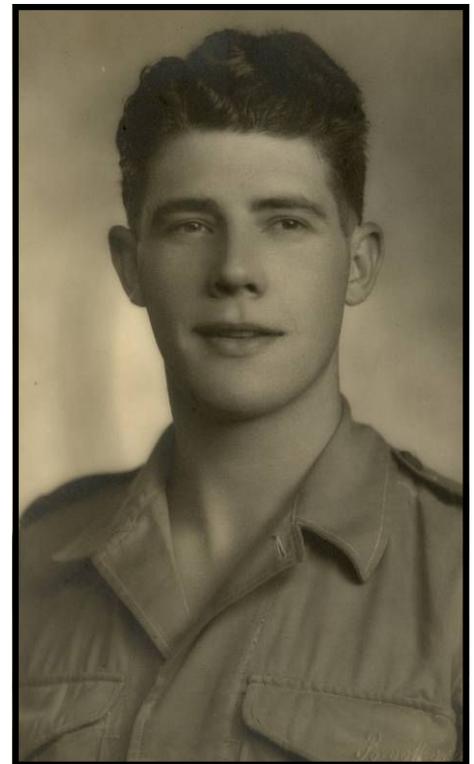
My belief in socialism is based, for one thing, on its capacity, if properly conducted, to provide for the welfare of all the people in a society as opposed to the very-much-based-on-greed dog-eat-dog nature of its main rival in economic systems, capitalism. There is much more, of course, but I must move on.

The reader may well wonder that someone like me should have such aspirations, but if I were to be asked what I would most like to be, given another life on this earth, I would reply in about this order : eminent philosopher; great novelist; great actor; a tenor of renown. Then there is the historian, the scientist and ... but one is what one is. And although man is certainly capable of self-improvement, 'changing his spots', indeed, capable of thwarting, too, to some extent, the intention of his genes, his intellectual attributes play a very large part in determining his role in life. And many of us are pretty limited in intellect. So, if we are sensible, though we may sigh with regret, about severe limitations, we may use our reason to come to grips with life as it is for us. Oh, how important the use of reason is! (Some clerics say that the existence of God can be proved by the use of the unaided reason.) In this life, it seems to me, we have constantly to keep in mind that being in error in our opinions is a state most easy of achievement. Russell

He that is certain is certainly wrong, for there is no such thing as certainty.

Prudence and forethought seem to me to be very important. Religion and socialism, however, are by no means the only things that I take an interest in. (I leave out of consideration, here, my family and friends.) I have opinions about very many issues: about racism, for example; about politics generally, and world affairs. As I proceed, I imagine, the reader will easily enough deduce some of my attitudes from what I say from time to time. It seems appropriate now, though, for me to get going on what I have to say about my life from 2 April, 1922, when I was born in Yarrowong, Victoria.

John Rawson
Greensborough, October 1996

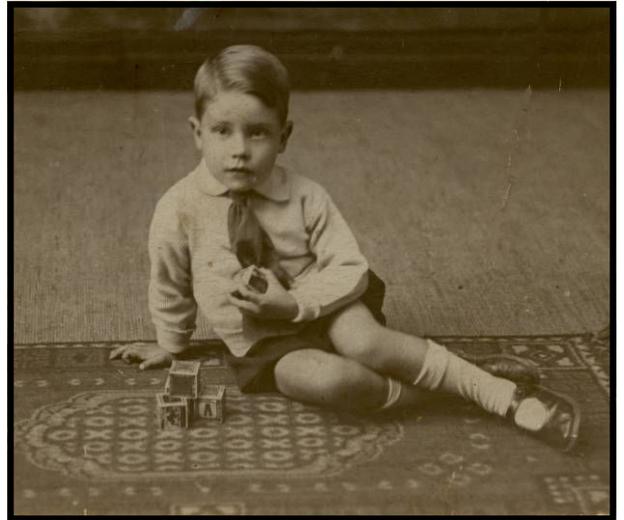


JJ Rawson 1943

Chapter 1 Boyhood in Derrinallum and Beyond

In the years 1922-1927, I was told by my brother, Bryan, we lived in Yarrawonga (behind the post office, in a timber house), moved to Benalla when my father was moved in his post office job, then back to Yarrawonga (to stay for a short period with my mother's parents). Dad was promoted to postmaster and went off to Derrinallum (from now on in this account known as Derri), where, for the time being, there was not a suitable house available for us to occupy. Dad became postmaster at the new Derrinallum Post Office on 5 May, 1926.

I have only a few memories of my first five years. I swallowed a tack from Grandpa Pitman's saddler's shop. (I remember the shop but not the swallowing. Nor do I remember Mum later locating the tack where you would expect it to be.) I remember the grape vine near the shop, and the messy effects eating green grapes can have on one's bowel actions. At Benalla, our back gate opened onto a sports oval. There was a football team known as the 'Rovers'. I was given blocks to play with when I was taken to the photographic studio. Subsequently, my mother sent a postcard photograph of me to her sister, Jess. She wrote in pencil, '... This is a photo of our baby. He was 3 on the 2nd of April. He's a good kid & no trouble.' The year must have been 1925. 'Poo stink shit abobba-Honkin' was a girl that some did not like.



"He's a good kid & no trouble." 1925

In May, 1927, the Federal Parliament moved from Melbourne to Canberra. Probably it was that event that brought the Duke and Duchess of York to Australia and to Melbourne. There was a huge military street parade. Someone took me to see it. I sat on a stool some of the time. Perhaps we were on our way to Derri at that time. Indeed, I feel certain that we did arrive there in the winter of 1927, for I remember Mum dressing me in a velvet overcoat and cap and sending me to a nearby farm to play with my new friend, Jim Barr. (I remember Jim's consternation at a later time when I assured him that he was certainly going to die some day.) The Barrs moved to Woorndoo in November, 1932.

Not long after they moved, I went to stay with the Barr family for a few days. I travelled to Mortlake by motor vehicle, and then by jinker for what seemed, and probably was, hours. Mildred Barr looked after me and I think Gilbert, or perhaps it was Tom, drove the jinker. The other children were Lesley, Jim, Ross and Alan. It seems to me rather remarkable that the lives of all seven of the progeny of Andrew and Louisa Barr were still continuing in May, 1996. To meet Mildred and Jim again, along with other friends of my childhood in Derri, was an emotional experience not so easy for me to handle.

Derri was (and is) a small town. In 1944, many of the town's buildings were destroyed by fire. Our family left the town in 1941. By rail it was 108 miles or so from Melbourne through Geelong, Cressy and Lismore. Mount Elephant (393m) is nearby. There was snow on it at least once in our time there. That was in September, 1927. Rabbits raised huge families in its crater and on its slopes.



My paternal grandparents, Richard and Mary Anne Rawson (nee Barrett) with Richard, George, & Charles: Mary, Henry, Annie and Lil. Melbourne ca 1910.

Derri had no electricity supply then; it arrived in 1938. There were a few carbide lights in the streets. The only school, the State School, went to 8th grade (Merit

Certificate). The main street, a double row of elm trees along its middle, had fewer than a dozen shops. Sam Batten, who had a wooden leg, was the boot repairer. The Eeles family ran the bakery and Mr Gullick was the blacksmith.

The blacksmith's daughter, Edna, known to us as Honey, was Alan's girlfriend for some time. One night, perhaps I was 13, I woke to find them both on my single bed with me. They were not there to see me, however, but were taking a very passionate interest in each other. I pretended to be asleep. Norm French, then the Omans, had butchers' shops, but later the Borbidges became the town's meat suppliers, in a new shop, however.

Mum and Gertie French were great friends. I heard Gertie say one day that she was the prettiest girl in Geelong, and one could easily believe that. Her eldest son, Bevan, was commissioned in the militia after the outbreak of war in 1939 and, achieving the rank of major, was one of the heroes of the fighting in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. One day, when I was still at school, I asked Bryan why some kids called Bevan, 'Letter'. He did not enlighten me, but he did say that I should not use that nickname at home. Bevan died some years ago. Brielson, Lowell and Laughton French still live in the Derri district.

In addition to the shops, there was a post office and a boarding house referred to as the coffee palace. Doreen Thompson's family ran the business. She and I were friends. These days, having survived the fires, the coffee palace has become 'The Elms Restaurant'. A bank, mechanics' hall, three churches, two garages—there wasn't much more. Except for the butter factory. There were no police, no dentist, no doctor, no lawyer, no chemist. Except for the headmaster of the school, it was a town that somehow managed without professionals, except that some visited from time to time. But wait a moment. Perhaps Mr McMeeken, the Presbyterian minister, as well as the Anglican vicar and the Catholic priest, neither of whom I remember, might reasonably have regarded themselves as professionals. The town did, as you would expect, have its nightman. It had N C (Fritz) Anderson, too. He ran the Defiance poultry farm, and had earlier managed the butter factory. He bred chickens in incubators. Heating? Kerosene, I think. I mention some other' trades people' later.

Our house was about a mile out of the town, not far from the railway station and beside the butter factory. It was the manager's residence, but he did not live there. It was a timber house with a galvanised iron roof and a cypress hedge at the front. The front lawn was of buffalo grass. The 'dunny' was down the back in the shed. (Perhaps you could buy toilet paper in those days, but our 'bum' paper was newspaper cut to size. Dad used to prefer the *Argus*, as I remember.) No wireless yet for us. A chip heater in the bathroom. Bodily cleanliness was much less observed in those days, as is well known. Perhaps I had a toothbrush, but if I did it was certainly not much used. Those days, toothache troubled victim after victim. One night when I was staying with the Sanders family near Little Lake, Mrs Sanders packed some toothache preparation into one of my tooth cavities. For me she thus assumed the status of a ministering angel. John, Bonnie and Keith Sanders were pals of mine. I can still see Mrs Sanders, on horseback and wearing jodhpurs, arriving at our house near the butter factory.

There was a copper in our laundry—a wood fire required. At a later time, Mum lit the fire and a little while after, out from the fire ran my pet rabbit. It did not live. Wood in the kitchen stove, too, and in the lounge fireplace. There were pressure lamps in the ceilings of a couple of the rooms. Otherwise, we used kerosene lamps or candles. We did, too, I recall, have an 'Aladdin' (mantle) lamp. It was a favourite with its soft light. People did not have refrigerators. We did have a Coolgardie safe. Probably no one in Derri had wall-to-wall carpet. We did get a carpet square for the lounge, but linoleum was extensively used in those days.

On Christmas Day, 1927, while I was playing with my brother Alan on the front lawn, my right elbow was injured when I fell upon my back with my arm underneath me. Just then, Mildred Barr walked by and suggested to Alan that my elbow was fractured. It was. Off to Camperdown (how—we had no car?) to have it set. It was a botched job, resulting in a 'gross deformity'. I began school a few weeks late, carrying a small bucket of sand to help straighten the arm. But the arm remained crooked. For a long time I was very sensitive about its appearance.

I can remember my first day at Derri State School. I can, in my mind's eye, see Ray Gellie sitting on a gatepost. I fell over that day; a nasty gravel rash on the knee (arm?). My sister Jessie and my brothers, Alan and Bryan, were all still attending the school at that time. Jessie, when she did finish 8th grade, was dux of the school. She was presented with a copy of *Lorna Doone*, a prize donated by Mrs J L Currie. The rest of us were never to achieve such eminence.

We continued to live in the butter factory house (still there in 1996) until late 1932 or early 1933. I had a number of friends, including Mick Davis and Max Foster, the latter going down in a bomber over the North Sea during the Second World War. Jim Barr and I simply loved football. I barracked for Carlton and I can recall running around in my early years calling out, 'I'm Horrie Clover, I'm Horrie Clover.' He was a Carlton champion of the twenties and early thirties.

A combined Derri team won the Western Plains Association (later League) premiership in 1928. A dinner was held at Skipton, (was it Skipton they beat?), and Dad spoke, commenting on the absence of ill feeling between the teams. He was a delegate on the tribunal and a timekeeper. Almost everybody called him Dick. 'We are the premiers, we are, we are.' I am sure that Mum, too sang that on the walk home from the 'Rec' (a rough, crab-holed sporting oval those days). I think that Derri, the 'Tigers', won another premiership not much later. Perhaps that was when we sang the song. Alan played for the team in the thirties, suffering a fractured collarbone on one occasion. Dad used to say that Alan had 'a good pair of hands', but, like me, he was never really a success as a footballer.

We had three dogs, Snowy, Streak and Rover. Snowy was poisoned by someone. My brother, Alan, decided that Rover was old and should be put down. He shot him with a .22 calibre rifle, but things did not go as planned, and I can remember running up the footpath screaming. I was eight or so then. Even now, it is harrowing for me to think about that incident. I don't remember what happened to Streak.

Bryan had a horse for a time. He made a low-slung cart with home-made traces, reins, etc, but no shafts, and the horse used to pull it. Even Mum rode on it at least once. One day, however, he, Jim Barr and I were travelling on it when the horse took fright (there were no blinkers either), bolted, and went round a bend so fast that we were all thrown off. After a couple of miles, the cart was smashed to bits. Walking home from the town, Alan was confronted with the smashed up remains and the terrified horse. No doubt he experienced the most awful imaginings. There was some gravel rash for us.

At home, the relations among the family members were pretty good. Mum and Dad got on quite well most of the time. Dad used to like to drink, and he had a number of good friends upon whom he needed to rely for transport if the decision was made to journey to Lismore or Darlington. Arthur Smith, Gordon Bristow and George Primrose were among those of his friends that had motor cars. Those towns each had an hotel; did not. In recent years, Dad had studied for and passed examinations that entitled him to join the 3rd Division of the Public Service. Mum told me that he 'topped Victoria'. And, years later, my Auntie Lil (his sister) told me that he was very good at school, the headmaster not wanting him to leave when he did. He served as Chairman of the Derrinallum School Committee for years and years. I remember that there used to be copies of *Rationalist* at home. Mum bought me a book once, a religious book, I think, with a story called 'Knocking out the T'. (The 'T' out of can't.) That story has influenced me.

I do not recall Dad ever hitting me. I think Jessie, for one, though, might have been beaten in earlier times. We have to remember that the Victorian era, not long past, encouraged that sort of thing. Dad was a kind, thoughtful, fairly gentle sort of fellow. I remember Mum whacking me across the head on one occasion, but that kind of conduct was not her habit. Indeed, she was a dear mother, and there was a good deal of love and cohesion within the family. At least, that's what I thought, anyway. I formed the view when in my teens that the Rawsons 'stuck like shit to a blanket'. That turned out to be one of my many fallacious judgements. Not that Dad or Mum ever let me down in a serious way.

We first got a wireless set in, about, 1930. Ernie Parsons installed it. He was a motor mechanic and was the proprietor of what later became Urquhart's garage. Static was a very big problem then. About this time, too, perhaps a bit later, a gramophone came into the house, and there were several records specially for me. We had a telephone, Dad being the postmaster. We all subsequently learned how to operate the switchboard in the post office and, in later years, when I was 14 or 15, I used occasionally to sleep at the post office to 'mind', the switchboard. I did this to relieve Dad who did that for a time to improve his income. The switchboard was all plugs, cords and shutters. Those days one's telephone was powered by a couple of dry batteries. Some of the subscribers, certainly those in nearby Geelengla (an area not a town), were on party line, which arrangement allowed some people to listen in to the telephone conversations of others, if they so chose.

One day, perhaps I was eight or nine, I walked into the butter factory to buy some butter for Mum. Just as I turned a corner an employee (was it Jim Spaul, the 'Tigers' full forward?) threw a bucket of very hot water to the floor. Much pain and large blisters resulted. Mum did the doctoring.

It was not too often that one saw an aeroplane in those days. James Fairbairn, who had been a flyer in the First World War, and who was a wealthy squatter, the owner of 'Mount Elephant', used to pilot a 'Moth'—was it a 'Gypsy Moth'? (In the early years of the Second World War he became Minister for Air, and perished with other important persons in an aircraft crash.) The next aircraft that I can remember seeing was the *Southern Cross*, (Charles Kingsford Smith), over Yarrowonga in late 1932. I went up for two joyrides in the thirties, one at Derri, the other at Warrnambool. The second flight was magic: in the front cockpit all by myself, the propeller whizzing around in front of me. The flight was supposed to cost five bob, but there were three of us kids, one with a shilling, one with sixpence, and I had two bob. The others said that I should go up, and the pilot did a short flight for three and sixpence. Unbelievable? (To the present time I have flown in 30 or so different types of aircraft.)

Over a fairly long period, mostly on Saturday nights, films could be seen at the Mechanics' Institute hall. They were silent until *The Jazz Singer* in the late twenties. There was only one projector, so there were periods of darkness while the next reel was positioned. I remember *Ben Hur* and *Frankenstein* being on. Did I see the former? It was screened on Tuesday, 20 November, 1928, I recently learned. The latter was considered to be too scary for me to see. (At a later time, though, I did see the *Bride of Frankenstein*.) Then there were *Hell's Angels* and *Hell's Divers* and...

The picture shows were so looked forward to by the people of Derri. The seating was not exactly deluxe, I should mention. The kids sat on long stools (benches?) without backs. This arrangement was good, in a way, because, on occasion, during a period of darkness when the reel was changed, a boy could lie back and put his head in the lap of his current girlfriend. If she let him, that is.

I remember Bryan (was the film *The Pagan*?) shouting one night when the villain did something particularly reprehensible, 'Oh, you dirty dog'. *All Quiet on the Western Front* made a huge impression on me. The horror, the cruelty, the agony, the injustice of warfare appalled me. I can still, in my mind's eye, see the young German hero, back in his home town on leave, and at his old school, the idea being that he would speak of the glory of fighting for the father-land. But he spoke out strongly against war, his opinions, however, meeting not at all the expectations of the senior class that he was addressing. They booed him from the stage, so to speak. Lew Ayres was a fine actor who, during the Second World War, in the United States, confirmed that he was a pacifist and drove an ambulance, if I remember correctly. I read Remarque's novel at a later time, and I was a bit stunned by some of its contents, for example: 'Kat turned his arse up to heaven and let off a mighty fart.'

The butter factory was an important part of my years at Derri up to about 1936, or so. I was employed there for a few weeks when I was about 15. Trucks used to go out to dairy farms and bring back cans of cream of varying quality. A 'tester' would stir the cream in a can (one day a drowned rat came up with the stirrer—the cream was graded third grade), thrust a spatula into it, and from that implement take a mouthful of cream. Other, more scientific, tests were carried out by Max McGregor in what I shall call the laboratory. Max later married Nancy Taylor, one of the station master's daughters. Jean Taylor and Marcia Lemon were close friends.

He would swish the cream around his mouth, spit it into a dipper, then would make a mark on the can to indicate the grading of the cream. One of my jobs was to clean the cans and the floors. About this time, but I don't mean when I was employed at the factory, Harry Stone, one of the drivers, began taking me with him on occasions, his main purpose being to have someone to open and close gates. Sometimes I would travel for miles standing on the running board of the truck. One day, at Gordon Bristow's place, Harry said to Gordon that perhaps I should stay at his farm to gather the eggs. Gordon said that by the look of me I should eat some. I was pretty skinny. (Bill Wilson had nicknamed me 'sprigger'—as in sparrow—because of my legs—and I was called that by many until I left Derri in 1938. Otherwise, I was known as 'Jack' until I met my wife-to-be in Brisbane in 1945.) Harry played centre for the 'Tigers' and was team captain.

Bertrand Russell wrote somewhere, 'Most people believe in God because they have been taught from early infancy to do it.' Religion had very little influence in our house. For a start, Dad was an atheist. Mum, I think, was fairly indifferent to it, and I remember her expressing the opinion that if there is a God he should make himself visible to us. Still there were occasions when she and some or other of us attended a Presbyterian service. For a time, at least, Mum belonged to the Presbyterian Women's Mission Union. I went to Sunday school for a while when I was 13 or 14, but entirely because I was sweet on Pat Shea at the time. She would usually be there.

Living as we did in the country, we saw sexual activity in the animal (non-human) world, so to some extent I knew about procreation and its means. But I do not recall being given any instruction at home in such matters, except that Dad gave me a book called *Why I Was Born* when I was 13 or so. (I was a failure subsequently with my own children in the matter of sexual guidance, too.) Among us schoolkids, however, sex was not altogether a taboo subject, and sexual experimentation occurred from time to time. Christmas Day, 1938, was still in the future.

In those years, if you lived in Derri (and lots of other places), there was only a primary school to attend: grade 1 to grade 8. Heaven knows where the nearest high school was—there was only a handful in Victoria at the time. Parents with the money to do so could send a child to Ballarat, say, or Geelong to a private school. Max Foster went to college in Ballarat for several years, got his Leaving, a job in a bank in Melbourne, and was clever and educated enough to become a navigator in the Royal Australian Air Force. As mentioned earlier, the Second World War claimed his life. Max's dad, Eddie Foster, worked at Wilson's General Store, but left to set up his own grocery business in a vacant shop down the street a bit. I remember assuring Max that from then on I would buy my pennyworth of broken biscuits from his Dad's shop. He had been an infantry lieutenant in the First World War, and had relieved a German flier's corpse of a superb, huge, Mauser pistol. Occasionally, Max gave me a surreptitious showing of it. What a beauty it was! The shop and their house beside it survived the 1944 fire.

During my last couple of years at school, Jack Stimson was the headmaster. Before him there was Mr Webb and, earlier, Mr Reece. A young Mildred Barr was one of the teachers. I was never top of the class in any exams, as I remember. I was good at mental arithmetic, reading, spelling and I could express myself fairly well on paper. My handwriting, though, was the despair of Jack Stimson (a friend of Dad's), who, on one occasion said (something like), 'Your father has about the best handwriting I have ever seen. Look at yours!' For years and years, I remained embarrassed about the quality of my handwriting. When he was headmaster of Newlyn school near Creswick in 1927, he was the first teacher to found a Young Farmers' Club. One day at our school, he came around a corner just as I 'fied' Ernie Hodson. He boxed my left ear very, very hard. He had a bad heart. A few years later, he collapsed and died while playing tennis at Wedderburn, Victoria. I should mention, too, that at the Merit Certificate examination, in 1935, I received 16½ out of 20 for arithmetic, just pipping (probably on the only occasion ever) Max Foster.



Derrinallum State School 2050 teachers and pupils in 1932. Mildred Barr is on the left of the teachers; Jack Rawson is 2nd from the right in the 4th row from the front.

I could sing a bit but, oh, how hopeless I was at art! Fights and scuffles among the boys were, naturally, a part of school life. I managed, mostly, to be involved in the latter rather than the former. And so, at the end of 1935, three or four months before I was 14, I and Mick Davis and Don Rogerson and Bernie McLeod and Gordon Heard and Isla Smith and Ernie Hodson and Charlie Parsons and Ray Gellie and Lila McPherson (perhaps she was the cleverest in Grade 8) and Heather McLennan and Roy Drake and others finished our formal education at Derri State School.

But we must return to 1932. In that year, perhaps in September, Mum and I went to Yarrawonga, there to stay with her parents, Jos and Annie Pitman, for three months or so. I went to Yarrawonga State School.

On Guy Fawkes night, 5 November, 1932, as was the custom in those times, we were enjoying a bonfire and crackers in Orr Street outside the Pitman house when Mum was suddenly taken off to hospital. When I asked why, grandma told me that, of course, people go to hospital when they are sick. It shows you a bit about those times, that not only did she not say that Mum was off to have a baby, but that I, even though I was 10, did not even realise that she was pregnant. I do recall that, perhaps not for the first time, but almost certainly for the last time, in my life, I prayed to God. The next morning I learned that Neville Peter Rawson had begun his existence on earth.

Either while we were away, or soon after we returned to Derri, as mentioned earlier, our family moved to another house, situated in the main street across the road from the main group of shops. On our side of the street, there were two garages, a baker's shop and another shop in which several attempts to establish a business failed. The Gillies, and later Tom Loader, had a butcher's shop, in Ligar Street, on the way to the butter factory and the railway station. The post office was diagonally across to the left. It was good to live in the town. (In those days the streets did not have names, as I remember, although we did refer to 'Main Street'.)

By now I was the only one of the family still going to school. There was a savage depression going on in Australia, and there was much unemployment. Jessie, Bryan and Alan were not always in work by any means, but they all, at one time or another, worked in Derri or other towns, sometimes relieving in the Postmaster-General's Department. Jessie was a telephonist, and Alan and Bryan worked as postal clerks. Dad's influence here, no doubt, was helpful.

In 1938, electricity came to Derri. No longer would we see 'old' Frank Dyer, ladder on shoulder, moving about the town to tend to the carbide lights on poles here and there. He lived in the 'coffee palace', cared for the uniforms of the 'Tigers', and was often 'marker' in the billiard 'saloon' where, though, there was only one table. He was said to be a very well-educated man. Alan told me once that Frank, a pipe smoker, said this to a man passing by on horseback: 'Please stay your quadruped and provide me with some means of ignition.' It seems that he had a sense of humour, too.

They were, in their way, exciting years. My small brother, Peter, pulled a pot of tea off a table, the contents spilling

down his chest. It must have been a Saturday, because, later in the day after Peter had gone off to Lismore for treatment, I pestered Dad for a shilling so that I could go to the pictures. Perhaps, understandably, he thought that going to the pictures at that time was not something that I should have wished to do.

One night, a very dark night, someone, probably Mum, asked me to go across the street to buy something at Northey's. This was before the arrival of electric street lights. I raced up the front path (the gate was open as it often was), charged across the footpath and crashed face first into the side panels of a truck parked in front of the house. I was flung backwards, but no serious damage was done. I continued to Northey's.

As well as the pictures, dancing was an important part of life in Derri. There were annual events such as the Bachelors' and the Spinsters' Balls, after which huge suppers were served. Sometimes, when a dance was being held, euchre tournaments would be conducted in the supper room. Ladies played a major part in these. Kids like me were sometimes co-opted to make up a necessary four. One's errors in play were sometimes not received at all well by an elderly lady partner.

Jessie, Alan and Bryan all danced, Alan with perhaps less enthusiasm and skill than the other two. I never ever did, even subsequently, show much talent in that area. Just the same, I would often go to watch the people dancing and to listen to the music. One frightening night, people were happily moving around the polished (with candle wax and sawdust) floor, when Martin Brown, dancing solo, and having had lots to drink, moved among the couples in a friendly enough, but probably irritating, attempt to be centre of attention. Reaching Sammy Stone and his partner, he engaged in what might have been described as a mild show of shadow boxing. Sammy Stone, a tall, powerful farm labourer, quite without ceremony, produced a right and then a left to Martin's jaw. Down Martin went. Drama followed drama. Bill Wilson was Martin's friend. Up from one end of the hall he came, the most ferocious scowl on his face. In long sliding strides, at the same time drawing a bottle of beer from his hip pocket, he quickly arrived at the scene of his mate's undignified meeting with the floor. Crash, went the bottle onto the head of Sammy Stone who, although he did not fall, staggered about in an alarming manner. The crowd then closed in and it was over. I was, I am sure, goggle-eyed throughout the nasty, though short, sequence of events. The last of the incident that I can recall was seeing Martin outside the hall smashing his fist into the palm of his other hand and saying, something like, 'Bring the bastard out here.' He was told that Sammy was in no condition to fight him. Indeed, he wasn't, but he recovered all right. No one went to jail, as I remember.

And Little Lake (Deep Lake) was so important to us in the summer months. It was three miles or so out of the town. But how to get there? On our school visits, Jack Tilly took us in his truck. Mr Scott, Inspector of Schools, signed my Junior Swimming Certificate on 28 May, 1934. At other times we relied particularly on the inclinations of Trevor Northey (the father of the footballer and coach, John Northey.)

Pop Northey and members of his family conducted a business across the street (as already mentioned) selling all sorts of goods, including newspapers. Before them, the Lemkes ran the business. Their fox terrier dog bit Gwen Parsons when she went into the shop one day, disfiguring her lip. Trevor Northey was about Bryan's age and was my hero of the time. He was, too, my principal adviser on matters relating to the opposite sex. On the night of Christmas Day, 1938, I consulted him. He assured me that there was very little likelihood that I would have contracted venereal disease (for some reason, VD was a popular topic at that time), close to Mount Elephant, a little earlier that night. The Northeys, as well as owning a Hupmobile motor car, had a 'T' model Ford: a car converted to a truck. In this, we would often head off for a swim—a quite heavenly prospect on a day when the temperature was up in the nineties or higher.

I was playing some tennis, as well, in those years, and there were exciting fishing trips to Emu Creek. We used to rob fruit orchards, too. One day, in the main street, an orchard owner (was it Mr Edgar or Mr Bain?), took a swipe at me. He missed, however. Joyce Oman, Mollie Foster, Alison Wilson and two or three of us boys used to play 'postman's knock', a kissing game, on occasions. One day, I decided that when I was to kiss Joyce Oman, I would place my right hand on her breast, feeling confident that she would think that, well, he had to put his hand somewhere, didn't he? He didn't mean to be naughty. Whatever her thoughts, she looked skyward, embarrassed, and she became very red in the face. But she did not push my hand away. That was the most intimate we ever were together.

Alan became interested in radio and bought a new cabinet radio—a 'Healing Golden Voice'. He became a lover of grand opera, in particular the voices of the great tenors. For me, too, this was a beginning of a life-time admiration of singers such as Gigli, Bjorling and others. And there was Jan Pierce, then known as Paul Robinson. It was said that 3KZ was allowed to broadcast his 'Bluebird of Happiness' only once a week: 'If things don't look so cheerful, show a little bit of fight, for every bit of darkness, there's a little bit of light.'

For a time, I was the 'lolly boy' at the Saturday night picture show. Northeys supplied me with various confections, a

tray in which to carry them (a strap around my neck), paying me nothing for my services except that I got in free. I none the less considered it reasonable that I should eat and not pay for a sweet of my choice. They never ever questioned the shortage of cash that ensued. (In earlier times, Dad used sometimes to bring me home what came to be known as 'Jackie Rawson lollies': McRobertson's Columbine Caramels.)

One night when I was selling sweets, the sad news came through that Eddie McLennan had died in the Camperdown Hospital. He was about Bryan's age. He sang publicly fairly often, and I well remember his stirring rendition of 'Goodbye' from, (was it?) *The Student Prince* just a short time before his death.

The end of school arrived in late 1935 and I was now one of the unemployed. Oh, the qualifications I had! Early in 1936, I began work (15 shillings a week) with Norm McInnes, who was a wool and skin merchant. He was a member of a clique (a popular word then) that included Jessie, Harry Stone, Pearl Borbidge, Snowy Wilson and a few others. He used an old farm house not far out of town on the Camperdown road to store the items that he bought from farmers as he travelled around the countryside. Sometimes, my tasks included ripping sheep's trotters off the skins, maggots flying everywhere when I did so. Sometimes, though, he took me with him, and they were great trips (he was a bit of a speed demon and was well known as one) in his almost new International truck. On more than one occasion, he left vehicle tyre marks on the earthen footpath under the shop verandas.

After only a few weeks with Norm, however, I was offered a job, this time at 12 shillings a week, at Wilson's General Store. Straight across the road, it was. So I began work as a grocer's boy; Jack Stimson, the school headmaster, said it was good that I was going to learn a trade. The hours were long, Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, too, but I rather enjoyed it all. I remember well that it was more or less normal for the boss and others to grovel to the wealthy landowners, people such as the Fairbairns and the Curries. Some were not necessarily prompt payers of accounts, despite the 'forelock tugging' attention they were given. At this time, I had a big crush on Marcia Lemon, the sister of Kelso, who was to become a workmate and, later, in Melbourne, a close friend. I used to try to have myself positioned at the counter so that I could see her as she and her friends walked past the front door on the way home from school. It was around this time that my voice broke.

I had a number of friends of both sexes. Mick Davis was probably my best male friend of those times, but there were others such as Fred Ruggles, George Stannard and Cyril Hooper, none of whom I have previously mentioned. Mick's mother, Mary Davis, had a drapery shop down the street a bit. She had my first proper grown-up suit made for me. It cost £2 something. I paid it off at so much a week, that arrangement being my idea. In retrospect, I decided, from her demeanour, that she did not go along altogether with that method of payment. Her shop is still in Main Street.

Later in 1936, or early in 1937, I was out of a job. Wilson's business was failing, money being short almost everywhere, I suppose. (I always thought that Dad got about £5 a week, but perhaps that figure was too high. At least his job was fairly safe.) I think that I easily earned my twelve bob a week and my honesty was never in question—but there it was. It seems to show that a sum of twelve shillings in those times was an important sum of money. Laurie Wilson had been a good boss. A couple of years later, the business was acquired by Wellmans, and he had a job in Melbourne. The shop, an adjacent house and our house, too, across the street, were lost in the fires of 1944.

Pop Northey, as well as being a shopkeeper, was a painter and decorator. He was also coach of the 'Tigers' for a time. I worked for him for a year or so, our jobs including the Mercer residence, miles out of town, the bank, the Mechanics' Institute hall and the headmaster's residence. Much of the time I worked with Lyle Stone, a person several years my senior, whom I admired. We used to argue from time to time, in a friendly way, and he said to me once, 'You'd get out of jail.' His father, Bert, was a football trainer, and Mick Davis and I used to go to 'rubbing down' sessions some evenings. They used to rub us down, too, sometimes. He said about me on one occasion, that I had an 'Arse like a black fellow's dog: two bones with a hole in the middle.' I used to worry about my skinniness and was so pleased to go into long pants. Dad brought my first pair home from Melbourne when I was 13. Joyce Oman was impressed.

Mavis Northey and my brother, Bryan, got on well, but at a later time she married a farmer, Bert Brown. Their grandson, Gavin Brown, became captain of Collingwood Football Club in 1994. Noel Northey, a couple of years older than I, was a very good footballer. He showed me a letter from Carlton on one occasion; they invited him to train with them. When it came to relations with the opposite sex, he was, to put it mildly, fairly forward. He collapsed and died after a football match at Derri in the late fifties. He was close to 40 then. We went up Mount Elephant one day to smoke some expensive cigarettes he had taken from the shop. We forgot matches and had to go down the mountain to a farmhouse to get some. Earlier he sang with St Paul's choir. He could fight like mad. Piccaninny Hill, in some documents referred to as Little Elephant, is not far from the railway station. That's near where the cemetery is. That's where Noel lies. And so does Lyle Stone and Alan Scott and ...

A section of Northey's building space was taken up by Alan Scott, who came from Ballarat and was a hairdresser. He controlled, as well, the one-table billiard room. He even had a 'fruit machine', for a time, at least. Yes, you pulled a handle in the manner of the later poker machines, most times losing your money. You could get a bet on the horses with Scottie; not that I ever did. The fires in 1944 destroyed the Northey buildings.

At about this time, I became absolutely fascinated by the delights of the billiard table. We played billiards, snooker and pin pool. It was, I think, against the law for boys of my age to frequent billiard rooms, but I, and some few others, got away with it. Dad and Mum did not like the idea much, but I was never directly ordered to keep away from the place. Alan was the best, or was close to being the best, player in the town, often playing for money. ('Double or quits' was a popular losing player's request in those days.) I never ever reached his standard over the ensuing years, although I could, at times, beat him at snooker or billiards. Having the money to play was often a problem. A game of snooker cost one shilling. Perhaps the performance of mine that I would mostly likely be remembered for by the chaps in the billiard room, was the night I managed to send them all out the back door by the simple act of farting. Northeys used the table at Christmas time to display some of their goods for sale.

Walter Lindrum came there to give an exhibition in 1937 or 38. As an employee at Urquhart's Garage, I was given the task of cleaning and polishing Scottie's Terraplane motor car, which picked Lindrum up at the railway station. It was five bob to get in, a sum not at my disposal. (Scottie, the mean bugger, should have let me in free, considering the jobs, like brushing the table, that I did for him.) Never mind, I saw much of it through an open back door. Lindrum had an astonishing degree of talent.

In 1937, we moved to a house on the other side of the street and close to the post office. The post office survived the fires seven years later, but the house did not.

There was no great scope for adventure in Derri for grownups or for early teenagers. I never ever did in those years own even a bicycle, but by the time I was 15 I had bought a pea rifle (.22) from Ernie Hodson for 15 shillings. My possession of a firearm was not welcomed by my parents, but they did not refuse to have it in the house. Mum used to say, 'You'll come home shot one day.' Before I owned my own rifle, I used often to go out shooting with friends, shotguns too, being among their possessions.

Just the same, Mount Elephant was always there, and did provide a measure of satisfaction for one looking for adventure. It swarmed with rabbits; they made good targets for shooters. But there was a trapper, too, Keith ('Stumpy') Heard, whose lantern light you could see at night as he traversed Mount Elephant, gathering rabbits from the hundreds of traps he had set on its slopes. Imagine how strong and determined he must have been. The foundation of his future prosperity was thus laid, I understand. If one wanted to experience the thrill of doing something a bit dangerous, one could, for example, climb up the face of the scar in the mountain caused by the removal of large quantities of scoria. On one occasion, in the process of such a climb, I found myself in a position where I could neither ascend nor descend. Scared though I was, I managed finally to reach safety. A fall would, I think, have very likely meant the end for me. The rifle club used to fire their .303 bullets into that scar. There were some trees on the mountain in those days, but most were dead or dying.

In 1937, I began work at Urquhart's Garage, my main task being to look after the petrol and oil sales at a service station adjacent to the garage itself. But before I go into any detail about that job, I must mention another that lasted for only one day.

A farmer a few miles out of town needed someone to help bring in the hay. There were three of us, the other two being strong and mature labourers. One chap stood on a horse-drawn dray, and with a pitchfork tossed hay up to me on the top of the growing haystack. I then had to spear with a pitchfork the hay tossed up, and transfer it to the man whose task it was to build the stack. It was pretty hard work for a 15 year old, but I managed all right. The trouble was that the next morning I was so stiff and sore that I did not feel capable of continuing, so that was that. At a later time, the farmer gave a day's pay for me to my boss, Col Urquhart. I thought that was pretty fair of him, considering that it could have been argued that I had let him down.

I forget what my wage was at Urquhart's garage, but I doubt that it would have been more than 15 shillings a week. Kelso Lemon, a year or two older than I, worked in the garage proper, though he was not a qualified mechanic. He played the trumpet in the local dance band and operated the projector at the picture shows. He had a permanently stiff leg, having knocked it on a pile of a jetty when diving into the sea at Mornington where his family had formerly lived. Within hours he was close to death from osteomyelitis, there being no drugs such as penicillin in those times. He had a bicycle with only one pedal, the foot of the stiff leg resting on a metal plate at pedal level. When he played his trumpet at a dance, the foot of his stiff leg rested on his perpendicularly placed instrument case. In later years, he played with the Northcote City Band.

Kel's father was the head ganger of a small group of men whose task it was to maintain the railway line for who knows how far in each direction from Derri. Alan was a ganger for a short time. Fred Lemon was surprised by Alan's ability to use a pick and shovel: Alan's nickname was 'Weary', when it wasn't 'Dick', and he was very lightly built. Scottie was a bit surprised, too, one day when Jim Thornton commented to him in an admiring way about Alan's ability to box. 'He's got a punch like the kick of a mule,' Jim said. Jim and Alan used to spar with gloves on, sometimes in the post office at night. Jim had a fine physique. He used a tie to keep his trousers up in place of a belt.

Kel told me years later, that Col Urquhart knew quite well that he and I, from time to time, stole and smoked cigarettes from open packs of 'Turf' cigarettes that Col left on a table in the garage. I wonder why he tolerated that? Col was a World War 1 flyer, and claimed that he had offered to fly an aeroplane under Prince's Bridge in Melbourne. Perhaps it could be done with a Gypsy Moth or some other small aircraft.

The petrol bowsters of the day were fitted with handles which one agitated so that the petrol was pumped from underground storage tanks up to a glass container on top of the bowser. When the petrol reached the desired figure shown on the bowl, you stopped pumping. In those times, service stations did not at all necessarily sell only one brand of petrol, but I can't remember what our brands were. ('Atlantic' was one perhaps?) Across the street, though, Northey's had one bowser selling 'Alba' petrol at one shilling and eight pence per gallon. About four cents a litre.

George Stannard's family had a dairy farm at Geelengla, a soldier settlement area with rocks and rabbits aplenty a few miles out of town. On Anzac Day, 1938, I was at the Stannard's place when something happened that changed the whole course of my life. It was afternoon, and George went from the house to bring the cows in for milking. I read a lot and had been reading a (no doubt trashy) magazine. I decided that I would go out in the paddocks to see if I could shoot a rabbit or two. I loaded a bullet into my rifle and went outside the house. It was a single shot rifle. When closing the breech it was necessary to press the trigger at the same time, otherwise the rifle would cock. I must have cocked the rifle. The magazine, I decided to stuff in the vee neck of a jumper I was wearing. As I was doing this with my left hand, I placed the rifle down butt first on the ground with my right hand. It went off. Wham! The bullet went through my left forearm, passed through flesh near my left armpit, and continued on, missing my head, perhaps, only because I was looking down at the magazine. It was as though my arm had been struck by a hammer, and the pain near my armpit could not be ignored either. Blood, when I dragged my sleeve up, was spurting out my arm. Later, I realized that an artery had been severed, and that if someone had not stopped the bleeding I'd have bled to death in no time. I think that close to my first reaction was to shout, 'George! George! George!

Now it just so happened, that just then Mrs Stannard came home in a vehicle from wherever she had been. She was able to control the bleeding, thus probably saving my life. Could George and I have managed the situation? We had no vehicle and had no knowledge of first aid. We were miles away from help. Mrs Stannard soon bundled me into their truck and drove me the several miles to our house in Derri. I walked in the door and said, 'I've been shot,' which declaration, for a moment or two, at least, made me pretty unpopular with Dad. I remember saying, something like, 'Jesus, I come home shot and you go on like that.' Who it was that drove us to the surgery of Doctor Davis in Lismore, seven miles away, I do not recall. The doctor did a sewing up job on the wound near my armpit, then I was admitted to the Lismore Bush Nursing Hospital where I remained for two weeks. Penicillin was not developed until 1943, as I have already mentioned.

An infection set in, I was delirious at times, and I have vivid memories of a nurse, on a number of occasions, squeezing my forearm and pus coming out a bullet hole in the manner of tooth-paste coming out of its tube. It was found, too, that the fingers on my left hand, especially the little finger and its neighbour, were not functioning properly. As far as I know, the incident was not reported in the *Lismore, Derrinallum and Cressy Advertiser*. I believe the matter was hushed up because it was not lawful for a 16 year old to use firearms. Postmasters were not without influence in country towns in those days.

A couple of weeks after I was discharged, it was off to Melbourne for me, Dad arranging for Ted Alcock, the proprietor of the second garage in town, to drive us in his big Ford sedan. (You could buy a bottle of beer for 1s 6d from Ted. Not that I ever did.) We had an appointment with Sir Alan Newton. His decision was that physiotherapy may improve the condition, which was due to damage to the ulnar nerve in my arm. An operation may be necessary later. Dad had evidently decided that he would ask his sister, Lillian, and her husband, Harold Martin, to put me up in their home at 24 Urquhart Street, Northcote. (Yes, a bit of a coincidence that I had been working at Urquhart's Garage.) Dad and Ted Alcock left, and I felt pretty damn miserable about it all, I have to say. Uncle Harold and Auntie Lil treated me very kindly right from the beginning, though, and their two children, Alan (13?) and Thelma (10?), were friendly towards me, too.

The house, single fronted, would have been a typical working class dwelling. There was a water heater in a very simple bathroom. There was a small laundry. The toilet was in a shed down the back. There was a loft on the shed,

on top of which was a 'Robur Tea' sign that could be seen from the train and from Heidelberg Road across the Merri Creek. A lane ran down the western side of the house. The front door was about two or three metres from the footpath, a lasiandra bush being enough on its own to take up an appropriate amount of space. The backyard was a reasonable size.

The Martins did not have a car, a telephone, a hot water system, a refrigerator, a vacuum cleaner, or even a bicycle. Linoleum was the floor covering. Lots of kitchen gadgets, electric knives, say, were not even invented then, as far as I know, at least. There was one radio, a cabinet model in the lounge. Uncle Harold said that he bought it from Myers for £19. There was a gas stove and a gas fire in the lounge. There was at least one gasworks fairly close, that one being in Fitzroy.

Auntie Lil's meals were always a pleasure to eat. As far as I was concerned, it was not a weakness in her culinary routine that one knew what kind of meal would be served on any given night of the week. After the evening meal, Uncle Harold would go into the lounge, sit in his favourite chair near the radio, place a sheet of newspaper over his knees, and then roll himself a cigarette, the newspaper catching any falling pieces of tobacco. 'Dad and Dave' and 'Martin's Corner' were among the popular radio shows. There was often a quiz show, too, and when a competitor turned out to be a teacher, the studio audience would say 'oo oo...', that reaction stemming from a belief that a teacher would probably know the answers, I suppose.

Uncle Harold had a limp, having been shot in the leg in the First World War. He worked in the Jolimont railway yards where he helped service the train carriages. Some people in his less than affluent social position voted, and do vote, for Conservatives. He was not so foolish, I feel sure. About the second evening I was there, he said, 'Do you smoke, Jack?' I said, 'Yes, in fact, I do.' I had not smoked openly in Derri, but now I did. (I gave up forever in 1962.) I think that my favourite fags at the time were Red Capstans, costing (was it?) sixpence for 10, and one shilling for 20.

Alan and Thelma were well behaved children, not engaging, as far as I was aware, in acts of vandalism or the like. Uncle Harold, if displeased sufficiently with either one, did not hesitate to belt them quite hard. Thelma, more often than Alan, I should think, felt the strong slaps across the back from her father. You would not expect that he would strike his 16 year old nephew, and of course he didn't. He was short with me a few times, but that was as far as it went. One evening, early in 1939, my friends, Frank and Kelso and I were having a conversation on the footpath at the front of the house, no distance from the front bedroom. We heard movement in the bedroom as though someone were approaching the front door. Kelso was on his bike and off like a rocket. Frank and I had no real choice but to await events. Uncle Harold came out and said, calmly enough, 'We can hear every word you are saying.' How stupid we were! How humiliating it was! How red hot were the things we were talking about! Aunt Lil next day: 'Please don't talk at the front gate at night again.' That was all.

I used to sing and whistle a lot. 'Come back to Sorrento' was a (Gigli-inspired) favourite of mine in those times. I didn't just sing it and other songs when the rest of the family were out or were up in their rooms—I sang at the top of my voice! I wonder that the family did not object, or that someone in Urquhart Street did not bang on the door and demand that I shut up.

Eric Hahn boarded next door then; I knew him only slightly. We were in the army together later. I see him usually at our reunions. He has not forgotten my excursions into the singing arena. His attitude towards my performances is one of forbearance, even of mild approbation.

These days, and for years past, I see the house as I travel over Urquhart Street by train. Not long ago, I noticed that the roof had been painted. For the first time since the house was built, I would guess. A silvery colour. It is now 57 years since an unworldly, ignorant and bewildered Jack Rawson arrived there, and an altogether new life began for him. So many memories. Perhaps I think more often about Thelma than the others, I suppose because she was a girl and I was a boy.

Although I went back to Derri to see my family from time to time, I never ever lived there again. The family moved to Boort in 1941, Dad becoming postmaster there. For me, an entirely new life had begun. Fancy living in Melbourne!

It may be sensible at this point to explain what happened in relation to the medical problem I was having, thus finishing with the matter. I used to travel by cable tram, mainly, into the Royal Melbourne Hospital in Lonsdale Street (after the war it became the Queen Victoria) for diathermy, or whatever. The treatment, in fact, did virtually no good as far as I could ascertain. After a few months, it was decided that I should have surgery to repair a partly severed ulnar nerve. I had the operation. Perhaps it helped a bit, but my left hand was permanently affected by the wound. On one occasion after I had medical treatment, I went into Coles cafeteria in Bourke Street for a cup of tea.

It cost threepence. I asked for a second cup, for some reason thinking that I would not have to pay for it. But it was to cost threepence, too. It arrived, but I had to refuse it. Threepence was all I had to travel home by tram to Clifton Hill.

The Melbourne of 1938 had a population of well under one million. The last of the cable tram routes was still operating, Thornbury being the destination of the tram from Bourke Street in the city. We would walk across the Merri Creek bridge in High Street to Queen's Parade, Clifton Hill, to catch a tram to the city. A friend and I were at the pictures one Saturday night in 1940 or 1941. When we came out of the Plaza in High Street, double-decker buses had taken over from the cable trams. So the gripman, who 'drove' the tram, was, like the cable tram, no more. And because we were to have double-decker buses was the reason the level of the road had been lowered under the railway bridge where High Street meets Queens Parade. The double-deckers have long been replaced by electric trams.

We were fairly close to the Clifton Hill and Westgarth railway stations, too, should we choose to travel by train. The trains of that time came to be known as the 'red rattlers'. One could travel either first or second class. I never ever went first class. In those times, Flinders Street Station was said to handle one million passengers each week day.

The city itself was of great interest to a 16 year old 'boy from the bush'. The tallest building then, if we disregard St Patrick's spire (and perhaps St Paul's), was the recently built 'Manchester Unity'. It is still on the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets. There were some traffic lights, the policeman on point duty, however, being a very important part of traffic control. Police had those tall helmets then, and pistols in holsters were not to be seen. I doubt that any policewomen were on the streets in those days. There were, of course, many fewer vehicles then, some few still being horse drawn.

There seemed to be an hotel on almost every corner. And there were lots of cinemas. Outside the city centre, in suburbs like Fitzroy and Collingwood, slums were much in evidence. Neon signs were a feature, especially just across the Yarra from Flinders Street Station where 'Southbank' has recently been created. The newspapers of the day would simply never, as they now do, print a swear word or make any reference to genitalia. Even 'bloody' did not get a look in. It was known as the great Australian adjective. For some time, I thought that sewer vents were flag poles. 'Stink poles', the kids called them.

At least one aspect of the weather conditions then is markedly different from today. I mean the occurrence of frosty mornings. It was quite normal in winter, sometimes for several days in a row, for lawns and nature strips, for example, to be frost-coated. Later, there would usually be marvellous sunshine.

One of the great events for me in 1938 was the victory of Carlton over Collingwood in the 1938 Grand Final. There were 96,834 people there, something better than one in ten of Melbourne's population. There was no booking of seats for the masses those days; you simply lined up at the gates. Uncle Harold took his son, Alan, and me. Ron Todd, at full forward, was Carlton's big danger that day, but Jim Park was able to subdue him. (He was killed in action in New Guinea in the War.) In the Southern Stand outer, where we were, the crowd pushed the picket fence down and sat around just outside the boundary line. A telegram of congratulations for me from Dad arrived at Urquhart Street that night. At a later time, Uncle Charlie's wife, Clem, was adamant that she knew for sure that the match had been fixed. That worried me.

During the months of the second half of 1938, I had no income. Auntie Lil would give me two shillings, or a little more or less, on request. The arrangement was that Dad would send her ten shillings a week for this purpose. The possibility that he did not adhere to this agreement worried me at times. I knew that money was far from plentiful at home. I do not remember that she ever refused my request, though. She was a very dear person, being always scrupulously fair in her treatment of me. I do not believe that I am a mean person, but the experience might well have grounded in me a certain prudence in the matter of money management. Auntie Lil died in 1950. Uncle Harold married her sister, Annie Huggins, at a later time. (Auntie Jean was the wife of my uncle, Henry Rawson, a brother of both Auntie Lil and Auntie Annie. I understand that she objected to the marriage so strongly that there was never to be a reconciliation between her and Uncle Harold and his new wife.) Towards the end of the year, I explained to Auntie Lil that, early in 1939, I intended to come to Melbourne to live. I would get a job and board with her, paying an appropriate sum each week. The nerve, I had! I don't think that I even asked her if that would be all right. She agreed to my proposal. I was by no means an obnoxious youth, but I can easily believe that she and Uncle Harold might well have liked to have their home to themselves with their own children.

So I went to Derri well before Christmas, and my new friend, Frank Speed, who was 18, came home for a couple of weeks. He was still with us when the fires of Black Friday, 13 January, 1939, caused so many deaths and so much destruction in Victoria.

Early in 1939, I returned to Urquhart Street, as before sharing a bedroom with Alan Martin. Getting a job was the next thing. Dad had spoken to his friend, Jim Fairbairn, MHR, about my being given a job at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fishermen's Bend. I knew this but, as I had not heard anything, I went about seeking work. I went for an interview at Healings in the city, and later found that they were prepared to employ me, but in the meantime I had applied by letter for a job advertised in a newspaper.

The Grocer Boy

One morning, Jack Halliwell turned up at the front door. He ran a cut-price grocery store in Sydney Road, Coburg, across the road, and south a bit, from the post office. He asked me some questions, and agreed to employ me, the pay, as I remember, being about 37 shillings a week. I was pleased. I started within a couple of days. Soon after I started, I received word about the job at Fishermen's Bend. Too late. Dad, understandably, was very annoyed with me. Had I gone to work there, I would have been in a reserved occupation. My life would have taken a very different course.

At first, I had to catch a bus over to Brunswick, and then a tram up Sydney Road to Coburg. But Jack Halliwell gave me a loan of £5 or so, and I bought a second-hand bicycle. He took money out of my pay for a few weeks. I cycled the distance in all weathers.

Sydney Road, Coburg, was, it almost goes without saying, a much less busy vehicle thoroughfare than it is now. One Friday night, after work, I whizzed down the road on my bike, travelling beside a tram, virtually unimpeded, for a longish stretch. Alan, who had come by tram with Vera Smith, who was later to become his wife, to see me, said later, 'You certainly can push that bike.'

Six of us, including the boss, all men, Percy, Len, Harry, Jim and Jack, worked in the shop in our white coats and white aprons. I was the junior worker. Monday to Wednesday was spent, in the main, preparing for a very busy remainder of the week, including Friday night and Saturday morning. During those early days of the week, we were all engaged in 'bagging' goods like sugar, flour, fruits, etc., for sale later. In the main, during that time, I was confined to a room at the rear of the building, carrying out some of the less appealing tasks, opening boxes of dates, for example, and weighing them up into the required amounts. Often, the boxes of dates were riddled with grubs. Up the front, the others went through bag after 70 pound bag of sugar, for one thing. They talked all the time. Sex was a favourite topic. My worst job, though, on Monday morning, was to clean the shop window, brass frame and all. The window, by the way, had very little on show. I was reminded of this when I visited Moscow in 1988.

On Thursday, we became very busy and, yes, we literally ran around the shop gathering items that the customer on the other side of the counter wanted. Once all the items were in a pile on the counter, one began to arrive at the cost to the customer. Choosing a suitable surface, say, a four pound bag of sugar, one item at a time would be moved aside, its price being recorded on the sugar bag. Believe me we were all pretty quick at adding up. And we rarely made errors. The boss would be particularly annoyed if one were to accept a dud two shilling piece. The idea was to inspect the milling on the coins, or to toss a suspect coin onto the marble platform along the front of the cash register. You listened for the sound it made.

The restocking of the shelves was another big job that had to be done, either from the back rooms or upstairs, mostly after closing time. One learned to stack bottle after bottle, or tin after tin, onto a bent arm, then race back to the shelves, there to place them. Halliwell bought in large quantities, so a huge truck load of goods would arrive in the backyard and two or three of us would unload it. One day, on the truck, I sat down for a moment while waiting for someone to receive goods from me. The boss, rather sour looking at any time, came up to the vehicle with the blackest look on his face that you could imagine when he saw me. No one normally took the full time for lunch. He was no union man, that one, but he was OK in many respects. His really was a cut-price grocery shop. He had hordes of customers those last three days of the week. He and his wife asked me home to his house in Bell Street for a meal one evening and, attempting to find a girlfriend for me, they also asked a very attractive girl. Their scheme failed. She did not take to me at all.

I fell heavily for a girl named Iris Mattock, but she, I suspect, found me a little 'slow'. Iris was a salesgirl at Ezywalkin on the other side of the street. Down a bit south. I was only 17 or 18. To see her, produced spasms of excitement, of nervousness, unprecedented and never again equalled in intensity in me. Teenage vulnerability in matters of romance is widely recognised. Once when we were 'parking' near the Coburg Lake, she said, 'You don't put any pressure in your kisses.' Subsequently I concentrated on 'pressure' kissing methods with Marcia and Jean Taylor. It took them a while to accept, and to get to like, my new osculatory technique.

Frank Speed was a Catholic, and had gone to school at the Christian Brothers' College in Clifton Hill. He had his Intermediate. I was very impressed. He actually knew about Shakespeare, and told me the story of *Hamlet*. In 1939,

the Lemons, Kelso, Marcia, and their parents, came to live in Dennis, which was no distance at all away. Fred Lemon was still in the railways, and his job there was to open and close the railway gates at the Victoria Road crossing. Frank, Kel and I became almost inseparable, and we were later joined by Wally Crooks who, as did Frank, worked at McRobertson's in Fitzroy. I was still fond of Marcia, and we got on well, but she seemed, anyway, to prefer Frank. I was terribly jealous at times. She married an airman later.

In those days (perhaps they are still enjoyed), there used to be annual grocers' picnics, butchers' picnics, confectioners' picnics and so on. Sometimes, a picnic was held at Portarlington, or Sorrento, or Portsea, and a group of us would attend an appropriate picnic, travelling across Port Phillip Bay and back on the paddle steamer *Weeroona* from Port Melbourne. They were simply wonderful outings. 'Roll Out the Barrel' was a popular song around the piano, especially on the way home. The *Weeroona*, I understand, became an officers' mess up north somewhere during the war.

I was only 17 when the war began. I seem to remember Bob Menzies', 'It is my melancholy duty...', on wireless at the north end of Hoddle Street with Frank one evening. Perhaps he had a portable radio. Were there portable, battery wireless sets then? I remember thinking (hoping?) that it would all be over before I was old enough to go. Very soon, a guard could be seen on the railway bridge over the Merri Creek at its northern approach over Urquhart Street. That did not last long though. Then Melbourne, from time to time, had blackouts at night, with a couple of searchlight beams darting around the sky finally fixing on their (friendly) quarry flying high overhead.

In those times, I began to take a keen interest in aeroplanes, Frank, to some extent, promoting that interest. I used to read aeroplane tales in magazines like 'Daredevil Aces', and others equally trashy. Frank told me about the RAAF with its Hawker Demons and Avro Ansons, and the RAF, too, with its Hawker Furies, Hawker Harts, Hawker Hurricanes and Wellington bombers. And then became available illustrations of, wait for it!, the Vickers Supermarine Spitfire. It had eight machine guns, for heaven's sake! We talked about navies, too, and I learned the difference between battleships, cruisers, destroyers, frigates etc. Frank, though a Catholic, was an Anglophile, I do believe. He believed that though they tended to muddle through, they won in the end. We pored over three of his books: *The King's Navy*, *The King's Army*, *The King's Air Force*. After, or during, an operation for appendicitis, a blood clot developed in his leg, and although he was in the militia during the war, he was not medically fit enough to join for overseas service. He, Kel and Wally were all very decent and sensible young men; I was fortunate to be part of that group. Kel, obviously, could not join the forces. Wally did, but I have quite lost track of him. Kel died of cancer in 1990. I had seen almost nothing of him over the years. I have seen very little of Frank, either.

The Time at McRobertson's

Jack Halliwell was rather displeased when, some time in the second half of 1940, I told him that I would be leaving in a few days (I should have given him more notice) to begin work at McRobertson's. A couple of the others, too, thought I was foolish to leave. Frank had persuaded me to change jobs, and it seemed to be a good idea, especially in view of its being closer to home, and there would be no Friday night or Saturday morning work. (In fact, I did work some Saturday mornings later, being paid overtime, however.)

McRobertson's confectionery factory covered a number of blocks in Fitzroy. Sir McPherson Robertson was, I think it's fair to say, a tycoon in the confectionery industry. He was by now in his eighties, but, dressed up in white coat and trousers, he often walked around his kingdom, looking here, looking there. Looking, too, at the ladies, ushering them through doorways with a paternal(?) hand. He had an eye for the girls, that lad. It was used to be said that his factories produced over a thousand lines, a line being a type of confection. It was easily the largest such place in Victoria—probably in Australia—places like Hoadleys and Allens being not at all comparable in size, variety or output. Employees had to punch a clock in those days. For some reason, I did not have to do that.

For a short time, I was in the Dispatch section. Here we put together orders to be taken by vehicles to outlets around Melbourne. Without really being aware of doing so, I moved around at a fast pace, as I had been accustomed to doing. At a later time, when I was working in the flavour room, one of the workers, a union official, coming in for supplies, referred to me when speaking to my boss, as 'the snake'. I later realized what he was referring to, and felt a bit hurt about it, of course.

For a time, I worked in a large storehouse, but then I was sent to work in the flavour room, my boss there being Ted Tame. I liked working there. My pay went down a little because I was now working under the confectioners' awards, whereas before I was getting the storemen and packers' rate of pay. This seemed a bit unfair, and one of the big bosses said that perhaps a pay adjustment would be made if I made myself indispensable. Some hope of that! In fact, I committed a blunder that might well have got me the sack. A foreman of one of the rooms came to get a quantity of

peppermint oil to put in a batch of sweets. I gave him spearmint oil. The batch was ruined. He was on the verge of punching me, but Ted stopped him. Just the same, the foreman really should have made sure that he had the right flavour before using it.

The worst job was making up a big wooden tub of flour and whatever to make an adhesive to stick labels on cardboard boxes, cans, etc. The flavour room was, strictly speaking, a part of the laboratory, this being controlled by Dr Fritz Stiebel, a German Jew. He had as his assistant a young woman named Fay McCulloch. (Perhaps the spelling was Faye.) Ted was quite determined that Dr. Stiebel should not get to know any of the 'tricks' of the flavour room, and was very curt with him, despite Ted's inferior position in the setup.

After a while, I began work in the laboratory proper. The main job I did was each morning to go over to a huge factory section where chocolate was being produced. I would bring back samples of several different types of chocolates in the process of being manufactured. I would weigh carefully a gram of each type, put them in crucibles, and place them in an oven. I would then weigh them again, the difference in weight indicating the amount of cocoa butter that needed to be added to that batch. I did not ever ruin a batch of chocolates, thank goodness.

Another job was to help in the control of the cocoa bean grub. The beans came from the Gold Coast of Africa. The bags of beans were stored in a huge warehouse, and from time to time I had to 'paint' a sticky goo in a band along all the walls. The intention was, I think, to prevent the grubs travelling up the walls. Where to, I don't remember. And there was a machine that produced a fog of a pesticide of some kind. The reason I worked on Saturday mornings at times was to place the machine in various rooms and turn it on. I had much of the factory to myself, and could sample all sorts of things. The snowballs were delicious. The 'Old Gold' room was a favourite, too. Most of the rooms, in normal working hours, had women workers. One felt a bit intimidated walking through a room.

Not long after I started in the laboratory, Dr Stiebel finished. One day he just did not turn up. The authorities took him, I heard. An enemy alien, I suppose. Fay was a PLC girl and had matriculated there. She had nearly gone 'up to the shop', but her parents (he was a big wig with the State Electricity Commission) decided against that, for financial reasons, I gathered. (The 'shop' was Melbourne University, the only university in Victoria at that time.)

Ted Tame embarrassed me mightily one day. Fay walked through the flavour room (I did not yet know her well), and I commented (crudely) to him on her shapely bottom. He called her to us and told her what I had said, the exact words. She reacted with composure, as you would expect from a PLC girl.

Fay had a boyfriend, in fact. He, Bill, was overseas with the AIF. He was a cellist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (perhaps that's not quite right) and a motor mechanic. I ran into Fay in the city one day in 1954. She had four small children with her. She had married Bill. Perhaps she had become a mechanic, too. Her fingernails were black.

So from then until I finished work to go into the Army in December, 1941, Fay, I suppose you would have to say, was my boss, but there was no chance that I would agree to paint that goo in the cocoa bean warehouse again. She made it plain that she liked me and we became friendly. But Ted Tame knew what would become of our relationship. He said to me, kindly enough, that parents, having educated their daughter in the way Fay had been educated, would never agree to her having any sort of continuing relationship with someone like me. I, in any case, was acutely aware of my inferior position in society. When I met them the parents were friendly and kind, but it was all over by mid 1942.

In 1940, my brother Alan joined the RAAF as a wireless operator, and Bryan went into the Army Canteen Service. He had been called up, but was discharged after a short time on medical grounds because of head pains. I had been learning Morse code, too, the idea being that I would join the RAAF as an aircrew wireless operator. Mum and Dad were not prepared, believing that I was too young, to give their permission for me to join the AIF but, though it seems a strange attitude, it was all right for me to join the RAAF. Early in 1941, I applied, but I was rejected because of my



With my cousin Mary Rawson in late 1940; no longer a grocer boy.

right elbow. Heartbroken, is not too strong a word to use about myself when I received the official letter. When I told the RAN recruiting office about my medical rejection, they said there was no point in my applying to join the Navy. Knowing that the Army would call me up at the end of the year, I made no more attempts to join up. I was so looking forward to joining the Army.

Frank and Wally Crooks had done some training with the militia. They showed me some of the movements of bayonet fighting. Using a broom in the Boort post office, I later went about executing the butt stroke with Bryan as my adversary. The head of the broom came off striking him a terrible blow to the side of the head. Whether that caused the problem I don't know, but for years he had a problem of head pain.

It is interesting to speculate on what might have happened had I applied in 1941 to join the AIF. It seems very likely that I would have again been rejected because of my elbow, and my whole subsequent life would have been different. It is true, that when I was called up I got past the medical officers to enter the militia. But when one saw my elbow, he said, 'Oh dear,' and called a colleague over to have a look. We were to leave quite soon that day to go by train to Ballarat. Their conversation went a bit like this: 'Let him go on. If there's a problem they'll pick it up later.' But heaven knows when I had my next medical examination. Of course, I did not want the elbow to stop me. I could easily have avoided military service had I wanted to.

During the 1941 football season, I played with McRobertson's team in the Saturday morning league. (Perhaps I did not work Saturday mornings then.) Other teams included ones from Raymonds and the breweries. I was not a huge success in the second ruck or forward pocket. I could take a really good high mark, but I was easily brushed aside, being so lightweight.

My sister, Jessie, married Harry Gray in 1939. A child did not survive. The marriage did not last and poor Jess was afflicted with schizophrenia in the early fifties. She died in 1988. Alan married Veronica (Vera) Smith in 1940.



My sister Jessie Rawson aged 31 years. Not very far in the future the misery began.



Chapter 2 The War Effort: a tiny, unheroic contribution

On 3 December, 1941, I reported to the Westgarth drill hall. My years at 24 Urquhart Street with Uncle Harold, Auntie Lil, Alan and Thelma were over. It had been, for me at least, a happy relationship. And so, too, I repeat, the happy years of friendship with Frank, Kelso and Wally were at an end. I was to make a lot of other friends of great value to me during the years that ensued, I hasten to say.

Travelling by train, a number of us recruits arrived at Ballarat. At the showgrounds we were greeted with cries of, 'You'll be sorry.' Since I knew something of the Morse code, I had asked to be allocated to Signals, and now I had joined 2nd Cavalry Division Signals. (There were no horses to be seen.) My rank was signalman, the equivalent of private. Our commanding officer was Lieutenant-Colonel Jim Downey.

Very soon, we were vaccinated and given inoculations, and some of the chaps were, for a time, rather badly affected by those medical precautions. In no time, we were learning foot drill, Corporal Joe Cronin, a sadist, I reckoned, had us left-righting around what was probably a horse trotting track. We practised Morse code. We slept in tents on floor-boards, palliasses helping to ease the discomfort. The pay was six bob a day for a seven day week. The food was by no means up to Auntie Lil's standard. Constipation did not help matters. Within a few days, Pearl Harbour was bombed and, not long after that, before Christmas Day, anyway, we had moved to a new camp site at St Albans Park, Geelong.

Guard duty now came along to help make life miserable. We had no weapons to carry yet. Night was the worst time. Someone would wake you, at midnight, say, and for the next four hours you would walk round and round the perimeter of the park, all the time doing your best not to lie down under a tree for a sleep. To do that would be a very serious breach of discipline, resulting, quite possibly, in a spell in confinement. I had a bit of a snooze at least once, just the same. Life was so different now!

I don't remember any buildings at St Albans Park. Up our end, there was one tap. No showers, cold water shaves. I suppose there were 'thunder boxes' for toilets, with a hessian screen giving a little privacy. On Christmas Day, 1941, there was much jollity, 'Volum' beer, a Geelong brew, being the major stimulant among the chaps. Too many huge tin mugs of 'Volum' had me throwing up in a grand manner. There was plenty of food, the quality being reasonably good. Some of the fellows used to go absent without leave into Geelong at nights, among them Frank Nippard. He liked to dance. He was to become a very close friend.

Lieutenant 'Grunty' Hunter took a detachment of us out for a few weeks to a site at Frogmore on the Barwon River. We had a transmitting and receiving wireless set, a 101, and we became part of a wireless net, one aim being to give those of us who were to be wireless telegraphy operators some practical experience. We were, most of us, in any case, learners, and on top of that, the atmospheric conditions often made it impossible to establish and maintain good communications with the equipment of the times. It was a big thrill for me when, on the first occasion, I managed to receive a complete message, slow though the process of success was. (I remember telling Fay's dad about this.)

We had been issued with our rifles by now: Lee Enfield, short magazine, .303s. Mine had been stamped 1910. It had been made before the First World War. There was a Thompson sub-machine gun, too ('Tommy gun'), and we took it in turns, under proper supervision, to fire it one day down by the river. Then we were issued with steel helmets, and were required to wear them for some hours each day, to get used to them, I suppose. One fellow, Arthur someone, liked wearing his so much that he seemed hardly ever to take it off. I think he fancied himself as a warrior. We swam in the river a lot, and it was our means of keeping bodily clean, as well. Poker was popular. Several of us hired a car and driver for £5 one Saturday night and went to Melbourne. We travelled at 90 mph some of the time. It was a big Ford V8. Snowy Brett and Bill Verney, as well as Frank, were valued friends of mine by now.

Early in March, 1942, our unit was moved to a big camp in Stud Road, Rowville, Victoria. Conditions were much better there. It even had buildings, including a 'wet' canteen. Again we lived in tents, now, however, having to dig slit trenches nearby. The trenches were full of water much of the time. It was not unusual for someone being, perhaps, half boozed, to step into a trench on his way back to his tent. Some of us did our first rifle shooting practice, travelling by truck all the way to the Williamstown Rifle Range. One expected the .303 rifle to 'kick' and hurt the shoulder, but this occurred only if you did not hold it properly to the shoulder. Still it was a big change from a 'pea' rifle. Alex Grieve blew 'reveille' on his trumpet each morning and 'lights out', too. In more recent times, he became a world identity as a French horn player. He received an Order of Australia award in 1994 for his contribution to music. He is also a talented graphic artist.

We began to learn about the motor vehicle, too, and Corporal Robertson, who conducted a written test on the internal combustion engine, told me that I topped the test. I have to say that the others could not have known much about the subject. We were taught to drive, mainly in International 12 cwt trucks. One day, after a lesson, Captain Jones told me that I was now licensed. Very soon after that, I had to drive a bunch of blokes to near Prince's Bridge, Melbourne. They were to row, or something. Believe me, they were pretty lucky to get there and back. Often, from then on, perhaps when Captain 'Happy' Howard was giving us a lecture on wireless theory or some allied topic, Sergeant Stan Hatwell would come into the hut and ask for 'Sig Rawson please'. This often meant that I was to drive some major or other in a Ford staff car to Dandenong. Confidence? I had very little. But it was very exciting, just the same. Later, 15111, a Chevrolet 15 cwt utility, was made my responsibility. I took it, later, on a train to Western Australia, and kept it for a year or so.

Route marching became a normal part of training now. One night, Frank Nippard and I had been in bed asleep for, perhaps, half an hour, having earlier had several pots of beer at the wet canteen, when up we all had to get. It was to be a 10 mile route march. Hell, we were miserable! And there was one epic march up into the Dandenongs which, thank heavens, had to be terminated on the second day because our brigade was to march through Melbourne. We were trucked back to Rowville. I can still hear Bill Payne, the silly bugger, calling out, 'Sir, we want to finish the march.' Like bloody hell we did! And I can remember Johnny Goodwin's feet—so badly blistered they were. Bill and Johnny were very good friends of mine. They have been gone a long time now.

During the time at Rowville, I went out on another detachment similar to the one from St Albans Park. We were camped in an apple orchard at Red Hill on the Mornington Peninsula. It was April, 1942, and there were apples everywhere. No problems with constipation there. As for other foods, we did pretty well there, too. Most of the time we were there, the supply depot was, for some reason, over-supplying us with rations. Corporal Joe Bain, our cook, took advantage of this bad piece of administration. And so did we all.

At this time, Fay and I were still contacting each other. She wrote me a letter in which she stated that she was 'pleased to receive a visitor', a few days before. For a time, I did not understand her meaning.

Many of us were keen to join the AIF. For a time after I was called up, a transfer to the AIF was not allowed. The ban was lifted, though, and months after I had applied the changeover was effected in August, 1942. My regimental number was previously V335135; now it was VX83879. It was a bit of a thrill to put the 'Australias' up on our shoulders, and, no longer to be 'chocos' (chocolate soldiers), the derogatory term used by some when referring to soldiers that were not AIF.



The Tent Mates, Perth, Western Australia, 1943.
Back Row: Ivan Fisher, Ray Gallagher, Jack Rawson, Ken Tulloch
Front Row: John Goodwin, Frank Nippard, Bill Verney

Off to Mullewa, WA

We became aware that we were to 'go away' somewhere. We thought that New Guinea would be the destination. We, some of us, became Signal Squadron, 3rd Motor Brigade Group, with Major 'Buzz' Leeming our OC (officer commanding). Captain Jack Ashby was second-in-command. He told some of us in later years that he and 'Buzz' chose the squadron members on the basis of whether they could play football. Though he should not have, Buzz as good as told us, by referring to the longest stretch of straight railway line in the world, that we were off to Western Australia. Lieutenant Ron Jacoby was to take an advance party, and about 20 of us boarded a troop train at Mob Siding, Seymour, on 3 October, 1942. It took us six days to reach Mullewa, a town 50 miles or so inland from Geraldton. In the first day or two, I lost all my money playing poker. The days were OK, but the nights were not so good because the crowded conditions made sleeping difficult. The smells did not help, either.

It was the task of the advance party to prepare a camp site for the arrival of the rest of the unit in two or three weeks. There were, of course, no buildings of any sort. No roads. No latrines. No water supply. Nothing but mulga trees and insects and some near relations in great variety. The thing I remember enjoying most was huge mugs of black tea. We put up tents, slept on the ground, and worked hard, the heat even now being pretty fierce. We were some

distance out of the town; out of bounds to us.

The nights were quite marvellous. No matter how hot the day, it was necessary to have covering, a blanket, perhaps, in bed at night. The breeze was called the 'Geraldton doctor'. For quite a time, our ration of water for all purposes was a service water bottle a day. A quart, perhaps.

By the time Colonus had won the 1942 Melbourne Cup, the rest of the unit had arrived. I was a member of H Troop; we were the wireless telegraphists. Another troop was responsible for line communications. They were the 'cable wallahs'—what a bunch! There were instrument mechanics and, too, there were cooks, clerks, dispatch riders, drivers and others. We numbered about 155. We were next to Brigade Headquarters. (Adrian Quist, the tennis player, was an officer on that headquarters.) The brigadier was a Collins Street dentist. His name was Clareborough. By Christmas, 1942, our unit title had changed to 3 Squadron Signals, 1st Australian Armoured Division. Our brigade of motorised infantry and an armoured brigade made up, with ancillary units, the Armoured Division. (The Japanese heard about this and sensibly decided not to invade Western Australia. At least that's my story.) Major-General H C H Robertson became General Officer Commanding, 1st Australian Armoured Division.

Friendships began to cement. It followed fairly naturally that those that shared a tent at Mullewa and got on well together, preferred to keep sharing a tent when the unit moved to another site. And so it happened with us, although I don't mean to say that there was never ever any variation of personnel in the tent that I occupied.

During our approximately four months' stay in Mullewa, I visited Geraldton on at least a couple of occasions. The ocean was wonderful. One day, I sold to a pawn-broker a gold filling from one of my teeth for nine shillings. Another time, Ivan Fisher and I, with 15111 and a wireless set, were sent to a site near Geraldton to provide communications back to brigade headquarters for a Western Australian Light Horse Regiment. An officer of that unit was very helpful and friendly. He lived on a big property not far out of Northampton with his wife and lovely small daughter. Ivan and I could not both be away from the wireless set together. He took me for an evening meal to his home, and I could not understand why we left his home much earlier than was necessary. The reader has probably already summed up the situation. He failed with me, but that did not stop him trying with Ivan, too, later, even though he must surely have known that I would tell Ivan. When Ivan and I got back to our unit, we were telling a group of our friends about the incident. It was embarrassing when it came out that the officer was a cousin of one of our friends. For a long time—but not then—it has been my opinion that homosexual men and women have been made that way by nature, and, that they are, so to speak, as 'normal' as heterosexuals. In all my years in the army, I saw almost nothing of homosexuality.

Mingenew

Mingenew was our next stop. I had my 21st birthday (2 April, 1943) there. A telegram arrived from Dad. That night we celebrated in the tent, drinking our small ration of bottled beer. 'Emu' it was—an unpopular WA brew. Later that night, a gale force wind blew and the tent fell down on us. The next lot of tent pegs were driven in much deeper.

Not long after that, something that may truly be regarded as a miracle occurred: I was promoted to corporal. Now I don't want to overdo the self-deprecatory bit, but I simply could not, and still cannot, understand why I was preferred before many others in H Troop. But Frank Nippard, Ken Tulloch and Bill Verney, Ivan and the others in the tent were kind about it all. Tent mate Ray Gallagher got a second stripe (he already had one) that day, too. The two stripes, a few days later, saved me from being charged, Major Leeming told me, for neglecting to keep the steering box of 15111 topped up with oil. One aspect of being a corporal was just wonderful: I was no longer rostered for duty in the kitchen. Those rotten greasy pots and pans! Many years later, Buzz Leeming told me that it was Captain 'Happy' Howard, H Troop commander, who proposed my promotion. 'Happy', from a wealthy Melbourne family, died in a motor accident in Borneo.

Under 'Red Robbie', as General Robertson was known to all, the division's training schedule became tougher and tougher. A route march of 24 miles or so was not unusual. I had been a corporal for only a couple of weeks, when I was sent off to attend NCO's Training Cadre Course No 4. The course lasted only two weeks, but it was, as fellows said, a 'bastardry' course. It had mainly to do with weapon training and foot drill, and the discipline was designed, I think it's fair to say, to break the spirit. A few did toss their rank in and rejoin their units. 'Red Robbie' reviewed the final parade and told us that we were up to the standard of first-class privates. Training like that got into you a bit, and when you got back to your unit you tended to be so 'mad with the zeal' that you were in some danger of over-doing discipline-related things. But most cooled down after a while.

In our tent we got on very well, although on more than one occasion arguments about this or that saw me holding one point of view and my mates another. I did find, and always have found, that some people are inclined too often to

take a highly critical, an unfair and intolerant point of view, about other people. I often got into trouble for defending someone in discussion.

Church parade was held on Sunday. There was no real pressure to attend, in our unit, at least. Those of us that did not attend, were given jobs to do in unit lines. We did see a film from time to time in the West, but perhaps not when we were at Minginew. By this time, we had been on leave by train to Perth at least once, those visits being highlights of our service life. Most of the time we had virtually no contact with people other than members of the army. Normally, we had no access to newspapers. There was not a wireless in our tent, and I cannot think of anyone who had one. We did, of course, have our transmitter/receiver sets in our vehicles. No doubt we were, to some extent, at least, kept informed, about the progress of the war. Probably news bulletins were issued from brigade or divisional headquarters. And, too, there would have been a short wave receiving set operating at our own headquarters. Any mail that we posted was read by one of the officers, who acted as a censor, cutting bits out with a pair of scissors where considered necessary. And then there was Aussie Rules Football.

Dandaragan

In August or September, 1943, we moved to Dandaragan. We were hardly there when Corporal Jack Downey and I went off to attend a hygiene course for a couple of weeks. We learned about malaria control, the disposal of waste, the various types of field latrines, etc., etc. It could well have been this course that began for me a permanent awareness of the need for cleanliness in the handling of foodstuffs and fluids. The common house fly, because of its disease carrying characteristics, became an enemy of mine forever. By this time, Buzz Leeming had left us and we had a new OC, Major George Rice. The next time I saw Buzz, in 1944, in Melbourne, he was in RAAF uniform, an airman, and doing aircrew training.

We were now clothed in armoured fighting vehicle uniforms, including beret (not that our motorized brigade had any AFV's), and our squadron had been issued with the latest vehicles for wireless sets. We called them 'bun wagons'. (I drove 15111 to an ordnance depot.) We were now using the same pattern wireless sets, 19's, that were fitted in the 'Stuart' and 'Grant' tanks of the armoured brigade. A team came along to test our wireless telegraphy ability, and Stan Hatwell, our transport sergeant, told me later that I was second behind Jack Downey.

Our squadron got going on providing a variety show for troops in the area. As I mentioned earlier, I sang and whistled a lot, it was sort of a habit and, in fact, in the Northampton Hotel, at an earlier time, the publican shouted four or five of us free drinks for a time as I sang to the mob. A tent mate, Johnny Goodwin, produced the show. He was a very able comedian, in later years working in Victoria with the well known Joff Ellen. Because of nervousness, I was not too keen about taking part, but Snowy Brett persuaded me to do so. I sang 'White Christmas' and 'Tumbling Tumbleweeds'. It was a very ordinary performance, I am sure. Snowy said afterwards, 'Oh, those bloody vowels!' (In 1961, I worked, with help, on improving my vowel sounds, I believe with some success.)

Training continued. We did a good deal of firing practice, and I became classified as a first-class shot with the rifle and the Bren gun. We often went out on 'wireless schemes' in our new vehicles. Route marching was a bore, especially the once-a-week night march of ten miles. On these, we sang a lot, and you would hardly believe how coarse, how disgusting, the words of the songs were. In this, the line troop, the 'cable wallahs', played a major part. Led by Sergeant Lindsay Trivett, they were an irrepressible, irreverent and, I think I can say, an admired group of men.

I was writing now to a girl, Dawn Black, I had met at an entertainment centre in Perth. She was very attractive, and we became engaged when I visited Perth again. But it turned out that I simply did not have enough affection for her to continue the relationship. On my 22nd birthday (at Chidlow camp), I received a gift from her, and here I was telling my friend Frank Nippard that I had to end our engagement. So I wrote to her that day. I felt such a rat. I wondered about my emotional capacity.

Chidlow and Back East

Late in 1943, or early in 1944, we moved camp to Chidlow, outside Perth (1st Australian Armoured Division had by now broken up) and we formed part of 2nd Infantry Division for a time. We were given leave to Perth fairly often, and we went AWOL, too, every now and then. For the first time in a WA camp, we had proper showering and toilet facilities.

Corporal Sammy Gilbert and I were sent to an amphibious training course at Point Walter on the Swan River, Perth. We were to complete the course of two (or three) weeks, and remain for the next course as junior instructors. In the

event, our course was the last to be held, for the time being, at least. I was glad, as it was April and the water was pretty cold when you jumped into it with equipment on from the 'Queen Mary', a wooden, fairly high, structure on the banks of the Swan. Some of the training was a bit scary, the cliff climbing at night, for example, and some of the unarmed combat training. I'll never forget Captain McKissock, the boss of that training. You have heard of barrel-chested men. He was one of them. He was always stripped to the waist. 'Blood, blood,' he used to say, as he demonstrated, perhaps, how, unarmed, to relieve a charging attacker of his rifle and fixed bayonet. And then to kill him. I learned so many knots, now forgotten. The night exercises, in landing ships, on the river were exciting.

We did not drink a lot; indeed, beer and cigarettes were rationed. When we did have some drinks in Perth, we usually drank in the saloon bar of the Adelphi hotel, where John the barman looked after us. There was, on two or three occasions, an American sailor there with whom we became friendly. One day, Bill Payne—he must have had too much to drink—was telling the sailor what a white man 'Rawsh' was. The sailor was black. I liked gin squashes then. I liked them so much that one day I had 14 of them—in those times one kept an account of how many glasses of this or that one had consumed. Subsequently, I created an horrific mess in a toilet at the ToCH hostel. And I don't just mean a mess in the toilet bowl.

The Allies invaded Europe in June, 1944. It was great news. The war against the Japanese had still to be won, however, and many of the troops in WA were sent back to the Eastern States to be reallocated to units involved, or to become involved, in campaigns against them. With many others, I entrained for NSW on 18 August, 1944.

It is a curious thing, but I am unable to recall any of the detail of that trip. It was not a matter of being boozed or anything like that. I was given leave from Melbourne for a time, staying at my brother Alan's place in Caulfield. I travelled by train to Boort to see my family, taking with me my rifle, bayonet and other equipment because I knew that my little brother, Peter, would be interested.

The next move was to Walgrove in NSW, where I made contact again with a number of my friends. Then to Redbank in Queensland, where someone decide that I should be posted to the Signals Section, 2/8th Australian Field Regiment, a unit of the famous 9th Division. (Rats of Tobruk.) So, late October, 1944, Ravenshoe on the Queensland Atherton Tablelands, was my next destination. I had not one member of my former unit with me. My morale was not so good. I had thought of 'throwing in my stripes' so that I might then have gone somewhere with at least one of my signalman friends. But I didn't. And perhaps I would have gone off by myself even then.

A Short Stay in the Tablelands

My new unit was an artillery regiment that had been in action at El Alamein and other places. Our section supplied communications to brigade headquarters, for one thing. The chaps in the section, all of whom had been in action, were friendly enough, but I did feel something of an intruder because, unlike them, I had no overseas service to my credit. I was a 'reo', a reinforcement.

The climate on the Tablelands was very pleasant. A small group of us found an ideal swimming place in a stream that we could reach in a quick twenty minute walk. At a picture show in Ravenshoe, with hundreds of other soldiers, I first saw Frank Sinatra. He was in the film, *Reveille with Beverly*. When he came on camera to sing he was booed by hundreds; when he began to sing hardly a sound came from the large audience. It was remarkable. He sang 'Night and Day'. To many, he was an unwelcome rival to Bing Crosby. I played basketball with a unit team.

The Small Arms School

In March, 1945, the unit, on the parade ground, was 'warned for overseas draft'. I thought, so I'm going to the war at last. But my wishes were frustrated. Our section lieutenant had been directed to provide a NCO to attend an eight weeks' weapon training instructors' course at the Small Arms School at Bonegilla, Victoria. He nominated me. There is almost no doubt that I was to go rather than any other NCO in the section because, for one thing, I was new and untried. One of the veterans in the section, Signalman Cubitt, told me that I was going because I was 'too good a bloke'. He was a tough soldier, that one, and his words helped my morale a lot. In subsequent years, some of my seniors considered that I was inclined to become too friendly with those that I outranked.

I left Atherton by train, first of all to Cairns, on 26 March, 1945. Heavy rains had caused disastrous floods in Queensland, and we were delayed on the way down. Conditions were fairly good at the Small Arms School, (later to become the School of Infantry), and although discipline was strong, it was not a school of bastardry. The idea was that we would learn all about a range of weapons, and learn, too, how to teach others about them when we returned to our units. The ranks attending went up to warrant officer. Perhaps there were some officers.

We did no more than fire the Vickers medium machine gun, but we went into a fair bit of detail with the other small arms: 3 inch and 2 inch mortars; projectors infantry tank attack; the Boyes anti-tank rifle; hand grenades; several types of rifles and pistols; Bren guns; machine pistols (sub-machine guns). There were lots of lectures, too, about this and that, including the theory of small arms fire, judging distance, etc. I was a very nervous instructor, but I gained confidence as the course progressed. At the finish, the Chief Instructor told me that I had done well for a sig. (A signals corporal would be presumed, naturally enough, to know less about such things than, say, a corporal of infantry.)

President Roosevelt died while I was at Bonegilla. On one occasion, Mum and Jess travelled by train to Albury, staying at an hotel for a few days. They went to a football match in which I was a player. In my case, at least, the course was pretty much a waste of time and money, as I was never to teach weaponry to anyone. The experience as an instructor was useful in later years, however. I received a letter from my very good friend, Frank Nippard. He had been posted to the Signals Section of the 2/7th Australian Field Regiment, another 9th Division Artillery Regiment. He had just recently gone ashore at Tarakan as I would have done had I remained with my unit. It was pretty scary, I gathered from his letter.



After the course finished, in June, 1945, I spent a few weeks in Melbourne, day after day travelling from Alan's place in Caulfield to the transit unit at Royal Park, only to be sent on leave again. Finally, I was off by train again, reaching Wacol Camp outside Brisbane where I was given all the necessary inoculations and vaccinations in preparation for rejoining my unit on Tarakan. But the dropping of the atom bomb was to end my chances of going to the war. I really did want to go.

I met Elizabeth Rose Sutherland in Brisbane on VJ Day, 15 August 1945. We were to marry in November the following year.

I think that I can honestly say that I have never been so despondent over a period of a few days as I was at that time. That was selfish of me. I was not in the mood to join in the celebrations in Brisbane, in the streets, so another corporal and I just walked about. By just the merest chance, in a Brisbane street, I met Betty Sutherland. She was with another girl and, instead of passing, someone said 'Hullo.' Had we not stopped that night there would, of course, been no one on earth just like Richard Rawson, or John, or Jennifer, or Robyn. There would be no Adam or Ashley or Fiona, or Josiah, or Mollie. And so on.



Liz, 1926

Chapter 3 Life in the Australian Regular Army to 1965

A week or so after the war finished, I met Ted Hall in Brisbane. Ted was formerly in 3 Squadron Signals, too. He said, 'Bad luck about Frank, wasn't it?' Frank had been killed in action in Tarakan, in July, 1945. Subsequently, I wrote to a chap who was in Frank's signals section, and in his reply he told me what had happened. The 2/7th was out of action. Japanese soldiers were entering the unit lines at night, stealing food. The lieutenant in command of the signals section decided that he would take a patrol out in an attempt to capture or kill Japanese. To do this was not part of the normal role of a signals section in an artillery regiment; no doubt the lieutenant sought the approval of his commanding officer. Frank was made the forward scout of the patrol and was shot through the head from very close range. His grave is in Tarakan.

Frank Nippard was in the very top, and small, group of those men whose friendships have been most important to me in my life. I had been to his home in North Coburg and had met his mother and some other members of his family. Like a couple of my earlier friends, Mick Davis and Frank Speed, he was a Roman Catholic. A very intelligent man, he was very well thought of by all his comrades. He was 25 years old when the war took his life. On Melbourne Cup Day, 1945, Alan and I walked from Flinders Street Station to catch a tram in Elizabeth Street to the races. Suddenly, there was Mrs Nippard. She saw me and the next moment tears poured from her eyes. Her son, Jim, about 14, had tears in his eyes, too. I managed, myself, not to cry, offered a few words that I hoped were comforting, and moved off with Alan, churned up emotionally, naturally enough.

I left Wacol Camp in Brisbane, sometime after the VFL Grand Final, probably in September, 1945. I recall racing around Brisbane trying to buy a *Sporting Globe*, which paper I knew would contain details of the Grand Final. Carlton had won. Whoopee! Betty and I had agreed to write. Alan and Vera were kind to let me stay with them again, my unit now being RR and GDD Royal Park. This was where, in Victoria, the discharge process for the Army was going full steam.

In my own case, I did not have enough points to be discharged yet. I began working in Hut 52, the last point of contact for the dischargée. Somehow or other I became a two-finger typist, helping to record certain details of each soldier as he entered the hut. So far in my life, as I recall, I had had the nicknames 'Jack', 'Sprigger', 'Rawsh' and 'Two Pot'. (The last one, short lived, was given to me at Rowville by someone because in the phonetic alphabet, the letter 'J' was 'jug'. Thus 'Jug Jug'- thus 'Two-Pot'. It had nothing to do with booze.) Now, someone who had seen service in New Guinea began calling me 'Big boss tapita'. I have forgotten why.

I had to give some thought to what sort of work I should seek when I was discharged. In accordance with the laws of the day, McRobertson's was obliged to re-employ me, but I did not find attractive the thought of going back there. Bill Ellison, formerly of 3 Squadron, decided that he would apply for the Victoria Police Force, more or less talking me into applying with him. He was accepted, but I was not. I have to say that I was relieved, rather. When the medical officer saw my right elbow, he said that I would need to return with x-rays and a radiologist's report. The army did the x-rays for me, and the report included, 'gross deformity of the right elbow with marked arthritic changes'. And the police surgeon said, 'Of course, you know we can't accept you.' I see Bill from time to time. He retired as a sergeant from the force. The police reaction to my elbow again suggests that I could easily have avoided military service had I wanted to.

Marriage

Around Easter 1946, I travelled by train to Brisbane to stay with Betty and her mother in their place at Auchenflower. Nothing was absolutely decided then about our future relationship, but a visit she made to Melbourne later in the year decided things, and we were married in the Registry Office, Melbourne, on 2 November. Alan and Vera and Jess and Bryan were among the small group that attended the ceremony. We went to Healesville by bus for a short honeymoon that night.

At the time, rental accommodation was hard to obtain in Melbourne. Returning from Healesville, we were fortunate to have the use of a flat in Carlisle Street, St Kilda, for a couple of weeks. Then a week or so in Snowy Brett's place in Burnley while he and his mother were away. Again, Alan and Vera came to the rescue, and we stayed with them at 6 Princes Avenue, Caulfield, for a time. Then we got our 'big break'. We began renting a room with the use of the kitchen, etc., from Nicky, who lived in a simple, weatherboard house in Cromwell Street, Caulfield. Our room opened up onto a veranda which, later on, Nicky had boarded and glassed in for our use. And that's where Nana, Betty's mother, slept when she came down from Brisbane in the second half of 1949. Nana, such a great help to us,

was with us for most of the time over the next 20 years. After that, she lived close to us. I cannot recall ever having more than a brief disagreement with her.

Early in 1947, I was sent with lots of others to 115 Military Hospital Heidelberg. It was soon to be taken over by the Repatriation Department. The point had been reached where I was entitled to take discharge, but it so happened that at the hospital I was given a job in the discharge process of soldiers who were now surplus to requirements there. So I hung on, having no job to go to, being now married and due to be a father in May. A small unit designated Administration Cadre, Australian Military Forces Wing, Repatriation General Hospital Heidelberg was raised, and I became one of its members, being mainly concerned with clerical duties. To get there I either took a tram to Caulfield station or I walked to Malvern Station. Then a train to the city, another train to Ivanhoe, and then a bus to the hospital.

The small unit was commanded by Major Alf Raine, who was a great bloke; we used to play tennis on the hospital courts. (At a later time he went to gaol for three months, being unable, when it was demanded of him, to produce £800 from his safe.) Captain Ray Bradmore, who bought for £5 the first Biro ballpoint pen I was to see, helped me a lot. He applied in 1948 for my promotion to sergeant, and helped me in the process of joining the Australian Regular Army when it was formed, also in 1948. In 1949, he argued with higher authority that I should be posted to a staff sergeant's job at Puckapunyal when the new 91 Camp Hospital was opened there in September, 1949. When I joined the Australian Regular Army, I became a member of the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps. I was no longer a sig. My ARA regimental number was for a while VP32234, but it was changed later to 3/1254. (The oblique stroke was later dropped.) I had four regimental numbers in the army.

Another member of the small unit had a much bigger influence on me, however. He was Sergeant Jack Gill. If I ever doubted which side of politics I supported—there was little or no doubt, really—the influence of Jack Gill's opinions was absolutely decisive. I feel sure that he was a Marxist. He had political aspirations, I discovered, as I heard him talking on the telephone to a Labor Party official one day, asking that the Party preselect him for a Victorian seat. In this, he was not successful. At that time, I knew little about politics, but as the year passed I corrected that situation, to some extent, at least. I was firmly on the side of the Left.

Our son, Richard, arrived, looking long, bruised and with an unhappy visage, on the day he and I first met, at the Winston Private Hospital in Burke Road, East Malvern, on 25 May, 1947. His dear mother had what may be called a 'hard time' in the process. Over the years, much has been done to reduce the agony involved in child birth; much earlier relief would no doubt have been available except for religious superstition, for one thing:

Simpson, in 1847, recommended their [anaesthetics] use in child-birth, and was immediately reminded by the clergy that God said to Eve: 'In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.' And how could she sorrow if she was under the influence of chloroform? (Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*)

Marriage is a difficult relationship for most of us to maintain, and it seems to me to be a bit unreasonable to expect members of the human race to practise monogamy; I mean, to have permanently one mate only. This is not to say, however, that it's not worth a good try, and Elizabeth and I have made a good try, I do believe. No doubt we have been helped along in this by the deep love that we have always had for our children; and by our pride in their having become good citizens, possessed of some very fine qualities.

Things occur in most marriages that seriously threaten their continuation, and our marriage was endangered on more than one occasion. I am not sufficiently gallant to accept all the blame, but I do accept most of it. It is not my intention, for more than one reason, to go into any detail about the problems that arose.

The Australian Labor Party was in power federally from 1941 to 1949. One hates to think of what might have resulted had the bumbling conservatives been in government during the war years. Chifley got the Snowy Mountain Scheme going in 1949, the task being completed in 1972. At the war's end, the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme meant that thousands of ex-servicemen and women with the necessary talents were to undertake all kinds of education and training courses free of charge. There were plenty of jobs. For a number of years after the end of the war, acute shortages of all kinds of things, building materials, for example, were experienced. As already mentioned, housing was a particular problem. Anti-communist fervour reached great heights in those times, the capitalist world being terrified of the philosophy of political economy as constructed by Karl Marx. But the Australian High Court ruled Menzies' *Communist Party Dissolution Act* as illegal in 1951. Never mind, at least Carlton won the 1947 Grand Final against Essendon. A very lucky win, indeed. I went by myself.

When, in 1947, Richard was a few months old, we visited my parents in Boort for a short stay. While we were there, Betty's mother became very ill in Queensland, so Betty travelled by train back to Melbourne, and then by air from Essendon Airport to Brisbane. She worked for some time at Myers in the City (my sister, Jessie, was there, too), the

extra income being especially useful now that we had a child. I can still see Richard's face when, in 1949, he saw his mother coming along Cromwell Street with his tricycle.

Puckapunyal

By September, 1949, I had begun my new duties as Company Quartermaster-Sergeant at 91 Camp Hospital, Puckapunyal, having earlier completed a Quartermasters' Course at the Royal Australian Army Service Corps School, Puckapunyal. I was responsible for indenting and accounting for all stores (except medical stores) and supplies at the hospital. Soon, I was promoted to staff-sergeant, that being the appropriate rank for the job I was doing.

The big problem now was to find a place for us to live, the family now including Nana, as I mentioned earlier. At the time, a number of army huts (corrugated iron) had been, and were being, converted to living quarters for families. It seemed to me that I had a good case for being allotted one, but those at brigade headquarters that decided such things had my name well down the list of applicants. The brigade had just come back from Japan, and their own members were being given priority. I won't go into all the details, but the Minister for the Army, who had publicly invited letters from soldiers, received one from me. Following his directive, brigade headquarters had found a place for us by Christmas, 1949. Now this wasn't the very best of married quarters, being 'emergency' quarters, whereas most were 'temporary'. Indeed, quite close to the hospital, this building, unlined, had been part of the venereal diseases section of the hospital during the war years. We were not short of toilets and showers, and the kitchen had a wood stove so large and black that Betty and Nana could hardly believe their eyes when, one day, just before Christmas, 1949, we 'marched' in. In early 1950, however, we moved 100 metres or so to a 'temporary' quarter in Suakin Road, and there the family remained until 1956. (But I went to Healesville in November, 1952.)

We were now, so to speak, in our first real home. A tin hut, lined inside with 'Caneite', two bedrooms, an electric stove, a 'Wonderheat' in the lounge and, how marvellous, a hot water system. We thought it was great, although the laundry, with a wood copper, was entered via an outside door. Home to this little place came John Sutherland Rawson (born 23 February, 1951), Jennifer Elizabeth (born 28 February, 1953), and Robyn Maree (born 30 May, 1955) from the Seymour Hospital where they were all born.

Soil for gardens and lawns had to be carted, usually by jeep and trailer, and I worked very hard at that for more than a year. In 1990, the 'house' was still standing, but was no longer a living quarter. It was so small!

My work at the hospital was fairly demanding, it being often difficult to satisfy the stores requirements of the matron and nursing staff. On occasions, the patient strength, it began as a 30 bed hospital, jumped alarmingly virtually overnight when an epidemic of flu, say, hit the camp. The National Service Scheme in 1950, and the Korean War, meant that the hospital needed more beds, and later it became 3 Camp Hospital with an establishment for 90 beds.

In the army, officers' and sergeants' messes and canteens for the rank and file are important centres of social activity. I spent more time in army messes than was altogether wise, or fair to my wife and children. There is no doubt that the notion of 'mateship' is not an idle one; drinking is only part of enjoying mess life. Betty, to some extent, joined in the mess life, and she made friends, of course, among the army wives. There were sporting activities to engage in, and there were films to be seen at the camp theatre. The camp had its own primary school. The children loved the large swimming pool. Poor Richard had a terrifying experience having his tonsils removed at Seymour Hospital.

In 1951, I began correspondence courses with the Melbourne Technical College (later Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) at about what used to be known as sub-intermediate standard. When, in 1941, I had applied to join the RAAF, with the intention of being an aircrew wireless telegraphist, the chap interviewing me wondered whether I should apply for pilot training. I would have loved to have been a pilot, but what chance would I have had with virtually no education, I had reasoned? He gave me a couple of very simple problems in fractions, but I had no idea how to solve them. Perhaps we did not do them at Derri. This was one of the incidents that persuaded me that I should try to 'improve' myself. There was, too, the hope that I may sometime be promoted to commissioned rank, which hope had no chance of being realized with a Merit Certificate educational background. In 1951, on those grounds, I failed when I applied for a commission. By 1959, I had a five subject Leaving Certificate and a four subject Matriculation Certificate. Not much, I know, but my self-esteem benefited, as did my future financial and promotion prospects. From those times, too, my interest in good literature firmed, and the breadth of my general knowledge expanded modestly. Bertrand Russell came to Australia in 1950, and I suppose it was from about that time that my admiration for him began. An address he gave over the ABC is contained in an audio tape among my possessions.

Early in 1951, I began to have trouble with my right hand, it being difficult, for example, for me to retain a proper grip on a tennis racquet. At first polio was suspected. As with my shot left arm, a problem with the ulnar nerve was

diagnosed. Bone in my broken elbow was becoming larger and was pressing on the nerve. At Repatriation General Hospital, Heidelberg, they cut some of the bone away and resealed the nerve. So both of my hands have been similarly affected, a wasting of muscle, for one thing, having occurred. But the conditions have not been a serious handicap.

School of Army Health

During 1951 and 1952, I was to attend two courses, one at Portsea, during which time John was very ill with whooping cough. The other was at Healesville at the RAAMC School of Army Health. The second course was significant because I managed to finish first in the class, and that influenced the chief instructor at the school to have me posted there as an instructor. I arrived there in November, 1952, and was promoted to Warrant Officer, Class 2, some time later.

At this time, there were no married quarters at the School, which was located two or three miles out of Healesville in a former guest house, 'Summerleigh Lodge'. We discussed the matter at home, deciding that it would be best, for the time being, at least, for the family, that is, Betty, Nana, Richard and John, to remain in Puckapunyal. The rental was very low, and the electricity at that time was free. Places in Healesville that we might have been able to afford to rent were not of a good standard. Richard started school in 1952. Jennifer and Robyn arrived in 1953 and 1955.

So, for most of the time for about four and a half years, I lived apart from my family. Usually, I travelled home to Puckapunyal only every fortnight for the weekend. On not too frequent occasions, I was given a lift in someone's car for at least part of the way but, in the main, I relied on trains, buses and hitchhiking. Eventually, in March, 1956, we moved into a new brick married quarter in the School grounds. In the winter of 1958, I transferred to the Royal Australian Army Education Corps and was posted to 20 National Service Training Battalion, located at Puckapunyal. We were allocated a permanent married quarter at 1 Vivi Street. The house was a Swedish prefab, small but comfortable enough.

Richard and John both went to school at Healesville by bus. There was a bus, also, to take the wives and families shopping in the town. We bought our first television set at Healesville. For most of the time at the School, I was an instructor but, for the last year or two, I was School Sergeant-major. This carried the rank of Warrant Officer, Class 1, but I transferred to Education before the promotion became effective.

A problem for me was that I was not at all an experienced Medical Corps soldier, but here I was instructing in some subjects that I had knowledge of only from the courses that I had earlier attended. Suddenly, through an injury to my friend, Bert Duncan, I was expected to teach first aid without any practical experience behind me at all. And some of the students (all were RAAMC) had come down from the battlefields of Korea. Another concern was that I had not served overseas and, as I always did, I felt a bit of a fraud about that. There were courses for female nursing personnel, both officers and other ranks, as well. In my opinion, women were superior to men when it came to foot drill, which had an important place in much of the training. Good heavens! the reader may say.



By 1954 I was a Warrant Officer Class 2 at the School of Army Health in Healesville, Victoria. This was an army publicity photograph taken with two members of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps. I can't imagine such a photo being used today.

The interaction of personalities at the school over the six or so years that I was there, would itself make interesting reading were one to have the time and the ability to place it all on record. Lieutenant-Colonel W McLellan, a pre-war Permanent Military Forces soldier, a person with great drive, was the Chief Instructor. (The CI was meant, at first, to be a medical practitioner, but that never did occur.) Our relationship was fairly patchy; there were at least two confrontations of major proportions, but that I remained there for a long time, even becoming, eventually, his School

Sergeant-major, suggests that he was at least reasonably satisfied with my contribution there. In fact, on one occasion after he saw a squad of women go through their paces on the parade ground, he said, 'John, you can stay here as long as you like.' He supported me in another unsuccessful attempt to gain a commission.

Bert Duncan and I became very good friends, and there were others also with whom I formed strong friendships. I have in mind Bill McKenzie and Roy McMillan, to name just two. Barbara Maxwell, of Eurasian birth, who topped every course she ever attended, finally became an instructor at the School. Bert had been in love with her for a long time, it was plain to see, and I feel sure that she felt that way about him, too. Bert's dad was in an institution for the criminally insane, and I feel sure that one reason he never sought to marry Barbara was his fear of the genes factor. At a very

much later time, he married someone else; there was no chance of children then. He died of cancer a few years ago. Barbara, at the time a member of the Nursing Corps, transferred to the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps later. It was no surprise to me when she became a colonel and director of the Corps years later.



My parents, Dick and Topsy Rawson, with their sons Bryan, John, Peter and Alan at Fitzroy in 1956.

Switch to RAAEC

I was setting off now on quite a new path in my army career—if that's not the wrong word to use. I had been in the Corps of Signals, the Medical Corps, and now I was to be an assistant instructor in the Education Corps. As I said in my short speech to the people who gave me a farewell party at Healesville, I had had an undistinguished career in the Army, but not very many soldiers had served in three different corps, so that was something that made me a bit unusual.

Before I left Healesville, I was sent to Queenscliff for a few days to learn to use the 16mm film projector. Later, I went to Middle Head in NSW to attend a short course that served to introduce me to the RAAEC.

The National Service scheme was not far from its end when, in 1958, I joined 20 National Service Training Battalion at Puckapunyal. I had a large hut that was called the Education Centre and Library, but there was little education work to be done; as for the library, hardly anyone ever borrowed a book. I did perform a useful function in one area, however, my work as treasurer of the sergeants' mess bringing an end to a long period of financial losses. I did this at Healesville, too, in fact. The mess corporal was the main offender, but no action was ever taken against him. I played too much poker and drank too much at 20 Battalion, although I did give up drinking for three months in 1959.

Betty and I decided that perhaps we could buy a car if she could get a job, and this she did, with Army Canteen Services. She was a very capable shorthand typist. So, on 3 December, 1959, we took delivery of a new Austin Cambridge A60, much to the delight of everyone in the family. It cost about £1200. I taught Betty to drive, and in no time at all Richard (12) and John (8), with hardly any instruction from me, demonstrated their driving abilities in the back blocks of Puckapunyal. I obtained my own civilian licence earlier, simply by going to the police station at Healesville with my army licence.

The Teachers' College

During 1960 and 1961, I attended a Primary Teachers' Training Course at Coburg Teachers' College. Having the car made the necessary travel a simple enough matter. I lived at Watsonia Barracks during the week and occasionally at

weekends. I was part of an adult group and made some good friends, even now being in touch with Tim and Lois Hunter who were fellow students in the adult group. Lois Arthur was a delightful Juliet in the college production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1961.

If I had any real success at Coburg, it was a result of written work such as essays, short stories, etc, that had to be submitted from time to time. (I am not talking about examinations.) Almost always, I am prepared to assert, my written material received top comments from a lecturer. In the early weeks of the course, I became aware that some, at least, were not convinced that the written work was done by me. One day, in fact, John Murray, the lecturer in English, early in 1960, popped on us an essay writing exercise in the classroom. I realized what the intention was. I felt ill at ease and made little effort to get going on the writing. Perhaps that helped confirm their suspicions. In the event, as time passed, and lots more writing was done, I am sure that they came to realise that I did not have a 'ghost' writer. At an earlier time, Tim had said, when I was given a paper back with very complimentary remarks on it, something about my wife having written it. He said it jokingly, but I suspect that he was a bit dubious about the paper's authorship. Perhaps they could not see how a soldier who seemed pretty dumb could manage to write reasonably well.

A most satisfying experience for me was the rehearsals for, and the performance of, *Romeo and Juliet*, over four nights in 1961. I played Friar Lawrence and had many lines to learn. Gil Brearley, later President of the Australian Film Council, produced and directed the show. I must now have a little boast. The night of the final rehearsal, Gil had with him to watch some theatrical authority whose name I was never told. Next morning, Gil pulled me aside as we were passing in a corridor and said, 'You were marvellous last night.' He seemed very pleased. It was a pretty strange thing, but almost from the final performance the hundreds of lines that I had learned, and I needed prompting not once, deserted my memory. Some members of the family were in the audience one night. (Some of us recorded some poetry, too, in 1961. A record is about somewhere.) Gil wrote on a programme that I had 'missed my vocation'.

We all went out from time to time for practical experience in this or that school. I suppose that the above average mark for teaching that I received at the finish was acceptable enough. The writing mentioned earlier was not taken into consideration, I am persuaded, in the academic mark, or perhaps I would have done better than the average mark I received. Overall, it was a pretty ordinary performance on my part. But I did find it hard to be interested in some of the subjects, for example, infant teaching.

For a time, some of us did an elective subject, philosophy. Bertrand Russell's name came up here. I went to the Coburg library to borrow his book, *Why I am not a Christian*. The book was not on the shelves but hidden away in a back room somewhere. Do such things still happen, I wonder? Bertrand Russell:

The love of free enquiry and free speculation has never been common. When it has existed, it has existed in only a tiny minority and has always roused furious hatred and opposition in the majority. (*An Education in History*)

At home, things were going along well at the end of 1961. Betty was still working. Richard was off to high school in Seymour. John, Jennifer and Robyn went to Puckapunyal State School. A little earlier, Robyn had suddenly been taken to Seymour Hospital for the removal of her appendix. She was as brave as could be. Jennifer jumped a grade at school.

An Other Rank No More

Early in 1962, we went for a fortnight's holiday at an army resort at Queenscliff. It was our first family holiday. Just before we were due to return to Puckapunyal, an official letter arrived informing me that I was to go to Canberra a few days later. I was to attend a Selection Board, the intention being to commission me were I selected. I flew to Canberra in a Fokker Friendship, my first flight since 1939 or 1940, from Essendon. I was there a day or two, and a few days later, at Puckapunyal, the promotion to lieutenant became effective. Richard said, 'Good on you Dad.' My son was proud of me. How marvellous!

That I was commissioned just then, however, was prompted by certain circumstances rather than by any strong claim that I had to be so promoted. Jerry Whelan, a good friend, and a real 'character', as they say, had been a Warrant Officer, Class 1, at the Puckapunyal Education Centre. He had been commissioned some time before. I sought his place at the Education Centre because it would have meant promotion to WO1, and a continuance of the family's residence at 1 Vivi Street. The Corps, though, wanted me to go to the Officer Cadet School at Portsea, to replace a WO2 who was to go off to civil schooling. The solution: I would go to Portsea, not as a WO2 instructor, but as a lieutenant. I hardly felt inclined to object to the arrangement. In March, 1962, the family moved to Sorrento, living in a house we rented there. In May, we moved into a married quarter at 9 Lyons Street, Rye. Richard went off to high

school in Rosebud, where he was to complete his matriculation in 1965.

The Years at OCS

The OCS at Portsea, located at what used to be a quarantine station, was established in the early fifties. Its role was to take in suitably qualified young men, either civilians or soldiers, give them the appropriate training and then to graduate the successful ones as second lieutenants at the end of the course. At that time, the course was of 44 weeks' duration. Most could choose the corps to which they would be allocated on graduating.

The experience I had had as an instructor in the RAAMC was a great help to me at OCS. On the other hand, here I was, at nearly 40, newly commissioned—I'd had no experience at all as an officer, obviously. Believe me, it's a different world from that of the other rank.

Colonel S T G Coleman was the Commandant for most of the time I was there. He gave me the best confidential report I was ever given. He would have said that the most important group there was the officer instructors, and I was to be one of them. (There were NCO instructors, too, of course, and he would have acknowledged their importance.) There were about 14 of them, all captains, from a variety of Corps, some graduates of Duntroon Military College, some graduates of OCS. All were younger than I was. There was one other RAAEC officer there, Captain Peter Shekelton, whom I knew well, and who at a later time became the Corps Director. They were a fine group of men. After 18 months there, I was promoted to temporary captain.

Colonel Coleman used to say something like this to the wives: 'Look, I'm sorry, but I am going to demand a lot of your husband's time for the next two or three years.' And so he did. For that matter, the wives, too, were involved, especially in the frequent social activities, these sometimes involving cadets, sometimes being confined to the officers' mess. Betty and I, a bit stunned by it all, I think, thought it all a great experience, just the same.

The principal subjects on which I instructed cadets were: Current Affairs; English; Military Law; Service Writing; Map Reading; Public Speaking and Debating. We had to involve ourselves in cadets' sporting activities; for some time I was the tennis officer. When, periodically, the cadets went out for a couple of weeks on field training, all the officer instructors went, too. It was pretty rugged at times, but I was never really troubled by the physical requirements. When, in November, 1965, I was leaving for Papua New Guinea, the Senior Instructor paid me a compliment on my ability to stick with it.

For years now, I had been reading a good deal, reading mainly, I can claim, what may be called good literature. Novels, mostly. But if I were going to be talking to cadets about communism and democracy and whatever, then I would need to change my reading pattern somewhat. And I did that. So I read J S Mill, Karl Marx, G H Sabine, Joseph Schumpeter and others. J S Mill, who was Bertrand Russell's 'god father', and whose own father, James Mill, told him that the question 'Who made God?' cannot be answered, impressed me very much, especially his *On Liberty*. I quote a passage from it:

If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

I had to do a lot of writing, also; and, as well, exercises, tests and examinations had to be set and marked. There is no doubt at all that I was not qualified enough to teach some of the things that were my responsibility. But there it was. I could say much about the cadets, but for reasons of space I shall say just this: they were a fine bunch of (mostly Australian) young men. I was fortunate to be associated with them. (I have remembered another nickname: 'honest John' was one way the cadets referred to me.)

Early in 1963, Major P H Bennett arrived at the School. He was to be the new Senior Instructor, later being promoted to lieutenant-colonel when the establishment was changed. Phil Bennett was a very impressive officer; in my opinion, at that time, the best officer I had seen. I forecast that he would make brigadier. Indeed, he was finally to make general, the first Australian Army officer to do that since Blamey during the Second World War. He became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, later being knighted just before the Federal Labor Government put an end to Imperial Honours.

He and I were at a bivouac site in the mountains during a field exercise with cadets. The news came through on the radio that President Kennedy had been assassinated. This was 22 November, 1963. So began the big cover-up, authorities doing the best to place the blame on Oswald. We went together to the RAAF station at Point Cook, in 1964, to attend a cadet sporting competition. We had lunch in the officers' mess with the senior RAAF officer, an air commodore, I think he was. He began to speak about the 'Rip tragedy'. In the late fifties, a CMF Commando

Company was taken on sea exercises off Queenscliff. There had been warnings of bad weather, but the exercise went ahead, and several soldiers lost their lives. I began to shrivel up inside. Phil Bennett looked as calm as could be. He, you see, was the officer-in-charge of that exercise. In the event, the air commodore made no criticisms, and I suppose he never ever did realise that he was speaking to the former OC of the Commando Company. From 1987 to 1995, General Sir Philip Bennett AC, KBE, DSO, KStJ, was Governor of Tasmania. (I had forecast that appointment, by the way, when I read of the death of the incumbent.)

As a family, I think it's fair to say, we had an enjoyable time over the years 1962-1965, despite the pressures that, for one reason or another, were, I suppose, on us all. We bought a new Austin Freeway car. We spent much time on the Nepean Peninsula, as we were free to do because my work was there. We fished and bathed or simply explored, say, the ocean beach. (Harold Holt, the Prime Minister, whom we saw occasionally, was to disappear at Cheviot beach in 1967.) Both the boys became good at tennis, playing for local teams. Robyn began training in ballet.



Liz and Richard, Jennifer, John and Robyn on a family camping trip in 1963.

Chapter 4 **More Regular Army: the New Guinea Years and on to 1975**

On 24 November, 1965, I was off to the Territory of Papua New Guinea, my new unit to be 1st Battalion, Pacific Islands Regiment, located at Taurama Barracks, just outside Port Moresby. I was to be the Unit Education Officer. Papua New Guinea was still an Australian colony. I flew first of all to Brisbane, from Essendon Airport, in a TAA Boeing 727 aircraft. (Melbourne Airport was to begin operations in 1970.) After take off, I learned, with a feeling of wonderment, that we were flying at an altitude of so many feet, at a speed of 600 miles per hour. Never in my whole life had I flown at anything like that height, or at even half that speed. Service officers flew 1st class, by the way; and so did their families on approved movements. I spent a few hours in Brisbane, and then boarded a Douglas DC6 to Moresby, arriving there early in the morning.

To enter the tropics for the first time, perhaps many would agree, is to experience such thoughts as, 'Good heavens, is this what it's like, will I be able to tolerate such a drastic change of climate?' For my own part, I soon became used to it; I liked it, indeed. And I think that the rest of the family did, too. Nana was up there with us for some of our stay, and I do not remember her finding the climate hard to cope with.

Taurama Barracks

As I mentioned earlier, I was to be the Unit Education Officer having to help me two young RAAEC lieutenants, Bert Jordan and John Hoban. Not long later, a group of National Servicemen, school teachers, all sergeants, were added to our teaching staff. The improvement of the educational standards of the PIR soldiers was our task.

I was soon interviewed by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce Hearn. At that time there were only a couple of black officers, and a big proportion of the senior NCOs and warrant officers were white as well. I lived in the barracks until the family arrived, the accommodation being only fair, and the food, too. I was made treasurer of the 1PIR Officers' Mess.

The battalion second-in-command (2IC) was going on long leave to Australia soon, and it was arranged that we could move into his house, it being thought that another house would become vacant before the 2IC came back. And that's what happened. Back at Rye, there was a great flurry of activity to arrange everything, and Betty and the children had much to do. The move was organized very capably by an officer at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. Four weeks after I arrived in Port Moresby, the family (though not Nana) arrived also, travelling 1st class in a Lockheed Electra. The next day was Christmas Day, 1965. A few weeks later, we moved again, and then once more before we left for Lae early in 1968. It was comfortable living. We even had a houseboy.

Richard, having matriculated, was accepted for the Victorian School of Forestry, Creswick, Victoria, and left us early in 1966, having worked in a government department for a few weeks before leaving. John and Jennifer began correspondence courses with the Victorian Education Department. Robyn went to a Port Moresby primary school, and was receiving ballet lessons taped by her teacher, Sandra McKay, in Melbourne. Later she was to return to Melbourne to continue her ballet training, boarding with a lady in Frankston. Jennifer won a scholarship for secondary education while we were at Moresby. After a time, Betty began work with Island Products in Moresby, and the extra income was such a help. (My gross fortnightly pay at the beginning of 1966 was \$222.32.)

It was while we were in Port Moresby, in 1967, that Premier Bolte, in Victoria, went about making certain that Ronald Ryan, accused of murder, was hanged. No one since has been officially executed in Australia. At the time, being an opponent of capital punishment, and like many other people, I was very upset. I find myself not to be so strong in opposition to capital punishment in more recent times. I do not believe in free will, so I can understand how forces beyond the control of the individual may cause him or her to kill someone. But a few years ago, I heard on the news about some Russian who had murdered something like 40 people. I found myself thinking, damn the effects of heredity, the effects of the environment, it would be better if he were to be eliminated. He was. So I suppose that I am against capital punishment—mostly.

The primitiveness of the society, especially when one got away from Moresby, was of great interest. In our time there, we found no particular reason to be afraid. A flight in a rattly old DC3 to Wau for a few days' break soon after arriving in PNG was another very new experience for us all.

In some areas of my consciousness—perhaps that's not the right word—these were troubling times. Throughout my army service, and especially in the Regular Army, the views that I held on some matters were at sharp variance with the views of the great majority of those with whom I was associated. Put simply, this situation arose because I had generally leftist opinions, whereas a big majority of the army—particularly, I believe, the officers and senior NCOs—

were right-wing in their opinions. In messes, for example, a right-wing point of view on, say, political matters, was asserted by some as though everyone within earshot agreed with it. And most of those present did agree. So, if I were not regularly to be in open disagreement with such opinions, I decided that, most of the time, anyway, it would be sensible of me to curb my natural inclination to oppose such opinions. And some others in the army, I believe, also took that attitude. As an aside, I should say that, perhaps understandably, RAAEC members were not regarded as 'real' soldiers. Some, like me, though, had seen service in other corps, at least.

The advent of the waging of war by the USA against Vietnam, the former nation's deliberate manufacturing of an excuse to wage that war, the deliberate deceiving of the Australian people by the Menzies government of the true nature of our involvement: these events all served to isolate me even further from the mainstream of army thinking. There was no possibility at all that I could support the war against Vietnam. All right, the reader may with much justification say, you were a hypocrite to stay in the army. You should have resigned and left. And I should have. I thought very seriously about resigning, and made enquiries about my financial position if I were to do so. Superannuation? Money back only. The family? From security to who knows what. I could summon up neither the courage, nor the mental acceptance of the family chaos that may ensue, to do what I suppose was the moral thing to do: to resign my commission.

Probably, my troubled thoughts affected my demeanour, to some extent. I was never one to make efforts to ingratiate myself with my superiors; perhaps I became even more stand-offish than was my custom. At Watsonia, a reporting officer wrote, 'He goes about his duties without any fuss.' The attitude, of not bringing yourself to the attention of your superiors, may be deserving of criticism but that, I am afraid, was the way I was throughout my service. A troubled mind might have meant an even further withdrawal by me from contact with my superiors.

Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Jones, the senior Education Corps officer in PNG, seems surely to have had his doubts about me. He arranged to meet the National Service Education sergeants in their mess. I was not invited. It was plain from what he said to me soon after, that the sergeants had spoken about me in a very complimentary way. Any doubts he might have had about the way I was carrying out my duties were dispelled, I felt it safe to assume, from his manner and from the things that he said.

Perhaps it was not surprising that one of the several chaplains in IPIR, a Catholic chaplain (the army thought that religion made soldiers better fighters) at Taurama Barracks, in 1967, without, understandably, informing me, complained to the Commanding Officer that I was a subversive. Now his main gripe about me, I am sure, was that I had made it plain to him that I was an atheist and, indeed, most of our disagreements were about religion. It would have been foolish of me to go on about Vietnam to him or to anybody else, but I accept that he could have drawn certain inferences from our sometimes heated conversations, about religion, principally, and about politics. The Australian Security Intelligence Organization was brought into the matter, but they would have found, for one thing, that I had never ever belonged to a political organization of any kind. I was, though, a strong supporter of the Australian Labor Party. That made me a bit of an oddity. I have included the key documents of the affair as an appendix to this personal history.

All of this was done, the reader should understand, in a covert way. I was never spoken to about the matter, by the CO, ASIO, or the cleric or anyone else. I said nothing at the time except to my wife. (In June, 1973, I brought the matter up with a visiting Military Secretary. He said little. I heard no more.) So, on the surface, things went on normally, although I feel sure that some, at least, of my fellow officers knew about the ASIO investigation. Perhaps it affected my future service in one way or another; almost certainly the decision to post me a little earlier to an appointment in Adelaide was due to my being under suspicion as a subversive. I did not go to Adelaide, however. Again, it would probably seem to the authorities that having an atheist education officer—I never spoke of religion to the soldiers—ran counter to the policy of having the soldiers indoctrinated with religious belief. The Lutheran chaplain said to a friend on one occasion, that 'Captain Rawson is not fit to be in New Guinea.'

Igam Barracks

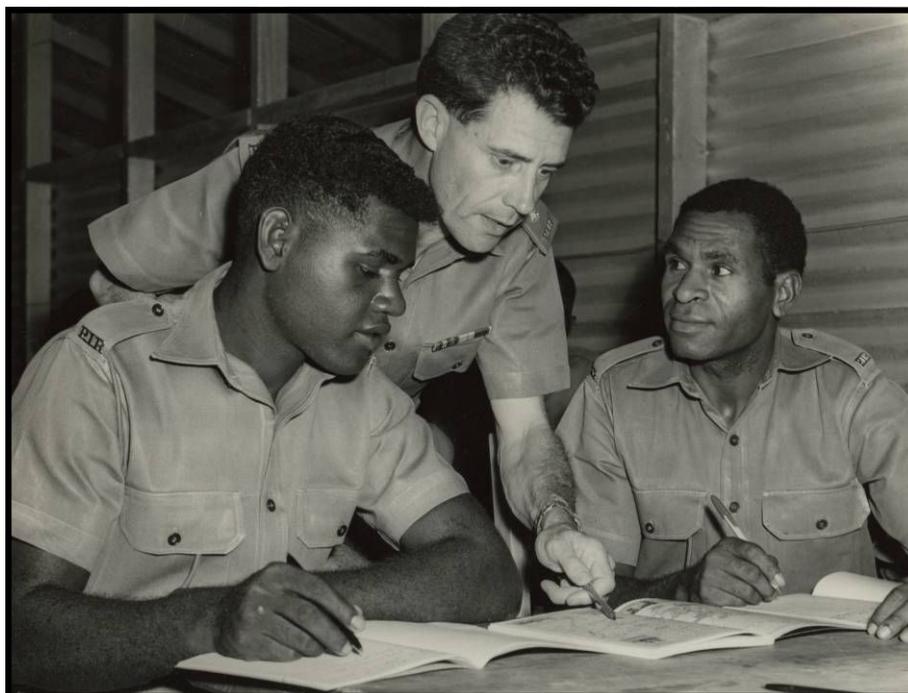
We talked at home about a move to Adelaide, but agreed that we would prefer to stay in the Territory. Even in normal circumstances, I would not have remained with IPIR for longer than another few months, so I spoke to Roger Jones about a non-corps appointment of some kind at Igam Barracks, a new barracks nearing completion at Lae. A non-corps appointment meant that I would not be an education officer, but that I would be given an appointment outside RAAEC. I became the Adjutant of the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (a CMF unit) on 10 January, 1968. The headquarters of that unit, and our family, moved from Port Moresby to Igam Barracks in March, 1968. Betty, John, Jennifer, Robyn and I flew to Lae.

We had a new house, high off the ground, furnished comfortably enough, with ceiling fans and louvered ventilation access in lower walls and windows. The yearly average rainfall was about 180 inches. Earth tremors occurred from time to time, being sometimes severe enough to scare, and to tip items off shelves and tables. We were some 10 miles out of Lae, an attractive enough town, smaller than Moresby. It was at Igam Barracks that we began to call Betty Liz; and so I shall call her Liz from now on in this narrative—except when I call her Elizabeth. She began work in Lae with the same boss, Merv Minns, that she had in Moresby. He was now managing a John Lysaght's steel works in Lae. John finished his Leaving, worked for Burns Philp for a time, and then with Ansett Airlines. Jennifer finished her correspondence course in 1969, completing matriculation, being coached in French by Johanna Hermann, still a friend of the family. Robyn went off to Frankston in the second half of 1968.

PNGVR was, as I have said, a CMF Unit, that is, most members were part-time soldiers. A minority, like the CO and me, were Regular Army. It had a wartime record of some distinction. There were sub-units in Moresby, Mount Hagen, Goroka, Wewak, Madang, Banz and Rabaul. I was at its headquarters. The CO was Lieutenant-Colonel Ken Gallard. He wrote, 'There is no question of his loyalty' in my 1968 Confidential Report. All the more senior people were white, including the officers commanding the sub-units. The major at Madang was an airline executive; the major at Goroka was a coffee planter. It was necessary for me to visit the sub-units, and this I did by Land Rover (to Goroka only), helicopter, Pilatus Porter army aircraft or commercial aircraft.

The five of us flew to Sydney in April, 1968, having arranged a place to stay at Kings Cross. Richard and Paula Redenbach, whom Richard met at Creswick, and whom he married in 1971, stayed with us for a few days. It was crowded living but we all enjoyed their visit. We travelled back to Moresby on the MS *Taiyuan*, stopping at Brisbane on the way. It was a great trip all round.

I was authorized to drive a Land Rover to the Goroka Show in 1968, and to take the family with me. It was all very interesting and exciting. This was up in the highlands, and the scenery was splendid as, indeed, it was in much of PNG. The PNG people vary a great deal in appearance, including colour and dress, and in language. A Papuan, for example, or a New Guinean, say, or a Buka, could readily be picked out in a crowd by some of the older hands there. A document especially written for the guidance of Australian officers and other ranks, included this comment: 'Since their stage of evolution and advancement is not as forward as ours their reliance on our counsel is the greater.'



Teaching soldiers of the 1st Battalion, Pacific Islands Regiment. The official view of PNG soldiers was that since "their stage of evolution and advancement is not as forward as ours their reliance on our counsel is greater."

Goroka and Mount Hagen alternated their shows, and in 1969 I flew to Hagen in an RAAF Caribou. (I learned from him, in later years, that Sapper (later Sergeant) Pat Miller, Royal Australian Survey Corps, who was to marry Robyn in 1989, was at the Mount Hagen show that year.) On one occasion, we drove to Goroka and back in the unit Holden station wagon. I was driving. We were close to losing our lives when a tyre burst at 60 miles an hour some miles out of Lae on the way home.

The adjutant's job at PNGVR was not particularly demanding. An adjutant is the Commanding Officer's right-hand man in 'A' matters, which are to do with personnel, their pay, health etc, and 'G' matters, which are to do with operations, training, intelligence, etc. Ken Gallard (of course, I never called him Ken) was a very reasonable, decent, person; by no means was he a martinet. Other units in the area included a hygiene training unit, a company of the Pacific Islands Regiment, a helicopter reconnaissance flight, and a school cadet unit. The Area Commander was Lieutenant-Colonel Wally Bishop, MM. He was, in fact, a day junior to Ken Gallard, and that allowed Gallard, on occasions, to question his authority if he so chose. I feel sure that Bishop, on one of his trips to Canberra, requested

Gallard's departure after the latter had been there only a year or so.

Richard was due to complete his course at Creswick at the end of 1968, and Liz and I thought that one of us, at least, should try to get to Creswick for his graduation. Months before, applicants were being called for to attend a Unit Emplaning Officers' course at the RAAF Base at Richmond, NSW. I put it to the CO that I should attend, although I should have found it difficult to provide a good reason why he should approve my application. He did, though, give his approval, knowing, too, that I could be given the job of providing some help and guidance to two, young, recently commissioned (from OCS) black officers, who were to do the course.

The course at Richmond, in November, 1968, was intended to make the student familiar with the troop and cargo carrying capabilities of Hercules and Caribou aircraft. There were many formulas and calculations involved, all of this being fairly demanding. We did a lot of flying, including a low flying trip along the coast to Sydney's north. It was called the bikini run. Whoever wrote my course report was very generous, even though I finished only in the middle of the class. They got me away a few hours early so I could get a certain flight from Sydney to Melbourne.

Dad, and I forget who else, drove with me to Creswick for Richard's graduation. He had done very well, and we were all very proud of him. After a few days, I returned to Igam Barracks, it being good to have seen my parents and other members of the family. Dad had retired at Fitzroy in 1956. After that, he and mother and Jess and Bryan lived at Alphington, Victoria. Poor Jess was a huge problem for them, being afflicted, as I said earlier, with schizophrenia.

Early in 1969, Lieutenant-Colonel Gallard moved out as CO, and Lieutenant-Colonel Bill Harrington came in from Canberra. He had been commissioned from the ranks and, as a private, or whatever, during the war years, had been a member of a firing party executing Japanese war criminals (perhaps only one) at Rabaul. We got on reasonably well, but much later in the year there was to be a very nasty turn in our relationship. But before I get to that, I want to say something about an incident that was, I am sure, behind my earlier-than-expected departure from PNG. (I had indicated to the Director of RAAEC that I would like to continue in non-corps postings.)

The Tyrant

I was chatting one day with a couple of other officers, one of whom was a staff officer on Bishop's headquarters. I learned, and I found it appalling, that black private soldiers from Igam Barracks were being charged and fined by Bishop for contravening Camp Standing Orders: some were not wearing ties when they went on leave to Lae wearing civilian clothes. I expressed doubt about the legality of the order and the punishment, and anyone reading the definition of a lawful order in the *Manual of Military Law* would surely have doubts, too. The staff officer told Bishop, it was obvious, from what happened a few days later. He came to my office and brought the matter up. He did not rave. He referred to an Australian Military Order that states that a 'CO's authority is paramount.' But clearly his authority must have bounds, I suggested. In any case, not long after, I learned, headquarters at Moresby suggested to him that it would be best if he stopped charging the soldiers. It might have been that he had other reasons, as well, for wanting me out, but on another trip to Canberra, he asked for me to be replaced, of that I feel sure.

There is little doubt that Bishop was something of a tyrant. Major Gary Ghent was the OC of the Company from IPIR that was stationed at Igam Barracks. He and Lois and their young children lived across the road from us. He had been, when I was there, an instructor at OCS. One Saturday he and Lois came to visit us in the last minutes of the Carlton-Essendon Grand Final in 1968. The Blues won. Some of Gary's soldiers got into some kind of problem at the airport. Bishop gave Gary such a rotten Confidential Report that he felt sure he would never be promoted; he might as well leave the army. And he did. A career ruined.

Major Len Brown, the OC of the Hygiene Training Unit, fell foul of Wally, too. He went back to Australia very quickly. Probably his career was ruined, too. And I have no doubt, either, that at a later time he made comments to an officer who was to become my CO in Melbourne, causing that officer to be prejudiced against me before we even met in 1973. But more about that later. The reader should keep in mind something I said earlier about members of the RAAEC: they were not 'real' soldiers.

We had been on leave to Australia, but I had nevertheless accrued lots of leave entitlement. We decided that Liz and I would visit Japan by boat later, and we arranged all that with some difficulty. One day, in July, 1969, a signal about married quarters arrived at the headquarters from an officer who, we realized, was to take my place as adjutant of PNGVR. Harrington said that he knew nothing about the changeover, and I believed him. Bishop hadn't told him, obviously. We were disappointed at home.

We now had to rethink our plans for leave, etc. It seemed reasonable to me that I should go on leave from my unit, and to have all the leave in Japan and New Guinea. That appealed to us, especially because we could retain our

married quarter; this meaning that Jennifer could finish her correspondence matriculation and the necessary examinations in Lae. Imagine the complications if she had had to go back to Victoria almost at the end of the school year. We had no idea at all where we would be living. There was John to consider, as well, but he, now that he had decided to keep working for Ansett, could live at their hostel in Lae.

Almost an Early Exit

Much to my surprise, Harrington would not agree to the proposal. He insisted that when the new officer arrived our married quarter was to be immediately available to him. I thought his demand most unreasonable. Soldiers, in most places, had to wait for a time before a married quarter became available. As for Jen, he said, 'Jennifer's education is of no importance.' But what about our leave in Japan? Bad luck. It was a hell of a row, and I was close to following Len Brown to Australia.

We arranged for Jennifer to board with Johanna until after the exams. We booked a passage to Sydney on the Swedish ship *Delos*. I began leave, and although I met Harrington in Lae before we left, I did not go near the Area Commander. Liz and I flew to Madang on 30 September, 1969, to board the *Delos*. We had a couple of days in Rabaul—such a beautiful harbour!—then sailed to Lae, where a strike caused us to remain for nine days. Our car was put on board at Lae. We were on the *Delos* for 18 days instead of nine. There was only a handful of passengers. We had a huge cabin. The weather was marvellous. The food was good. The drinks were cheap. We had a simply lovely time.

Back in Aussie

We disembarked in Sydney on 18 October, 1969. We had left John and Jennifer behind in Lae. Jennifer was to complete her correspondence school year and return home by year's end. John was to continue with Ansett, and it was saddening to realise that he was no longer to be part of our household. I had, though, encouraged him to remain in Lae, and in later years he assured me that he had a wonderful time there. He came back to Australia to stay late in 1972.

We drove in the Freeway through Canberra and Lakes Entrance to Melbourne, where once again Alan and Vera put us up for a short time. We rented a place at Seaford for a few weeks, then moved into a brick veneer married quarter at 63 Medina Road, Glen Waverley. Our personal effects from Lae took weeks and weeks to reach us but, at least, our furniture came out of storage quickly enough. We needed a new refrigerator, washing machine and television set badly, items that a credit company enabled us to buy straight away. We needed more space, and a bungalow, which became Jennifer's, was put up in the back yard later. We remained in that house until December, 1975, after I had left the Army.

Carlton had lost to Richmond in the 1969 Grand Final, and Arthur Calwell's Labor Party had very narrowly lost to Menzies in the Federal election. Calwell, although a Roman Catholic, and to his eternal credit, had not become part of the DLP after the Labor Party split in 1954. Catholics had formed a significant part of the ALP, but many of them now joined in the task of fighting communism wherever it seemed to be raising its head, but especially, perhaps, in the union movement. They were an obnoxious lot, managing for years to keep Labor out of power by taking votes from them, but not themselves having any real success electorally. Back in 1963, an editorial of the *Anglican* in Brisbane (Frances James?) got it pretty right: The DLP 'was a disgrace and a serious threat to democracy in Australia.' It wrote of 'dirty fighting', the 'despicable lies and misrepresentations.' 'This is a party, in our view, whose tactics are utterly beneath contempt.' 'It is a party of the blackest reaction, sustained by an unholy alliance between clericalism and large-state capitalism, indistinguishable in any respect from the Italian Fascist or German Nazi parties of the 30's.' The Catholic intellectual, BA Santamaria, was one of the DLP's principal architects.

Robyn was home now and off to high school. She applied, unsuccessfully, to train with the Australian Ballet School. Jennifer won a scholarship to university and began courses in arts and law at Melbourne. Robyn won a university scholarship, too, and enrolled at Monash, not completing her degree course, however. Jennifer gained an Arts Degree and an Honours



Richard married Paula Redenbach at Creswick in 1971. Richard has made his career in forestry.

Law Degree, missing out on a first class honours degree by only one place.

A little later, Richard began staying with us while doing a science (in forestry) degree at Melbourne, his diploma from Creswick counting towards the degree. After giving up at Monash, Robyn decided to leave home. Nana had rooms at a place in Ashwood. Richard and Paula married at Creswick in 1971; a really lovely wedding it was. Liz, as always, managed the home very efficiently.

I had weeks and weeks of leave to take. Almost to the end of March, 1970, I think. I had been advised that I was posted to Melbourne University Regiment as quartermaster. That would have suited us very well in some ways, especially as we would have probably lived in Grattan Street, Carlton. The Military Secretary's office altered the posting, not, by the way, even consulting me. A piece of paper arrived saying that I was to be QM, HQ Watsonia Area, instead. But I didn't mind, too much. (An army psychologist told me years before that I had a well adjusted personality, one of the things that influenced him to say that being, I thought, my statement that I had never been unhappy in a job.)

The Taxi Driver

So we knew where I was to go, but not for a while yet. We needed money. I decided to drive taxis, something that I was not allowed to do at the time, as I remember. (At a later time, I think, service members could gain approval to take up work under certain conditions.) Of course, I had to get a licence, and that turned out to be not so easy to do. Without going into detail, I'll just say that you had to know Melbourne very well. I failed twice, all of this taking up precious time. When, finally, I did get it, I had only a week or two to go before I was to report for duty at Watsonia.

At the moment, I am writing on a fat pad of ruled foolscap. If I were to write all that I could write about my experiences as a taxi driver, I'd need more than one fat pad. I drove for Astoria taxis. In 1970, I drove for some months at weekends. Early Saturday morning, Liz would drive me up Swanston St where I would be given a cab, which I would wash and then set off. The hours for taxi drivers are necessarily long, twelve hour days not being at all unusual, because otherwise only a very low level of income would be reached. One weekend, I remember I earned \$19 on the Saturday and \$18 on the Sunday. That was one of my best results.

During this period, I picked up in the city one day our sergeant cook and drove him to the races. He didn't seem to notice. On another occasion, at night, thank goodness, a corporal jumped in the taxi at Flinders Street Station and directed it to Watsonia Barracks—of all places. I got away with that, as well. One day, during this period, I went for a drink at the Canada Hotel in Carlton just near the Astoria base. One of the (owner) Gange brothers was there. He said, 'Oh, here's my best driver.' Apart from my industry, I did not steal petrol or give them money troubles either, so that helped my reputation.

A few weeks before I was to leave the Army, in December, 1975, I took some resettlement leave to drive taxis. I did consider going into the business. I went back to base one day to pay in and get petrol, when I heard someone say, 'The Governor-General has sacked Whitlam.' That was 11 November, 1975. April, 1977, to August, 1978, I drove full-time, my aim being to reach a total earnings of \$10,000, which I managed to do. We needed the money particularly so that we could visit Jennifer in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Taxi driving can be boring, but it is rarely so when you have a fare in the cab. One night at the International section at Melbourne Airport, I waited for two and a quarter hours for a fare to turn up. That was boring. And when a fare did turn up, all he wanted was for me to drive him to a nearby suburb: \$2.50. In Toorak Road, South Yarra, one evening in 1977, I decided that it was time I finished for the day. A fellow asked me, however, to drive him to the Canada Hotel in Carlton. That suited me very well: I had arranged to meet Liz and Jennifer there. Again in Toorak Road one day, in the morning, I took someone to St. Kilda. Hours and hours later I was back in St. Kilda again. I picked up the same chap and took him back to South Yarra.

There is really hardly an end to the tales that a taxi driver is able to tell. I found that, in the main, if you treated people fairly and decently they tended to respond in kind, although that is not to say that relationships were always friendly:



Mary Lydia Sutherland (Nana) at Richard and Paula's wedding.

sometimes nastiness, and danger, indeed, was present. My rule was, usually, not to start conversations. I drove a brigadier (I was a major, but he did not know that) out to the airport one evening. Not one word passed between us. Sometimes people said, 'You Greek?' Once a woman insisted that I was Greek. I have always been glad that I experienced the taxi driving world, despite the long hours, the very poor pay, the element of danger and the unhealthy nature of the work.

The early seventies were to see the end of the lives of my dear father and mother. Dad had a slight stroke, his condition deteriorating over 18 months or so. He died peacefully, at 79, on 11 April, 1971, at a private hospital in East Brunswick. Mother suffered a heart attack, was admitted to the Austin Hospital, Heidelberg, in December, 1972, and died a day or two later. She was 80. Mother used to say, 'John's the only one who calls me mother.' I was saddened, but not devastated by their deaths. Perhaps, as I suggested earlier, I am lacking in emotional depth. Perhaps, in trying to view my own mortality as a matter not to be concerned about, there is a carryover affecting my reaction to the deaths of others. If so, in some ways that may be a good thing. I know, though, that if Elizabeth does go before me, I will be devastated: 'Death, be not proud, though some have called thee mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.' (J Donne)

My parents were both cremated, religious ceremonies being performed at the funeral parlour. In Dad's case, that upset me. Dad was an atheist, so I should have thought that he would have made it plain that he would not want religion brought into the matter. Perhaps he did not but, if he did, I consider that Mother and Bryan betrayed a trust. The excuse, not that I heard an excuse offered, of 'Oh, he doesn't know,' I find inexcusable. I thought it best not to voice my opinions, not wanting to upset my mother.

Jessie and Bryan were now left together in the house at Ross Street, Alphington. Bryan believed strongly that it was his duty as a son to care for his parents, and in such matters he was loving and dedicated. Mother was clearly his favourite parent. Now, too, the burden of caring for Jessie fell on his shoulders almost alone, and he carried that burden with admirable solicitude. A leucotomy was performed on Jess in 1954, or so, her conduct did improve, and in later years she became more quiescent, but she was a huge problem in the household in the last years of my parents' lives. Snow Wilson had been her lover over the years, being very kind to her, but they never married. Bryan fell in love with Norma, in Boort, back in the forties, but she was promiscuous, and that disappointed him enormously, I have reason to believe. He never married. I think, myself, that Bryan was bisexual, but he took neither direction in a sustained, emphatic or revealing enough manner for one to be quite sure just what his sexual preferences were. Bryan and Jessie moved from Alphington to Beaconsfield Parade, St Kilda, in 1981, and later to Frankston. Jessie died in 1988. She had been eating very little and I understand that malnutrition was given as the cause of her death. Bryan was admitted to Frankston Hospital in January, 1994, very ill with a flu virus. His appearance in the months beforehand suggested that he was a cancer victim, and it was found that he had leukaemia. He died of heart failure within hours of his admission. In later years, he simply would not go to a doctor, this attitude being quite contrary to his routine of earlier times when he was troubled a great deal by head pains. He was discharged on medical grounds from the army, and was, again on medical grounds, granted early retirement from the Commonwealth Public Service.

Alan and Vera were in Ruby Street, Balwyn. Their daughters, Nola and Karyn, both married, Nola to John Allen who was in the RAAF, and Karyn to Graham Ward, who was to reach a senior executive position in the business world. Nola split with John in the early seventies, later marrying Phillip Duncan whom, in about 1992, she divorced. Nola has four children, Karyn two.

In 1990, Alan and Vera moved to Queensland, to the Gold Coast. Vera's mental condition had been deteriorating for some time; a massive heart attack took her life at a nursing home in July, 1994. A little time before, Alan had had surgery for cancer of the bowel and liver, but his early death was inevitable. He died in August, 1994, a month after Vera. They were both cremated. Peter and I, in June, 1994, flew to the Gold Coast to see them both. When we went to see Vera at the nursing home, she simply would not look at me. We had always, I thought, been good friends. Perhaps she had come to dislike me. Her poor, sick mind was a factor in her rejection of me, I suppose. I like to think so. Alan was never one to whimper. And he didn't now. He knew that he had little time left. He faced his end with courage. Alan, once on the Left, had swung to the Right years before. He and I had many bitter arguments. We agreed about one thing, however—we were both atheists. His atheism, though, was a much milder version than mine.

Peter married Diana in the fifties, and they had two girls, Lillian and Lana. Lillian married Eric Graham, a Scot, and they have two sons, but Lana, a first class honours graduate in science from Melbourne University, a teacher, is single. Peter and Diana divorced in the early seventies. Peter and Irene have been together since 1972.

Watsonia Barracks

I spent two and a half years at Watsonia Barracks. I was promoted to major in February, 1972, the promotion being automatic after being six years a captain, and after passing the necessary promotion examinations. I became Camp Commandant, which, of course was a non-corps job for a RAAEC member. If, as I doubt, the reader has managed to read this narrative up to this point, he or she will have read that I had some difficulties with others from time to time. Others, too, have similar difficulties, of course. On one occasion, I was appointed to carry out a stocktake of a unit's stores account. The ledgers were in a mess in relation to the stores actually held. My intention, and duty, to arrive at an accurate count was not welcomed. It was decided to take me off the task, but my replacement, too, did his best to arrive at the true state of affairs. Things were found to be in a bad state, reflecting badly on those responsible.

Things did not always run smoothly between me and the officers' mess committee, either. There was some dissatisfaction with the meals over a period, and it was demanded that the mess catering staff get exactly what they should get in the way of rations, according to the ration scales, that is. I tried to explain that they were doing very well the way things were, but the President of the Mess Committee would not accept my explanations. 'It's not acceptable,' he said. So I ordered the NCO controlling the issue of rations to the several kitchens to give the officers' mess its strict entitlement of supplies. The standard of the meals fell away badly, and it was agreed that we should return to the earlier way of dividing up the food supply. In an area with several kitchens, feeding smaller numbers, in this case, the officers' mess, can be given a little more than its strict entitlement. In those times we came to know WO2 Reg Falkiner and his wife, Dorothy. They are still among our close friends. In October, 1973, I moved to the Westgarth drill hall to take up my new appointment of Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General at HQ 3 Cadet Brigade. Don't be fooled by the grand sounding title; it was a relatively unimportant job.

I began playing squash in 1970, at Watsonia. Over a period of five years, the game was a dominant feature of my recreational activities. I recall that I played every day—for longish periods—for nine days in a row in 1974. There was an army competition and a pennant competition out Glen Waverley way. In those years, particularly when I was at Watsonia, I played very often against Bob Maguire, a Catholic priest who for a few years was a chaplain in the Australian Regular Army. Bob did not take kindly to being beaten, and at times things became rather unpleasant. In more recent times, as the parish priest in South Melbourne, he has done wonderful work with an organisation engaged in promoting the welfare of street children.

The war in Vietnam was still going on in the early seventies. Big anti-war rallies were held in the streets of Melbourne, Richard, Jennifer and Robyn attending at least one of them. Doctor Jim Cairns was a leading anti-war in Vietnam figure. Since before then, and up to now, he has been someone whose outlook on life has seemed to me to be admirable.

In October, 1972, as we had much earlier agreed we would do, John and I went on an overseas trip. I was able to take six weeks' leave from Watsonia. Because he worked for Ansett, John was able to get us cheap round-the-world fares. As I recall, the air fare cost me about \$140. We went first to Hong Kong in a Boeing 707. We left Hong Kong in a 747, soon to hear a frightening explosion somewhere outside. After a time, the pilot explained that one of the motors had surged, so we had another night in Hong Kong. Instead of Rome next, we ended up in Istanbul for a night. We flew to Rome, got on a train and went by rail to Naples, Berne, Zurich, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Paris, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Copenhagen and back to Amsterdam. We caught a ferry from the Hook of Holland to England, stayed in London for a week, and then flew to Los Angeles, where we spent another week. And where, on the radio, in bed at a motel, we heard that the Labor Party had been elected to office back home in Australia. Marvellous news! John did not go back to New Guinea, but went off to live and work in Sydney. Carlton were premiers in both 1970 and 1972. Richard, Jennifer and I stood in the crowd of 121,696 in 1970 to watch what has gone down in football history as a remarkable game. Liz went on her own and Jennifer and I went together to see the 1972 victory.

Another Tyrant

Before I left Watsonia, I met, in the officers' mess, the officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Ken Bladen, who was to take up command of 3 Cadet Brigade, the unit to which I also had been posted. Such a thing had never before or since happened to me. I mean, he was curt in the extreme, making his contempt plain to the other officers in the group. I simply could not understand why he would behave in such a manner. When, on 1 October, 1973, I arrived at Westgarth, he happened to be near the entrance door. Not a word of welcome, not a smile, only a curt remark that indicated that I should see another major inside the building. (The Westgarth drill hall was the very place I reported to on 3 December, 1941. Now, it seemed, it would probably be the last place from which I would leave the army, 30 something years later.) It appeared pretty certain that at last I would be unhappy about the sort of job I was in. (Remember my remark to a psychologist years before that I had never been unhappy in a job?)

From the very start of the relationship between Bladen and me, it was plain to me that a crisis point would be reached at some time not too far into the future. I began to make notes in a small army note book. 4 October, 1973:

We were in my office. He next closed the door. He then began to be 'straight' with me. He said that he had done his utmost to have my posting as DAA and QMG cancelled. He said that someone (Lieutenant-Colonel Bishop, I feel sure) had made criticisms of me. It is very likely that Bishop told Bladen about my being investigated by ASIO, for one thing. He said that he wanted a young officer to work to him and he agreed that most officers regarded education officers with disdain/contempt.

He was a Royal Australian Infantry Officer, who had recently served in Vietnam. His opinions, even if they had some legitimacy, should not have caused him to behave as he was behaving.

A very odd thing about our relationship was that, now and again, he would, so to speak, relent and be very friendly and polite towards me. And at times he said, or wrote in a minute, quite complimentary things about some job I had done. It was close to sickening how polite and friendly he was on an occasion when a visiting colonel from divisional HQ, who knew about the situation, came to lunch with a group of us one day. He might have been, he very likely was, a brave infantry officer. I had contempt for him, too, even so.

The Formal Complaint

The crisis I spoke of did arrive. HQ sent me to Adelaide to investigate a large loss of stores during the annual camp of 4 Cadet Brigade. I worked like mad over about a week, producing a fat report that, I learned later, was thought by divisional HQ to be 'very good'. (As an army officer I was certainly no better than average, but I was reasonably good at such tasks. An officer at Watsonia, after I had investigated something or other, used the words 'his forte', and even my *bete noire* wrote, 'I have concurred in this—well done' on a minute paper.) When I got back to Westgarth, I found that Bladen had instituted a, quite unauthorized, change in the establishment of the unit, with my standing both altered and lowered. I made a formal complaint. This was a rare step for an ARA officer to take, indeed, I knew of no other instance of a major doing that.

Week after harrowing week ensued. Bladen rejected my complaints. I had asked that my complaints be referred to the next higher authority: the general officer commanding the division. Although initially, I understand, I had his sympathy in the matter, he became furious with me because I had written what he described as an impertinent letter in which I made certain demands, demands that would have to be agreed to by higher authority if I were to consider myself propitiated. I probably did go about it a little rashly. Just the same, it was his responsibility, surely, not to allow his quarrel with what I had written to interfere with his duty to investigate the complaints without prejudice. That he did not do.

It took the GOC 11 weeks to get around to interviewing me. In the Westgarth drill hall, when the telephone rang, everybody could hear it. Waiting anxiously as I was for the matter to be finalised, every time the phone rang, I thought, 'Perhaps this call will relate to my problem.' No luck! And so it went on and on. The anxious waiting I mean. That period, I am convinced, laid the basis for the duodenal ulcer that was diagnosed at a later time.

Eventually, Major-General Henderson rejected my complaints, so I asked that they be referred to the Australian Military Board. The board upheld them:

The redress of wrongs submitted by Maj Rawson has been upheld on both counts, and his re-posting has been approved
...

The Military Board had decided that Lieutenant-Colonel Bladen had shown prejudice against me and that he had treated me unfairly. Bladen served for about another 18 months, to reach his 20 years' service, and then resigned. Major-General Henderson—other major-generals had decided that he was in the wrong—left not so long after, as well. Perhaps he would have left in any case.

Quite soon after the meeting I had in Melbourne with a representative of the Australian Military Board, the Chief of Personnel, Major-General 'Sandy' Pearson, at which meeting he advised me that my complaints had been upheld by the Board, I was posted to Central Army Records Office at Albert Park as Staff Officer, 2nd Grade, Personnel and Logistics, in charge of Information Services. The colonel-in-charge was a bit wary of me at first—perhaps he thought that I was a trouble maker—but I think he came to accept me well enough. He particularly asked me to improve the quality of the material that left my area with his signature block on it, and satisfaction was later expressed about that. This was to be my last posting.

A little more now about a further problem I had with Bladen. A little time before my interview with 'Sandy' Pearson,

Bladen had interviewed me about my annual confidential report. He asked, among other things, how I thought I had gone in the job. I said that I thought I had done as well as most. He agreed(!) He did not ask me to read and initial the report before I left for my new posting at Central Army Records Office, but his chief clerk sent it to me after I had been there for a while. That sort of thing was just not done. I mean, a CO having his clerk handle confidential reports.

Perhaps I can sum up the report by saying it was extremely uncomplimentary. There was no likelihood at all that I would initial it without also writing hundreds of words, as was my right, to comment on it. I sent him a minute about it.

For more than one reason, I was surprised to receive the confidential report that you forwarded to me recently. For example, so many weeks had gone by since it was first initiated that I thought you had decided against completing it. (That it reached me after I left 3 Cadet Brigade should not have surprised me).

But there was one over-riding reason why I was surprised; it seems incredible to me that you would regard yourself as qualified to write a confidential report on me. After all, it was only a few short weeks ago that a Military Board decision found you guilty of holding prejudice against me. (And certain remarks you make in the report about my beliefs reveal a prejudice going far beyond anything that had come clearly to the surface previously—at least in the differences between you and me).

Perhaps there is no legal issue involved here, but surely there must be a moral one. This seems to me so obvious that it requires no elaboration.

Could I suggest that you give further consideration to the matter? I think it unlikely that the Army Office, in the circumstances, would think it proper that you should write the report.

Of course if it is decided that the report should proceed, I shall have to decide upon the action I shall take.

I spoke to my new CO and explained my position in the matter. Not long after a direction came from the Military Secretary at Army Headquarters: the confidential report was to be shredded. I gave it to a lieutenant-colonel and watched him do it. I had photocopied one small section of the report and here is the wording:

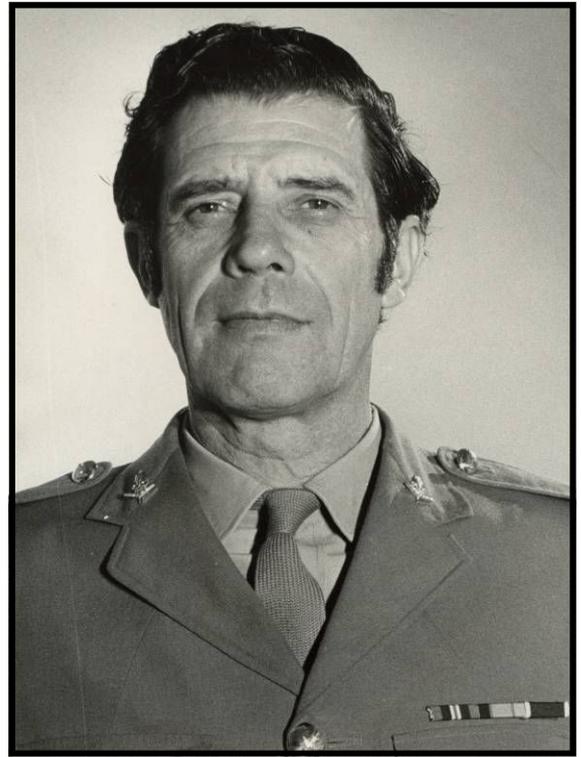
His unusual views on religion and his extreme political views are unsuited to a cadet and school environment.

He seems to have had a number of worries connected with a redress of wrongs submitted in Nov 73 and of late, some housing problems.

To Thoona Grove

Soon after we returned from New Guinea in late 1969, Liz began experiencing worrying health lapses, and it was soon diagnosed that she had a problem with blood pressure. The condition has been a continuing problem, sometimes being under control with medication, sometimes not. In 1977, she underwent surgery at Austin Hospital, her left carotid artery requiring a 'clean out'. Her heart, too, having a couple of unsound valves, has caused her a good deal of worry. But she had been indefatigable in her determination to care for those close to her.

We didn't have much money, but we were certainly not short of friends. In those years, or, for that matter, since. Bernie and Pat Carins, Dick and Marge Matthews and Bert Duncan were among those we got on well with. In Bert's case, though, a strange development occurred, in that he drew away from us, even though he seemed to like our company. We were all puzzled. I came to the conclusion that the problem had to do with the very high regard in which he was held by the several ladies. It was quite plain to an observer that this was so. I believe that he was embarrassed by their clearly shown interest in him, and decided to withdraw from a situation that he perceived to be delicate. No one in the group, by the way, would agree with my very tentatively expressed opinion about the reason



1976 and I was soon to resign my Commission as a major in the Royal Australian Army Education Corps. Perhaps the strain was showing but I have never liked this photograph.

we had lost his company. They had no explanation. He told me once that I was a 'strange bastard', which comment, rather than offending me, I accepted with a degree of pleasure. I think that he would have agreed that he was pretty strange, too. Ours was a strong friendship.

Vic Edwards, a warrant officer who worked for me at Watsonia, lived with his wife, Ann, in a one bedroom weatherboard house at 16 Thoona Grove, Greensborough. Vic, a Welshman, had moved from the British Army to the Australian Regular Army at the time of the war in Korea. We get on well together, and when he was to move to Tasmania, in 1974, he agreed to sell the small house to us. \$18,000 was the price. With a Defence Services loan (they used to be known as War Service loans) of \$12,000, and money we somehow managed to scrape together, we bought the property, taking possession on 25 June, 1974. We rented it to a young couple for a time.

I mentioned earlier that the Whitlam Labor Party won power when John and I were in Los Angeles. After so many years of the Right being in government, the three years or so during which Labor took the reins was a very exciting, if sometimes worrying, period for their supporters. They did some very worthwhile things, including ending Australia's involvement in the war in Vietnam. Kerr, the Governor-General, using powers hardly anyone would have thought he would use, dismissed the Labor government in November, 1975, having connived, I have no doubt, with opposition leader Fraser before-hand. The Whitlam government being a big worry to the USA, I am deeply suspicious that their agents played a part in Whitlam's downfall. I have often marvelled that bloodshed did not occur. Sometimes I think that we were a gutless lot to accept so meekly such a rotten manoeuvre on the part of forces of the Right. Subsequently, though, the people did vote Fraser in, and that fact reduced the strength of arguments against the momentous events that had occurred.



Richard and Paula's children Ashley and Fiona in 1989.

In 1972, Richard had to appear at the Magistrate's Court. His number had come up earlier in the ballot conducted to obtain young men for the armed forces (or was it just for the army?). He had registered as a conscientious objector. I went along to the court in civilian clothes, to act as a character witness for him. I think that my presence helped a good deal to persuade the magistrate that Richard should be excused from service. When it was revealed that I was a serving army officer, I noticed the raised eyebrows of the magistrate. At a later time, Richard said that he was proud of me that day, which opinion, expressed in the way that it was expressed, had a pleasing effect on my level of self-esteem.

After they married, Richard and Paula lived in Hawthorn for a time, Richard now being a graduate in Science from Melbourne University. Then they moved to live in Stawell where Ashley was born in November, 1975. By the time Fiona arrived in 1978 they were living, not far from us, in Watsonia.

John and Cheryl Mann were married in Sydney, Adam being born in 1975. Liz and I drove to Sydney for the wedding. Their marriage failed. In 1981, John began living in what came to be known as the 'cottage' or 'little house', but more about that later.

Jennifer finished her Arts and Law degrees at Melbourne University in 1974, then did her articles in the city with a former member of our unit, Jack Meadows. I had made the arrangement with Jack, a Master of Laws, at one of our annual reunions. Jack (he thought Jennifer was wonderful) gave assistance, too, in the matter of Jen's being admitted to the Bar, during which ceremony, by the way, Jennifer and a fellow atheist were separated from the main group of lawyers to be admitted. Indeed, the arrogant judge in charge of proceedings made some slighting remark that I thought atrocious. Jack was disappointed that Jennifer did not go along with the swearing-in process, but had opted to make an affirmation.

Jack assured me that, of course, he did not believe in God, but he believed it best to conform with custom on such occasions. Many people hold that view: they don't themselves believe, but they think it best that others, especially the

masses, do. The eminent American psychologist and philosopher, and pragmatist, William James, who died early in the 20th century, held that kind of opinion. Bertrand Russell, who admired James enormously, but by no means always agreed with him, made this comment:

He wants people to be happy, and if belief in god makes them happy let them believe in him. (*History of Western Philosophy*)

Jen's career, however, was not to be as a lawyer. In 1975, she applied to join the Diplomatic Corps, and after much testing and many interviews and so on, she was admitted early in 1976. She was, in fact, in the same group of entrants as Alexander Downer, who is now the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Among the things the 1972-1975 Labor Government did was to improve the conditions of service of members of the armed forces. They changed the regulations that applied to superannuation, for one thing, thus ensuring that members discharged from that time would be much better off financially than was the case beforehand. In my own case, I began to pay much, much less towards the scheme than I was paying before, even receiving back the sum of \$4,000. When I joined the ARA in 1948, I had not 'bought back' service to 1941, but now I was given the chance to do so at 5.5% of my pay during those years. As a corporal (for example), I used to get about seven shillings a day, so I did not have to pay much to buy back. And, as I have said, the 'retirement pay', as it was called, became considerably more generous. Obviously the pay of a retired major was much better than the pay of a warrant officer, at which rank I would very likely have remained had I not 'gone to school', for one thing, in those earlier years.

In the early months of 1975, I decided that I would leave the army on 3 December that year, having completed 34 years of service on that date. Since the retiring age for a major in the RAAEC was 55, I would not be retiring; I would be resigning my commission. It was necessary for me to make formal application to resign, which application was approved by AHQ. I was on the Reserve after I resigned until I became 55, but was not called upon to serve in any way.

Having only one bedroom, the house in Thoona Grove was rather too small, we considered, so Liz and I had all kinds of ideas about what should be done about the problem. I had plans drawn up to have the house added to, but was unable to raise the \$9,000 required to pay for it, even though, in a few months, I would easily have been able to repay the loan. One day, Liz had a brilliant idea: why don't we move the house on the block, thus making room for a second house? We made enquiries at the Shire of Diamond Valley and, yes, we were told, the block is (just) large enough for that to be approved. Peter and Irene were living in the house at that time.

Early in the second half of 1975, the job was done, at a cost of \$2,025. (There were lots of associated costs such as the creation of a stone fence and a driveway.) Defence Services Homes would not give me approval to move the house unless I arranged insurance coverage. On one very harrowing day, I made phone call after phone call to insurance companies, but none was willing to insure the move. So I had the place moved without insurance, escaping any penalty for my transgression.

Before the house could be moved, it was necessary to remove a good number of trees. With a hired chainsaw, I spent a weekend on the job, and the next weekend we made a huge bonfire of the fallen trees. Around this time we inspected some Western Red Cedar log houses at a display, deciding at last what we would erect on the newly available space on the block. The house kits were imported from Canada. Some very worrying times and a great deal of hard work were to follow for more than two years. One way or another there was so much to be done.

About the middle of August 1975, I was sitting at my desk in my office at Albert Park Barracks. I had just drunk some black coffee and taken a pain killer for a knee injury I had sustained while playing squash. Suddenly, there was such an awful pain just below and slightly to the rear of my right armpit. I felt sure that I was not having a heart attack; I had really no idea at all what it was.

Six hours later, I was wheeled into an operating theatre at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. For my part, I could not get in there quickly enough. For hours, a couple of junior medical officers had been trying to find out what was wrong; when a surgeon, Mr Penfold, examined me, he diagnosed the problem straight away. What a relief! Perforated ulcers cause terrible pain because acids from the stomach escape through the hole in the wall of the stomach into the abdominal cavity. It seems that as a result peritonitis sets in, killing the patient unless the requisite surgery is performed fairly promptly.

At this time Liz was in Sydney with John and Cheryl. She returned to Melbourne. Jennifer was in the process of being interviewed, etc., for entry to the Diplomatic Corps. She was to go to Canberra on the Sunday after I was

admitted (on the previous Monday), so I requested that I be discharged on the Sunday. Mr Penfold agreed.

I realized later that certain pains in the back, and other problems that I had had for some time, were indicative of my having an ulcer, but the problem had not been diagnosed. It seemed to me that the emotional stress that I had endured over the months in 1973 and 1974 had contributed to the establishment of the ulcer, but it was not until 1994 that the authorities accepted this. But more about that later.

Out of hospital, I now had the third of December to look forward too. Before this date, as I have already noted, Kerr destroyed the Labor Government, destroying, too, however, his own reputation to a large extent. (He was a drunk, too, as was evident from time to time.)

Chapter 5 A Score of Years in 'Civvy Street'

It was a strange feeling to realise that it was all over, that no longer was I in the army. I had often regarded myself, and I feel sure that I was so regarded by some others, as a misfit. There was, too, the fact that I had been in an army for 34 years without ever having been shot at. It seemed almost to be a paradox, an absurdity, that it could be so. But there it was. Since I had had a sufficient length of service, I was granted the right to use the title of 'Major' if I so wished, but I have not done so. In earlier times, I would have been able to use 'Lieutenant-Colonel' on discharge, but the Labor Government of the day put a stop to that practice. As a matter of interest, my gross pay at that time was \$324.47 a week. (Tax was \$107.00.)

Because there was so much to be done on the block at Greensborough, and it would have cost so much to pay someone else to do it, I had decided not to seek employment, at least for the time being. There was so much worry and there were so many difficulties associated with the project (I, for a start, had few handyman skills), that I later came to the conclusion that it would have been better if I had gone away and let someone else do the job.

Within a week of discharge, Liz and I flew off for 10 days with some friends to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hong Kong. For one of the few times in our married life, we had no reason to be too concerned about money. I remember that the money I had received for the leave I had not taken was more than enough to pay for the holiday. I was to receive, also, a cheque for over \$14,000 in lieu of furlough, and a cheque for over \$40,000 for part commutation of my retirement pay. Perhaps some will consider it crass of me to mention such details of our financial situation, but I do not regard the matter as being particularly confidential. I might add that it did not last too long, what with all the spending we did on housing (eg. \$15,000 for the house kit), and a Leyland Mini car for Liz. By now I did not have a car. The old Freeway packed up in 1975.

We were still living in the married quarter at Glen Waverley, but we were obliged to move out quickly. Peter and Irene were still in the house (now in a position facing Patterson Crescent) in Greensborough. Jennifer said, 'Why don't you buy a house?' Good idea, we thought. So off Liz and I went to find one as close as we could to Thoona Grove where, before too long, we meant to put up the log house. So we bought a two-bedroom brick-veneer place at 109 Nell Street, Greensborough. One day in January or February, 1976 we moved in. Nana moved in with us, too. And Ben, the dog.

The place at Nell Street cost \$32,000, of which we contributed about \$16,000, borrowing the rest on a five-year personal loan. After we moved out later that year, we rented the place for \$50 a week for a couple of years but, foolishly, we sold it for about the same price as we bought it in 1980.

As I mentioned earlier, Liz and I had decided that we would go about putting up the log house ourselves. We had decided to have a concrete slab in which we arranged the inclusion of electric heating cables. The tradesman that did the brickwork along the foundations, although he was given the plans, did not get all the measurements right. A day before the slab was to be poured, and three or four days before the house was to arrive, I discovered the blunder. I should have insisted on the brickwork being done again (it was 17 bricks high at the north-east corner), but the slab was to be poured and the logs to arrive, so I agreed to accept some 'adjustments' to the wall.

From about the time the house arrived, a huge semi-trailer load, in April 1976, a year was to pass before we were able to move in, and even then there was still much to be done. We, with some help from my brother Alan, got the logs up to about top-of-window level, but the remainder of the work, the roof, for example, was beyond our capabilities. We paid someone to finish the walls and roof. All the work we had done ourselves, by the way, saved us very little in money. We might as well have paid someone in the first place.

The problems that arose seemed endless. There were times when ones enthusiasm fell away badly, but we were stuck with the task and had to continue as best we could. Liz, although she did not speak of it then, had experienced loss of vision, this resulting in the need for the carotid artery operation in 1977 that I have already mentioned. She stood up to things in a most admirable manner.

Much had been done, and was to be done, on the other house, too. We gave it, for example, a new roof, added an extra room, carport and driveway. We took steps to arrange for strata titles for the two places. Liz and I became the Body Corporate. Our money soon ran out, and personal loans became almost a way of life for us. In the end, we became outright owners of the log house, our Defence Services loan applying to the 'little house' in its new position. For a time, the other house was at 19 Patterson Crescent, but once the strata title arrangement was made its address became Unit 2 at 16 Thoona Grove. The earlier address, however, is still being used by John and Shirley. My ulcer

problem recurred, and I was later told that I had duodenal ulcer disease.

Soon after we moved into the log house, Jennifer was to go off on her first overseas posting as 3rd Secretary at the Australian High Commission in Colombo. (Peter and Irene had moved out of the other house, and we moved from Nell Street to it sometime earlier.) Since Liz and I wanted to visit Jen, and since money was in short supply, anyway, I decided that I had better take up taxi driving again. As I explained earlier, I drove for 17 months, a very interesting, if rather exhausting and poorly paid period of my life.

When we moved from Nell Street, we brought with us Ben, our dog. (Strictly, Ben was Jen's and Robyn's dog.) He was not easy to control, and unless we kept him chained there was no way, because of a lack of fencing, from preventing him from racing out onto the streets. I drove him, in Liz's Mini, to the RSPCA station in Burwood where they would destroy him. I don't think that, in all my life, I have ever been so emotionally upset. He slobbered all over me all the way. I blubbered almost all the way. Did I have to do that? Why did I not take him to a dog's home? These and other questions assailed me for a time. But, of course, in the manner of things, the problem subsided.

After Liz and I moved out of the small house early in 1977, it became Nana's home until she died in October, 1980. It was so pleasing for us that we were able to provide her with a place of her own, for which place we charged her a moderate rental. She had always been of quite marvellous assistance to us as a family. She was a wonderful cook, excellent at sewing and watched over the children with loving care whenever she was asked to. She had what seems to have been an unhappy life overall. She was not prepared to speak of her failed marriage; indeed Liz knows very little about her father or what became of him. Nan was born in 1892. Her grave is in Eltham cemetery.

To The East

We were visiting Singapore, Sri Lanka and India for about eight weeks. Jennifer had a comfortable flat in a Colombo suburb. Later, Sri Lanka became a place of deadly civil unrest, but it was fairly peaceful while we were there. The three of us visited India for a couple of weeks, our stopovers including Madras, Agra, New Delhi and the State of Kashmir, where we stayed for a time on a houseboat on Lake Dahl. It was exciting to see the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort in Delhi and other places. The thing I most disliked was a generally poor observance of the guidelines of hygiene, and, at meal times, for example, my thoughts tended to be concentrated more on the likelihood of grubby kitchens than the food itself.

When we got back to Colombo, a friend of Jen's, a lawyer, told us of something that had happened while we were away. At a small school, not far from Kandy, in Central Sri Lanka, a small boy had been naughty in the classroom. The teacher, to punish him, locked him in a small room contiguous to the classroom. It seems that some cries from the boy were ignored by the teacher. When the teacher did open the door, he found, not the boy, but a huge python. A grief-stricken father arrived and knifed the teacher to death. The python was killed and cut open, but the boy, of course, had not survived.

An evening or two before we left Sri Lanka, Jennifer put on a farewell social gathering. Her flat was the upstairs one of two flats. An Indian bank manager and his wife and attractive young daughter lived in the lower flat. There were 30-40 people at the party, and a fair amount of noise ensued. The next morning we learned that the young Indian woman, the daughter, had committed suicide by chewing the flowers (leaves?) of the oleander shrub. She was found at her parents' bedroom door. It was considered by some, it seems, her (probable) cries for help had not been heard by her parents because of the noise we were making. Jennifer retained her composure admirably.

It was discovered in Colombo that I had a heart problem that, at a later time, back in Australia, was diagnosed as extra ventricular systoles, normally not a serious condition. In Colombo, though, the doctor intimated that it was, indeed, serious, and I was left with the impression that I may pop off anytime. I found myself being able to cope calmly enough with my situation, but it was a relief, just the same, to be told later that it was a fairly common complaint, not usually dangerous to life. Blood pressure was a problem, too, but drugs have been able to control it.

So 1980 arrived with Malcolm Fraser's coalition government in power federally. In Victoria, too, a conservative government remained in control. In the USA, late that year, to the amazement of many Australians, at least, someone named Ronald Reagan won the Presidency of that nation, taking up office in early 1981. Perhaps, because he had been Governor of California, we should not have been so surprised, but what was the place coming to? Capitalism, I believe, has reduced American society to its present far from admirable state.

When Jennifer finished in Sri Lanka, in 1980, she went on exchange for a year to the Foreign Affairs Department of New Zealand, the headquarters being located at Wellington. Late that year, Liz and I met her at Christchurch, and the three of us saw a fair bit of New Zealand, especially the South Island, travelling in a campervan-type vehicle. The

scenery was stunning.

The Parking Attendant

On 2 April, 1979 (my 57th birthday), I went into the city to be interviewed for a parking attendant's job with Adams Parking. I began work on the north-east corner of Victoria and Swanston Streets Carlton. Except for a small brick office-size building, the block was vacant. If you really squeezed them in you could admit about 60 cars: \$2.00 each.

At first, the arrangement was that I should work from 7am to 11am, the pay to be \$3.50 an hour. (The park was left unattended after I left.) No mention at all was made about conditions such as sick pay, annual holidays, public holidays. For my part, I assumed that I was simply a casual employee, and that they were entitled not to take such things into consideration. My ignorance of such matters was inexcusable, even though I was in the army all those years. It was only at a later time, that I found out that people in my position were subject to the provisions of the Motor Drivers' Award, and that I certainly did have entitlements that were conveniently (for them) disregarded by Adams Parking.

For four years, five days a week, (I missed very few days through illness, although, in fact, I was not at all well, often) I got out of bed at about 5:10am, to be in there in Liz's Mini about 6:45am. There was no power or water, no proper toilet facilities. Just the same, as with taxi driving, one met a variety of people. Some were nice to know; some were odious, to say the least. One morning in 1980, I said to Harry, an Italian who parked there often, and with whom I used to chat, 'Harry, my daughter is coming home from overseas today.' As I said it a KLM airliner passed overhead. Jenny was in it.

As the weeks passed, extra parking space was obtained in contiguous derelict buildings, over total spaces reaching about 140. The supervision of it all was not at all an easy task, and there was much trouble with non-paying car owners. My relationship with the two men who managed Adams Parking was cordial, and on more than one occasion they expressed their appreciation of my services. (One of them, in fact, had been declared bankrupt at an earlier time, and was now illegally in business.) Just the same, they were a couple of flint hard operators, whose main concern was the making of money, outlaying as little of it as they could manage.

In October, 1982, I was asked to start up the operation of a car park in St Kilda Road, in a new building. And this was where, finally, things went wrong between them and me. It was, I believe, the cleaning of the two floors of the car park that became a big issue. I swept the entrance and exit ramps and the area around my car, which was my office (they provided no furniture), but the rest of the two floors was never swept or cleaned during my time there—to 18 July, 1983, that is. Near the end they asked me if I would be willing to do the cleaning, perhaps on a Saturday morning. I said no to that, but told them that my son John would take the job on.

On my final day there, the manager arrived, bringing with him a chap whose car park had just been lost to one of Adams' competitors. Here, in my opinion, was their solution to the cleaning problem: this guy out of a job (that he needed more than I did, almost certainly), perhaps with a family to keep, was willing to do the cleaning. And, believe me, Adams' Parking would be hoping that he would not expect to be paid. The manager did not mess about: 'We want you to take a few days off.' He made some sort of apology about not advising me earlier. We had a huge argument, during which the proprietor arrived, then I got myself paid, jumped in my car, and drove home. I reckoned that I had been treated most unfairly and when that happens it really gets me going. The notion of fairness is, I believe, a part of the makeup of those who believe in socialism. I don't mean, of course, that believers in capitalism are necessarily against fairness in human dealings.

I made enquiries at the Department of Industrial Affairs and obtained, too, a copy of the Motor Drivers' Award. What I learned made it quite certain that Adams' Parking had been cheating me and other employees over a period of several years. To take the matter up with the Department seemed to be a good idea as they investigate and prosecute. But I finally learned that they investigate only a period of one year, so it seemed best to turn to the legal system. Jack Meadows agreed to act for me.

Because of the bankruptcy matter, and because of the fear of a taxation investigation, Adams' Parking was in a very precarious position. They offered me \$2,200 in cash, which sum I refused. I was able to draw up a very detailed statement of all the money they owed me, covering wages, annual holiday pay, public holiday pay and a handling money allowance. (There is a file on all this among my possessions.) It all came to \$7,333.89.

The legal process was very lengthy and very slow. At last the matter came up at the County Court. An affidavit from the proprietor was so weak in the eyes of the barrister that the latter asked the judge for permission to have a fresh affidavit sworn. In effect: 'Our defence is terribly weak. Could we please try again?' I gathered from my barrister

that a judge would not normally allow that. So the case was adjourned, the second affidavit sworn, by the way, containing perjury on a grand scale.

It was either late 1985 or early 1986 before the legal battle was over. My solicitor and theirs got together with some senior legal person, this method only recently being introduced, and, on the advice of Jack Meadows, I agreed to a settlement of \$6,000. (His bill was \$2,000.) Jack died from lung cancer a few years later.

Over the period 1981-1983, I did some voluntary work for the Labor Resource Centre, which was situated in the ALP building in Carlton. It was during this time that first, the Cain Government in Victoria, and then the Hawke Government in Canberra, took office. Jenny Macklin, one of those I worked for at the Centre, has recently won our seat of Jaga Jaga.

Liz went overseas for a few weeks in 1984, her main purpose being to visit Jenny who was now a Second Secretary in the Australian Mission in Harare, Zimbabwe. There was not enough money available for me to go too. She had a wonderful time, her travels including motoring with Jennifer a couple of thousand miles throughout Britain. She returned via Hong Kong.

Shirley Birch, who was to become John's wife in 1986, was now living with him in the other house. Shirley it was who gave me another nickname, Sadie, during the period when Liz was away and I had plenty of housework to do. John worked for a time as a barman at the Diamond Creek Hotel. At the time I had the blowup with Adams' Parking, he was working with them too, but later KC Parking became his employer, and he is still working for them in Latrobe Street, City.

Although Liz became less interested in following the fortunes of the Carlton Football Club, I was about as keen as ever. In my lifetime, Carlton has won 11 premierships; I have been lucky enough to have been there on nine occasions, missing the 'bloodbath' (as it has been called) against South Melbourne in 1945 (I was in Brisbane), and the narrow victory against Essendon in 1968 when we were in New Guinea.

In 1975, I wrote a letter to the *Australian* newspaper, a letter about the teaching of religion in schools. It was published, and I reproduce it as an appendix. At the time the topic was getting some airing in the community. Letters to the newspaper have become a sporadic hobby of mine since then. Most of us (Nietzsche called us the 'bungled and botched') being pretty limited in intelligence and abilities have very little opportunity to influence opinion. In just a tiny measure, perhaps, a letter may influence some readers, so that the writer, knowing that, may derive some satisfaction from his or her efforts. You realise, too, that friends may read the letter, and, indeed, some people you have quite lost track of may read it as well. And it's nice to think that you have made some kind of contact with them, even though some or most may quite disagree with the opinions you have expressed.

In the middle eighties Robyn became a student at the Victorian College of the Arts. She did very well, earning a BA, majoring in dance. She was now qualified to teach dancing, but the right kind of opportunity to do this did not arise. It seemed now that Pat Miller would be the man she would settle down with.

Richard, in the middle eighties, was to move on from head of Fire Research in his Department, these days known as Conservation and Natural Resources. He and his family moved to Traralgon, then to Benalla, then to Bairnsdale, where, now in the Executive Service he was in charge. In about as many years he moved up four places on the promotion ladder. Currently his office is in Melbourne where he is the Director, Forests Service.

In 1982, I bought a Charger 'Sportsman' from a young man who parked in my carpark opposite the Melbourne Baths. It was a 1974 model, and was in pretty good shape. I tell a story against myself of an incident that occurred in Hoddle Street, Clifton Hill not long after I bought it. Facing up to traffic lights, I took off at a fast rate when the lights turned green, deciding that I would beat the Falcon that I saw out of the corner of my eye on my right. The next lot of lights became red. The Falcon pulled up beside me—it had two uniformed policeman in it. A fine for speeding ensued. Yes, I know that it was childish of me. When I decided to sell it in 1990, my neighbour Neil said, 'Some young Italian will buy it.' Indeed, the latter's father bought it for him, willingly handing over a cheque for \$4,200, which was more than twice what I paid for it.

In 1986, Jennifer learned that her next posting was to be as First Secretary at the Australian Embassy in Damascus, Syria. She had bought a house at the beginning of the eighties in Lyons, ACT. For some time she had been a strict vegetarian and I jokingly referred to her sometimes as the skinniest diplomat in the world. For years she has been jogging every morning (she is an early riser), and these days she is a keen cyclist, too. She went to Damascus in the second half of 1987.

If we were to go to visit her, then we needed some extra money. I began work with a security firm in July, 1987, and

stayed with them for about seven months. My place of work was at the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works depot, across the road from Northland Shopping Centre in Preston. It was shift work, but the conditions were good, and it was not a long drive to get there. I was back in uniform again. While I was there, Carlton won the Grand Final, and that madman massacred those poor people in Hoddle Street, Clifton Hill. It would have been appropriate, in my opinion, if he had been killed instead of captured.

In 1986, Liz had a nasty accident in her Mini, although she was not badly injured. She was stationary at traffic lights, when a car driven by a young man crashed into the rear of the Mini. She was hurled something like 100 metres through the intersection. A kind gentleman who saw what happened brought her home. Her cervical spine was affected by what is known as whiplash, and she received some financial compensation at a later time. I believe that a tow bar on the Mini saved her, in that the other vehicle struck that, and so did not crash through the rear of her vehicle.

John and Shirley Birch (it was her second marriage, too) were married by a celebrant in March, 1986, the ceremony being conducted on the patio at the front of our house. John's son, Adam, joined in the ceremony. Shirley's son, Peter, and her daughter, Tracey, were present, as was Tracey's one year old son, Jade. Stretching things a bit, Liz and I could now say that we were great-grandparents. I was disappointed that my brother Bryan did not attend, which meant that Jessie did not come either. I was not particularly surprised, however, it being not unusual for Bryan to let people down.

For most of the eighties, for a number of reasons, my health was not at all good. It was a curious irony that something I was eating for health purposes was, in fact, harmful to my health. This was the 'bran' problem. An explanation of all this is contained in two letters that I wrote to the Health Department in Victoria, and one letter they wrote to me. Any doubt that I might have had that I was being poisoned by Fenitrothion sprayed on grain by the Grain Elevators' Board, vanished when, all of a sudden, I realized that I had not thought about suicide for weeks; and when the emphysema that had been diagnosed in 1986 was subsequently shown by X ray to be no longer present in my lungs. Emphysema does not go away; clearly the enlarged lungs had some cause other than smoking or whatever. Because I went overseas in April, 1988, for six months, I let the matter drop. Please refer to the appendices for the contents of the letters.



John and Shirley Birch were married at Thoon Grove in 1986.

The Long Stay Away

The decision to visit Jennifer in Damascus in 1988 developed into something rather more than that. Peter and I had agreed that we would go overseas together (it would be his first time), and there was much planning to be done. He left the State Bank early in 1988, his last position being that of manager of the High Street, Preston Branch. For one thing, we wanted to visit the USA. Liz had said that she did not want to go there, which is just as well, really, for we could not have afforded that, which fact she, of course, recognised. Jen's and our friend, Merry Wickes, was a First Secretary at the Australian Mission to the United Nations in New York, and she had agreed to allow Peter and me to stay with her for 10 days in Manhattan. We left on 10 April. I was not to arrive home again until 10 October.

Liz was home by herself (John and Shirley were nearby, of course) until June, arriving in Damascus in the middle of the month. I had arrived there on the 6th.

Peter and I spent a short time in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas and New Orleans, and the last 10 days of our stay in the USA in Merry's apartment at 120 East 54th Street, Manhattan. The apartment, on the 22nd floor, was very comfortable, costing the Australian Government US\$4,000 a month. During our stay there, we learned from Liz on the telephone that Jess had died. Since 1950 or thereabouts, hers had been a sad and miserable existence. That misery impinged on others, too, particularly Dad, Mother and Bryan.

New York is, no doubt, in many ways, a rotten place. Just the same, I found it very interesting indeed. Through Merry's influence, we were able to attend the Anzac Day Commemoration Service at the British Empire Building, Fifth Avenue. The host was Chris Hurford, Consul-General of Australia. We had to put up with a fair amount of religious ceremony, but it was a great occasion (for people like us), even so.

Easily the most memorable of our experiences, though, and Peter thought so, too, was a trip in a large ferry around Manhattan Island. The fellow describing things as we travelled was superb, and one did not wish to miss one word, even though a cold wind was something of a distraction.

After the Anzac Day Service, we made our way down to near the northern end of Central Park to see an Aussie Rules football match; Mike Fitzpatrick, formerly captain of Carlton, was one of the players and, no doubt, one of the organisers. I had a chat with him and with Jack Hamilton, a former Collingwood player and VFL official, who was a visitor to New York, too. (He was to die in a motor accident back in Victoria a few short years later.) Peter took some photos.

Peter and I shared a room in all the places that we stayed at, and the fact that I was managing to snore a lot was disturbing his sleep, testing his patience considerably. We bought ear plugs for him in New Orleans, but they were not much help.

From the John Kennedy Airport, we flew to Munich, where we spent a few days. Then to London where we stayed with Peter Willis and Eleneth Woolley, an Australian married couple, friends of Jennifer, for the time being living and working in London. Peter is a lawyer and Eleneth was working as a Chartered Financial Accountant. They have been back in Australia for several years now and live in Eaglemont, Victoria. Liz and I, knowing they were back and living in Eaglemont, were travelling in a train towards that railway station one day. I said to Liz, 'This is the station where Peter will catch the train to go to his office in the city.' There he was on the platform. And he got into our carriage. Peter, my brother, and I travelled by train around the UK for a few days, after which he flew home to Australia.

Before I left Australia, I had arranged and paid for, through the Intourist organisation of the USSR, a visit to Moscow, Kharkov and Leningrad. During our stay in Munich, I had arranged, with no little difficulty, to travel by train from Frankfurt to Moscow via Hanover. (The air fare was far too expensive.)

On 23 May, 1988, I flew from London to Frankfurt where, in the evening, I caught a train to Hanover. German trains were very clean and comfortable. I waited several hours on a railway platform at Hanover, the Soviet Paris to Moscow train arriving at about two in the morning. The journey to Moscow through Berlin, Warsaw and Brest Litovsk, took about 36 hours. Eleneth had advised me to take some food with me, so I had bought some nuts and dried fruit. The conductor gave me a cup of tea. I had a sleeping compartment to myself. I went for two days without a meal.

At Brest, on the Polish-Soviet border, the undercarriage of the trains have to be modified because of the different gauges. This took some time. An official found something to concern him about my documents, and went about searching my compartment, including in the ceiling. If you looked at my passport photograph and the visa photograph you might well have thought they were of two different people. Perhaps that was what concerned him. I spoke to a young Intourist official who came along to meet me, and showed him Jennifer's card as First Secretary in Damascus. His English was good, and I think that he spoke to the official. The intention of interrogating me was dropped, and a rather sheepish looking official gave me back my documents.

At the Moscow railway station, I had to search for an Intourist official who, in no time, had me in a car and on my way down Gorky Street, at first, to the Hotel Belgrad where I was to spend three nights. (I had arrived a day early.) The car, by the way, had seat belts fitted, but when I went to fit them on the driver said 'No, no, no,' so I decided not to argue. (Perhaps he said '*Nyet, nyet nyet*'.)

It was, for me, a very exciting thing to be in Moscow. For years and years it had been my intention to visit there if possible. It would have been great to have Liz with me. A city of about 9 million people, its most imposing feature was, I thought, the Metro underground, costing virtually nothing to travel on. Some of the rail stations were real showpieces, and there was almost no litter on the tracks that I saw. The main thoroughfares, in the main, were wide, pedestrians moving underground at intersections.

In New York and London there were beggars everywhere, and one felt menaced in Manhattan, but these conditions did not seem to apply in Moscow. I saw no obvious signs of poverty, but there was a certain lack of colour, to a large extent due, perhaps, to an absence of advertising and the rather drab apparel most seemed to wear. I saw no graffiti. Sirens did not shriek all day as they did, especially, in San Francisco. There seemed to be fewer attractive women about than in the West. Tighter budgets might well have made it difficult for women to dress attractively. (In any

case, the ethos of a socialist society would be different from a capitalist society.)

In general, there seemed to be no attempt to brighten up the shop windows; indeed, they usually contained very little, that scarcity being indicative of the situation in the shop itself. (But I don't mean to imply that the people were short of food.) I went into a florist shop in the suburbs and it really was a pitiable sight, having hardly any stock at all. And I found it to be true, indeed, that queues were everywhere to be found.

Every tourist, I suppose, goes to see Red Square, St Basil's, the Kremlin, Lenin's Tomb, etc, and it was all (from the outside of course) very impressive. The Bolshoi was not operating at the time, but I saw it from the outside.

The Hotel Belgrad was, I should think, a three or four star in our terms. It was so noticeable at reception that office technology was a long way behind that which we saw, for example, at the Hilton in Las Vegas. Lots of hand-written documents. (The USSR was recognised as a world leader in high-tech, however.) The food was fairly good, although toast was not available at breakfasts. Perhaps the authorities had decided that toasters would not be manufactured. The dining room was huge, virtually all the staff being well set-up, rather surly males.

There was not much opportunity to converse with the people, although English was fairly widely spoken. The education system, from the little I learned, was an impressive one, and perhaps Harold Laski, English Political Scientist, knew what he was talking about years ago when he said this: 'Nothing in modern times even approximates to the scale or the rapidity of the Soviet advance in the field of education.' A lady told me that the problem of men drinking too much vodka was a huge one.

Kharkov is an industrial city about an hour's flight east of Moscow. The USA President, Ronald Reagan, and his wife, arrived in the USSR that weekend. I viewed his arrival on television at the Intourist Hotel where I stayed. I rang Liz, the call costing, for about five minutes, 77 dollars (seven roubles a minute). That evening, in the dining room, a huge party was going on. I was at quite a large table, all alone. A chap with a lady came in, patting me on the shoulder as he walked by. Sometime later, on his way out again, he grabbed me and kissed me on both cheeks. I was flattered, I suppose, but puzzled. I had noticed a tiny red flag on my table. He must have thought I was a Pole. Perhaps he was one, too.

It took about two hours to fly to Leningrad, west of Moscow, again in a Tupalov R134 aircraft. My baggage travelled with the pilot. When the aircraft landed at Leningrad and stopped, a tall lady official entered the passenger section and indicated to me that I should approach her. Everyone else remained seated. She put me and my baggage in a huge bus, no one else, and over we went to the terminal buildings, from where I was despatched without delay, by taxi, to the Hotel Leningrad. This seemed to me, and surely it was, a curious procedure. To explain it, I thought that a young man who had acted as a guide on my tour of Kharkov had asked that I be looked after. He had high hopes for the Soviets under Gorbachev. He told me that his family with an income of 750 roubles a month paid 25 a month for their apartment, this including all services. (At the time, an Australian dollar was worth 0.46 roubles, 46 kopeks, that is.)

From my hotel room I looked down on the warship *Aurora* on the Neva River. It was there as a monument, having fired the first shot, it was said, of the 1917 Revolution. And if the reader perhaps thinks that the revolution was not justified, then perhaps the words of the Australian, Alan Moorehead, may serve to modify his or her opinion:

The ruling group owned all the wealth, enjoyed all the privileges and monopolised all the political power, and it did not intend to give up any of its prerogatives. It considered the peasants (some 95% of the population) to be little better than animals who could not be trusted with the slightest responsibility.

I spent three nights in Leningrad, and had what may be described as a seating problem each night. The first night, I found the concert hall at the hotel. There were very few people about, but there was obviously to be entertainment of some sort. No one was selling tickets. I went in. I sat down. A lady came in making it plain that I had taken her seat. I moved along a couple, but more came in and I had to move again. I moved down about three rows, but again I had to move. I then left, but not before being giggled at.

There were no ushers at the Moscow Circus the next night, but after a while a gentleman showed me to my seat. At the Kirov Theatre, the next night, a lady who, with her daughter, was there to see quite marvellous ballet, found my seat for me. We communicated mainly through a gentleman who acted as a translator. The lady, from Siberia, was interested to meet an Australian, and said she would like to write. We exchanged addresses and when I arrived home in October, 1988, there was a letter waiting. I was interested in having a pen-friend from Novosibirsk, and we corresponded for a couple of years. As is plain from what I have said (above) we were never alone together. It does seem possible from some of the contents of one of the letters that she wrote to me, that Faina regarded me as rather more than simply a pen-friend.

Leningrad (it has been renamed St Petersburg) is a beautiful city, with not a skyscraper, not even what may be described as a tall building, to be seen. Probably the Winter Palace, in which is contained the Hermitage, would be regarded as the focal point of the city. The Hermitage art collection is world famous.

The next morning, 2 June, 1988, a taxi took me to the Leningrad airport from where I was to fly back to Moscow to catch a train back to Germany that evening. The driver of the taxi thought Ronald Reagan 'A good man. Gorbachev talks a lot, but gets nothing done.' I had about eight hours to fill in before boarding the train, and much of this time I walked about Moscow, much of the time not really knowing where I was, however.

At the railway station, I entered my sleeping compartment just before the arrival of a young woman with, I supposed, her father. She was to share my compartment (lower bunk) and was going to Paris. Her father seemed to be a little uneasy about the arrangement, although one has to think that such co-mingling is normal enough on Russian (and other European?) train services.

Just then a woman came running along the platform waving a piece of notepaper which she gave me. I think it was from the Intourist chap at the railway station. It said, 'I'm afraid that you will have to pay for the extra night at the Hotel Belgrad: 117 dollars US.' I paid the money without demur.

As I mentioned earlier, I arrived in Moscow a day early, but when I spoke about payment for the extra night the clerk indicated that I would pay later. I was at Reception several times, but no mention was made of the tariff. I thought, perhaps they have decided to waive the matter; in any case I'll let them take the initiative. I had to watch my spending, of course. Morally I was in the wrong, there is no doubt about that.

I had paid for a sleeping compartment both ways because, as with when I shared a room with Peter, my snoring would be an irritation to people. I strongly suspect that I disturbed the young woman's sleep (by snoring), so the next day I spent most of the time in the carriage corridor looking out the window. An American, Dennis Duke, helped me finish off the remains of a bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label whisky. He had been with Reagan's mission and, with his mother and aunt, was travelling to London to catch the QE2—for the fifth time. He did not approve of my failure to volunteer the money for my extra night. His conversation showed him to be heavily prejudiced against the Soviet system. Aneurin Bevan had this to say in *In Place of Fear* about such prejudice:

The opponents of Marxism are usually so deeply prejudiced that they are shut off from reality by a wall of their own making. Their unscholarly bias renders them as unfit guides to political conduct as the Marxist dogmatists. A sympathetic understanding of what Marxists are trying to say to the world is a prerequisite to learning where the Marxist practitioners are likely to go wrong.

The train to Frankfurt, West Germany (there is a Frankfurt in what was then known as East Germany, too), left Hanover at about 6.15 am on 4 June, 1988. An Airbus A310 took me from Frankfurt to Damascus. It was evening and Jennifer met me at the airport. I learned from her that Liz would not join us until the following weekend.

There was a permanent armed guard (Kalashnikovs) at the front entrance to the apartment building Jennifer lived in. A Syrian politician lived there. Hers was a large apartment, occupying the entire top floor. There was a mosque close by equipped with loud speakers high up on the turret. One was to endure loud wailings several times a day. Sometimes, I must admit, the sounds were not so unpleasing to the ears.

Damascus is a pretty grubby city, but by no means uninteresting. One noted that men and women usually moved about in separate groups, it being unusual, say, for two men and two women to walk along a footpath together. It was not unusual, to see (usually) youngish men holding hands as they walked along. It is a mainly Muslim society, of course, so women have an inferior position in the social strata.

Syria is widely regarded as something of a police state, and perhaps it is. It had, and perhaps still has, its problems with Muslim fundamentalists. President Assad took some very strong action against them, including, I was led to believe, the shelling of the town of Hama, as a result of which thousands perished. I went to the famous Ommayyad mosque with a Syrian lady. I admired the hundreds of small carpets spread over the huge floor area. She agreed that they were attractive, but said that the ones they replaced were even nicer. But they were used to wrap up and to take away the bodies of 300 men who had been massacred as they prayed. Still, we did not feel menaced as we moved about. I suspect that the streets of Manhattan are more dangerous than the streets of Damascus. Assad, when he first drew up the constitution did not mention religion. There was an outcry, so he included in it that the requirements of being a Muslim applied to the country's leader. Who knows, he may be an atheist.

We had the use of Jen's small car, and a driver on long trips when she did not come, too. We visited many places including Palmyra, across the Syrian desert, Aleppo, Hama, the Assad dam and other places. The ancient ruins that

we saw, including some constructed by the Crusaders, and some by the Arabs themselves, were a cause of some wonder to us. (The Crusaders, I suppose, were Christian fanatics, as every bit as cruel as the Muslim ones.)

A special trip we did was to Jordan, passing through the capital, Amman, and on to the ancient city of Petra. The *Sunday Age* of 12 July, 1992 published a short piece of mine on Petra. I shall include it as an appendix.

Another special trip for me, Liz was not allowed to go on this one, was to the Golan Heights, which feature I was shown over by a young Australian army captain who was serving with the UN.

Liz and I flew out of Damascus twice before our final flight out. We had more than a week in Cyprus, and later visited Hungary and Austria. Perhaps we preferred Budapest to Vienna, but they are both charming cities. Innsbruck, with mountains on all sides, is just about breathtaking.

Jennifer was First Secretary (political) at the Australian Embassy. She had two ambassadors while she was there, but the Syrian Government would not accept the diplomat appointed by the Australian Government to replace the one serving when we arrived. The diplomat had served in Israel. Jennifer was appointed Charge d'Affaires, which appointment she carried out for 18 months until she left Syria in June, 1990. The British had no embassy there at the time so, in addition to doing the Ambassador's job, she looked after British interests. She continued, also, to visit Beirut regularly, an armed guard accompanying her in Lebanon. I would include here the text of the highly laudatory message she received from her Department on her departure from Damascus, but she would be angry with me.

And so ended, on 10 October, 1988, our longest, and for me at least, most interesting overseas trip. It was lovely to see everyone again, and Australia really is such a great country. (There is room for improvement of course.) Each month, too, I would again be able to meet with a dozen or so of my comrades from 3 Squadron Signals, the Second World War unit that I was with in the early forties. These meetings are in addition to our yearly reunion.

The Soviet Union Dissolves

Within a year or so of our return to Australia, events of great moment began to occur overseas. I mean the breakup of the Soviet Union. I have no hesitation in saying that this failure of socialism was a great disappoint to me, even though I was well aware that the system was possessed of many deficiencies. Bertrand Russell, (like Einstein) believed in socialism. He visited the Soviet Union in 1920 and talked with Lenin, and came away disappointed with what he had seen. Perhaps he put his finger on at least part of the problem when, in *Communism and Capitalism*, he wrote this:

The whole theory of Communism is that you give an enormous amount of power to people who are adherents to a certain creed, and you hope that they will exercise that enormous power benevolently. Whereas it seems to me that everybody—with few exceptions—misuses power, and therefore the important thing is to spread power as evenly as you can, and not give immense power to some small clique.

There was, of course, no chance at all that Western capitalism would do other than what it did do right from the beginning of the Revolution: oppose communism everywhere in every way possible, including armed intervention by 14(?) European nations after the Revolution, and a blockade.

When people came out in the streets in so many places, it seemed to me that the movement must have leadership. Straight away, I believed that the most bitter opponents of 'Godless Communism', the Catholic Church, were heavily involved. Even in the modern world, the influence of the Pope is enormous. It must have been most demeaning for Gorbachev to have to visit him on two occasions. Gorbachev later commented in his newspaper column: 'All that has happened in East Europe over the last few years would not have been possible without the presence of the Pope.' Personally, I'd much prefer communism to Catholicism.

Things might have turned out very differently if the experiment had not been opposed so bitterly, but of course there was no chance that would happen. (Capitalist nations like Germany and Japan were given huge assistance; they, too, would become bulwarks against communism.) In the final analysis, the Soviet Union, it seems, could not compete with the economic prowess of its opponents, to mention just one thing. Karl Marx (and Engels) knew all about the capacities of capitalism, as an extract from *Communist Manifesto* (1848) suggests:

The bourgeoisie [as Marx described capitalists of the time] during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together.

For someone that believes in socialism, it is not at all encouraging to consider the future. Even in Australia, where the Australian Labor Party used to be a Democratic Socialist Party, the situation has changed, so that the Labor politicians

now prefer to be referred to as Social Democrats. Certainly they never, as far as I am aware, use the term 'socialist' about themselves, publicly, and they seem to embrace capitalism very readily, being, though, much preferable to the conservatives from my point of view. As for, say, the United States and the United Kingdom, it may well be that their economic systems have had much to do with their decline as societies in the world of nations. That the kind of economic system in operation does indeed have a huge effect on societies, has been widely recognised. This extract from G H Sabine is an example of that recognition:

The importance of Marx's interpretation of history can hardly be exaggerated. It brought to light the enormous weight of economic forces such as technology, transportation, the supply of raw materials, the distribution of wealth, finance, and the formation of social classes, in past and present politics, in law, and in the formation of moral and social ideals. Whether he exaggerated the importance of economic factors is of little moment, for their importance is certainly great.

(Are we not, most of us, well aware that North Korea, a communist society, is very different in its composition from, say, the Philippines?)

For me it is depressing to think that capitalism may well continue to determine the future of our world. Almost without doubt, China, by the middle of the 21st Century, will be an economic colossus in this world. But will it be a communist or a capitalist power? Perhaps it will combine the best of both systems. I do agree that our own country, in world terms, is a place that we may be proud of. I have little doubt, however, that had not the Left shared some of the power over the years, it would not be anything like as egalitarian a country as it is. Nor would the aged and the underprivileged and the sick receive the attention that they do receive; and so on. Germane to those remarks, and having in mind a comparison of our society with the society of the USA, I include the last paragraph of a letter of mine that the *Bulletin* published in 1988:

Perhaps, too, US society may well be more compassionate, better educated, receive better health care and be less crime-ridden and poverty-stricken were the holders of political power not almost always from the ranks of those representing wealth and privilege.

Robyn and Pat married, quite without any fuss, after our return home from Syria. Our fourth grandchild, Josiah Rawson Miller, was born in Williamstown on 31 August, 1989. It goes without saying that I was much flattered by his being so named. On 27 January, 1993, Mollie Elizabeth Miller was born at the Royal Women's Hospital, in Carlton. Those two dear children could hardly have had chosen for them two more loving, intelligent and able parents than Robyn and Pat. Pat recently earned his Master of Arts degree and is now Senior Historian with the Heritage Council of Victoria. A talented musician, he also arranges music and plays saxophone and clarinet in various jazz bands.

Liz and I, three years in a row, 1990, 1991 and 1992, travelled by car to NSW and Queensland. In 1990, we visited the Darling Downs, meeting with relatives of Liz, many of whom had not seen her for something like 50 years. In 1993, we were overseas again for a couple of months, spending a week in Hawaii, and the rest of the time in Tonga. We flew to Honolulu on the 2nd of November, and had the experience of being able to celebrate our 47th wedding anniversary in both Melbourne and Honolulu, on two successive days, that is.

After I had a three year tussle with the Veterans' Affairs Department, I was, in 1994, granted a small pension and free treatment for my duodenal ulcer. These days, Veterans' Affairs are very hard to beat, and there is little doubt that I would not have won the argument (I lost my argument about a spinal problem) had I been less determined (read: stubborn) and less capable of stating my case in writing.

Tonga

Liz and I visited Tonga because Jennifer was appointed Australian High Commissioner (read: Ambassador) to Tonga, taking up her appointment in March, 1993. It is difficult to imagine a person (unless that person is Richard) more devoted to her or his responsibilities than Jennifer. Tonga is a very odd place. For a start, it is a kingdom and far from being a democracy. From what I have read, I am persuaded that corruption is endemic. The place has churches galore. A number of denominations go about propagating their myths, the Methodists having, numerically, the strongest, unhealthy, grip on the people. (It was Marx, of course, who said that 'Religion is the opiate of the people'.) The Catholic Church is very influential, too. I have forgotten who it was that wrote: 'Everywhere that Catholics are in the majority, negative social developments make themselves felt.'

One has to regard it as highly probable, that the backwardness of Tonga may well be more than a little attributed to the heavy religious influence that it suffers. It is hard to believe that, though I understand the relevant law is soon to be repealed, in Tonga on Sunday, the people are not permitted to engage in sporting activities, nor are aeroplanes allowed to fly in or out. No doubt other activities are affected by the law as well. Perhaps it says something about the

hygiene standards in Tonga, that I was unable to buy a fly swat in any of the several shops that I visited in Nuku'alofa; the shop assistants did not even seem to know what they were. Robyn, Pat, Josiah and Mollie visited Jen, also, while we were there, the large swimming pool at the residence being an amenity that we all enjoyed.

In 1992, I submitted a short story to the *Age* competition with, predictably, no success. I mention it, though, so that I can describe a rather odd experience that I had in relation to it. In the story, the main character, on a walk along a river bank, found himself confronted by a waiting younger man, an ex-soldier, who seeing that the older man was carrying a short stick, and wearing an army (utility) hat, deduced that he was an ex-army officer. I quote from the story some of the thoughts of the ex-soldier: 'And that silly bloody stick he's carrying. what's he think it is, a swagger stick?'

A few days after I wrote those words, I was walking along Grimshaw Street, Greensborough, when I saw that a man along the footpath to my front had stopped and was obviously waiting for me. He was an ex-soldier. I knew him years before. He said, 'Is that a swagger stick you are carrying?' It was, as I said, an odd experience.

It is the winter of 1995 as I go about putting together the final passages of this narrative. My dear Elizabeth and I are now old. Our shared existence, in our rather odd, but dear to us, small house in Greensborough, is one of comfort, if not of luxury. We are, I believe, closer to each other than we have ever been. She is quite marvellous in the way she manages the household, showing me much kindness, part of which is the excellence of the fare that she provides for us both.

We both read a good deal. We play Scrabble several times a week. She looks at more TV than I do, but she chooses programmes with care. She sleeps badly and listens to the radio and reads during her sleepless hours. Neither of us has smoked for many years. We enjoy drinking, but we don't often overdo it.

Both of us have health problems, but we are fairly mobile; even so, I walk more than she does, including when doing my job of delivering 'Neighbourhood Watch' documents. Sometimes we go to the football together. I almost always see Carlton play, even if only on TV. We are very fond of the cinema, and would attend many more live entertainment shows than we do were more funds available. We 'play the pokies' from time to time. These are precious days in many ways.

I have recently finished the task of painting the garage and the outside of the house. I am not, for nothing, known by some as a stubborn old bugger.

John and Shirley, next door, are very kind to us, and it is a great comfort for us that they are near. Adam has been with his mother in Yamba, NSW, since Christmas, 1994. Peter and Irene are nearby, too, and we get on very well together. On occasions we have stayed with them at their site in a caravan park at Shallow Inlet near Wilson's Promontory. Peter has a boat and the fishing is most enjoyable. We now have our own caravan and annexe on site at Shallow Inlet.

Liz often stays for a day or two with Robyn and Pat and the two children, Jos and Mollie, deriving much pleasure from being with them. During the week, Richard lives in a flat in Brunswick, and we see him every now and then. Their home is still in Bairnsdale, but they expect to move to Melbourne once Fiona has completed her VCE year.

Early in 1995, Jennifer was advised to apply for the position of Head of the Foreign Affairs Branch of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. She was successful. She returned from Tonga and took up her new position on 21 August, 1995. She was promoted and is now in the Senior Executive Service.

On 30 September, 1995, Carlton won their 16th premiership. Both John and I attended the match. We met Liz and Shirley at the club headquarters later in the evening. There was much merriment.

In recent times, I have managed to learn more about my ancestors than I had known since childhood. On Mother's side, there was a fair bit of information at hand. Her mother was a Cairnes, one of the 15 children of William Bellingham Cairnes, a citizen of some significance. He was an Englishman who had migrated from Drogheda, Ireland, where his family was of some influence. Her father, Josiah Pitman, a saddler in Yarrowonga, was a son of a Congregational Minister, A J Pitman, who left Plymouth, England, in 1834 to settle in Australia. Dad's father, Richard Rawson, was one of 11 children fathered by George Rawson, who came to Australia from England with his wife and one child in March 1862. It was very interesting to learn that my great-great-great-great-grandfather was named John Rawson. He married Jane Jefferson in Yorkshire, England, on 11 October, 1792. It seems there were no convicts in the family after all. In a way that was a bit of a disappointment. Much of the information about our family of Rawsons was provided by Leonie Hamilton, who lived, at the time, at least, in Golden Square, Victoria. 'Our' Rawsons, she told me one day, were noted for having big noses.

I hope that it is not the case, for I do so admire him, that the reader will be fed up with my calling so often upon the wisdom of Lord Russell to, I believe, enhance the contents, and, now, to grace the conclusion of, this narrative. Please bear with me just once more. This time I quote from his famous, *A Free Man's Worship*, written in 1902 when he was 30. Is it any wonder that he won the Nobel Prize for literature?

That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual beyond the grave; that all the labour of all the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so near certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.

Appendix 1 A Brush with Security

They were tall, well-built men, and neatly dressed, and their size seemed to be at odds with the size of the Morris 1100 car in which they arrived. They spoke briefly with one of the battalion guards; then they eased themselves into the car and it moved along the road in the direction of Battalion Headquarters. This was 1967.

There was little doubt in my mind about their identity—people in their calling do have a certain air about them. The telephone rang minutes later, and the caller, as I felt it would be, was the Battalion Intelligence Officer: ‘Oh, John, have you finished that personal particulars form yet?’

It is not easy to say when all this had its beginning—certainly a supporter of the Australian Labor Party is pretty much alone in his ideology in the Australian Army. And it’s not just a case of conservatism among the officers either: not too many other ranks are Labor supporters. But perhaps this particular episode could be said to have begun upon the arrival at the Barracks of a certain member of the Royal Australian Army Chaplains’ Department. On occasions we talked. We talked by no means only about politics—in fact, we spoke only little on that topic. Censorship, pornography, and religion were part of our conversations and it must be said there was some heat to these at times. (At this time strenuous efforts were being made by some to keep such publications as *Pix* out of the hands of New Guinean soldiers—because this practice seemed pointless to me and I had said so, a member of the Chaplains’ Department (not the same one) told one of my colleagues that Captain Rawson was ‘not fit to be in New Guinea.’) And he was appalled, no doubt, that an atheist should be allowed to belong to the battalion. On one occasion, also, the Commanding Officer removed and screwed up a calendar with a naked woman on it from my office wall, giving it to me when I indicated it was my property.

He was by no means the first one I had met over the years who could not stomach radical opinions—but he was, as far as I am aware, the first and only individual to report me for my ‘subversive’ opinions. Know? No, I do not *know* that he did. There was enough evidence as far as I was concerned, though, to confirm this opinion. Especially when I rang the Intelligence Officer back and that Chaplain answered the telephone. Then I felt I knew quite well what was happening at Battalion Headquarters: the two men from the Special Branch were with the Commanding Officer; the Intelligence Officer had gone from his office to tell the visitors that Captain Rawson had not yet completed the Personal Particulars form; and the Chaplain was waiting to be called to give his ‘evidence’.

I had wondered a few weeks before why I was being returned (early) to Australia to a posting in Adelaide. The senior officer from my Corps in New Guinea had just returned from a visit to Canberra when he told me this. He was a fine officer and an honest person and I sensed his embarrassment at the lack of prior information or explanation given to me. He agreed to do what he could to change the decision so we could remain in New Guinea for a further period. When, soon after that, the Intelligence Officer asked me to complete a Personal Particulars form, again I wondered. What for? ‘Oh, it’s just routine’, said the Intelligence Officer. But it is not routine to be asked to fill in another one of these forms unless one’s circumstances change, for example, by marrying. I began to realise what was happening.

A Personal Particulars form is a document forming the basis for a check by the Attorney General’s Department into the background of the individual. It is the basis for a security check, the check normally done by ASIO. Details one must provide include such things as the ages and birthplace of parents and siblings, the places in which one has lived, the countries one has visited; and so on. I had not completed the form by that time because the necessary information about family birthplaces and other details had not been forwarded to me by my father. (I did, however, complete it quite soon after the visit of the men.) It is worth mentioning at this point, that in later months when, as an adjutant of a unit, and at the direction of my Commanding Officer, I made an application to be cleared to ‘Top Secret’, this was refused and the ‘Intermediate’ grading that I had been given in 1962 was still dated 1962, not, it should be noted, 1967. What happened to the ‘routine’ form? Obviously it was not ‘routine’ at all—it was initiated because someone (in my opinion the Chaplain) had complained that I held subversive opinions.

There was no chance at all that even the most thorough investigation would reveal any association by me with any subversive organisations or individuals—unless you regard the publishers of the *New Statesman* and Bertrand Russell as fitting that description. (And I must say that some I have known would so regard them.)

I had jotted down the number of the car. Later that day my wife drove me in to Konedobu. We found the car where I had expected to find it—outside Police Headquarters, in which building were also the offices of the Special Branch. My wife and I still laugh about that episode. She called herself ‘Natasha’ that day.

There was no doubt in the minds of my wife and me by now: we knew beyond doubt that the views I held on many

topics, views which agreed with those of many men in the then Federal Opposition were deemed so likely to be subversive that, on the complaint of a cleric, I should be moved out of New Guinea.

After their interview with the Commanding Officer, the men went to the Headquarters of the Company to which I was attached. No doubt they were seeking the opinions of the Company Commander. We got on quite well together. Our favourite topic was football, however, not politics. I have a sneaking suspicion that he may even have voted Labor. In any event, although he probably did consider me something of a radical, I feel sure that he would not have considered my outlook subversive.

A few days later, the Commanding Officer called at our house. It was late afternoon. My wife and I were both at home. We liked and respected him and he was most welcome to a book from the few we had. He had not done that before, though. And there he was, kneeling down in front of the bookcase carefully reading every title. When he left, 'Natasha' said, 'You know what that was all about don't you?' Indeed, I did know. Bertrand Russell was the only controversial writer in the shelves, so I supposed that helped my case. (In fact there was a copy of the *Communist Manifesto* in the house somewhere. I shudder to think!) He knew many of my opinions; we had had discussions from time to time during social occasions. I think he thought I was pretty harmless, really, even if a bit misguided.

The adjutant of the unit was interested in books, too. As he passed my office one day he paused at the door to say a word or two. It happened that I was at that moment opening a small parcel, a book I had had sent from Australia. He was most interested. He walked across the door to my table and looked carefully at the book. Bertrand Russell again! I often wonder just how many knew what was going on. Things like that do get around.

The crisis passed. No one told me, of course, that I had been cleared, (if, indeed, I had been) but I learned that I was to stay in New Guinea for a further period, and that seemed to be some sort of proof that my innocence had been established. In March, 1968, we moved to a new camp near Lae.

But was it really the finish? Not really. The officer who wrote my confidential report in 1968 thought it necessary to write, 'there is no question of his loyalty' among his comments about me. I wondered if he knew that I knew what he meant. Why would he write that unless my loyalty was in question and unless he had been given the background? That document is part of my dossier in the Military Secretary's Office, Department of Defence (Army Office), Canberra. (The first time I ever brought the matter up officially was with the visiting Military Secretary at Watsonia Barracks in June 1973—I thought it about time it be known that I knew.)

His successor, I am positive, had been briefed about me, too. I remember being amused in the Mess one day when a conversation began about a union strike that was occurring in Australia. On such occasions I almost invariably said nothing—in any case politics was supposed to be a subject not talked about in messes. The officer had eyes that might be unkindly described as shifty. He was not facing me but, no doubt to observe my reaction to what was being said, his eyes kept darting around to his left. It was quite a priceless performance. I had become accustomed over the years to remaining 'poker faced' in most circumstances, and so I remained on this occasion.

We left New Guinea in 1969. One day in July, 1969, my unit received a signal from an officer in Australia inquiring about married quarters as he was to replace me as adjutant of the unit. This was news to my Commanding Officer and to me. I realised later that the Area Commander had arranged this, probably because of a difference of opinion we had had over his charging and fining black soldiers for not wearing a tie when going on leave to Lae in civilian clothes at night. (Headquarters at Port Moresby put a stop to this later.) My posting was to be as QM (Captain) of a Melbourne unit. (This was changed later without any reason being given.)

Now the Government has changed. (It is 1973) Now, on every hand, in Officers' Messes one hears the most vituperative, unfair, inaccurate and mindless criticism of that Government, its Ministers and its policies. It is almost always assumed that there is no dissent from anyone within earshot. Bring out the Personal Particulars forms!

Melbourne 1973

Appendix 2 A Letter to the Australian

11 November, 1975

Sir—It is probably too much to hope that the proposal to introduce the subject of religion into the Victorian school system will be rejected: the influence of the Church is pervasive indeed, especially in its influence upon conservative governments.

Should the authorities succumb to the great pressures that the Churches will undoubtedly apply, it will be interesting to see the form that the instruction will take.

Will the subject of religion be carefully examined as any school subject ought to be? Will the existence of a god be assumed, or will the powerful arguments against his existence be put to the children?

Will the Christian version of creation be revealed as the fairy tale that it is? For example, will any of the teachers be willing to admit that the existence of fossils alone, long ago made nonsense of the Christian Church's theory of the creation?

Will the teachers speak of the great poverty, ignorance and cruelty associated with religious teachings over the centuries? Will the children learn that, generally speaking, the established Church has always associated itself with the rich and the powerful in their oppression of the poor and the weak?

And what of hell? Will it be seriously maintained that there is such a place? Or will the Church practice of terrifying people with this concept be not included in the curriculum?

Presumably the teachers will give instruction on the several great religions. Will they explain that only one of them can be true; and that, indeed, it may well be that none of them is true?

How much better it would be if children were taught to face life without the aid of myths! Then, hopefully, greater numbers of our citizens would grow up unwilling to accept lies and deceit and hypocrisy. If that should happen, then the possibilities for good are, I should maintain, beyond calculation.

J Rawson

Glen Waverley

Appendix 3 The Official Complaint (or Redress of Wrongs)

Text of my letter to the Commander of 3 Cadet Brigade dated 19 November 1973

1. I, 31254, Major J.J. Rawson, RAAEC, believe that I have been grievously wronged, and I seek urgent redress of that wrong in accordance with the provisions of AMR 194.
2. My complaint is based on the unjust manner in which I have been treated since taking up the appointment of DAA and QMG, HQ 3 Cadet Bde, on Mon, 1 Oct 73.
3. My specific complaints are these:
 - a. The Commander of 3 Cadet Bde, who admitted on the fourth day after I had taken up my appointment that he was prejudiced against me and had tried very hard to have my appointment cancelled, and whose hostile attitude towards me from the first day reflected that prejudice, took the opportunity when I was interstate on duty for nine days (leaving on 23 Oct 73) to change the authorised structure of the Brigade establishment. I found on reporting back for duty on Fri, 2 Nov 73, that I had been moved out of the office of DAA and QMG (where the GSO3, now to be known as Adjutant, was installed) and indeed, completely out of Brigade Headquarters; I was now to occupy what was formerly the Brigade Sergeant Major's office.
 - b. From being the Senior Staff Officer on Brigade Headquarters, I was relegated to the (non-existent) position of Administrative Officer (Q) in the Melbourne Area Cadet Group (a grouping of two Cadet Battalions), and was to be responsible to the Commander of that Group.
 - c. All this despite the fact that the very day before I left to visit Adelaide, that is, on Mon, 22 Oct 73, I had, with the Commander's concurrence and indeed, at his direction, begun the preparation of a diagram of the Brigade organisation, a diagram which he had authorised and which showed my appointment as SO2 (Pers and Log). He had begun to use this title in reference to me. During my absence, the diagram was produced but the drastic changes in relation to my status, the changes already mentioned, had been made to it.
4. These actions, I believe, executed in an underhand way, have had the inevitable effect of harming my military reputation, of seriously reducing my status and, too, of inducing contempt, disdain or pity into the attitudes of those, of all ranks, with whom I am serving or with whom I am likely to serve in the future.
5. My own situation aside, I believe that there is an issue of considerable importance involved here and it is this: when Army Headquarters sees fit to post an officer to a specific appointment on an authorised establishment, it seems to be quite wrong that a junior commander in a lower formation is free to ignore that posting and, without reference to higher authority, without making formal application for a change of establishment, alter the structure of the approved establishment, in the process (as in this case) relegating an officer to a position of inferior status. I believe that the present situation at 3 Cadet Bde illustrates the dangers inherent in allowing an individual such scope: "Justice is [not] the will of the stronger".
6. I have been deliberately brief - but that does not mean that I have nothing more to say. I ask that this complaint be dealt with promptly.

Text of my follow-up letter to the Headquarters of Training Command dated 6 January 1974

References: A. A written complaint by Maj J.J. Rawson dated 19 Nov 73.

B. AMR 77 (4) (a) and (b).

1. In paragraph five of Reference A, I expressed a strong concern that commanding officers should be permitted to arrogate to themselves the right to ignore decisions made by the Military Board; specifically, decisions which result in the appointment of officers to positions on the establishments of units. What had happened to me, I believed, was an injustice unworthy of the Australian Military code, or, for that matter, any code based on the concept of justice as understood in a democratic society.
2. I have considerable confidence in and respect for the Australian Military code, believing it to be a just code. My feelings of confidence and respect have been completely justified by the existence of Reference B: the Australian Parliament felt so strongly that such freedom of action must not be given to commanding officers that it passed a law aimed at preventing them from abusing their authority in the manner that I have described in my written complaint.
3. The provisions of that Law are:

"Where the Military Board posts an officer to an appointment on the establishment of a unit, the commanding officer shall not, without the approval of the formation commander -

- (a) direct the officer to perform the duties of another appointment on the establishment of the unit; or
- (b) direct another officer to perform the duties of that appointment.”

4. One must believe that the existence of the Regulation would be known to at least one officer among those concerned with the processing of the complaint. Yet the situation is allowed to continue. A law of the land, a law aimed at the protection of the individual has been broken, and nothing concrete has been done to correct the situation. From any point of view, this failure quickly to redress the effects of a blatant contravention of an Australian Military Regulation must surely increase the gravity of the injustice that I have suffered.

5. Leaving aside the legal considerations involved in a law being thus infringed, I wish to make it known that I would not regard the wrongs I have suffered as being anything like fully redressed unless the following were to occur:

a. That Headquarters Training Command issue a letter of severe reproof to the Commander of 3 Cadet Brigade, an information copy being forwarded to Maj J.J. Rawson.

b. The letter to state that recent unauthorised changes to the 3 Cadet Brigade organisation involving the appointment of SO2 Personnel and Logistics are a clear contravention of AMR 77 (4) (a) and (b), and that a complete reinstatement of 31254, Maj J.J. Rawson to that appointment is to be made, the reinstatement to be effected during the second week of Feb 74.

c. Additionally, the letter should direct the following action:

(1) Maj Rawson is to reoccupy the office of the SO2 Personnel and Logistics. (The office he occupied as DAA and QMG).

(2) Headquarters 3 Cadet Brigade is to distribute on its Lists C and D, advice that certain changes made in Nov 73 to the staffing of Headquarters 3 Cadet Brigade are now seen to be inappropriate, and that Maj J.J. Rawson is to reassume the appointment of DAA and QMG (in future to be known as SO2 Personnel and Logistics).

(3) All charts/diagrams of the organisation of 3 Cadet Brigade that do not accord with the foregoing are to be amended accordingly.

(4) The Commander of 3 Cadet Brigade is to notify Headquarters Training Command in writing (copy to Maj J.J. Rawson) when all the foregoing instructions have been complied with.

6. There is, too, the question of my continuing in the appointment of SO2 Personnel and Logistics, Headquarters, 3 Cadet Brigade. (The Commander said that he would seek my reposting once I had submitted the complaint). Some time during the early months of 1974, but not earlier than two weeks after being fully reinstated, I would like a posting to an appointment at least equal in status to this one, and one which is acceptable to me in regard to my family situation.

Text of a letter signed by the General Officer Commanding Training Command, Major General W.G. Henderson, to the Commander of 3 Cadet Brigade dated 14 February 1974

References: A. HQ 3 Cadet Bde letter 42-R-106 of 27 Nov 73

B. Maj Rawson's letter to HQ Trg Comd 6 Jan 74 (not to 3 Cadet Bde)

1. Following receipt of Reference A. you were advised by GOC Trg Comd to inform Maj Rawson that GOC would interview him as early as practical in 1974.

2. D Cadets had already interviewed Maj Rawson and had advised him generally the situation within 3 Cadet Bde.

3. Subsequently Reference B. was received within this headquarters. This was an impertinent letter which in effect directed GOC Trg Comd on Maj Rawson's requirements for the redress of the alleged wrong.

4. Maj Rawson was interviewed by GOC Trg Comd on 12 Feb 74 at which time it was ascertained that the officer considered he had been wronged on two counts:

a. The attitude of Comd 3 Cadet Bde towards him on taking up his appointment and

b. His appointment to a position within the Establishment other than that of DAA&QMG.

5. With regard to the first of these complaints, Maj Rawson advised that the attitude within the Headquarters towards him changed after he submitted his first redress and since that time the attitude to him had been friendly and helpful. In view of this I advised Maj Rawson that it seemed that despite the early attitude that he had been accepted, and that Comd 3 Cadet Bde had advised me that his work had been satisfactory in his current appointment. In view of this I consider the original wrong had in fact been redressed.

6. With regard to the second complaint, GOC Trg Comd advised the officer that every effort was being made within units of the Australian Cadet Corps to improve the organisation, and in particular to improve the Army's image in relation to cadet activities in the eyes of the public. He was further informed of the experimental organisation within 3 Cadet Bde whereby the metropolitan units, ie 20 Cadet Bn and 22 Cadet Bn would be grouped as Melbourne Area Group for increased effectiveness. Consequently this led to the removal of the appointment of DAA&QMG from the Headquarters and the creation of a new position, Admin Officer (Major) under Melbourne Area Group. The officer was further informed by GOC Trg Comd that he viewed the new position as being a more responsible one than the original position, consequently he did not believe that the officer had lost any status as suggested.

7. With regard to Reference B., when questioned why it had been sent in view of the previous assurances given to him, he stated that he had discussed the information concerning the provisions of the AMR with his daughter who suggested to him the "he should tell somebody about it."

8. In addition, Maj Rawson has been advised that the new trial organisation was brought into existence with the knowledge and approval of GOC Trg Comd and in fact when the result of the Miller Committee concerning cadets is known, a recommendation will be made to the Dept of Defence (Army) for the implementation of the new organisation.

9. Comd 3 Cadet Bde is to advise Maj Rawson of the decision of GOC Trg Comd in this regard and is to give a copy of this letter to Maj Rawson for his retention.

10. If the officer does not accept the decision of GOC Trg Comd he is to be advised of his rights in accordance with the provisions of AMR 194.

Text of my letter to the Australian Military Board dated 28 February 1974

References: A. A written complaint by Maj J.J. Rawson dated 19 Nov 73.

B. A letter from Maj J.J. Rawson to HQ Trg Comd dated 6 Jan 74.

C. HQ Trg Comd letter to Comd, 3 Cadet Bde, dated 14 Feb 74.

D. A letter from Maj J.J. Rawson to Comd, 3 Cadet Bde, dated 20 Feb 74.

E. AMR 77 (4) (a) and (b).

1. On Tue, 12 Feb 74, approximately eleven weeks after my written complaint (Reference A) was forwarded by the Comd 3 Cadet Bde to HQ Trg Comd, I was interviewed by the General Officer Commanding Trg Comd in relation to that issue.

2. On Mon, 17 Feb 74, the Comd 3 Cadet Bde received 2 copies of a letter from the GOC (Reference C), a letter which informed him of the decisions arrived at by the GOC. I considered it odd that the letter was not addressed to me, but I must accept that I was wrong in expecting that that would be the appropriate procedure.

3. It is my intention in this submission, not only to reply to the GOC's letter to the Comd (which really does seem an odd situation to find oneself in - I mean, having to reply to a letter that was written to another officer), but to present evidence which will, I contend, point to serious defects in the way that the Australian Army's Military Code is sometimes interpreted.

4. On 31 Dec 73, approximately three weeks after my complaint had reached HQ Trg Comd, I was informed by the Comd that the GOC had rung him with instructions to advise me that it was too late at that stage to do anything about the complaint; the GOC would be visiting Melbourne in late Jan or early Feb and he would see us both then.

5. I have always understood that official complaints, especially those of such a serious nature as this one, should be dealt with all due speed. Obviously this was not to be so in this case. The Comd was leaving the unit to begin leave that day and the GOC was to begin leave on 4 Jan 74, so I supposed that that was a least part of the reason for the delay.

6. Now I turn to the contents of the GOC's letter. Paragraph two stated that "D Cadets had already interviewed Maj Rawson and had advised him generally the situation within 3 Cadet Bde". The only occasion on which I have had any kind of interview with the Director was on 4 Feb 74. He spoke to me very briefly. It was obvious to me that his main purpose was to impress upon me how very angry the GOC was on receiving Reference B. As he had done before during a telephone conversation on 12 Dec 73, he spoke of my relegation as being a not unusual happening; so I must infer that the contravention of Reference E is commonplace. I spoke to him on the telephone on 3 Jan 74, 16 Jan 74 and 30 Jan 74, but not once did he even hint that the GOC or he himself had given even oral approval to remove me from my appointment and relegate me to the non-existent (on the approved establishment) position of Admin Offr Q.

7. It was not my intention to write an "impertinent" letter. At the time of writing I was administering command of 3 Cadet Bde so of course the letter was addressed to HQ Trg Comd and not to HQ 3 Cadet Bde.

8. At the beginning of my interview with the GOC, I did my very best to explain my reasons for writing the letter, this issue being obviously uppermost in the GOC's mind. (That he was most angry was apparent (perhaps to all present) when we met in the Sergeants' Mess earlier in the morning. I said: "Maj Rawson, sir. He said: Yes I know. I'll see you later".). Through being persistent, and on several occasions finding it necessary to request that I be allowed to continue, I gave the following explanation:

a. Shortly before Christmas, 1973, I found Reference E.

b. I thought: "If what has been done to me is forbidden by a Regulation, then a formal complaint from me should not have been necessary".

c. I was puzzled as to what I should do. I reasoned that the Comd could not have been aware of the Regulation otherwise surely he would not have infringed it. From what he had said to me, I had to assume that the Director did not know of it either.

d. I discussed the matter with my elder daughter. She is an Arts graduate and is about to begin her final year Law. She considered that it would be improper for me not to advise higher authority that I knew of the Law - I would be as though I were intending to "hold an ace up my sleeve", as she expressed it. I believed her opinion to be sound.

e. I expressed regret that the remainder of my letter had been construed as "an impertinent letter which in effect directed the GOC Trg Comd on Maj Rawson's requirements for the redress of the alleged wrong". The simple fact was that it seemed reasonable and sensible to me that I should state clearly in writing those things that I considered should be done to redress the wrongs I had suffered. This, I reasoned, would assist the GOC in his consideration of the matter.

9. So there was rather more to my explanation than is suggested by paragraph seven of the GOC's letter, which states that my daughter suggested that "he should tell somebody about it". It is quite true that the attitude towards me of the Comd, has, in recent times, been good. But what is one to make of that change? Is it not odd indeed that the change in attitude took place immediately after he had read the details of my complaint? Did he suddenly decide that he must eschew all prejudice against me for reasons unconnected with the complaint I had lodged? Did he suddenly come to believe that he should treat me in accordance with Australian Military Order 301 which states that "officers of all ranks will adopt towards subordinates such methods of command and treatment as will not only ensure respect for authority, but also foster the feelings of self-respect and personal honour essential for military efficiency?" Had he read in the Notes to Army Act Section 40 which, in discussing the offence of conduct to the prejudice of good order and Military discipline, state that "... Military discipline requires a certain standard of honour and reasonable care on the part of officers in their dealings with all persons, and if such standard is not observed it will not only lower the status of the service generally but, by diminishing the prestige and authority of those concerned, prejudicially affect their power of administering discipline"? (The emphasis is mine. Having read the notes to Section 40 of the Army Act very carefully, I believe that, even if there were no such Regulation as AMR 77, it is strongly arguable that an offence had been committed).

10. I believe that when he read the complaints he saw straight away that he would be shown to have acted dishonourably, unfairly and precipitately, and that he had better try to retrieve the situation at least to the extent of behaving in a civilised manner towards me. But the damage had been done. The prejudice and the strong dislike had done their work, and only a full reinstatement and a continuation of the decent treatment would provide any kind of solution to the problem.

11. But in a minute to me dated 24 Nov 73, the Comd wrote, "I am not in a position to redress your complaints". Not in a position? If he thought he had erred, and his manner has indicated that he did indeed think so, who was in a better position than he to effect the redress? Surely to admit an error is not to undermine the system of military authority.

12. At a later date, on Thu, 7 Feb 74, five days before the visit of the GOC, events occurred that gave the Comd a chance to reinstate me. It was learned that the Capt who had taken over the "A" aspects of my proper duties (the AMR forbids this being done, too, of course) was due to be posted in about a week. The Comd told me, in the company of two other officers, that he had decided that I should take up the "A" duties (presumably I would continue with the "Q" duties, too) from the departing officer, and that I should move back into my old office that day. He stated that he would ring the Director to obtain approval for the move.

13. A little over half an hour later he came to my office. He said he had received a direction from HQ Trg Comd that in no circumstances was Maj Rawson to be given "A" duties to do. He was obviously surprised and puzzled, and expressed the opinion that the direction might have resulted from the GOC's being very angry about the second letter I had written. He implied that the GOC's attitude towards the complaint was in my favour before he had received that letter. He also said that it was a pity that he was not allowed to do it as that would have solved the problem.

14. So here was a situation where the Comd, having made a decision which was tantamount to an admission that he had acted wrongly in removing me from my proper appointment, being overridden by the next authority to whom my complaint had been referred, even before that authority had interviewed me to hear what I had to say.

15. Why? It could hardly be the quality of my work, for although in his letter, in paragraph five, the word "satisfactory" is used, the GOC in my interview with him said that the Comd had told him that my work was "good". It seems obvious to me that Reference B was one reason. It seems obvious that the questions of whether I wrote an impertinent letter and whether I had been wronged were not, as surely they should have been, considered separately, but that the former created a bias that was quite

apparent in his attitude towards me, and was perhaps reflected in his decision.

16. Again, I have not been shown the covering letter the Comd wrote in forwarding my complaint to higher authority, so I have had no chance to refute any criticisms he might have made. When I spoke of this to the GOC he said that there was very little in the letter.

17. In paragraph four b, mention is made of my “appointment to a position within the establishment other than that of DAA&QMG”. Unit Routine Order No 54, dated 2 Nov 73, appointed me to the position of Admin Offr (Q), Melbourne Area Cadet Group. But AHQ MS25944 dated 2 Aug 73, appointed me as DAA&QMG (497Y) HQ 3 Cadet Bde vice Maj J. Welch. And HQ 1 Div 73/GH/125 (Pers MS), dated 7 Aug 73, stated in paragraph four that “Maj Rawson is to assume duty Sep 73 and it is expected that he will remain in his new appointment for a period of not less than one year”. The fact is that I was removed out of it in a shameful manner in less than five weeks. How is it that the former authority could override the latter, especially when there is a law which all senior officers, anyway, should be presumed to be aware of that forbids such an action?

18. The GOC adverts to the establishment of HQ 3 Cadet Bde. The establishment quite obviously still included a DAA&QMG according to the records of AHQ (MS) on 2 Aug 73 and HQ 1 Div on 7 Aug 73, otherwise how could I have been posted to the appointment? And a search of the relevant files at HQ 3 Cadet Bde reveals no evidence whatsoever that any action has ever been taken under the provisions of MBI 82-1, or any other authority, to delete the position of DAA&QMG. On the other hand, the establishment does not, other than by arrangements outside the laid down procedures of MBI 82-1, have an appointment of Admin Offr Q, so how can it be “within the establishment?” In any case I have had several titles since I was relegated” Admin Offr (Q), SO (Q), “Q” Officer and SO2 Log.

19. I have already written at some length about the attitude of the Comd towards myself. The point that is ignored in paragraph five of the GOCs letter is this: certainly the “attitude” had changed, but how much damage was done before it changed? Again I bring notice to the notes from Section 40 of the Army Act that I have already quoted in paragraph nine.

20. On 4 Oct 73, three days after I had taken up my appointment, the Comd admitted to me that he was prejudiced against me before even meeting me; admitted that he had attempted to have my appointment to HQ 3 Cadet Bde cancelled; agreed that RAAEC officers were widely held in contempt; repeated to my face a crude and uncomplimentary—and untrue—remark made about me by some person (I know who it was) he had met; said that he wanted a young officer to work with him: it seems some officers are “career” officers and others are not; removed me from my proper appointment and office whilst I was absent on duty. But I could go on and on. Is this sort of thing commonly done?

21. I have already commented on most of what is said in paragraph six of the GOCs letter. As the officer who has occupied both positions it is certainly not my opinion that my present position is the more important one. And as for loss of status - it is interesting to hear the opinions of other officers and civilians who know of what has happened. What of those who do not know the facts? What do they think?

22. Paragraph eight states that “Maj Rawson has been advised that the new trial organisation was brought into existence with the knowledge and approval of GOC Trg Comd”. It should be noted that no mention is made of the Comd seeking and gaining approval to remove me from the appointment of DAA&QMG as Reference E stated must be done. It was not done in writing. Was it done over the telephone? If it was, how odd that neither the Comd nor the Director at any time ever mentioned the fact? (I have, by the way, a fairly complete record of all of importance that has happened). And even if approval had been given to remove me, should it have been done in this way? I wonder how many majors of two years’ seniority, and having a satisfactory record, would have received that sort of treatment.

23. I regret the necessity for all this. I am not a vindictive person. I do sincerely believe in the democratic process and the right of the individual to just treatment. It seems to me that the safeguards as they exist in the various repositories of the military code of justice have been wisely and fairly drafted. The basis of my complaint is that the principles of this code have in this case been disregarded.

Addendum

1. In Reference A. I expressed the opinion that the treatment I had received must have the inevitable effect of harming my military reputation.

2. I reproduce without comment the Military Board’s own definition (MBI 129-6) of that expression:

“Military Reputation’ may be expressed as an officer’s or soldier’s character, credit, respectability, good name or standing as a member of the Profession of Arms.”

Text of a letter signed by the Military Secretary, Colonel J.A. Hooper, to the Headquarters of Training Command dated 31 July 1974

Reference: A. HQ Trg Comd 73/GR/202 of 28 Feb 74

B. Army Office (MS) 11415 of 27 May 74

C. Army Office 72/R/68 of 15 Jun 74

1. The redress of wrongs submitted by Maj Rawson has been upheld on both counts and his reposting has been approved vide Reference C.

2. The above decision has been conveyed to Maj Rawson during an interview with the Chief of Personnel in 3MD on 12 Jun 74. The Comd 3 Cdt Bde and Col (Trg Doctrine) HQ Trg Comd were present during the interview.

3. Please have the officer advised of the decision.

Appendix 4 Three Short Stories

The Matinee

It was winter, but the sky was blue and the air was warm and vibrant with the hum of bees, and the song of a magpie radiated gaily from the paling fence which enclosed the house on three sides. Caught in the sun's rays, tiny drops of moisture, strung like beads, coruscated along the bottom of the roof's spouting. As he dug, the warmth of the sun pressed upon his bare back so that his flesh glistened under a thin film of perspiration. He sang softly.

At each thrust of the spade he neatly gathered a small section of earth from where it had lain firmly packed since spring; as he straightened a twist of his arms turned the spade and the block of soil fell inverted into its new position, crumbling as it did so. The smell of the soil rising to his nostrils mingled pleasurably with the sweetness of the flowers which grew prolifically on all sides.

Too late, Tom saw the frog. Too late, to stay the downward plunge. Too late, the tiny creature leapt. Caught by the soil encrusted blade, the body lay mutilated, the beautifully proportioned rear legs torn from the trunk. He swore once, vehemently, and turned away, sickened. Grasping the spade halfway along its handle he drove it spear-like into the earth. Fishing in the pockets of his trousers he found the butt of a cigarette which, incredibly small though it was, he lit deftly. He squatted on one heel.

Though not tall he was a big and powerful man. Entirely free of hair, his torso was yet almost gorilla-like in its muscularity and cast. Massive thighs, accentuated by his crouched position, seemed ready to burst the cheap linen trousers which, apart from heavy boots, were all he wore. His face was almost beardless, but wholly masculine were the strong mouth, the jutting chin, the fine nose. Blue, the lightest blue, were his eyes, and his hair light coloured and fine glinted dully and golden in the golden light of the sun.

On the far side of the house two children, one of his sons and a pal, played, the joy of their play communicating to him. He smiled faintly. Peter was a big, strong kid; even at 12 there was no doubt he would closely resemble his father—physically, at least. But he was clever, too—there was the difference, the father thought ruefully. Bill, four years younger than Peter, looked and behaved like his mother: fine boned and slim, considerate and gentle were mother and younger son. Tom grinned as he thought of the pandemonium at the matinee: of yelling kids, of ear-shattering gunfire, of fights and hair-pulling and tears and laughter. And he thought tenderly of Bill, who was always complaining of this but who always, as today, went again.

The sun had dipped behind the house and Tom was cold now. He wriggled into a tattered black jumper and lit another cigarette. He heard the truck then. The road beside the house was unsealed, and he could imagine the swirl of red dust raised in the wake of the whirling wheels. It was travelling fast—too fast. He shifted position uneasily.

“My God, Peter,” he thought. “Don't, don't be on that road!”

Suddenly he knew. He knew with such certainty that he was on his feet and running even before the blast of horn and screech of brakes ripped the air in hideous cacophony.

It was not far to run: “No! No! God, No!” His huge shoulder crashed against a house corner and his left collarbone snapped brutally, but he was down only for an instant.

Peter and his friend stood there; there on the footpath beside the road, a pall of red dust settling lazily about them. A great surge of relief flooded through his body, and he took his boy in his arms, and he said hoarsely, “Son, son, son!”

Peter did not move. Petrified, his face ghastly, he stared towards the ponderous truck which stood at rest obliquely across the road.

Slowly, Tom dropped his arms; slowly he turned. Beside the pole against which it had been flung, a boy's bicycle lay twisted and broken. Beginning in his belly, great stabbing shafts of anguish pierced him and he screamed once—terribly.

He stumbled blindly towards the house, his useless arm hanging by his side. Cradled tenderly against his splendid

chest lay the broken body of a little boy.

Melbourne
August 1960

Wednesday is Tomorrow

‘You all right, mate?’

Oh yes, I’m just fine! I’m hanging on to this stinking rail to persuade clowns like you that I’m the best toilet gymnast in town!

But he did not say it. He said: ‘Yes, thanks, old chap, I’ll be okay—a bit of a turn, that’s all.’

The little man adjusted his trousers: ‘You sure? You look awful crook to me.’

‘Yes, sure, thanks—thanks very much.’

The pungent odour of beery urine caught at his nostril; he pushed backwards and to the side so that he leaned against the wall. The cold marble tiles against his back felt good—sterile and prophylactic despite their surroundings. The band of agony across his chest had subsided, but he trembled uncontrollably.

This was the second time; the first time they had been dancing together. He remembered the way she had felt in his arms, the luxurious softness of her body pressed warmly against him. God, it had hurt! But this was worse—much worse.

The swing door that opened into the bar crashed against the wall again. He knew the man slightly; tall, well dressed—suave as hell. He braced his knees, pretending to have just finished. ‘A good day for a few,’ he said.

‘My friend, every day is a good day for a few.’ This unsteadily, with the palms of both hands pressed on the tiles above the stainless steel. ‘You on your own?’

‘No, with a couple of friends.’

‘Some other time, then?’

‘Yes, surely, thanks.’

The man took out a packet of cigarettes. ‘Smoke?’, he asked.

‘No thanks,’ Dennis said, ‘It’s years since I smoked.’

Dennis moved towards the door. He felt much better now. He walked back into the saloon where his friends waited.

‘We thought you must have gone home,’ Alan said.

‘No, I will go now, though. I don’t feel so good—had a bad time for a minute or two—there was another time, remember?’ No point in going into detail, he thought.

Their faces showed genuine concern—they liked this man who was their boss.

‘Be in tomorrow?’

‘Oh, yes, as much as I hate Wednesday’s flurry. See you then, Alan. Goodnight, Jim.’

‘Goodnight, Dennis,’ they said.

They watched his tall, impressive figure as he went. He was that sort of man—few people, men or women, ignored Dennis. They looked at each other but said nothing. Alan thought: If anything happened to him, who’s next?—My god!—you rat!—you rat!—you lousy rat!

He usually walked to his car: for a man still under 35 he got precious little exercise. The tram was crowded. He hated crowds. Rather, he didn’t hate crowds—he hated being crowded. He hated the smell of sweat, too—not fresh sweat, but stinking days’ old sweat. The blonde who was virtually sitting on his right hip didn’t stink of sweat though—she smelled clean, heady; she disturbed him a little—but just a little. Her nearness was disconcerting, but if she thought she was making him sweat she was wrong—damned wrong. Jean was for him.

Sometimes, he thought, he loved this car as much as he loved Jean. I hope your innards are in better condition than mine, he grinned ruefully to himself. The motor caught first time. He liked that. Come on, girl, let’s go.

The little girl’s legs twinkled across the lawn, and he caught her and dumped her over his shoulder. She beat tiny hands against his back; with his free hand he smacked her gently on the buttocks. The shape of her little bottom felt perfect; he thought of those who could see no beauty in the human body and he wondered why. For some reason he felt reassured.

‘Daddy, come and push me on the swing?’

‘No, darling, not now.’ A twinge of guilt sped through him. Must I say that so often? He put her down. He strode into the house somehow knowing exactly where Jean would be. She came him and he kissed her very hard. She responded so that his head swam deliciously.

‘You know something,’ he smiled, ‘for two people married for five whole years that kiss was far from cold.’

Her eagerness and smile waned: ‘Darling, is it just sex with us? Is it too important with us?’

He held her at arms’ length, his eyes troubled: ‘Jean, you have said this before. Sex is important, though of course it’s not everything. Do you really believe that you could love me in the way that women and men love if sex were absent or weak?’

‘No, I don’t. Kiss me again.’

At dinner he told her what had happened. He thought he should. He could not but feel that she might have been a little more upset.

‘Perhaps I should see a doctor?’

‘Yes, perhaps it would be wise—yes, of course you must.’

Perhaps? Doesn’t she realise that this could be damned serious? Perhaps she is right—might her feelings for me be dictated only by sex after all? But Great Scott!—to think self-pity in other people makes me sick! Dennis laughed at himself.

‘Dr Williams, do you think?’

‘Yes, he’s a dear old man. Would you like me to go with you?’

‘No, honey, but you might ring him and make an appointment—say eight o’clock?’

...

‘Frankly, Mr Marshall, I’m not sure. From what you have told me I can’t help but suspect a coronary, and my examination tends—but only tends—to confirm that. But, as I say, I’m not sure.’

The old man leaned back, his paunch lifting slightly from its position over his waist band. He placed his stethoscope and sphygmomanometer in a drawer which he neglected to close. With a leaky ballpoint pen he filled in details on a card before he spoke again.

Dennis watched him, trying, almost unconsciously, but without success, to read what he wrote.

‘Mr Marshall, I think you should do this. I know a very good heart man in Collins Street. If you call there at 10 tomorrow morning I’ll arrange a cardiogram for you. What do you think?’

Dennis was troubled—badly troubled. He felt slight nausea and found it very difficult to free his mind of the black-garbed spectres which were his thoughts. As if to cleanse them from his mind, he looked intently at the fluorescent light suspended above the doctor’s head, but the precious face of his wife glowed there and tears were close.

‘Yes, of course, doctor. Thank you.’

He rose to leave, the smell of the surgery adding to his depression. Doctor Williams wrote hastily on a pad, placing the slip of paper in an envelope which he addressed with a flourish.

‘Goodnight, Mr Marshall. My regards to your wife.’

‘Thanks again, doctor. Goodnight.’

Though it was March the night air was sharp, and he felt better for its clean contact as he walked the short distance to his home. Perhaps she heard his footsteps, or perhaps she just knew: she opened the front door before he reached it. She kissed him lightly and they walked inside, her hand in his.

There were no tears. She said: ‘Darling I just know you’ll be all right. I love you terribly.’

They slept later than usual; he rose to ring his secretary at nine telling her not to expect him before eleven.

‘Any callers, Miss Wilson?’

‘Yes, Mr Marshall, all the details are on your desk.’

...

Three o’clock ... these damned specialists tell you less than the others! ... why the blazes does it take so long? Shall I ring Jean? ... no, no point in that ... or did I say I would? Funny, it’s not myself so much ... but Jean and Jenny ... Jean and Jenny ... Jean and Jenny.

‘Miss Wilson, answer this letter, please. Use your best syntax, but tell them politely to go straight to hell.’

‘Yes, this is Mr Marshall. Dr Slater? Fine ... fine ... put him on.’

‘Doctor, that’s great, just great! Yes, I was worried. Tomorrow at the same time? I’ve never heard that word before, but if it’s not serious it can wait till tomorrow. Yes, thanks ... yes, thanks ... thanks very much, doctor, ‘bye for now.’

...

‘Jean, darling, it’s all right ... it’s all right, darling ... of course I do ... God, how I do! Yes, Alan can have it from now ... thirty minutes at the most.’

It was close to midnight. Clapsed in each others arms they lay, moonlight streaming through the window upon their now still figures. She was asleep. The soft light fell across her face and bare shoulders. She was not a beautiful woman but at that moment she appeared very beautiful to him. In the next room Jenny stirred and sighed softly. A thrill ran through his body and he gathered his wife closer, pressing his lips gently against her forehead. A clock began to strike.

The Dog Walloper

It was a November day in suburban Melbourne. A Saturday. The sun shone in the cozy way that he liked best. There was little wind. There was much that was pleasant about the path that he was taking for his walk that day. The pathways, for cyclists and for walkers and joggers, were close to a river, some of the time running right beside it. The sound of agitated waters combined elegantly with the cries of the many birds that frequented the mainly native trees along the river banks. Grasses of many kinds grew luxuriantly on each side of the path. (There was talk of tiger snakes, so it was sensible to be watchful). As he walked, as was his habit, he slashed the tops off various weeds, especially those with a certain yellow-coloured flower. Swish, and down they went. He missed more often than he thought he should, and this irritated him, rather.

The stick that he carried, though he used it frequently to attack weeds, was really his means of protecting himself from dogs. Indeed, he called it his dog walloper. (The first attack was yet to occur). It was a slender, green stick, not even a metre long. It looked a bit like bamboo, having clearly defined segments. It was, very likely, a piece of cane.

Many years had passed since he had seen carried what was then (still?) known to some as a dog walloper but was, in fact, a pace-stick. These were carried (only?) by regimental-sergeant-majors. (He had never, himself, been an RSM when he was in the Army). The normal marching pace for male soldiers was thirty inches. The pace-stick could be set to measure that and other lengths of pace. For example, for women the normal marching pace was 27 inches, his memory told him.

RSM's were, and no doubt are, special kinds of men. And then some. They were relatively few in numbers; an infantry battalion, for example, had only one of them. He was the top other rank in the battalion. Sometimes he was humorously described as 'The king of the shit', this in contrast to an occasional title for lieutenants: 'Shit of the kings'. Their rank (RSM was not a rank) was Warrant Officer 1st Class, though all WO1's, were not, by any means, RSM's. Once you got there you had reached the top of the other ranks' promotion ladder. Some were commissioned, in more recent times going straight to captain instead of to lieutenant as used to be the case. These things he thought about as he walked.

He walked through the area where bellbirds had a colony. He marvelled at the almost exquisite agreeableness of the brief, high pitched, and delicate note that they struck. The river was no Mississippi; just a narrow and, just now, muddy stream that joined the River Yarra a few kilometres away. Recent heavy rains had raised its level so much that plastic packaging, now litter, was caught in branches high above the water. So high, that he thought, whimsically, smiling to himself, that water nymphs, bent on creating puzzlement among humans, must have been at teasing play with the waste. As for him, he liked facts, not myths, although they were all right in their place. There were too many myths around, myths regarded by some as truths, for his liking. And that was a fact. He thought of something from J S Mill that he had long ago committed to memory: 'In the opinion, not of bad men, but of the best men, no belief which is contrary to the truth can be really useful'.

Sometimes during his walks he went around the cinder track a few times. Today it was to be just once. It was good to feel the firm, even surface under his ageing feet. No hills to climb, no slopes even. Fairly often school children were there with their teachers and parents, a public address system working overtime as they went about their sports' day. His own children were long grown up. They were good citizens and he and his wife were glad that that was so. He remembered that, years and years ago, he used to say to his mates, 'You've never lived until you've been a father'. He still thought that to be a valid viewpoint. In these times, though, it was selfish, surely, to have lots of children. There were so many mouths to feed in the world. He preferred Beijing's directions on this matter to those issued from Rome.

The bridge was hump-backed. It was new. Crossing it meant that the river would be on his right, for the time being, at least. So far, and not for the first time, he had not met even one person along the way. It was something of a puzzle to him that so few people did use this long stretch of pathways. Perhaps, he thought, older people, anyway, were afraid of being attacked. Sometimes one did feel a little apprehension, certainly.

The sports field, facing the walker as he crossed the bridge, was in use that day. As well as having goal and behind post for Australian Rules football, it was fitted out with a cricket pitch. A cricket match was in progress. He watched for a short time. The players urged one another along with vigorous young voices.

He turned away from the game and set off walking again. After a couple of hundred metres or so, the sports field,

though close on his left, was lost to his view, being now, because of the path's downward slope, on a higher level than the path. There was a steep tree and bush covered bank up to it. The river was down an almost sheer bank on his right. Soon the grounds, tennis courts and buildings of a large school would appear on his left.

The man stood motionless right in the middle of the path some twenty metres in front of him. Facing him. Arms folded across his chest. Where did he come from? Was he behind a tree? He looked to be about forty—perhaps he was a bit younger. Much younger than the walker, that was for sure. And much stronger, too. He was both heavier and taller—that was easy to see.

Is it right this time, too, my sixth sense, or whatever it is called? It is telling me that there is danger here, perhaps terrible danger. Once before I had this feeling. It was right then. Yes, it's right again. I know it. This man means to rob me I suppose. But I have no money with me. How will he react, what will he do, when he realizes that? Hell, he may knock me about. Is he a madman? Perhaps he's that prisoner that got away from gaol a few days ago. What was he, a murderer, wasn't he? Jesus! If only someone would come along! Bloody lonely place! Richard or John could handle him. Belt the shit out of him. Maybe. Maybe not, though. He's a tough looking bastard. Perhaps he'll walk away when I show him that I have no money. Perhaps he's a pretty good bloke, basically, and just wants some money for a good feed. No, that's not what this is all about. I just know. What do I do? Show some guts. Keep walking. What's the alternative?

Had it been feasible for him, with some preservation of self-respect, to avoid the encounter, he would have done that. But retreating back along the path, or scrambling up the bank, even before he was absolutely sure that he was in danger, seemed cowardly things to do. Jumping into the river had little appeal, either. In any case, the fellow could have caught him easily given their relative mobility and agility, if he had wished to do so. In no time at all. Well before he was able to attract the attention of the cricketers, certainly.

Shit, what an old creep! That's a utility hat he's got on. He was probably in the army. A million years ago by the look of him. And that silly bloody stick he's carrying! What's he think it is, a swagger stick? He should have it jammed up his arse. Jesus, did I hate officers! Specially those bastards at the court martial. 'Bombardier Cherry, you have been found guilty...' or whatever it was the idiot officer said. The old bastard is shit frightened—I can tell from here. Come on, buddy boy, here's where I square things up a bit. If you know what's good for you, you will say no when I ask you whether you were ever an army officer.

'Let me pass, please.'

'Why should I? Why don't you hit me with your swagger bloody stick?'

'I call the stick my dog wallop. I carry it for protection.'

'Jesus, our RSM had a dog wallop. Not like that. Was he a ripper! Could be a real swine, though. Leave you bastards for dead.'

'Sure. Sure. But why are you stopping me?'

'You were in the army, sport, weren't you?'

'Yes, a long time ago. What's it to you?'

'Were you an officer?'

'Some of the time.'

'How come, some of the time?'

'Well, I got a commission later on.'

'Yeah. I was to go to OCS. But I got in the shit. Blew it.'

'Oh, bad luck.'

'As if you give a stuff.'

'I do, as matter of fact, I do.'

‘OK Pop, let’s cut out the crap. Hand over your wallet, your money.’

‘Look, I never carry money on these walks. You can see when I pat my pockets. There’s nothing in them. If I did have any money, believe me, I’d give it to you as quick as a flash.’

‘Yeah, just my bloody luck. Give me your watch.’

‘Hell, it’s worth hardly anything. Besides, it’s very, well, yes, precious to me.’

‘Bad luck, mate. Hand it over quick smart or arse over head you go, as they used to say.’

The blackest ferocity welled up inside him, flooding his being. But he kept control of himself, for the moment. The sensible thing to do would be to hand the watch over and hope to be allowed to move on, away from this crazy scene. Back to the safety of his simple house and to the one that he loved. But his rage was too much for him. He extended his left arm out towards his waylayer, at the same time turning a little to the right: positioning himself to strike. The stick was in his right hand. The erstwhile bombardier, an erstwhile inmate, too, of both a military and a civil prison, with both powerful hands began to remove the watch from its place on the older man’s wrist.

With the most awful snarl, his eyes ablaze with savagery, he slashed with his slender stick. It reached the fellow’s head, catching the left side, across the ear. The blow induced terrible pain in its target. But there was no good reason why it should have felled (as the walker had hoped it would) a man of his age and condition, and it didn’t.

‘You rotten old bastard, I’ll kill you’. His right hand moved down to a large pocket on the leg of his army issue trousers, but he changed his mind. Too much noise. Grabbing the stick with both hands, he easily wrenched it away from the grasp of the walker. Immediately, then, he retaliated with the stick. This time the blow did fell its target. The victim fell backwards to the path, struck his head, and lay supine there, partly stunned, his face screwed up in anguish and misery. Snot and saliva ran down his chin.

The top segment of the stick (it had six segments) had been shattered by the second blow, part of its length having broken away altogether, leaving just a pointed sliver of cane at the end. It had been converted to a lance, a short lance to be sure, and a frail one, too. But a deadly weapon it certainly became in the hands of this man.

Fiery red with pain, consumed by a hatred and fury verging on madness, the ex-artilleryman held the lance in both hands in a grip that was, indeed, rather like a cannon-loading grip. But it was not a shell he was putting into a breech. He went down on his left knee beside his stunned victim. Placing the point of the lance just below the sternum and directing it towards the heart, he then, in one quick movement, rammed the lance into the upper abdomen and into the heart. The walker died immediately. He withdrew the lance, tossing it into the river. For a man of his strength the next task was easy enough: he picked up the body, carried it to the river bank then dropped it. It fell the few metres down to the edge of the water where it lay partly submerged. Blood oozed from the wound into the water. He looked around. Not a soul to be seen. Serve the old bugger right. He moved away along the pathway, adjusting the position of the pistol that he carried in his large trouser pocket. He had stolen it 48 hours before. He called it his cannon.

At the cricket match, the police team was fielding at the time the killing occurred. (They were playing a local team: a social match). The few spectators were gathered near the club house, across the arena from the river. A police car with two senior-constables in it pulled up at the club house. One got out of the car. He looked about and saw that the policeman he wanted to speak to was fielding across the arena towards the river. He walked around the arena, talked to his colleague, and had begun to move back to the car when he heard a sound from the direction of the river. Walking to the edge of the field, where a high wire netting fence served to arrest escaping balls, he looked down a bank and through the bushes. He saw the body being dumped and the man that did the dumping move off. He suppressed an inclination to shout something. The fence prevented him from charging, as he felt like doing, down the bank. He sprinted along the fence, searching for a gap in it, pistol in hand.

Bloody hell, what is this? About to go off duty too. He looked like the bastard that got away the other day. I’ll know when I get a good look. Mate, try any tricks with me and you’ve had your chips.

The gap appeared. Taking a deep breath, thrusting fear aside, the senior-constable moved with admirable nimbleness down the bank to the pathway. There he was.

'OK pal, put your hands up. I know who you are. I saw you chuck that guy in the river. You're under arrest. Walk towards me. Keep your bloody hands up ...'

The escapee got the pistol out of his pocket just before the bullet slammed into him. He lay shot to death on the pathway. Two hearts were pierced that day on the banks of the Plenty River.

Melbourne
1992

Appendix 5 **Petra, The City of Ancient Monuments**

Our world has travel wonders in abundance, but few of them, perhaps, have a stronger claim to uniqueness than Petra, Jordan, has. Its out-of-the-way location means, one supposes, that many fewer tourists than its truly astonishing attractions would warrant visit there. (This tourist, with his wife and a Syrian guide, drove there from Damascus in 1988.)

Petra was the capital of the Nabataeans, a people long settled in Jordan; for centuries, indeed, before and after the birth of Christ. The visitor needs to be prepared to walk fairly long distances or, alternatively, to hire a guide and horse, to engage thoroughly in the sight-seeing. (Good accommodation is available nearby.)

Petra, it has been written, is a city of ancient monuments, monuments carved out of rocks in what is a mountainous area. How, you wonder, could people of those times, with the limited variety of tools that were available to them, how could they have created such beauty in the form of facades, of tombs, that appear before your eyes as you explore? And, oh, the colours!

It would, to many, at least, be worth making the trip to Petra even if only to see the Khazneh. A facade, some 30 metres wide and 43 metres high, its appearance first strikes the visitor when he or she walks through a crevice in a wall of rock about 100 metres from it. It is such a wondrous sight! It has been described as 'the most perfect two-storeyed facade which has been preserved in the East from antiquity until now'. Another of the facades, the stunning Ad-Deir, is even larger than the Khazneh, it being reached after a walk up hundreds of steps. (Bob Hawke, we were told, was taken up there by helicopter.) And there are all the other monuments to see.

Some say that a visit of three days is needed for one to explore Petra thoroughly. That may be so. A visit of just one day, however, we found to be a quite marvellous, touching on spiritual, experience.

Melbourne

July 1992

Appendix 6 The Poison Letters

Text of a Letter to Health Department of Victoria, 24 November, 1987

I learned recently that your Department has, since 1985, been carrying out research on bran. I understand that your officers have established that processed bran, in Australia, contains organic phosphate, which substance is 'acutely toxic when taken in high doses'. I gather that you are reluctant to provide a definition of what constitutes a 'high dose' of the toxin. It is quite safe, though, I have been told, to consume two (heaped?) tablespoons of unprocessed bran daily.

I am 65. Beginning about the middle of 1984, for a total period of about two and a half years, I have been eating daily three-quarters of a metric cup of ('Purina') unprocessed bran. That amounts to about six moderately heaped tablespoons. The purpose was to combat the chronic constipation that followed the onset of diverticulitis. The bran helped considerably. I should mention that I also have (revealed in an X-ray a year ago) enlarged lungs.

My health for several years now has been very poor indeed. I say in all sincerity that, feeling the way I much of the time have, I could not see myself living very long at all. I used to say to my wife on occasions that someone must be poisoning me although, in truth, I really did not think that was so. My wife reminds me that she said more than once that 'bran is poisonous for you'.

There have been so many symptoms but I shall not list them all now. They were not, of course, all present all the time. Fatigue, a severe reduction of intellectual and physical vigour, aches and pains everywhere (especially bone pains) a big increase in body weight, problems with my eyes, puffiness and flushing in the face and mental changes are some of the symptoms that now seem to me to be very likely the result of my ingestion of the poison in the bran. (Up to the time I began eating unprocessed bran in 1984 I had never weighed more than 75 kilograms in my life. In a few months I put on 10 kilograms. Because of supposed allergy problems I stopped eating it, and soon lost the increase in weight. Early this year I again began to eat it, again resulting in a big weight increase. Was it the bran, the milk, the honey or the poison that caused the increase? Or was it a combination of two or more of these substances?.)

On Sunday, 15th November, 1987, I ate unprocessed bran for the last time. Since then there has been a marked improvement in the way that I feel. There is almost a spring in my step. I am more alert. I am not without some aches and pains but nowhere so many as before. The improvement is not so marked as when I stopped eating bran (and other foods) two years ago, but then I am two years older and perhaps permanent damage has been done, too. It seems certain, events seem to have provided the proof, that my big health problem was not caused by food allergies but by a poison contained in unprocessed bran.

I should now like to return to the question of my enlarged lungs. I have not smoked for 25 years. I had smoked, not heavily, for no more than 18 years before that. Up to now there seems to be no explanation for the development of my lung condition. Please give me an answer to these questions: is it possible for that poison to cause damage to human lungs; should I see a toxicologist?

Finally, perhaps my experiences could contribute to the research activities on unprocessed bran that your Department is engaged in? If you think that they could, then I should be pleased to co-operate with your officers.

Text of Health Department Response, 4 January, 1988

I refer to your letter dated 24 November, 1987 concerning pesticides in whole grain products.

Whole grain is treated by the Grain Elevators Board with the pesticide Fenitrothion to protect it from insect infestation.

Fenitrothion is an organo phosphate insecticide that is rapidly destroyed in the body and at the levels present is virtually no hazard at all. Unlike the organo chlorine pesticides, DDT, Dieldrin and Aldrin that accommodate in the body fat.

A further property of Fenitrothion is that it is a liquid that boils at 145 deg C, which means that during the baking of bread or other cooked products, most of it boils away.

To conclude, raw bran has a small residue of a harmless pesticide in the levels found and cooked products are absolutely safe.

Your ill health is clearly due to some other problems and you should continue to consult with your Doctor over these matters.

Text of Response to Health Department Letter of 4 January, 1988

I have your reply to my re-submitted letter of 24 November, 1987. I use the term 'reply' with some hesitation, though, for it would be less than accurate thus to describe your letter of 4 January, 1988.

I find it astonishing, indeed, that an organisation like a State Health Department would reply so dismissively, so evasively, so discourteously, to a long, fairly detailed and clearly serious letter from one of the many whose health it has a responsibility to help safeguard. There are some of a sufficiently uncharitable nature, that would describe such a letter as a 'snow job'. That its intention was quickly to dispose of a serious threat (to whom?) is obvious.

The fact of the matter is (and my letter made this plain) that there is no doubt at all that discontinuing the heavy ingestion of unprocessed bran, on two occasions, mind you, resulted in a marked improvement in my health. (There are a number of people who know that to be so.) It is hardly surprising therefore, that I find the final paragraph of your letter to be almost breath-taking in its irresponsibility.

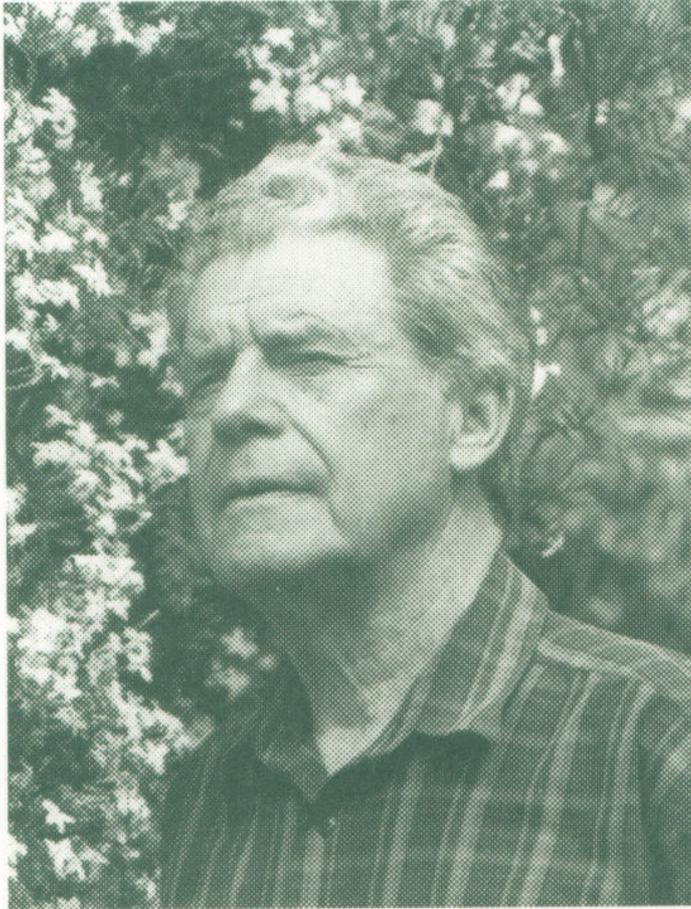
Let me write about just a couple of the many, previously unexplained, signs and symptoms associated with my being poisoned by Fenitrothion. The doctor I go to diagnosed 'depression' as one of my ailments. I was depressed, all right: feeling the way I felt, depression would be almost inevitable. A couple of weeks ago, something occurred to me: I had not thought about suicide for weeks. I am not, you see, depressed any more. A pain in the back of my head (it came and went) was at times severe enough to make me think that I must have mastoiditis. It has gone. I don't any more have a watery drip from my bowel. But I could go on.

There is much more that I have to say on this matter. For the time being, however, please provide me with prompt answers to the following questions:

- One of your officers, on 17 November, last, on the telephone, said that Fenitrothion is 'acutely toxic in high doses'. Is that so?
- Do I have your absolute assurance that it is quite safe for any individual to ingest daily over a long period of time three-quarters of a metric cup of 'Purina' unprocessed bran?

In conclusion, I ask that you refer my file to the Minister responsible for your Department.

PS: I have never ever boiled, baked or cooked unprocessed bran.



John Rawson, known to many as 'Jack' was born in Yarrowonga, Victoria, in 1922 and moved with his family to Derrinallum, Victoria, in 1927 where his father, Dick Rawson, was the postmaster for many years. John grew up in Derrinallum and in *Mount Elephant Once Had Trees* he describes his experiences. He left for Melbourne in 1938 after a shooting accident required him to have specialist medical treatment. During the Second World War he served in Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland, where on VJ Day, 15 August 1945, he met his wife to be. He remained in the army after the war with postings at Puckapunyal, Healesville, Portsea, Port Moresby, Lae and Melbourne, retiring with the rank of Major in the Royal Australian Army Education Corps in 1975.

John lives in Greensborough, Victoria, with his wife Liz.