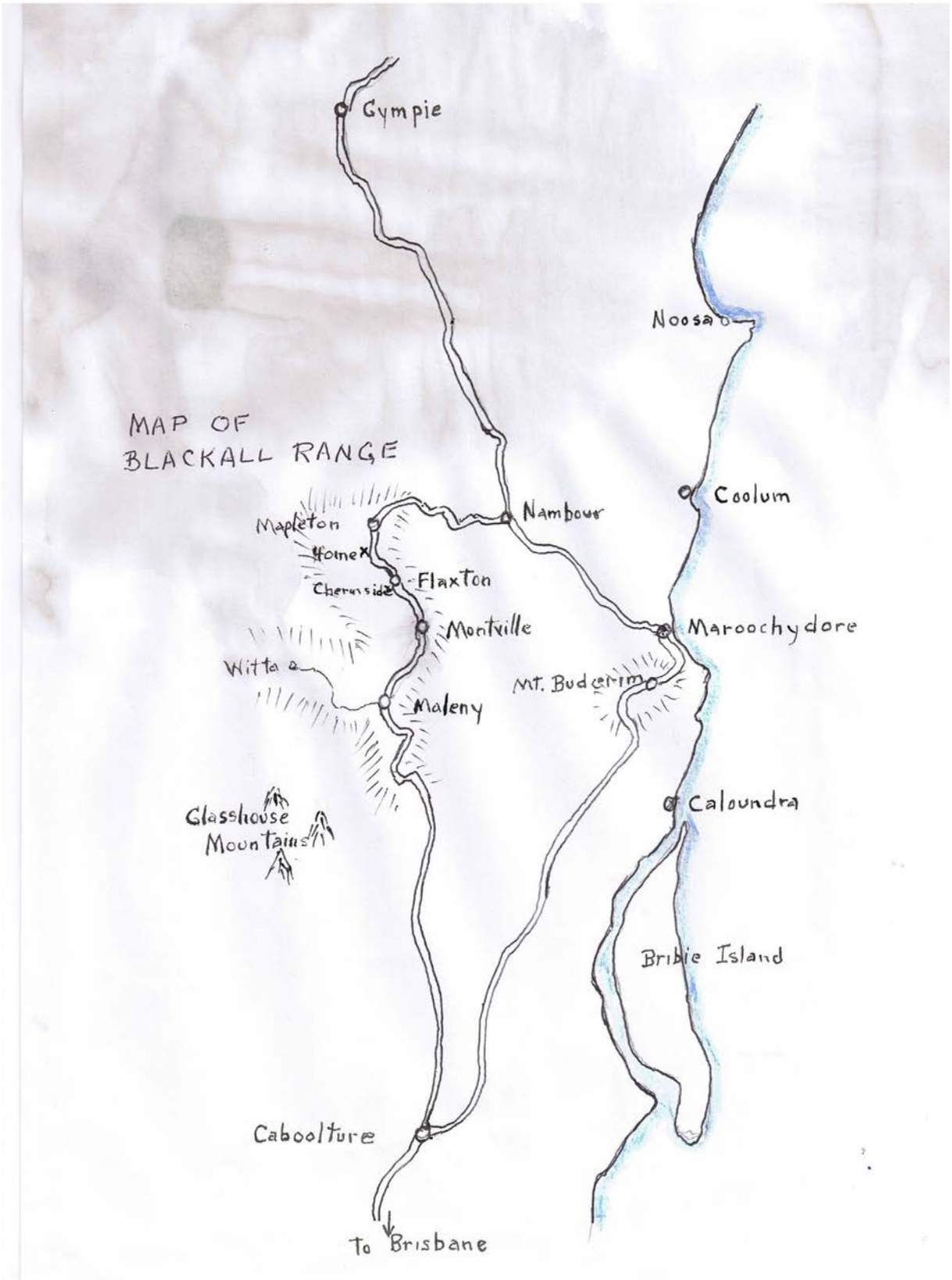
MEMOIRS

WILLIAM DIXON SUTHERS

His early life until marriage
to Margaret Johnson
1919 – 1949

Chermside Queensland


MAP OF
BLACKALL RANGE
Gympie
Noosa
Coolum
Nambour
Mapleton
Flaxton
Montville
Maroochydore
Witta
Maleny
Mt. Budgerim
Glasshouse
Mountains
Caloundra
Bribie Island
Caboolture
To Brisbane

Joseph and Alice Dixon

William and Jessie Suthers

Mother's and Father's Wedding
Back row: Percy Dixon, Joe Dixon, Alice Olive, Lil Willet, Frank Suthers
Seated: Elizabeth McLeod, Harry Norman, Eva Dixon

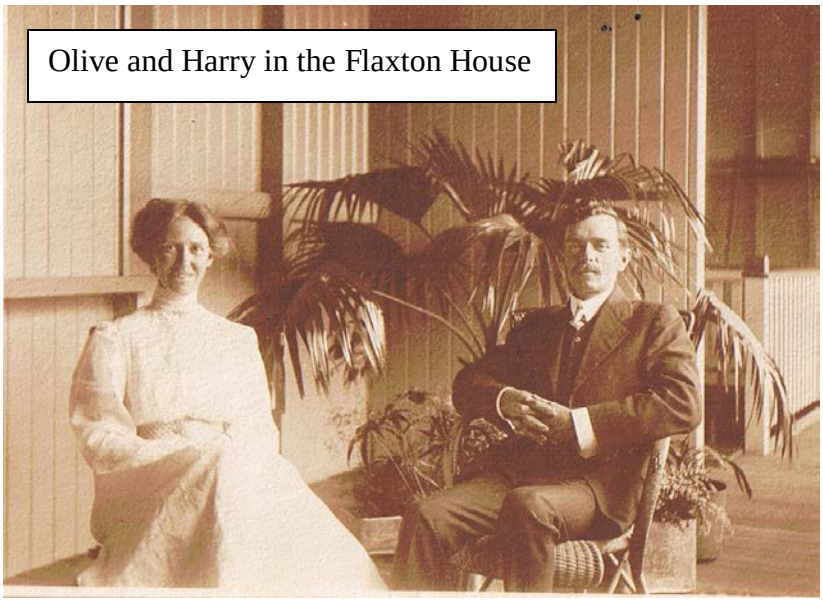
EARLY DAYS IN FLAXTON 1919-1927

At the time of my birth on March 4 1919, my father Harry Norman Suthers was an orchardist in Flaxton, Queensland. He had met and courted Olive Dixon in Gympie, a prosperous gold-mining town, where the Suthers and Dixon parents ran businesses. William Suthers ran a general store, while Joseph Dixon had a boot factory with a retail outlet for his products.

My parents were married in 1911 after a two year courtship (Harry 30, Olive 31) and decided to start a china and glassware business in Ruthven Street, Toowoomba. It is understandable that they were drawn to shop-keeping, as Olive had helped her father with the book-keeping at the shoe and boot shop, called 'The Busy Bee'. Harry must have learned some serving skills in his youth, as he could handle change, tote up the cost of a long list of items, and wrap up a parcel faster than most.

Many of the items in our china cabinet originated in the Toowoomba shop and may have been slow to move from the display shelves, as Harry's taste and appreciation exceeded his business sense of what the ordinary public could afford. As far as I can gather, the shop flourished until the outbreak of WW1, when supplies of china and glassware soon dried up, as most of the china came from England and the glassware from various factories in Europe. Circa 1915 he sold up and moved to the Blackall Range, 60 miles north of Brisbane, to take up an outdoor life growing citrus (navel oranges and a variety of mandarins).

Flaxton was a small village on the Blackall Range, a spur of the Great Dividing Range, rising 900 ft. above the level of the coastal plain. The "Range", as it was called by the locals, was composed of rich red volcanic soil originally covered by dense rainforest, but partially cleared in the early years of the 20th century as new settlers took up holdings.



Olive and Harry in the Flaxton House

These pioneers engaged in dairying or growing crops such as bananas, pineapples or citrus. One of the early arrivals was Joseph Dixon, the father of my mother - Olive.

Harry and Olive returned to Flaxton to be near the Dixon family, buying a property in the vicinity. Their desire for a family was frustrated for a long eight years. A kidney infection caused several periods of illness, as did a duodenal ulcer. In the fourth month of her pregnancy, my mother became very ill and one kidney was removed. When I was still a small boy she related to me what a worrying time it had been, as the chloroform anaesthetic had

caused prolonged vomiting, so that I was thrown around and buffeted incessantly in my cosy cocoon. It seems I was lucky to have seen the light of day. However to my parents' relief the crisis passed and I was born five months later at Brisbane General Hospital.

Olive and baby Billy

My earliest memories were of the orange orchard and of the packing shed set amongst the trees. To my childish eyes it was vast, half filled with wooden packing cases, placed ready for the fruit to be packed. Close to one wall was a loading dock and adjacent to it, the home-built grading machine, made of wood and leather and powered by a diesel donkey-engine. After tipping the picked fruit into a chute, a rotating corkscrew lifted the oranges onto an ingenious sloping gutter, which guided the oranges past various sized leather apertures, so that uniform sizes finished up in their respective bins ready for packing.

The fruit cases were made of rough-sawn timber, universally used for packing fruit and vegetables until the advent of cheaper and lighter cardboard boxes. As “Bob the Builder” wielding a hammer, I saw in my grandson Ben a reminder of myself at age five, learning to drive innumerable nails into a block of wood in the packing shed, imitating the adults as they nailed up the cases.

Childhood smells produce persisting and vivid memories. Even today after the passage of eighty-five years, the overpowering smell of orange blossom, the odour of stink bugs and of the lime and sulphur spray used through the orchard, brush away the years in a moment and I recapture the feelings of that five year old. I also have memories of overnight showers on warm earth, which miraculously would transform a cow paddock into a green pin cushion dotted with white capped mushrooms. My mother and I would sally forth with an inverted open umbrella to collect a sizeable quantity for the pantry.

There were other excursions to collect delicious items of food. Passionfruit vines flourished in the rich soil and grew wild, festooning native trees on the roadside. Yellow cape gooseberries grew amongst the lantana, so both could be harvested in large quantities. These days an allowance of twenty passionfruit per person (price 50c ea) would be an extravagant dessert. Occasionally, I would collect a basin of fruit, scoop out the contents until a cup was three-quarters full, add some cream and demolish this luscious mix. I attribute my long life to this high intake of passionfruit in my youth. (This probably accounts as well for my affectionate nature!)

The Queensland lantana was no subdued and well-behaved Sydney variety, but a rampaging giant often ten feet high, spreading along the roadsides for hundreds of yards when it was not controlled. Together with my young cousins, we created a maze of tunnels and secret paths under this exuberant canopy. It was full of unexpected dark places, conveying a vague sense of danger and of frightening shadows, causing a shiver of alarm, when we penetrated beyond the familiar paths into the denser undergrowth.

A small one-teacher school fronted the main road, which still winds its way along the top of the escarpment connecting the villages of Montville, Flaxton and Mapleton. A plot of land sufficient for a schoolhouse and playground was donated to the Queensland State by my maternal grandfather Joseph Dixon, while the Dept. of Education erected the school and paid for the teacher. My early schooling took place here, in company with my Dixon cousins.

Joseph Dixon’s early life is related separately in his Reminiscences, so I will merely mention that after managing a boot factory and a store in Gympie between 1896 and 1907, he then selected land at Flaxton on the Blackall Range and moved there with his wife Alice and two sons, where they built a large and impressive house. ‘Chermside’, as it was called, became the family home for two generations, only passing into other hands in the 1960s after my Aunt Mary moved into a nursing-home. These days it is a B&B called ‘Tanderra’, still retaining some of its early grandeur and catering for the many tourists who now flock to the area.

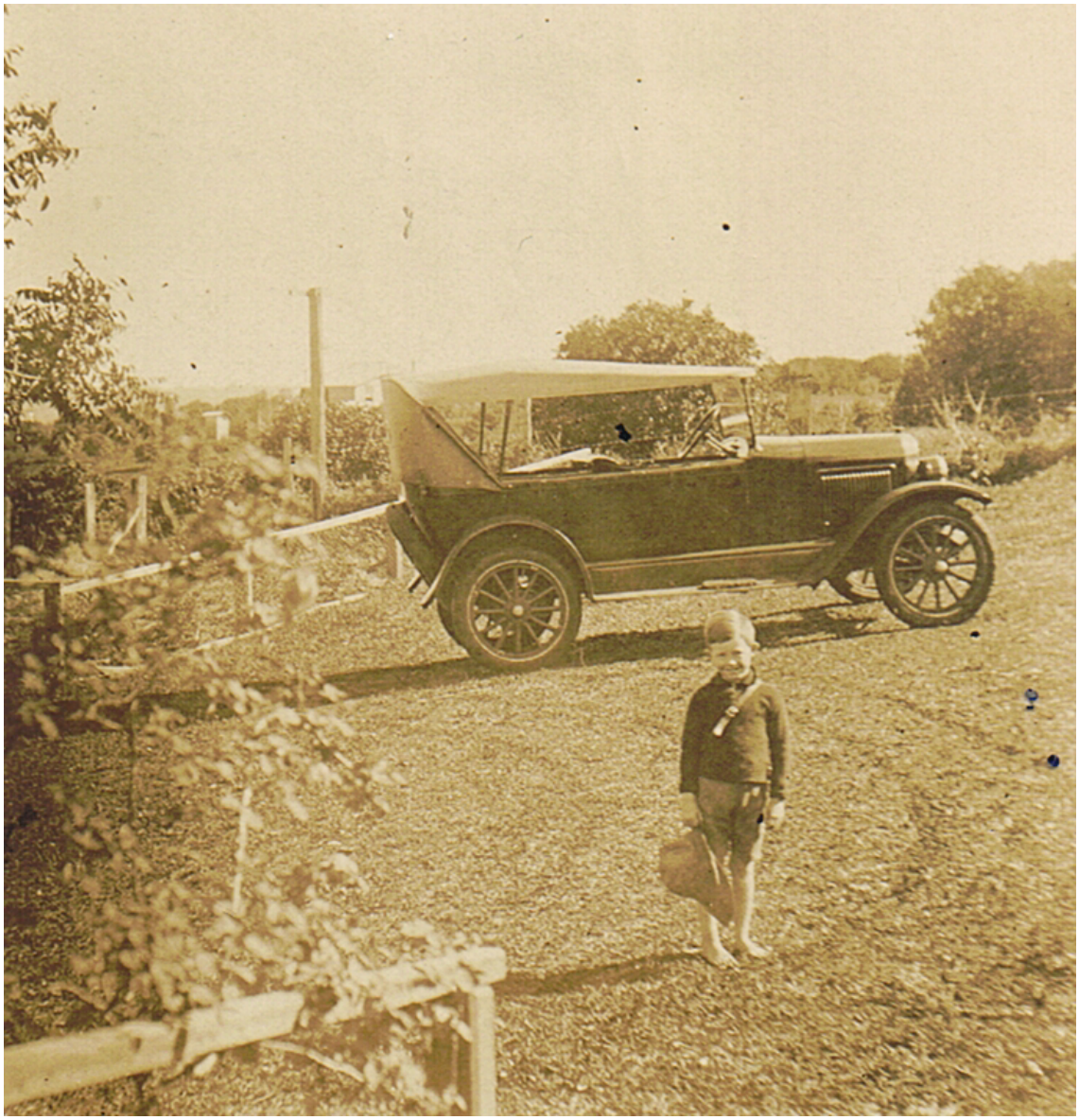
Back row (left to right)	**Middle Row**	**Front Row**
Joe Dixon	Mary Dixon	Morris Dixon
Bob Ruddle	Eva Ruddle	Betty Dixon
Ralph Maurice Burnett	Ruth Ruddle (on Mum's lap)	Molly Dixon
Elise J Burnett	Joseph C Dixon	Alice Dixon
Francis Maurice Burnett	Alice Dixon	Phil Ruddle
May Dixon	Olive Suthers	Jessie Dixon
Percy Dixon		Alice Ruddle
Hilda Alice Burnett		Bill Suthers
Harry Suthers		

Olive and friend Lil on steps of Chermside

Joseph's two sons, Joe and Percy, acquired properties of their own adjoining the Dixon's Chermside homestead and ran dairy farms, with the cultivation of pineapples as a sideline. There were four children in Uncle Joe's family and two in Uncle Percy's, all going to the same small school as myself, so I saw these cousins on a daily basis. Uncle Joe's children were Molly, Morris (my age), Jessie and Elsie. After my first year at school Molly left to go to a boarding school in Brisbane. Uncle Percy had two girls, Betty and Allie, a year or two older than myself. Other cousins, the Ruddles and Burnetts lived in Maleny only half an hour's drive to the south, but we saw them only rarely. Uncle Bob R. and Uncle Maurice B. both owned dairies and Uncle Bob also owned a piggery.

The school was one mile along the muddy main road from my parent's orchard. There was no school bus so I had to walk to and from school in all weathers. The first

teacher I remember was Miss Brooks and my parents offered her bed and board as there was no suitable boarding house within a reasonable distance of the school.



Billy on his way to school.

Flaxton School House

School children 1924 – Billy front row, second from right

Our schooling must have been a little haphazard, as one teacher had to organise the activities of twenty odd children, ranging in age from five to twelve years. Each class was small (five children or less). Sometimes the older pupils would have to correct the sums of the younger ones or test their spelling. We must have been very orderly, as I can't remember any classroom chaos. In retrospect, it is hard for me to accept that we used slates and slate pencils for our schoolwork, a custom which today seems almost Dickensian. Each of us had a damp rag to wipe the slate clean, when the sum or writing exercise was finished.

One of the most enjoyable playtime activities was to collect the fruit of the Australian Bean Tree. We would remove the three large beans from the huge green pod - each bean about the size of a large hen's egg, make a hole through the bean seed with a piece of wire and attach a length of string. We would then have a competition to see who could hurl bean and string the highest.

Another favourite game, of which we never tired, was for players to line up on either side of the grassy playground, about half the size of a football field. One unfortunate was chosen as the enemy, to be posted to the middle of the area. At a given signal, the players had to race to the other side trying to avoid capture. Each captive joined the enemy, so it became harder and harder to escape the growing number of enemies and reach the safety of the other side.

My father's property consisted of a comfortable and roomy weatherboard house with a nice garden and a bush-house, in which my mother delighted. The bush-house afforded a shady and colourful approach to the front door. There was an orchard of mature orange and mandarin trees, two pasture paddocks, in which two or three cows grazed and on a lower slope, a separate cottage occupied by a workman and his family. Mr. Draper helped with many of the orchard activities - spraying, cultivating, pruning, fruit-picking - and he must have milked the cows, as I cannot remember my father with a bucket between his knees at the milk end of a cow.

Our house had the customary wood fuel stove, but there was no electricity. Most rooms were lit by acetylene lamps, with the gas piped through the house to bracket-jets on the walls, similar to the gas-mantle lights used in cities and towns everywhere for over a century. The acetylene plant was suitable for isolated country homes. Under our house stood a large red metal cylinder, a bit larger than a dairy can. Inside it floating in water, was another metal cylinder like a giant upturned test tube in which calcium carbide was placed. The water reacted with the chemical and the gas generated was collected in the dome of the inverted cylinder. The weight of the cylinder produced a positive pressure in the gas chamber. In fact it was a gasometer in miniature. The characteristic odour surrounding the apparatus, was intriguing to me and I was always on hand to watch my father recharge the tank with these magical grey lumps, when the gas pressure was failing.

Other lighting was provided by portable kerosene lamps. My mother had an elegant table lamp for the dining room - a 2ft column of polished porphyry stood on a gilded base and supported a bowl for the fuel, a glass chimney, and a satin shade.

The small Flaxton community was connected by telephone, but it was a shared line with all calls going to a switch-board at the small post office. The subscribers were allotted their personal call signals, but any curious busybody could listen in to all conversations in the network. I remember only one wireless in our community. It

belonged to a neighbour who was an enthusiastic radio ham. He had erected a long aerial, on high poles to get an adequate signal. My parents and their young four year old were invited to experience this latest scientific marvel one night. The proud owner had advised that reception was very poor in the daytime, so the evening it had to be. The long cabinet with its imposing array of dials looked worth every penny of its undoubted high cost. Powered by a car battery, we watched as the row of eight glass valves glowed into life; dials were gingerly turned and the owner coaxed a squeaky recital of news from the set. I soon lost interest, went to sleep on a lumpy sofa, and was carried home later dreaming of rotating dials, whistles and static.

On reflection, the country people of the 1920's were very self-reliant when it came to food. The cows provided milk, butter and cream, the hens gave us fresh eggs and occasionally, there was a bonus of roast chicken for dinner. We grew fruit and vegetables, preserving them, when there was any excess, while my mother made bread twice a week. Our pantry was stocked with a selection of jams and of big jars filled with preserved fruit. All the cooking fat was carefully saved and made into soap - it was brown in colour and produced a poor lather but was quite effective for household use.

COOLUM HOLIDAYS

Despite all this busy life around the home and the multitude of tasks involved in running an orchard, there were breaks in the daily grind during the summer holidays. Most of my holidays were spent at the seaside. Flaxton is about 30 miles from the coast. From an elevation of 900 ft, the sea and seaside resorts like Mooloolaba and Maroochydore can be seen from the range crest. The sea seemed very close but was not easily accessible in those days. The coastal plain was low and swampy and the primitive roads, which led to the seaside were often impassable after rain. However in the 1930's the low land was drained and the roads sealed.

Grandpa Dixon owned a beach house at Coolum facing the ocean. The small village consisted of thirty or so homes and a small general store. There were few facilities, but we fronted a beautiful beach and a wilderness area, which stretched all the way for twelve miles up the coast to Noosa. We travelled by car from Flaxton to Coolum, but in the wet season Father would park the car near the sugar mill at Nambour alongside vast piles of sugar cane waiting to be crushed. We would then travel by the cane tram for the rest of the journey. The cane tram was a typical Queensland toy train, with a 2ft 6in rail track, which meandered through the cane farms in the area hauling mini-trucks of harvested cane to the mill. Our food and luggage would be transferred to a primitive coach, which was added as required for the slow trip to Coolum. The Dixon, Suthers and Ruddle families used it frequently.

Cane train to Coolum

Billy at Coolum Beach with cousins

A large hill, Mt. Coolum, reportedly named by Captain Cook, was close to the village. The northern side was grassed and dairy cows from Keane's farm grazed here keeping the paspalum short. I remember we collected milk each day in a billy can from this farm, which was a mile inland. Some benefactor before our time had made two wooden toboggans, similar to the primitive slides used by the early settlers. We children had great sport careering down the grassy slope, four on each slide. This entertainment would continue until the adults got tired of pulling the heavy toboggans back to the top of the hill. Often three families would pack into the roomy Coolum house, which had wide verandahs on two sides. Over Christmas holidays, as an only child, I enjoyed living with the large extended family and the give and take of a mixed bunch of cousins. I remember vividly, huge platters of fish fillets in the centre of a large dining table, with my mother and two aunts either busy at the wood-fired stove, or serving seven hungry children. In those days the supply of fish was unlimited - that beach provided bream and trevally in abundance. While beach whiting were running, the rising waves would be black with thousands and thousands of fish. At such times, my father would bait a line with two hooks for me, throw it out and hand it over. I would have been about five years old and had no time to get bored, as often within seconds I would be hauling two flapping whiting up onto the gently sloping beach. With the big increase in seaside population over the years and the intensive commercial fishing, those times are but dreams for the present day angler.

On the road to Coolum

There was no such thing as the modern bait shop in Coolum. Pippies could be dug up in abundance along the beach at half tide, while my father and uncles would entice sand worms to the surface by sweeping a dead fish, usually a small shark, to and fro across the sand as the tide ebbed. On some occasions pippies would be collected and cooked to form the base of a tasty seafood chowder.

My mother was very strict about food, having a Spartan dietary regime for herself because of a duodenal ulcer. So it was understandable that her carefully nurtured little boy was not allowed to eat bread fresh from the oven, or bread fried in dripping. There was no chance at all that I would be allowed to add brown sugar to my porridge. My cousins around the table spooned this forbidden substance onto their porridge, making wonderful brown islands in a sea of white milk. Auntie May took pity on me, secretly putting a spoonful of brown sugar on the bottom of the bowl and covering it with porridge. This would be handed to me with a surreptitious wink from Auntie, who would say, "Here's a special one for you, Billy!" If my mother eventually found out, she never let on - God bless her!

On one vacation, the Arthur Suthers' family (six boys and one girl) rented a cottage at Coolum, so I was able to meet another branch of the clan for the first time. I would have been six or seven, and Angus and Garth one year and five years respectively, my senior. At that time Arthur was headmaster of Cooparoo Public School, Brisbane. His wife Ida wanted a daughter desperately, but as Murphy's Law often demonstrates, wishes and dreams are often frustrated in this life. She had six sons in succession. Finally her persistence was rewarded by the arrival of a girl - Gwenda. I was not to meet up with the family again until 1944 during the war.

I have no recollection of Christmas festivities at home, but can recall bedtime sessions with my father at Coolum. One Xmas present was a Collins pocket classic of Robinson Crusoe, much too old for me, but the bare essentials of the story - shipwreck, cannibals, footprints in the sand and Man Friday, were extracted from the long-winded original by a loving father. It was the custom on New Year's Eve for everyone to collect driftwood lying along the beach and to build a bonfire, which would be lit shortly before midnight. I would be put to bed at the usual time and aroused and taken to the beach when the fire was about to be lit. When the large pile of dead branches caught alight, I was given a sparkler and sat with my cousins on the sand, gazing in wonder at the towering blaze, uncertain what it was all about. After one Coolum holiday, my friend Terry had a birthday and as a special treat I was invited to go with him to Nambour, as the picture show man had come to town. The School of Arts was specially prepared with all its windows darkened. The lights went out and with an impressive fanfare of sound played by an invisible pianist, the flickering black and white images appeared on the screen. It was a cowboy film and as the story unfolded, the pianist conjured up appropriate music for the romantic interludes, the dramatic confrontations and then the sound of galloping horses during the scene when the villains were pursued by the sheriff and his posse. About twenty minutes into the show, the baddies disappeared into a cleft in a cliff face, leaving the posse searching in vain. At this point the projector broke down. After a long delay the performance was abandoned and admission money was refunded. I was not to see another movie for two years, by which time the talkies had arrived with singing stars like Al Jonson and dramatic actors like George Arliss, who had moved from traditional theatre to the screen medium.

THE McLEOD FAMILY

Occasionally my parents would drive to Brisbane. This involved a trip of sixty miles on a mostly unsealed road. My parents went to see relatives, to attend the Brisbane Exhibition, or to shop for items not available in the country. At that time the road was little more than a dirt track winding through the bush and connecting small townships. In the rainy season it could be a tiring full-day trip. Low lying stretches were under water and churned into quagmires by wagons and drays, as well as by the new arrival - the motor car. Farmers on the roadside used to earn good money by towing bogged cars through bad patches. Grandpa Dixon relates in his diary that riding on horseback from Buderim, a generation earlier, to court his lady-love at Eagle Farm Brisbane, the trip would take him two whole days.

In Brisbane we frequently visited the McLeod family, who were father's cousins (my grandfather, William Suthers had married Jessie McLeod). This branch of the McLeod family lived in Gregory Terrace in a grand house called 'Loch Earn', perched on the heights overlooking the C.B.D. and the Brisbane River. To visit Jean, Flora, and Gert was a major event in my childish mind. The major attraction was their pets. They owned a cockatoo, which perched on a branch in the back garden, constrained only by a long length of dog chain, a koala in a large enclosure and two black scotch terriers, who ruled the household. They were comfortably off and with no children of their own, spoiled me outrageously. The one male in that branch of the family, Dan, spent most of his life on a country property west of Brisbane and was a bachelor.

The other McLeod lady who became part of the feminine ménage at 'Loch Earn' was Elizabeth or Ellis McLeod, whose diary forms part of the family history. She had never married, either from preference, or perhaps partly because of the Victorian concept that it was the duty of one child, usually the eldest daughter, to look after parents in their old age.

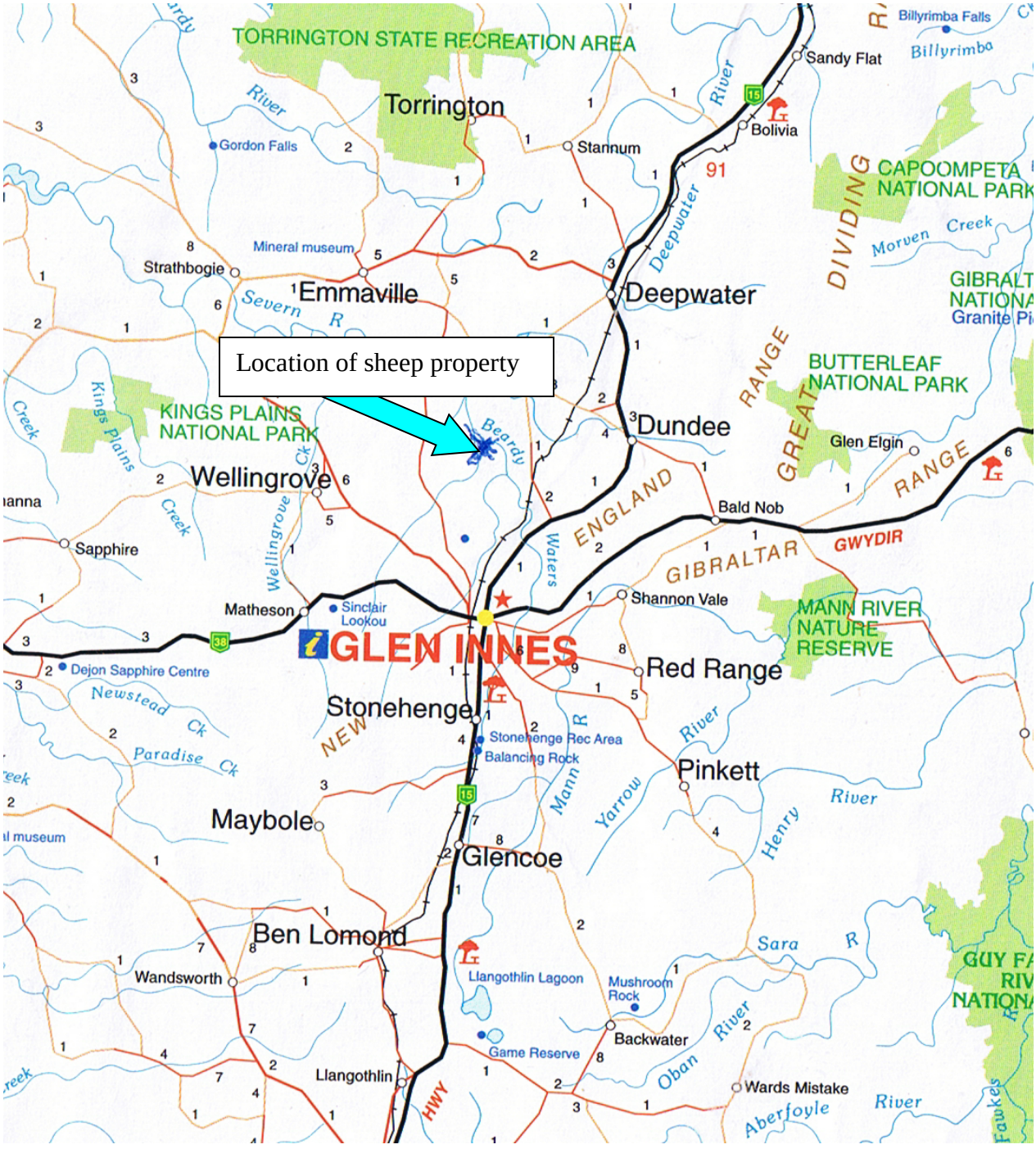
After the death of Ellis' father, James, she had lived with her aunt Jeannie, who was widowed and known to me as Great Aunt Jeannie. Among my books is a copy of Arthur Mee's "One Thousand Beautiful Things", with an inscription:

To Dear 'Billy' Dixon Suthers, From Great Aunt Jeannie
Wishing him a very Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year 1927.

When Jeannie died, Ellis had moved into the 'Loch Earn' house. My parents suspected that she had some difficulty fitting into the busier lifestyle there. These ladies busied themselves with Clan McLeod activities, community aid projects and the local Presbyterian Church. Gert and Flora were keen golfers, the former becoming president of the Queensland Golf Associates Union. Having feminist leanings and lots of drive and determination, she promoted the formation of a golf club, in which the ladies were full members and any male members were associates. In recognition of her efforts, the new club was named "The Gertrude McLeod Golf Club". It still remains one of the premier clubs in Brisbane. Gertrude drove an early model Armstrong Siddeley, one of the first cars to have a fluid flywheel - the forerunner of automatic transmission. She took part in interstate motor rallies, at a time when few women had the opportunity or inclination to drive. On her last visit to 5 David St., I remember her giving Margaret a helpful putting lesson on the carpet of our lounge room. My parents could not understand why such a talented and popular young lady with a private income, had not found the "right man"!

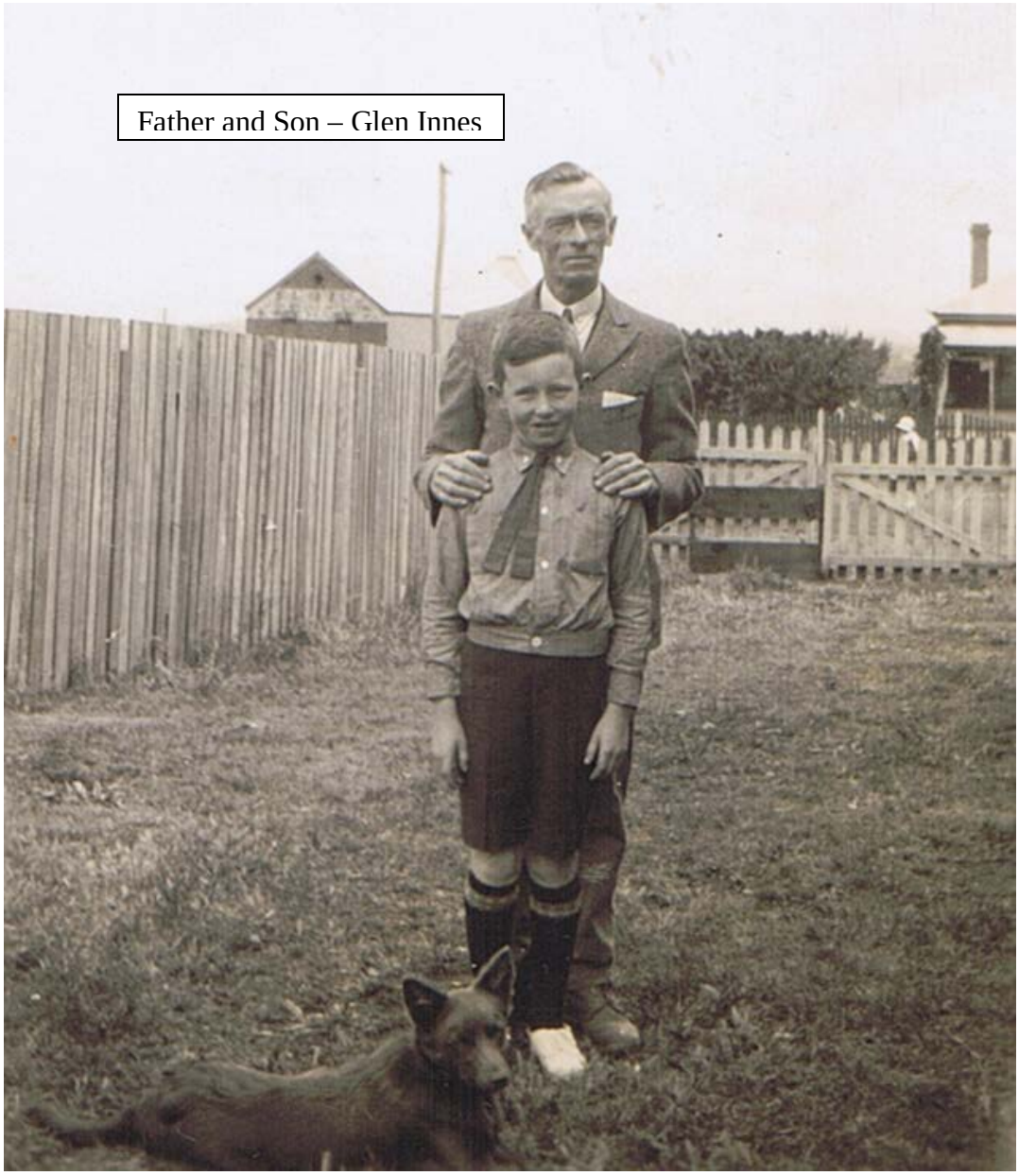
Ellis McLeod became the Queensland representative of the McLeod Clan and in her early seventies travelled to the home of the clan - Dunvegan Castle, on the Isle of Skye. The occasion was a historic one, as fellow clansmen from around the world had gathered to celebrate the investiture of young John McLeod, grandson of the Chief - Dame Flora McLeod, as the new head of the clan. I am including these details about the McLeod families mainly for the benefit of Iain, who carries the middle name of McLeod after his maternal great-grandmother. Ellis McLeod was my mother's bridesmaid and regarded us as her special family. In her Recollections, she relates many stories of a shared childhood with Harry and Frank Suthers.

Before Dame Flora retired as chieftain, she made a grand tour of Canada, New Zealand and Australia to rally support for the Clan and for the young successor soon to assume his role as leader. During her Sydney visit there was a clan gathering in the Botanic Gardens. Margaret and I were introduced to her by Ellis McLeod. We asked Dame Flora about the spelling of our baby son's name and it was she who suggested 'Iain McLeod'.


Location of sheep property
TORRINGTON STATE RECREATION AREA
Torrington
Gordon Falls
Mineral museum
Strathbogie
Emmaville
Severn R
Stannum
Sandy Flat
Billyrimba Falls
Billyrimba
Bolivia
91
Deepwater
DIVIDING RANGE
CAPOOMPETA NATIONAL PARK
Morven Creek
GIBRALTAR NATIONAL PARK
Granite Pi
BUTTERLEAF NATIONAL PARK
Dundee
Glen Elgin
GREAT RANGE
KINGS PLAINS NATIONAL PARK
Kings Plains Creek
Beardy
Wellingrove
Wellingrove Ck
Sapphire
Matheson
Sinclair Lookou
ENGLAND
Bald Nob
GWYDIR
GIBRALTAR
Waters
Shannon Vale
MANN RIVER NATURE RESERVE
GLEN INNES
Dejon Sapphire Centre
Newstead Ck
Paradise Ck
Red Range
Stonehenge
NEW
Stonehenge Rec Area
Balancing Rock
Mann R
Yarrow
Pinkett
River
Henry
Maybole
Glencoe
Ben Lomond
Wandsworth
Llangothlin Lagoon
Mushroom Rock
Backwater
Game Reserve
Llangothlin
HWY
Oban
Sara R
Wards Mistake
Aberfoyle
Fawkes

GLEN INNES SCHOOL DAYS 1927-1935

In 1927, when I was in third class, my parents sold the house and orchard in Flaxton, packed up their possessions and moved to Glen Innes in the New England district of N.S.W. The town with a population of 5000, was the centre of a rich tableland, very suitable for sheep, cattle, mixed farming and cold climate fruit. At an altitude of 3500ft, the climate was a dramatic change for us Queenslanders. My father still wanted an outdoor life and fancied that sheep might provide a better income than that of growing oranges, which were in glut supply at the Brisbane market. On many occasions the prices he received barely paid the cost of packing, transport to Brisbane, and agents' fees.



Father and Son – Glen Innes

Some furniture and unwanted possessions were sold, the rest packed and sent by rail to Glen Innes. My father owned a four cylinder Willys Overland Tourer 1924 Model, with a canvas hood. It was loaded to overflowing with our personal possessions. Two improvised racks on both running-boards held all mother's most precious pot plants and palms. We must have looked a weird sight - a sort of plant nursery on wheels, with green fronds and foliage waving madly in the breeze, as we drove via Brisbane, Toowoomba, Stanthorpe, and Wallangarra to Glen Innes. Father rented a house in Taylor St., Glen Innes for a year and I continued on in third class at the local primary school. A classmate at that time, Lloyd Sommerlad, became a firm friend and that relationship has endured for over seventy-five years.

Lloyd's father, E.C. Sommerlad, was editor of the local newspaper, "The Glen Innes Examiner". The provincial newspapers of that era were a vital part of rural communities, giving pride and identity to small towns by representing their local interests and providing a forum for debate. Sadly, most of the independent proprietors have now disappeared, with the inevitable amalgamation of small local newspapers, or their takeover by 'Press Barons'. Passing by the Examiner building on the way home from school in the company of Lloyd, I can remember being fascinated by the large linotype machines, which created the individual letters on slim metal slabs. These letters were assembled on a frame by the compositor to form the layout of a newspaper page, with its columns, photos, and plates for business advertisers. A whole series of frames set out on a long bench, represented the contents of a bi-weekly issue of the Examiner, ready to be transferred to the printing press. There was some romance in this laborious procedure, which has been lost in our modern age of computers and offset printing.

Ready for church

The Suthers and Sommerlad families attended the Methodist Church and Sunday was a busy day, with morning service at 11 am, Sunday School at 2.30 and evening service at 7 pm. Both E.C. Sommerlad and my father were lay preachers and circuit stewards. My parents sang in the church choir and both families were very involved in church activities. State-wide Sunday School examinations were organised by the Methodist Youth Dept. in Sydney, to encourage a thorough knowledge of the Bible. All children attending Sunday School were pressured to sit for these exams each year and those Sunday Schools achieving high marks were awarded coloured banners - purple, red and green, with lots of gold lettering and embroidery. Glen Innes always did well, resulting in a flamboyant array of banners, which were hung around the walls of the church hall. Whatever the spiritual benefit of this examination competition, at least I gained a working knowledge of the Holy Scriptures at an early age. Men's Brotherhood met monthly in the Church Hall at 5 p.m. on Sunday and in my senior

years at High School, I was able to attend when there was an interesting speaker on the programme. One such was the Head Inspector of Schools from Armidale, Dr Mann, who gave me a new perspective on poetry. He gave a talk on “The Delights of Poetry” illustrated by lengthy excerpts from “Idylls of the King”, all recited from memory--page after page.

‘So all day long the noise of battle roll’d
Among the mountains by the winter sea;’ I was enchanted !

After we had settled into our new home, my father inspected many properties in the district before choosing one near Bullock Mountain called ‘Western Lea’, about fifteen miles northwest of Glen Innes. It was bound on two sides by a river and a creek, both of which provided abundant water for stock. The 1200 acres were heavily timbered with stringy bark, mess-mate, peppermint and yellow box predominating. The property needed a great deal of improvement by ring-barking many acres of eucalypts, so that sunshine could penetrate the canopy and promote growth of the native grasses. The Dept. of Agriculture made an inspection and recommended pasture improvement by planting certain areas with Kikuyu Grass, but the experimental plots were totally eaten out by the hundreds of rabbits on the property. Though disappointed, my father trapped and shot the pests to reduce their numbers. We became very fond of rabbit stew, feeling that this was an appropriate “tit for tat”.

Weston Lea

Home Paddock

There was no residence on the property, so he built a large cabin in the home paddock on a grassy slope overlooking a waterhole on the Clarvaulx Creek. The cabin was clad with corrugated iron and lined with tongue and groove pine planks. A huge fireplace was built at one end with granite rocks found on the property. All cooking was done on the open fire, using billies, camp oven (for dampers), plus the usual fry pan and griller. The climate was colder than Carawatha, so big log fires were needed during the winter.

The picturesque creek, with its series of waterholes at frequent intervals, wound its way through the countryside, from the small mining town of Emmaville to its junction with the Beardy River, one of the property's boundaries. At this point the watercourse flowed northwest, joining the Macintyre River on the Queensland border before turning south and becoming part of the Darling. Lombardy poplars, willows, and wattles, dotted the banks of the creek and I immediately claimed the territory as my own personal playground. Freshwater yabbies inhabited the banks, murray cod were found in the deeper holes, while wild duck fed and nested among the reed beds. I learned to swim in the waterhole below the cabin, following instructions in an article cut out of the Tamworth newspaper, supplemented by shouted advice from my father on the bank. I think he disliked the leeches, which swam up from the muddy bottom, so he preferred to stay on dry land.

Swimming at Clarvaulx Creek

As an only child, reading was a passion and my mind was filled with dreams of heroic adventures, of villains getting their just desserts and of searches for hidden treasure. Little did I know that a treasure trove of sapphires lay hidden in the gently murmuring shallows, where I built dams of river stones and hunted and killed the striped leeches which abounded there. Twenty years after my father sold the property, an amateur gem hunter found some sapphires a mile further up Clarvaulx Creek. Other prospectors followed and eventually Murphyores, a Brisbane mining company was granted a mining lease over this area, including our former property. In the decade following the mid-fifties, sapphires to the value of $11,000,000, were extracted from a two mile section of the creek.

Accompanied by Margaret, I visited the property some time in the seventies. I wanted to show her this boyhood playground. Perhaps you can anticipate the scene, as we drove up to the bank of the creek and the crossing, which led to our former property. All the waterholes had been drained and a wide sweep of flood plain close to our cabin

resembled a battlefield. Overturned boulders, rusting steel cables, broken and abandoned steel chutes and shovels, littered the landscape. With the water drained away, many of the trees on the river bank, including magnificent poplars and graceful willows, had died. The crystal clear water of the past, had been replaced by a muddy stream flowing through this man-made devastation. The road leading into the home paddock was barred by a high mesh fence, which held several notices saying “Trespassers Prosecuted”. The sad thought crossed our minds that this picturesque stream, which had formed part of the countryside for countless years, had been raped and devastated by the greed of man in a brief ten year period.

To maintain a logical sequence of events, I must now go back to the early Glen Innes days. Both wheat and wool prices fell as much as 50 %, shortly after my father bought the sheep property. Loans floated in London failed to be fully subscribed, whilst interest on the existing loans, amounting to £225,000,000, had to be met. It was the time of the Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 to 1935. The N.S.W. Labor Premier, Jack Lang repudiated overseas interest payments to keep the State Government. solvent and to avoid a complete breakdown of government services. This was a temporary measure, but in such a climate of uncertainty there was a run on the Government Savings Bank, as nervous depositors hastened to withdraw their money. For a time the bank closed its doors to halt this panic scramble. Savings Bank passbooks frequently changed hands for half their real value to speculators, who were prepared to gamble on the bank eventually opening its doors again.

My father gave temporary jobs to three young teachers, recently qualified, but unable to teach, as there were no positions available and certainly no extra finance. They were kept busy on the property ring-barking timber, in exchange for food and lodging in the cabin and fifteen shillings each per week in wages. After waiting for several months they received postings to schools. Two of them, Rob and Jim Staines, achieved great success in later life. One became Principal of Sydney Teacher’s College and the other Principal of Newcastle Teacher’s College.

Twelve months after our arrival in Glen Innes, the Sommerlad family moved to Sydney, so my father bought their house in Macquarie St., where we lived for seven years during my school days. It had a large garden, an orchard of assorted stone fruits, a section for gooseberries and loganberries, and even a long asparagus bed. All these goodies had been planted by the previous owner, Lloyd’s father, who was an enthusiastic gardener. When the Sommerlads departed, I lost my close friend. We didn’t meet up again until University days, except for a brief get-together when I came to Sydney in 1932 to see the opening of the Harbour Bridge.

Macquarie Street - Glen Innes

It was a period of limited opportunity for young people. In country towns the brightest boys applied for jobs in banks or sought admission to a Teacher's Training College on a scholarship. Girls also could pursue a teaching career which was a favoured choice, for banks would not accept girls. The only other common occupations available for girls were nursing, office typist, dress-making, serving in a shop or domestic service.

I spent all my school holidays on the property, following my father around and participating in all the day-to-day tasks whether mustering, drenching, or dipping sheep, ring-barking, or fixing slip-rails. Grandpa Dixon bought me two rabbit traps and a setter (a small hand-held mattock), so I soon became skilful in digging a hole for the trap, covering the plate and jaws with a square of paper and sprinkling loose earth on top. The rabbits were in plague proportions, and during the winter months, when the pelts were thick, I would skin the rabbits caught, then stretch each pelt over a loop of fencing wire. These were dried in the sun for two weeks and when I had a large store of skins, I would sell them to the hide merchant in town. This was the only way I could earn a little pocket money. There was one horse on the property, which my father used for mustering. I learned to ride bareback, so that if I fell off a foot would not be caught in the stirrups. A neighbour, Ebb Perkins loaned me a single shot pea rifle, so that I could kill off still more rabbits, while in the long waterhole, I swam, caught yabbies, and occasionally caught a nice Murray cod on a set line. These were simple pleasures but they engendered a love of country life, of lazy summer days, and of grass sparkling with a heavy hoar-frost on winter mornings. I recall the words of Albert Suthers, who said, "You can take a boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of a boy!".

In 1931 I moved up to the High School, which had been built on the grounds of the old gaol. Most of the old buildings had been demolished, but the prisoners' exercise yard, which had brick walls about 20 ft. high, had been converted into a tennis court. The amplified sounds of racket striking ball in this enclosure were remarkable. Later the P&C

Assoc. built two more tennis courts in a corner of the school grounds but these lacked the weird acoustics of the exercise yard.

Over the next five years my horizons expanded to embrace the Renaissance and the Reformation, the mysteries of Chemistry, the challenges of Latin and French, and the exciting world of Shakespeare and the classics.

I can recall my feelings on the issue of a big bundle of textbooks at the beginning of a school year and the almost physical hunger to explore what lay between the covers. I played cricket and tennis in school teams, but not football ("only child" syndrome) and competed in school athletics, the middle-distance race (440 yds) giving my best results. Being a bookworm, intellectual activity had a higher priority than physical prowess. As school captain in my final year, I was called upon to speak at school assemblies, which was quite an ordeal. When on the stage of the assembly hall about to launch a debate as team leader, I was able to start off with a rehearsed introduction and somehow or other maintain the verbal momentum. Despite the bunched muscles in the pit of my stomach, it was possible to function as a passionate advocate of the League of Nations. This was an excellent training ground for later life as public speaking, for me, was not "doin' what came naturally". In retrospect, I acknowledge the dedication of my teachers at that country High School. There was much encouragement and little sarcasm.

High School Group

During this period (1928 - 1935) hard economic times persisted, both in the city and the country. Itinerant swaggies (so called because they carried bed-rolls or swags, a billy and little else) roamed the country side looking for odd jobs. They would knock on doors offering to chop wood or dig the veggie patch for a meal. My mother baked her own bread and many a time I saw her wrap a loaf and hand it to some hungry and dispirited swaggie. They must have had a secret code of some sort - perhaps marking the corner post of the front fence with chalk, for the passing itinerants halted unerringly at our gate to ask for a bite to eat, yet moved quickly past nearby houses. Often it is the children with lots of time and also youthful curiosity, who can best solve these little mysteries.

My mother augmented the meagre returns from the property by providing board and lodging for two engineers working at the Main Roads Board office. One of these men, an Englishman, Frank Barsden, was the first to encourage me to think of a career in science or dentistry. One of my valued mementoes of his interest in my development is a book called 'Tell England' and on the front blank pages, he had written out the poem by Rudyard Kipling, 'IF'. Naturally enough, it has been part of my limited repertoire ever since. There was no friend or relative of ours in any profession, but Mr. Barsden's suggestion took root, so that in my last school year I applied for an Exhibition in the Faculty of Dentistry. After sitting for the Leaving Certificate (HSC) in 1935, there was an agonising wait until early in the New Year, when a letter arrived from the Dept. of Education informing me that I had won an Exhibition.

Sixty-five years had to pass before I fully understood how lucky I had been to be successful in 1935. Before the exams, I had a bad attack of bronchitis verging on pneumonia and though recovering, the doctor would not allow me to leave my bed and sit for the first exam - the English paper. My English teacher, Ethel Rush, volunteered to bring the exam paper to my bedroom, the Methodist minister, Rev. Almond, volunteered to act as invigilator and so the crisis was averted.

In 1992 I met a dental colleague, who asked me if I remembered from my school days, an English teacher, Miss Rush. She was his patient and thought he might know of me. This resulted in my making contact with her, aged ninety and in a nursing home. She remembered the examination incident perfectly, filling in many more details of her part in the battle with officialdom to break the rules, thus saving me a repeat year.

One other event in my school days is worth mentioning. Aviation history was made during the period 1929 to 1935 by Charles Kingsford Smith who made many record-breaking flights, including an Australia - England flight of twelve days twenty hours in his plane "Southern Cross". He made headline news frequently, best illustrated by the Trans-Tasman flight with P.G. Taylor in the Southern Cross in May 1935. The tip of one propeller shattered, damaging the port engine and shutting it down. The starboard engine soon dangerously overheated, as oil had been lost from the system. P.G. Taylor clambered out on the wing strut with spanner and a thermos flask to collect some precious oil from the dead engine. The struggle back along the strut against the force of the slipstream was touch and go, but this daredevil act saved them from ditching in the sea.

There was great excitement in Glen Innes a few weeks later, when it was announced that Kingsford Smith and the Southern Cross would make a tour of northern towns to give joy-rides to the locals. On the appointed day Smithy and the plane landed

in a paddock at Stonehenge just out of town. My parents and I joined the large crowd of spectators, most of whom had never seen an aeroplane at close quarters. The “Southern Cross” took off and landed with its load of five or six many times, before my father, quite carried away, said “Here! Go and buy a ticket!” putting five shillings in my hand.

Thus my first flight was in a famous plane, with a famous pilot in the cockpit.

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY 1936-1939

The news that I had won an Exhibition at Sydney University caused my parents to move to Sydney without too many regrets. Wool prices were still low and my father's indifferent health made the property too much of a burden. The family settled in a flat in Arundel St. opposite the University Steps. Some weeks later we moved to 8 West St., Petersham, my father renting three upstairs rooms of a two-story federation house. He made some internal alterations, providing me with a 6ft by 4ft dressing room and a sleeping alcove on the verandah. With that accomplished, he returned to Glen Innes to try to sell the sheep property, which took several months.

So along with thirty or so young hopefuls, the country boy enrolled in an office adjacent to the Main Quadrangle, chased around for second-hand textbooks - Physics, Inorganic Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Anatomy - and visited Dental Supply Houses to get a prosthetics kit and a grey lab coat. The latter items were a sign that we had the prospect of long hours in the laboratory to develop some manual skills before attacking a flesh and blood patient. Another fresher was Ken Crocker, a Sydney Grammar boy whom I had met previously through Lloyd Sommerlad. We teamed up, worked together happily during the next four years of the dental course and he was to become best man at my wedding, and vice versa.

Come the summer vacation and a successful First Year over, a family holiday was planned at Bonville on the North Coast. Ken Crocker was invited to join us as the Crocker family had given me some good times in the Blue Mountains during that year. Mother, Ken, and I, travelled by train to Sawtell (adjoining Bonville and just south of Yamba), while my father in Glen Innes loaded the old Willy's Overland with camping gear and joined the three of us at the Bonville Camping Reserve. We enjoyed a month of surfing, fishing and life on the beach; a lifestyle which did terrible things to my fair skin. There was oystering along Boambee Creek, where both of us could legally collect half a sugar bag of oysters each. These provided a change from our fish diet, while at a nearby plantation we could buy a large bunch of half ripened bananas for next to nothing. The bunch was hung on a tripod of sticks behind our camp stretchers in the tent. Ken and I had to attack the bunch constantly to keep pace with the rapidly ripening fruit.

After this carefree holiday, it was back to work with a vengeance, as a summer term of six weeks was fitted in before Lent Term. This gave the demonstrators an all too short time to develop our prosthetic skills before our biology lectures and dissections were scheduled. With Ken's encouragement I joined the Sydney University Regiment as a private. We spent four years together in D Company, which was the Vickers Machine Gun Coy. There were no weekly night parades at the Regimental HQ. (at the time located on the Western side of No 2 Sports Oval) as that would have interrupted our studies. A more satisfactory training arrangement had been devised - to concentrate all training into two fortnightly camps held during University vacations. The camps were at Liverpool or Menangle, and these training sessions gave us healthy and cheap holidays, with the opportunity of meeting with fellows from other faculties.

Neither Ken nor I had any thought of promotion, as it seemed to us that N.C.O's (non commissioned officers eg corporals & sergeants) had lots of duties and were always on the go. We simply enjoyed the open air life, the route marches, the tactical exercises

and the camaraderie of the ranks. Some who had been in school cadets, had ambitions and worked hard to become sergeants or finally, commissioned officers. By contrast, in my fourth year I reluctantly became a corporal.

On route marches, to help the time pass, a Sgt. Major or Junior officer would strike up a tune and the troops would take up the song - usually a bawdy one unfit for polite society, eg "There were cats on the roof-tops, cats on the tiles,
Some with syphilis, and some with piles, etc…

When approaching a house by the roadside, or small village, the song would rapidly change to "Onward Christian Soldiers", or the French Canadian boating song "Alouette je te plumerai! Et le nez!" etc. We marched to and from the rifle range near Liverpool Camp for our weapon training. Firing a 303 rifle, which had a kick like a mule was very different from shooting rabbits with a pea-rifle. Ken was no stranger to range shooting, having been in the Sydney Grammar Rifle Team, so with his help I soon became competent and enjoyed this part of army life.

There was no motorised transport provided for the infantry or for the machine gunners during manoeuvres in those days. A battery of 25 pounders had been allocated to the S.U.R. in 1934 and the gun crews rode in trucks in front of their guns. The D Coy Vickers Machine Guns were transported by 1st W.W. horse limbers and we foot-sloggers envied the drivers from Horse Transport, who rode and guided the horses. My first memory of Ashley Hunter is when I saw him astride one horse and guiding another, as he manoeuvred his limber into position; that was long before I got to know him as a friend. The limbers also carried the ammunition and those, oh so important hot-boxes containing our food. Many of my companions had been in school cadet corps, an experience which made them familiar with rifle drill, rolling puttees and all the basic skills of army life. Never was there a recruit as raw as this youth from the country! I was on a steep learning curve.

After the basic parade ground training and shooting exercises on the rifle range, the machine gunners had to master the complicated operation of the Vickers Maxim machine gun. The training required teamwork, plenty of muscle and a fairly high standard of technical skill. Each gun needed a team of three to go into action - No 1 the gunner, to carry the barrel and recoil mechanism, No 2 to carry the heavy tripod and No 3 who was responsible for the cans of belt ammunition. The firing drill was complicated, requiring each gunner to train for all three roles, in case one of the team became a casualty. This demanded hours of repetition to make certain that each action became automatic. A jammed gun was a disaster, so each gunner had to know the parts of the recoil mechanism intimately. A gunner was not considered competent, until he was able to dismantle the gun block, identify the parts by feel and reassemble in pitch darkness, or under the cover of an army blanket.

Having acquired these skills, Ken and myself wanted some other activity and applied to become rangefinder trainees. The rangefinder service type is a metal tube about three feet long and six inches in diameter, with lens apertures at each end. It works on the same principle as the camera rangefinder. Two images are made to coincide, which gives an accurate range of any target up to 2000 yards.

During major regimental manoeuvres, the gunners had to support the advance of rifle companies, who would be attacking a specific target. This was difficult enough in daylight, but even more so during night exercises. After a daylight reconnaissance of the

target, lines of sight would be determined, white pegs hammered in and signal lamps placed. Then locks would be placed on the gun's traversing scale so that the line of fire would be confined within safe limits for advancing troops. All this sounds boring, but it was a valuable lesson in thoroughness and patience. The brief account of our training has been included, in case my preliminary remarks about free and easy army lifestyle and careful avoidance of extra duties should give you a totally wrong impression. We were interested in doing a good job and becoming efficient. Of course, this does not mean that we sat like dumbos on the duckboards of our tent, when the Orderly Officer approached to round up a fatigue with the familiar cry, "I want four volunteers - You, you, you and you!". One learned ways of fading from view or of ripping off boots and trousers to avoid a task.

At Liverpool Camp the troops were housed in WW1 army huts with galvanised iron sheets on roofs and sides, while at Menangle Camp we were under canvas, eight men to a tent. The iron sheds were like ice-boxes during the winter camp. A straw palliasse and four army blankets could not provide enough insulation, so greatcoat and all surplus clothing was piled on top when it came to bedtime. After the bugle call "Lights Out" when all became quiet, occasionally some misguided character would slip outside, run his bayonet along the length of the iron corrugations thus creating an unholy racket. Pandemonium would reign until the Orderly Sergeant or some officer arrived to restore Law and Order.

These comparatively brief episodes of army experience gave many of us the feeling that it was but a foretaste of things to come. The nations of Europe stirred uneasily in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. Australia was a long way from this ferment, but there were signs that "No man is an island, intire of itselfe"…… Refugees were arriving here in large numbers seeking safety and freedom from persecution and bringing with them needed skills and different cultures.

In Dentistry II, I shared a lab bench with Helma Neu, my senior in years and knowledge, as she was a qualified dentist from Germany. Being Jewish, she feared what the future might bring and emigrated to become a dental student again, being permitted to start in Second Year.

Another professional of that time, Walter Magnus, decided to leave Germany while it was still possible, but the Nazi officials would not allow him to take any of his money out of the country. He converted all his worldly wealth into platinum, and using his dental skills, cast this valuable metal into dental hand instruments - tools of trade - which were permissible luggage. These passed the scrutiny of customs officials, being the same colour as normal steel instruments. Any money or gold object would have been confiscated immediately. Feeling that he was too old to face three years of further work and study like Helma, Walter opened a small restaurant in Paddington and then in Angel Place. It prospered and he gradually took over the whole building, creating a city eatery, which was very popular in the forties and fifties.

The details of this escape from Nazi Germany were related to me by Peter Magnus, his son, who enrolled in the Faculty of Dentistry at Sydney. He was a professional colleague whom I met frequently at Sedation courses. So the story had a happy ending, with the son following in his father's footsteps in this new country.

I believe the army training in the S.U.R as an undergraduate, made it much easier a year later, to make the transition to full-time service during the war. It gave me a

maturity, which was sadly lacking and an ability to mix more easily with all sorts and types of people.

Meanwhile there were lectures and exams to get through and new manual skills to be learned at the Chalmers St. Dental Hospital. Our prosthetic guru and boss was a famous identity at the Dental Hospital. The person in question, Joe Palmer, was not a graduate, but a highly skilled dental mechanic, who had created this position for himself by sheer talent. Impeccably dressed in a spotless long white coat, sporting a flamboyant bow tie and gold rimmed pince-nez, he would make a dramatic entrance and waving his arms about, call out "Gather round men!" and proceed to demonstrate some difficult problem, such as the making of a silver splint for a broken jaw. At that time there were few dental facilities at public hospitals and most patients with fractured jaws were referred to the United Dental Hospital. Every final year student had to treat a broken jaw patient as part of the course requirement. The timetable was filled completely, with no breaks whatsoever, unless we skipped dissections or other practical classes. Occasionally, if a good movie was showing in the Union Hall at lunch time, we would rush in to get our seats, consuming sandwiches and fruit in the Stygian darkness. As dental students, we envied those who had chosen Arts or Economics. In the usual mad rush from one lecture hall to another we caught occasional glimpses of these lucky students, who had time to lounge in the sunshine around the Quad chatting up girls. Certainly it was part of their education to question the meaning of life, of reality, of religion and to airily make plans for the future, but we had no time to lose, no time to waste, with our full timetable. However, thoughts of the future, especially in Third Year and Fourth Year (1938-39) gave us an uncomfortable feeling, not a foreboding, but rather a frisson of excitement - a mixture of fear and fascination - at the thought of war.

It is strange to recall the clinical priorities of the dental course in the days of the old Dental Hospital. Extraction of teeth was a major activity for most dentists, as patients all too often, elected to have teeth removed rather than restored. So skill in exodontia was a high priority. As well, a lot of time was given to training us in prosthetics, so that we could restore speech, function and aesthetics after the requested extraction treatment. One could not blame ignorance, or poverty, or fear, for this often tragic treatment. A pretty girl in Glen Innes, a friend of our family, Beth Huthnance, was engaged to be married to a Sydney doctor. She became unwell some weeks before the marriage, no satisfactory cause could be determined, so it was decided that all her teeth should be removed and full dentures made. The theory of focal infection was alive and well in those days, when no obvious cause could be found.

When it came to the 'drill and fill' routines in the Operative Clinic, we students came equipped with a portable cabinet of instruments and a foot treadle machine to drive the handpiece. The era of dental chair electric motors, variable high speed and ultimately the air-turbine drill, came much later. So much for the technology of the time!

Lloyd Sommerlad followed Ken and myself to the University, from Sydney Grammar in 1937, having decided to repeat his final school year. With a love of the English language and a father, whose career was in writing and journalism, he chose an Arts/Economics course. This syllabus gave him time to participate in extra-curricular activities. Having grown up in an environment of journalism, he was drawn naturally to the S.U. newspaper "Honi Soit", joined the staff and after three years became its editor. There were two terms when a wordy battle raged in the columns of the paper between

conservatives and radicals, who presented opposing views about some current crudities of undergraduate humour. The editor had launched an editorial crusade titled “Wit Without Dirt”, which provoked an impassioned response in the Letters Page of the paper. I doubt whether much has changed in student attitudes, comparing then and now. The young are irresistibly drawn to the radical side of the spectrum.

I attended one or two meetings of the Student Christian Movement and then, influenced by Lloyd I suppose, joined the Evangelical Union. Lloyd knew many members from his Crusader activities at school. In my timetable it was possible to fit in a weekly lunch hour meeting and occasionally other functions - prayer meetings, tennis parties or a weekend at Medlow Bath. Having few Sydney friends, I found this company very congenial.

Towards the end of my time at University, a number of the E.U. members formed themselves into a distinct ancillary group or cult under the leadership of Lindsay Grant, a Med. Student and Del Agnew, a Melbourne University graduate. They followed a Charles Wesley treatise on “The Doctrine of Sinless Perfection”, which among other assertions stated that “If a person was in a state of grace”, then “he/she was without sin and incapable of committing sin, while continuing in that state of grace”. This cult demanded obedience to a small hierarchy, with a control over their money and their private lives (any reader interested in further details could search out this book by David Millikan - “Imperfect Company” in my bookcase).

Luckily I was only on the fringe of this movement, but several undergraduate friends became deeply involved with disastrous results. In Dentistry II Lindsay Grant tutored us in Practical Physiology, while continuing his Medical Course. I came to know him well and he definitely had a charisma, which enabled him to manipulate young people, by playing on their religious beliefs.

After the war the same group calling itself “Tinker Tailor” catered for wedding receptions, dinners and Xmas parties at St. Malo, a historic sandstone residence at Hunters Hill. Other members were building up a business in interior decorating, while a small sub-set of doctors and dentists became property developers, renovating and selling houses in the suburbs. Considering they were mainly new graduates, I thought how easily one’s religious beliefs could be misdirected. Within the group there seemed nothing strange about putting professional skills to one side and becoming amateur carpenters, painters and caterers, at the behest of cult leaders. There are false prophets in every generation!

While doing Arts at S.U. Mavis Patterson became a cub reporter on Honi Soit staff and while working there, met Lloyd. They fell in love and married in 1943 while Lloyd was in the Army. By the time a certain English girl, Margaret Johnson landed in Sydney to take up a teaching position at Frensham, Mittagong in 1949, Mavis and Lloyd were living in a house in Pacific Hwy., Lindfield and gave the new arrival a warm welcome and a home from home when she came to Sydney. Margaret was married from their home and Lloyd acted as proxy father to escort the bride down the isle to the waiting bridegroom. Instead of a bridesmaid, we chose a charming young flower girl, Dorothy Sommerlad. Margaret and I have always been so grateful for Mavis’ and Lloyd’s friendship and generosity, at a time when both of us were without a base in Sydney.

After that digression, I want to return to the University years of 1937 and 1938. At the beginning of 1937, a Glen Innes boy - Neville Fakes - a year behind me at High

School, came to Sydney to enrol in the Faculty of Engineering. He boarded with us for three years at Petersham. We travelled to Uni together by train and tram, hopping off the toast rack tram at City Rd. gates. Our relationship was amiable but not intimate, as we were in different faculties and had different interests. The war broke out, Neville went to Melbourne to work at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and later joined the Shell Company, becoming a top executive in various parts of the world. Forty years were to pass before our paths crossed again and a warm friendship developed. The rekindling of our friendship occurred in a most amusing way. Margaret had decided that she wanted to go to a concert performance of Wagner's "Parsival" at the Opera House. I was not particularly interested, so Margaret arranged to go with a friend, Tony Balthasar; she to provide the tickets, he to take her to dinner at the Benelong Restaurant during the long interval. When Margaret and Tony arrived for the meal, the waiter asked if they would mind sharing a table with another couple. They agreed and were guided to a table for four, where two persons were seated. Audrey and Neville Fakes were introduced to Margaret Suthers and Tony Balthasar. Neville promptly said, "The name Suthers rings a bell. Would you be related to a Bill Suthers?" "Yes I'm his wife", replied Margaret. A reunion of old school mates took place shortly afterwards.

I now need to deal with my father's activities. He had found a buyer for the sheep property late in 1936 just before the camping holiday at Bonville. With that worry off his mind, he was able to leave Glen Innes and joined Mother and myself at Petersham. After a few weeks he bought a confectionery business, delivering wholesale supplies to small shops and milk bars scattered in the south-western suburbs as far away as Liverpool and Leppington. It was an outdoor life, which suited him, but was never very successful. He bought a new 30 cwt. Bedford van to replace the old Renault that came with the business. During holiday breaks, when not in army camp, I accompanied Dad on his rounds and learned to drive the van.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

My love affair with the Blue Mountains began during those varsity years. Ken Crocker's father had once run a smallgoods business in Katoomba St., Katoomba but he sold the business because of ill-health, retaining ownership of the upstairs flat for family use. I was invited to stay there on many occasions with Ken and his sisters, Leah and Gwen. We would hike along the Federal Pass, explore the recent landslide at Narrow Neck, threading our way around great sandstone boulders the size of houses, which lay across the walking trail. From there we would hike out to Ruined Castle and beyond.

Then there was tennis on a nearby hired court, night walks to the floodlit Katoomba Cascades, toasted vanilla almonds from the Paragon Café, famous even then for its homemade goodies. Strange to say, one of my most vivid memories is of mornings spent on the top of the street awning above the delicatessen in Katoomba Street with Ken. It was simply a matter of opening the front window of the flat, tossing out a blanket, and climbing through ourselves. Armed with text books and notes, we would swot up anatomy in the warm sunshine, while the busy life of the street below flowed past, heard but not seen and somehow a world away.

Ken Crocker, Bill Suthers and Lloyd Sommerlad - Katoomba

I understood that a legacy had enabled Mr. Crocker to sell the delicatessen and retire to Greenwich. When war broke out he became an armchair strategist, worrying over every setback reported in the press or on radio. As this unhealthy state of affairs was not relieved by the need to work, he had a nervous breakdown. When on the mend, his doctor recommended work as a therapeutic measure, and for the duration of the war and for sometime afterwards, he was occupied very happily in the smallgoods section of Davy Jones Locker (D.J.'s Market St. Store).

When Lloyd became an undergraduate, the duo became a trio, as apart from our friendship in common, Lloyd's family owned a cottage - "Dawn" - in Blackheath. This simple weatherboard house was perched on the crest of the hill, on the Katoomba side of the village and adjacent to the Great Western Highway. The traffic was fairly light in those times, but every lorry had to change gear, up or down, just level with "Dawn".

We played tennis on the council courts, swam in the natural lake in Blackheath Park, (now filled in because of pollution) and played beginner's golf at Blackheath golf course. There were daytime walks to Govett's Leap, Evan's Lookout, Nellies Glen, and Grand Canyon, all favourites, especially the latter. These activities usually took place when there was a house party of young people, mainly from Lindfield Methodist Church. Among them were Winsome Finnegan and Verdun Sommerlad, whose romance began in the Blue Mountains. Even after nightfall there were excursions to Govett's Leap, arms linked and singing songs, with the mountain mist swirling through the overarching branches of trees, on the last slope down to the lookout. Strange to think that my first knowledge of German lieder came on such an evening, when Winsome taught a group of us a Schubert song, "Wild Rose". It was these happy experiences in the Blue Mountains which led to a much later choice - the purchase of cottage and land at Mt. Boyce.

To revert to the harsh realities of life, war was declared on Sept. 3rd, 1939 in the last year of my dental course. The S.U.R. was in camp at Ingleburn at this historic moment. Many in our ranks were sent off to guard strategic points such as radio transmitters, bridges and pumping stations. Medical and dental students were advised to complete their courses, as they would be of more value to their country after graduation.

I passed the final examinations with Class II Honours, but was unable to graduate with my year, as I was three months under the statutory age of twenty-one. A further period of service at Ingleburn, filled in that waiting interval until March 4, 1940.

However, two dental students, Phil Green and Max Halliday, who were in camp with me, decided to join up as combatants rather than wait for the exam results. This was a most important decision with long-term consequences. Having trained in the S.U.R. in the Machine Gun Company, they were posted to the 2\1st Machine Gun Regiment and served with the A.I.F. in the Middle East and also in the South-West Pacific region. Towards the end of hostilities Phil transferred to the 2\1st A.G.H. being posted as dental officer, with the rank of major. This move enabled him to get some dental experience before returning to civilian life. Max was demobilised early as he suffered a partial mental breakdown due to war stress.

The remainder scattered in all directions, some joining the R.A.N. or the R.A.A.F. Others filling positions in the civilian work force. Many experienced dentists had enlisted, leaving gaps to be filled by the newly qualified professionals.

The University posted my "licence to practice", so there was no cap and gown ceremony to mark the occasion. Life in the Navy suddenly seemed an exciting prospect. I had had my fill of lugging machine guns around the countryside, or going on interminable route marches. So I filled in an application for an interview with the chief R.A.N. dental officer and found that a wait was inevitable - I would have to wait my turn. Somewhat frustrated I sought a temporary position as an assistant in a country town. Charles Harris of Flavelles Dental Supply Coy. arranged an interview with Reg Cook of Tamworth, who was looking for an assistant.

THE YOUNG GRADUATE IN TAMWORTH 1940

Tamworth sounded fine, I passed muster and by the end of March I was settled into a boarding house and had commenced work in the dental suite above the Commercial Bank Chambers in Peel St.

Socially and professionally I had many adjustments to make, including shaking off the student mentality and coming to terms with a more tolerant approach to life. As an only child with a strict Methodist upbringing, the real world was very different from life as a student in a suburban flat. Now, I had an income and a role to play as a young professional in a country community. I learned that it would be "infra dig" to take a girl to the movies, buying tickets for the back stalls. My position in the town demanded nothing less than the dress circle. What was even worse, it would be common knowledge around the gossip circle the next day that the new young dentist had escorted Patricia or Rita to the pictures. More importantly, the next topic arose "Was he likely to be serious?"

I had found accommodation in a house with four other young men - two bank clerks, a dental technician and an insurance salesman. In a small dance studio in North Tamworth, three of us took dancing lessons; learning the basics of fox-trot, quick step, old time waltz, and jazz-waltz. Dancing had been a no-no area for me up to then, for good Methodists did not go dancing. While at school in Glen Innes, the Methodist minister had given us a talk about the problem of dancing; I quote his words "Christians should abstain from doing anything which might cause their brother (or sister) to stumble." I was not able to sustain such elevated levels of behaviour any longer and embraced this new activity with enthusiasm. Only recently, I read a quote of "Diamond Jim" McClelland, (Labour Senator in the Whitlam Govt.). "Why do Methodists disapprove of couples bonking in darkened doorways?" Answer: "Because it might lead to dancing!" Many years ago he was a neighbour of ours in Clifton Gardens and a renowned iconoclast.

After the dance studio visits, I went to most of the Balls at the Tamworth Town Hall in the winter season - Catholic Ball, Apex Ball, Hospital Ball, C.W.A. Ball etc. Groups of young debutantes were presented to some official, everyone clapped and the "debs" with their nervous escorts took to the floor. After this formality, the band struck up a popular tune such as "South of the Border". Sometimes I took a partner, but mostly just arrived and joined the milling crowd of young bloods, surveying the talent seated on chairs around the wall. As soon as the M.C. announced, "Take your partners for a fox-trot" there would be a charge across the dance floor to importune the girl of your choice and if lucky, sweep her off into the gyrating mass of couples already on their feet.

I joined the lunch hour water polo club, at the Olympic Pool, only one block away from the office. The routine was as follows - arrive 1300 hrs., change and in pool by 13.10, match 13.10-13.30, eat lunch 13.35-13.50, change and back to work at 14.00hrs. Such an activity was one of the advantages of the country, I guess! There were other activities - amateur theatricals at the Church, tennis parties and horse-riding. A party would hire horses from the local riding school and ride out into the countryside - Moore Creek was a favourite spot. Once there, we would light a fire, grill some chops or steak, brew billy tea and return slowly homewards, with a billy or two filled with blackberries. My companions were Grace Walker, Alma Southwood (both teachers), Ray Warne, (butter factory manager) and occasionally Tim McCoy (a dentist).

The war, still the phoney war was far, far away but slowly, imperceptibly life changed. Familiar faces at the water polo matches disappeared, off to army camp or air training in Canada; an R.A.A.F. Flying School was established in Tamworth, so Tiger Moths overhead and flying crew in the streets of the city, became part of the every day scene. My lovely dental nurse, Judy Upjohn, fell head over heels in love with a glamorous air force type - Flight Lieutenant Bill Leer. They married, but separation was inevitable in war time and this separation often resulted in disaster. The romance faded after the pilot went overseas and I suspect there was no real commitment from the gallant knight with wings.

Having heard nothing from the R.A.N. by the end of 1940, I was sufficiently restive to terminate my agreement with Reg Cook and return to Sydney. My parents had moved to St. Ives, where father was working as book keeper/general help at Camellia Grove Nursery, owned by Prof. E.G. Waterhouse (a camellia expert). The humble weatherboard cottage in the nursery was offered to Father, if he was prepared to be the resident caretaker.

Tired of waiting, I went to Victoria Barracks, Paddington and enlisted in the C.M.F. as a dental officer, with the rank of captain. Three weeks after donning the khaki uniform, a call came from Melbourne, for a final interview with Commander Dick Wolcott at the U.D.H. Chalmers St., Sydney. In due course, I came to the interview in Army uniform; but naturally my fate was sealed before I had said anything. His final remark, ringing in my ears was "You look fine in that uniform! I think you had better stick with the army".

NB: There was a division in the status of Australian troops in WWII. In the early stages of the war most soldiers who enlisted were volunteers which meant that they could be sent to fight anywhere at all, in Australia or overseas (members of the Australian Imperial Force-A.I.F.). When conscription was introduced, those who were called up were enrolled in the CMF (Commonwealth Military Forces). They were not forced to serve outside Australia.

I was not able to transfer from a C.M.F. unit to an A.I.F. unit until 1944, when I was transferred to 2/6th Dental Unit in North Queensland as part of 9th Division.

LIFE IN THE ARMY 1941-1946

My service career was set firmly on land rather than sea. A week later I was posted to the Sydney Showground and joined a group of dental officers who were working frantically to make A.I.F. soldiers dentally fit before they embarked for the Middle East. The first O.C. of the Camp Dental Centre was Jock Eliott, in civilian life an oral surgeon. He was followed by Alan Lawes a prominent suburban G. P. in a busy practice at Gordon before enlisting. When he was promoted to O.C. of the Dental Centre he became the most disliked major in my entire army experience. One of his fads was to insist on a morning parade for the dental orderlies, the army equivalent of chair side nurses. They were lined up, hands extended horizontally with palms downwards for a careful inspection of their fingernails each morning. Their hair style was also given close scrutiny. All this was somewhat humiliating and the same result could have been achieved in a better way. I remember that the same person did a thesis on "The Cause and Cure of Thumb Sucking in Infants" using experiments on and observation of poddy calves. This was a weird project, but he gained the DDSc despite some snide remarks from his colleagues. I slept with some of the officers on camp beds in the Nestle kiosk and ate in the improvised Officer's Mess under the main grandstand. One of the dental officers, who shall remain nameless, did 120 amalgam restorations in one day, keeping two dental orderlies working non-stop, mixing the amalgam in the now out dated method, using pestles and mortars. One may be forgiven for thinking that this event was just the dental equivalent of an urban myth, but I saw the record-breaking act in progress. It happened, but I was not impressed.

In early April I was posted to the Dental Centre, Bathurst Camp. We were attached to a Camp Hospital, rooming and eating with the medicos there. It was an interesting experience, as I was living with professionals, who had completely different approaches to the practice of medicine. Major Hales Wilson, a senior physician, was meticulous in his method of diagnosis. He would carry out a lengthy case history for each patient, order numerous pathology and other lab tests and arrive at his diagnosis. On the other hand, Major Kenny, equally experienced, would examine the patient for five minutes, look at his hands and tongue and prescribe the medicine or treatment. He scorned the tedious approach and preferred to "fly by the seat of his pants". I was not able to decide which doctor was more acceptable in an army environment. The training camp was fifteen miles out of town, but buses ran to and fro most evenings and at weekends. I used to attend the Methodist Church on Sunday evenings and being in uniform, soon found friends and accepted hospitality. In this manner I met many Bathurst families, including "Moppy" Wilson and daughters June and Hope. Margaret Moxham, a school teacher in Bathurst also became one of my friends.

June Wilson was a promising singer, soon to win a scholarship and go off to the Royal College of Music, London. Thus fate steps in, and shapes the direction and course of one's journey through life. Six years later, June was the one responsible for bringing together the Australian Boy and the English Girl in London.

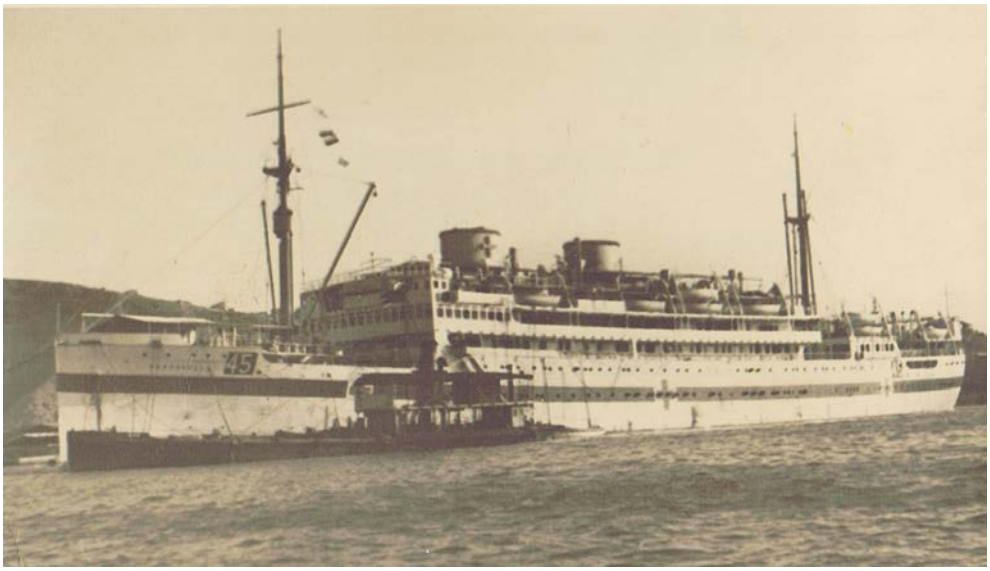
In the winter of 1941 it was bitterly cold in Bathurst Camp, there were heavy frosts every morning which lay on the grass until noon, unless in full sunshine. An epidemic of measles broke out, with the result that the Camp Hospital was filled with

soldiers who were seriously ill. A type of viral pneumonia was a common complication and it did not respond to M. and B., or to the sulphanilamide drugs, which were at that time the only available weapons to fight the disease. In the space of two weeks, twenty or so young healthy men died from the viral pneumonia. I happened to go on five days leave to my parent's home at Camellia Grove Nursery, St Ives while this epidemic was in progress. Within 24 hours of arriving home, I felt very poorly, ran a high temperature and "Bingo" my body was covered in a red rash. An army ambulance was called and after some hours of waiting, I was carted off at midnight to Prince Henry Hospital at La Perouse, at this time used for all service personnel with contagious infections. As was the pattern in Bathurst, viral pneumonia developed and I was seriously ill for two weeks. Perhaps the timing of my leave was only a coincidence, but I was extremely lucky to finish up in a major hospital.

During this time in hospital I was aware one night of gunfire out at sea, searchlights in the sky and general commotion. I learned the next morning (Jun 1st 1942) that Sydney Harbour had been invaded by Japanese midget submarines in an attempt to torpedo naval ships at anchor. Several U.S. and Australian vessels had returned to Sydney from the Battle for the Coral Sea, including the Canberra, Adelaide, Kanimbla, Westralia and USS Chicago. Three subs entered the harbour to attack these ships. An anti-submarine net stretched from Watson's Bay to Middle Head but there was a narrow gap left so that Manly ferries could pass to and fro. One sub closely followed a ferry through the gap and escaping detection, proceeded up the harbour towards Garden Island with the USS Chicago as its target. The second sub was entangled in the boom nets and the two man crew blew up their vessel. The third M24 sub is believed to have entered the harbour, negotiating the boom net but was sunk by depth charges. Meanwhile the first sub manoeuvred into position and fired two torpedoes at USS Chicago. Both missed their target, but one detonated under HMAS Kuttabul, sinking it with the loss of twenty-one lives. The M24 disappeared and its fate is not known. Five enemy subs were cruising off the N.S.W. coast at this time, sinking seven ships with the loss of hundreds of lives. This was not generally known, because of the strict censorship. On Jun 8, two of the mother subs shelled Sydney and Newcastle suburbs, but fortunately did little damage.

A week of convalescence at home followed my hospital stay, after which I returned to Bathurst feeling vastly better, but carrying some long-term after effects in the form of a lung condition - bronchiectasis which has continued to plague me for most of my life.

TWO YEARS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1942-1944



The Wanganella

Six weeks later, I was posted to 64th Aust. Dental Unit and after the issue of field equipment in Sydney, our unit embarked on the hospital ship "Wanganella", destination unknown. A rough passage across the Great Australian Bight followed, as we travelled far south of the usual shipping route into the Roaring Forties en route for Fremantle. On arrival we disembarked, travelled by train to Northam Camp, east of Perth, and shortly after boarded a troop train for a slow and rickety journey to Mullewa, 400 miles to the north. In this sandy, marginal wheat country, the unit set up camp ready to service the dental needs of 3rd Motor Brigade (a C. M. F. Formation, with an Armoured Brigade attached). Together these two brigades, plus pioneer and engineering units and a battery of 25 pounders, formed the 1st Armoured Division, but it was an improvised force created in an emergency, but which thankfully, did not have to face a hostile force.

The strategic plan was that this Division would be ready to resist any attempt by the Japanese to land on the W.A. Coast between Geraldton and Port Hedland, an almost impossible task for any army group in view of the length of coastline and terrain. This Armoured Division remained in the Mullewa-Mingenew area for two years, training hard, but acting only as a garrison force, while the battles raged in Europe, the Middle East, and in the Pacific.

Two dental sections headed by Rod McNeil and myself, set up field surgeries under canvas, in the mulga scrub and rapidly came to terms with our fellow officers and with the environment. We entered into the sporting activities, which took place after parades or on rest days, playing mainly basketball. I came across a book by Julian Huxley - "Better Sight Without Glasses" and following his regime of eye exercises, was able to discard my spectacles. I was able to practice dentistry without them for the next twenty years, so have always been grateful for Huxley's help.

There was a lot of bird life at Mullewa, but the predominant species was the galah. Being wheat country there was food in abundance and thousands of pink and grey galahs would perch on telephone lines making them sag alarmingly. Some of the officers in our unit became acquainted with the families of local wheat farmers and were able to buy fresh eggs and some plump chickens to augment our army diet. One bright spark borrowed a shotgun from a nearby farmer, but refused to disclose the reason for needing it.

Christmas was approaching and the supply officer was determined to provide a festive meal in the officers' mess despite canvas roof, tea-tree brush sides, limited provisions and lots and lots of flies. When that day arrived and we gathered in the ante-room, the menu was handed around with a great flourish. Eagerly scanned by the officers, it read as follows:

Asparagus tips on toast
Grilled spatchcock
Cold roast lamb and vegetable salad
Pears and tinned cream
Coffee, peanuts and raisins

There was a great deal of bonhomie and larking about, especially when the entrée was put in front of us. A brown and shrivelled carcase sat forlornly in the centre of each plate, obviously the smallest specimen of spatchcock in the world. The dissection of the bird to gain even a minute portion of meat was difficult but the discovery of some grains of lead shot gave us the clue - the local galah population had been reduced by fifty or so. For a worthwhile snack I think that three hundred birds in a pigeon - sorry - galah pie, would have better suited the appetites of thirty hungry men. The main course was adequate in quantity, but we didn't fancy the added protein provided by the fat maggots crawling between meat and lettuce.

In Padre Codd's tent there was a battered portable gramophone and when life in the mess palled I would join him to hear a scratchy rendition of Beethoven's Fifth or The Merry Widow on old 78 records. With Father O'Herlihie, I played chess and in so doing became more ecumenical, learning that the bigotry which existed between Protestant and

Catholic at that period had no place in the army, or any of the services. In Tamworth I had been told that no Protestant youth could expect to get a job at Reagan's Store (R.C.) or vice versa at P.G. Smith's emporium (Protestant).

Mother became seriously ill in 1943, having a major operation for bladder cancer at Wahroonga Sanatarium. Being on the other side of the continent 3000 miles away, a long delay occurred before I was granted compassionate leave and set off by train. After an interminably slow trip across the Nullabor Plain to Adelaide, I decided it was time to take drastic action. Flights were few and far between, but I managed to catch a DC3 plane to Sydney only to arrive too late to bid her farewell. She was a wonderful mother, with a great love of flowers and gardens and a great believer in the merits of liquid manure. I have memories of her excellent cooking, of delicious homemade bread, distributed generously to friends and those in need and of her cakes, cookies, and apple tarts. Her dream for retirement was to own an allotment big enough for her to grow a range of flowers, especially roses, for sale. In her younger days she had a nice contralto voice, and both she and Father (a baritone) sang in Eisteddfods, when this was one of the main musical activities of the time.

Mother died on 26/1/43 and I arrived on 27/1/43, to be greeted with the words "She is beyond all pain now". Essie Burnett, Mother's elder sister, came from Maleny to look after her during the last few weeks. When Auntie Essie returned home, I took Father away for a week to Goodnight Island near Nowra, after which it was time to return to army duties in Western Australia.

Thirteen days later I reached 3rd Field Ambulance, which had moved to Mingenew. Rail travel was slow and unreliable, due to impossible demands on the system and lack of maintenance of the steam locomotives.

Details from my diary 4/3/43 show very plainly the slowness of transport. A large body of service personnel including myself left the staging camp at Adelaide after a wait of three days for a train west. Due to the change in rail gauge, we had to transfer to the Trans-Continental train at Port Pyrie and dined at the staging camp alongside the line. Apparently there was no hurry to start. The train moved off at 1900 hrs, reaching Port

Augusta about 2300 hrs. Sixty miles out of P.A. the train jolted to a halt and after 30 minutes moved slowly off again, BUT going backwards. We had to return to carry out some repair to the locomotive. The train started again sometime in the middle of the night and we breakfasted at Wirappa 84 miles from P.A. The average speed for the journey was 7 miles per hour. The train then crawled at snail's pace to Pimba about 20 miles further on, where we whiled away the time (3hrs) before another jolting start.

Often the train would stop miles from anywhere in the middle of this vast plain for an hour or more while the locomotive crew collected old railway sleepers to stoke the boiler and raise a head of steam. There had been good summer rains and the local rabbits had multiplied in numbers due to the abundance of food. Now, in autumn, the grass was withering, the sandy soil drying out and hundreds of rabbits were dying of starvation. Nature is cruel and men can be sometimes. While waiting for the train to move on, some of the troops would chase a selected rabbit and run it down in a hundred yards, as all the rabbits were weak and had no stamina. A rapid coup de grâce would then put the rabbit out of its misery.

Having reached Mingenew, inland from Geraldton, I was moved from 3rd Field Ambulance to 1st Aust Armoured Div. Two days later my dental unit set up camp and surgery at 4th Motor Regiment. Months of boredom followed, tempered by occasional periods of learning experience. Long route marches, commencing with 20 miles, extending to 30 miles, and then to 40 miles were ordered by the Commanding Officer. Imagine the grumbling! A motor regiment used to rapid movement by lorry, Bren Carrier and scout car, forced to march like the poor foot sloggers (infantry). I had no business joining in, as my duty was plain - attend to the dental needs of the men and not to play at being a soldier. However, as the whole regiment, apart from the sick and maimed, went on these marches, there was little work to do and I got the C.O.'s permission to join in. These marches, getting longer and longer, eventually required a start time at 0400hrs and a return at 1800hrs. This was a good test of stamina, but I found I was able to keep up with the extremely fit troops.

The spring flowers were out and these route marches across a sandy plain, usually drab, but now transformed by masses of colour, daubed on an otherwise desolate countryside, stimulated an interest in the local flora. I identified the granny's bonnets, the masses of purple Lechenaultia, the spider orchids, the rabbit orchids and the antelope orchids, adding to my collection as time went by.

I was able to do some rifle and pistol shooting with the other officers, which was good fun. On one army exercise I was able to slip away from work with the Signals Officer to watch the troops advance on an objective, covered by a barrage of shells whistling overhead, coming from a battery of 25 pounders some distance to the rear.

On 4/9/43 my diary records the news that the Allies have landed on the toe of Italy. What a long, hard slog lay ahead of those troops, English, Americans and New Zealanders! I am twenty-four and a half years old today.

At meal times in the mess hut, all sorts of jokes are related to brighten the day. For example: From Field Engineer's manual 1937: "When you want to use the shovel, put down the pick and pick up the shovel" or yet again - Instruction in Jeep Handbook: "Mechanical breakdown of vehicle: Possible cause - No Petrol in Petrol tank—Remedy—Put petrol in petrol tank" Simple isn't it!

A piece of doggerel from the army rag-bag:

Pit-digger's theme song: Raise, strike, break, rake
Handle low, swing and throw.

Apart from weapon training and military manoeuvres, there was another side of army life, which had little appeal to the Aussie digger and that was the army parade. Perhaps the following notes at the time of a divisional parade will help you understand why!

G.O.C.'s Inspection (General Officer Commanding) Extract-7/9/43. First rehearsal for G.O.C.'s Parade-our regimental exercise seems to have been postponed indefinitely. I tell my men that they will have to go on parade - panic in the camp!! Owen Greenhaugh, my batman and a former Sein Feiner, at last obtains webbing from the Q. store after a wait of some months. 600 pairs "anklets web" arrive from Ordinance. Strange that they should come to hand, just in time for G.O.C.'s inspection!

We usually have a regimental parade every week, but this is an extra, a Brigade Parade. 8/9/43 Diary cont'd. Dress rehearsal for parade. Bugle call at 0500hrs. Raining heavily. Battery parades cancelled till 0830. My morning sick parade cancelled - transferred to afternoon. At 0830hrs there is a message by regimental runner - rehearsal transferred to afternoon. My dental parade for afternoon is cancelled. Regimental orders circulated at 1000 hrs: Midday meal at 1145. Dress-overcoats, slouch hats. 1100hrs: Multiple call from harassed adjutant—"Clouds breaking, overcoats will not be worn". As to be expected, with so many orders and counter orders, when troops assembled and marched on to the parade ground, some were in overcoats, some without. Such lack of uniformity caused another panic. An immediate order was promulgated - All unwanted overcoats to be removed - then collected and piled in Y.M.C.A. hut. There were men in brown shirts, men in blue shirts, men in no shirts at all. An officer arriving late clad in flash double-breasted overcoat beat a hasty retreat. There was a long pause and then an order from the C.O. through clenched teeth, "Batteries will break off to get A.F.V. (Armoured Fighting Vehicle) jackets."

The Army is structured in a complicated but logical way when it comes to parades. First comes the drill and practice for a regimental or battalion parade, our present situation. When this parade has reached the standard required, the three regiments, brigade H.Q. and support groups then have to drill together for a Brigade Parade. Both are a preliminary to the Divisional Parade, when three brigades and all their hangers on are gathered together in an ordered pattern, which is laid down in the Army Bible/Manual. This may be great fun for the organising coterie of officers, but it is sheer boredom and torture for the O/R's, who are assembled, drilled, inspected and moved from place to place like massed puppets on a giant board.

Now we can return to an account of the brigade parade to see what happened next. Our regiment marched to the sports ground to join the other regiments and attached units - all lined up in companies or squadrons. Then came the order from the Brigadier "Officers! Take post in review order!" "General Salute—Present Arms!" Our Brigadier was not satisfied. "R.A.A. that was not good enough! We will practice that again!" Four hours later, back in camp – more b***** rehearsals with the prospect of rifle and squad drill for men and saluting practice for officers behind the mess. Finally, there was another rehearsal, which showed more smartness and precision. Then the finale. "Now—all together! Three cheers for the General!"

Thursday 9/9/43. A glorious day for the real parade! Mass at 0700hrs. Breakfast and company inspections followed. There was a smell of fresh crushed grass, as we marched onto the parade ground. The troops arrived at 0920hrs, C.R.A. at 1000hrs G.O.C. at 1030. During the inspection, which took over an hour, about forty men keeled over after standing at attention for this long period. Seasoned soldiers learn to relax but it is not easy to fight the symptoms of impending disaster. One can observe the early symptoms of pallor, yawning, and swaying on feet before one's companion crumples to the ground. The platoon sergeants broke off and carried the crumpled figures unobtrusively to the rear. While standing in the back of a jeep, the G.O.C. gave an inspiring speech to boost the troops' morale. Always realists, the men grinned wryly while muttering, "Well at least we got issued with some clothing items in short supply".

The postponed field manoeuvres were carried out a week later. After a hard day and night the 3rd Regiment arrived back from the exercise at 0230hrs the next morning. All were wet and tired as it had rained all the time. The rain blows over frequently as the equinoctial gales are here in earnest. Finished "Sense and Sensibility" and exercised with dumb-bells in my tent before evening mess.

On Dec 1, 1943 I said good-bye to Dandaragan and 3rd Field Regt. Our dental section had orders to move to 2/5th Armoured Regt. It is mid-summer on the day we packed and moved, the temperature was 110 F in the shade.

The following day, our brigadier, Brig. Wells, arrived from Brigade H.Q. to join us for formal mess. Being posted to a different unit is a bit like joining a new firm. One tends to keep a low profile and get the lie of the land by a process of osmosis. I avoided the wild party afterwards - dive bombing and some dog-fights with model planes.

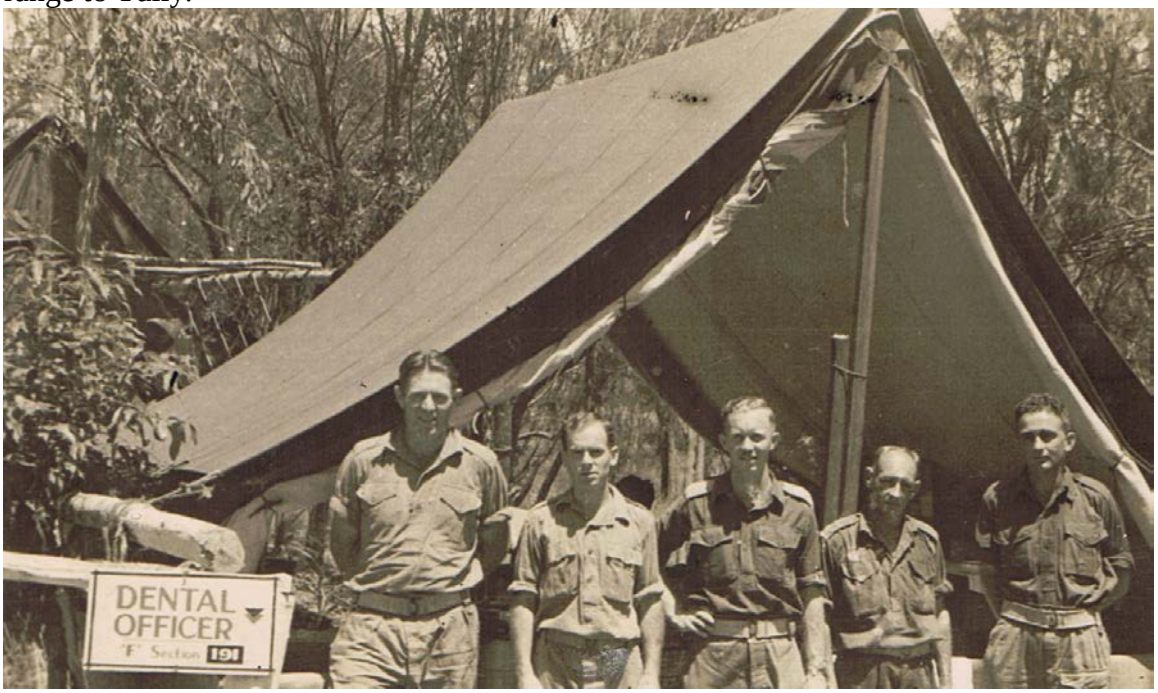
Padre Thomas, WD Suthers and John Best

The following three months were spent with 2/5th A.A.R., which turned out to be a very happy time with a group of good-natured officers. Some time was spent at Moora, in the dry desert country, some in Perth and down in the Karri and Jarrah country, where all units engaged in Jungle Warfare Training. I was detached from the Armoured Division late in March and on Good Friday, 7/4/44 left the staging camp at Chidlows by train for Kalgoorlie and the East. I was ten days in transit as the condition of the railway system had not improved at all. Crossing the Nullabor was a slow business, but eventually I made it to Cairns by an even slower Queensland train. On arrival, I was attached to an A.I.F. Dental Unit, the 2/6th, which meant that we were likely to see some action overseas.

WITH 9 DIVISION IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

In September 1944 I was transferred to 9 Div. and appointed D.O. to 18th Infantry Brigade. A Capt. Suthers was in each battalion of the brigade - Garth in the 2nd/9th, Angus in the 2nd/11th, and myself in the 2nd/10th. Later Rod Suthers became Brigade Major at H.Q. under Brig. Chiltern so it was a remarkable coincidence to have four related Suthers in the one brigade.

Most of the 9 Div. Units had moved to camps and training areas in a district on the Atherton Tableland called Kairi. I served there attached to 2/10 Battalion for three months. Then on November 6th our section was attached to 2/5th Field Ambulance for amphibious training at Cairns. The 2/5th was to be my unit when we went overseas and I had very little time to get acquainted with a new group of officers. There seemed to be more eccentrics among them than usual. Having loaded our army lorry with tents and equipment we joined a convoy which went by a southerly route via Milla Milla down the range to Tully.



There had been heavy rain both before and during the journey and when the convoy turned north, heading for Cairns and Trinity Bay, the bridge over the Tully River was covered by two feet of swirling flood water. There were no rails on the sides of the bridge, only the decking with its edges delineated by a border of logs about one foot high. Already one lorry had attempted the crossing and with no visible markers it had moved laterally and been swept off the bridge. Luckily the driver and the soldiers aboard had leapt out and had swum to safety. Though our lorry stayed put, a few adventurous souls had waded across. Two men in my section decided to follow suit, so I joined them. All went well until we reached mid stream, where the current was strongest. The force of water threatened to break the traction between the soles of our feet and the timber planks of the decking. We had to keep our feet very close to the planks, moving forward six

inches at a time. In this way, all three of us reached the other side. One might ask for what purpose, as we had to wait there for several hours until the water dropped and revealed the bridge margins.

Our camp was established in the coastal bush behind Trinity Bay, north of Cairns. All the troops practiced climbing up and down rope nets from the deck of a ship, with pack and full equipment. We embarked and disembarked on to or from craft bouncing in the surf; we learned to rig up our individual hammocks in the rainforest and to adjust mosquito nets and individual ground-sheets, for maximum results. This activity indicated that we were gearing up for some big move, probably an amphibious landing, after a long, long training period.

There was a great difference between our camp at Trinity Bay and the Brigade's established training area at Kairi. The scenery changed from open woodland country to fertile cane fields adjoining dense rainforest and high mountains rising from the narrow coastal plain. On the unit's first rest day, I joined a day excursion to Green Island, lying a few miles off Cairns. Among the passengers on the launch "Merinda", there was a group of laughing W.A.A.F.'s and starved for female company, two of us joined them, which made the day's outing very enjoyable

I was attracted to a W.A.A.F. Sgt., Gloria Passmore, who came from Melbourne. We met again on the return boat trip to Cairns and by mutual agreement went to an evening church service. This was the beginning of a romantic interlude, moved along by the thought that dramatic changes were imminent, or so we thought. She was full of high spirits, a dreamer who wrote poetry, to which I was partial and she had a keen sense of the absurd. I was able to take her to some beautiful

picnic spots, including Kuranda above Barron Falls. This village, the river, and the glades of Cabbage tree palms, seemed a paradise then, but much more ordinary, visited forty years later. (Same as the Danube, which only appears blue to those in love!).

The 18th Brigade completed amphibious training and we returned to Kairi on the Atherton Tableland, our base camp as it were. Gloria and I corresponded frequently in the first flush of romance, but with the difficulty of getting down to Cairns the relationship gradually cooled, as we had little opportunity to meet. I found these lines in my diary - December 2nd, which expressed in poetic terms, my feelings at the time.

"The tender bloom is faded, but still its petals hold
The fragrance of departed days, before our love grew cold.
The years can't dim the memory of happy days gone by,
And joy oft finds expression in the reminiscent sigh.
The dream lives on, though time has sped;
Beauty once known, is never dead."

Extract from diary 3/1/45-Today learned that Garth has gained his majority.

Over the next four months army life went on normally again, filled with dental duties, route marches, early morning P.T., basketball matches, and inter company debates, eg "Is advertising a nuisance or a necessity?" Also there were visits to 2/2nd A.G.H. at Rocky Creek to see two A A.M.W.S., whom I had known during University days. When meat could be scrounged from the Service Corps a few of us would organise a picnic, taking nurses to Lake Eacham or Lake Barrine, two picturesque lakes which had formed in volcanic craters.

However, amidst all these activities there was a sense of irritation and some personality clashes just due to the sheer tedium of army training in units already fully trained, plus the effect of rain, rain and more rain. Our small and compact dental unit looking after 9th, 10th, and 11th Battalions and Brigade H.Q. was a fairly happy crew. The only casualty during this waiting period was Bruce Sheppard, my quiet and inoffensive batman, who went "troppo". I arranged for him to be boarded out, before he cracked completely, did something foolish and finished up in detention.

One of the best cures for boredom was sport. Basketball was all the rage and company teams played other company teams, officers played men and officers played other officers. There was one eventful day which I won't forget in a hurry! At 0930 Gordon Loveless, our adjutant, called

asking me to play basketball in Officer's A team at 1030 against A. Coy. I hurried through the last two patients on sick parade, and dashed off to the court. During the first quarter of the game my S/Sgt arrived to say that Major Vincent (my boss from Div. H.Q.) had arrived and wanted to see me, and immediately!! Violent protests came from the spectators. I sent a message asking him to wait until the match was over (the arrogance of youth!). When I arrived back at surgery after the game, filthy dirty and sweaty, I found Major Vincent working on patients who had arrived unexpectedly at my canvas surgery. His sneaky tour of inspection (well justified I must admit, from his point of view) was just bad luck as thirty men usually didn't arrive suddenly without notification. There was also a captain from 2/9th, who had developed a dental abscess. He was striding up and down and fuming at my absence. My S/Sgt. was caught in the act of boarding (charting examination) of the men - not in the rule book- and definitely the job of the Dental Officer. A lot of shouting came my way and I was carpeted like a naughty school boy; things looked black, but my previous good record must have saved me and the storm blew over. The chaps in the mess say there is a vacancy in the unit for an A.1. Batman.

Extract from diary 4/5/45: F section, 2/6th A.D.U., attached to 2/5th Field Ambulance - departed in convoy for Cairns to embark on L.S.T. (landing ship tank) for some overseas operation. This was my last entry, as it was against army orders to keep personal diaries when serving overseas. I learnt that the Field Ambulance was to join 7 Div., which was to land in S.E.Borneo assisted by the 18th Brigade, while the rest of 9 Div., was to assault Labuan and Sandakan on the north coast

It was exciting to find oneself aboard a battle-scarred American ship, which had taken part in several Pacific operations. It was also quite a change in lifestyle to be able to walk into the galley and tap off a cup of coffee from a percolator always in service.

THE BALIKPAPAN OPERATION
MAY 1945 – FEBRUARY 1946

The ocean was reasonably calm inside the Barrier Reef, but crossing Torres Strait en route to Milne Bay we struck a gale, which rolled the flat bottomed ship around alarmingly. On both sides of the vessel, long metal pontoons had been welded for landing supplies in Borneo. These threatened to break loose, as every swell would rise up and hit the underside of the pontoons with a terrific crash. As duty officer one night, I saw the ship's engineers, drenched in spray, re-welding the pontoons to the vessel on the starboard side where the force of the waves had fractured the welded unions. The convoy staged for a day at Milne Bay then sailed on to Morotai, a coral island, where bitter fighting had taken place. Shattered remnants of coconut palms bore their own mute testimony to the fierceness of the pre-landing bombardment.

After a day at Morotai, where an invasion force was assembling, we sailed to a rendezvous off the coast of Balikpapan. The next morning the dawning light revealed to us a fleet of ships, rocking gently in a calm sea. It was not peaceful for long!

Continuous gun fire broke out from naval ships covering the landing, American Lightnings flew busily overhead, strafing the beaches and low hills, while assault troops were spilling over the sides of transports to board L.S.I.s (Landing Ship Infantry). The landing area had been heavily bombarded the previous few days and Jap resistance was minimal, as they had taken cover in a network of tunnels and well constructed dugouts.

At 0800hrs the Field Ambulance and C.C.S. (including our Dental Unit) clambered down the mesh ropes into small L.S.I.s, and headed for the shore. There was still some fire from light automatics and two heavier calibre weapons, but it was desultory and ineffective. The Field Ambulance took over a large bungalow, partly damaged, but with level grounds where tents could be erected. There was no looting as such but from the ruins of houses open to the sky, we collected two carpets and some chairs to provide some minimum home comforts. The oil refinery at Balikpapan and the town itself, had been destroyed almost completely, but all the Japanese troops had moved to the interior to avoid capture.

As my Dental Section rapidly became integrated with the Field Ambulance, there seemed to be more eccentrics to cope with on foreign soil. Idiosyncrasies often become more pronounced under conditions of stress. The C.O. was short in stature, bumptious and insecure, while the 2 I/C, a dreamy major, appeared to have a severe memory loss when it came to relaying orders from on high. Occasionally, I would be hauled over the coals because I had failed to attend a morning conference of officers. My quite valid excuse was that I had not been notified, but no one was concerned about the truth of the matter, only the inconvenience. Another captain raged on about giving precious drugs to the Japanese P.O.W.s, who were passing through the C.C.S (Casualty Clearing Station). He was planning to take a complete skeleton back to Australia to help him pursue further post-graduate studies after the war (guess where this would come from!).

In a lighter vein, a medical officer, David Pope, had a fixation about a mournful Scottish ballad which he insisted on playing on a battered old gramophone in the mess

ante-room every evening without fail. Probably the storm of protests which arose was mainly responsible for his persistence in this anti-social behaviour. The song went something like this:

Lord Randal had been poisoned by a rival and arrived home groaning in agony
Mother: “Oh, where have you been Lord Randal, my son?”
Oh! Where have you been, my handsome young man?”
Lord Randal “At the house of Marr, mither, so make my bed soon!
For I’m wearied with hunting and fain would lie doon.”
Mother “You are dying Lord Randal, Lord Randal my son!
Lord R. “Oh mither! Oh mither! Oh make my bed soon
For I’m sick at the heart, an’ fain would lie doon”
(this was his refrain at the end of each verse)

Captain Harry Fitch was the unit’s pharmacist. On one occasion in the mess, he must have appeared embarrassed, when cross-examined about the sale of contraceptives in his Perth pharmacy before the war. This topic held great promise for further teasing. Some genius hit on the phrase “Fitch’s frog skins for fastidious fornicators” Soon printed notices began to appear at random - at the ablution block, in the toilet or hanging on his tent pole, promoting Fitch’s f* f* f* f*f*. Such was life in the army!

Medical and dental sick-parades were held each morning, but the workload was light, for the first week or so. Mopping up operations resulted in lorry loads of sick Japanese prisoners arriving at the Field Ambulance and C.C.S., mostly suffering from beri-beri. This is caused by a lack of Vitamin B Complex and the deficiency affects the motor nerves of the legs and arms. They were quite unable to walk and had been abandoned by their own army units and left behind in two primitive hospitals. Our M.O.s were kept busy giving massive doses of Vitamin B to restore them to health, while on the Northern coast of Borneo, at Sandakan and Labuan, the Japanese were sending their prisoners-of-war on forced route marches, to kill off as many as possible before our troops could arrive.

Mopping up operations by the infantry battalions continued for several weeks. I explored the coastline and the

devastated port of Balikpapan but was not able to venture inland because of the very real risk of injury from booby traps. Once our section had set up the mobile surgery under canvas, emergency dental work kept us busy some of the time, while we had to participate also in the day to day functioning of the Field Ambulance. There were some casualties, as well as sickness among the troops. One tragic accident occurred when Col. Humphries, C.O. of another Field Ambulance, was killed by a falling coconut palm, when taking a photo. He had seen action and been bombed in Egypt and Palestine, only to be crushed by the trunk of a weakened palm within three months of the end of the war.

Meanwhile, both troops and accompanying civilian administrators were busy restoring normal civilian life. The dispersed native population returned gradually to what

was left of their homes and properties, while military police enlisted native constables to maintain law and order. Les Griffin, a dental officer in another Section of 2/6th Dental Unit, was sent to Bandjermasin on the southern tip of Borneo. A number of native and European prisoners including a group Dutch women, were requiring medical and dental care, as they had been living in atrocious conditions during the Japanese occupation. With the arrival of white Australians, who brought food, treatment and kindness, the bestowal of sexual favours occurred, with few of the inhibitions of normal society. Mopping up operations continued for several weeks with little happening except the arrival of groups of Japanese prisoners.

On August 8, without preamble, came a brief announcement over the radio of the surrender of Japan. None of us had heard of the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This news followed the main announcement almost as an afterthought and with no further detail. There were wild shouts and cheers, plus a few bursts of fire from rifles and automatic weapons. We collected in the mess hut, our beer ration was one bottle per man every two days so there was little scope for over-

indulgence. I had been teetotal during my army career, except for the occasional glass of port at formal mess (once a week). The rest of our unconsumed beer ration disappeared that day and I joined in the celebration, ending a long period of abstinence.

Some of us used to swim in the sea amongst or beyond the anti-invasion defences; tree trunks driven into the sand at 45 degrees to the open sea. There was no thought of sharks and no one was ever attacked to my knowledge.

A signals officer, a keen sailor, constructed a sailing dingy out of scrap timber from wrecked houses and covered the frame with canvas which was water-proofed. Somehow or other he made mast, main and jib, and then needed a crewman. Some of the officers looked at his makeshift sailing dingy and laughingly said, “No thanks!” I volunteered, somewhat ignorant of the dangers involved. The weather was kind, my skipper experienced, the boat held together, and we had many good excursions off-shore. With the rashness of youth, we sailed with no oars, no flotation bags and probably with little chance of being rescued, if we capsized.

One day before lunch, a tall figure in white shorts and lots of gold braid elsewhere accompanied by a retinue of naval types, entered our mess. I recognised him as Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of South-East Asia. The Borneo Operation, in retrospect, was not significant in bringing the war to a close, but one of the main objectives was to

free the prisoners-of-war quickly, in an effort to save as many lives as possible. This plan was frustrated, as we now know, because the Japanese top brass tried very hard to wipe out all the Allied P.O.W.'s in North Borneo, by sending them on forced route marches. The few survivors of these "death" marches, managed to slip away from the ragged line of exhausted marchers into the jungle, where they were cared for by the natives.

The points system governing return to Australia and army discharge was based on length of service, marital status, children etc., so I was well down the list, waiting from August '45 to January '46 in Borneo. Some officers and men volunteered to join the Allied Occupation Forces in Japan, others departed to Australia, leaving the forlorn few, as a garrison force to protect defence equipment and supplies.

The depleted number of officers in our Mess went on a drinking binge consuming can after can of--------NO! not beer, but tomato juice! There were cases and cases of it in store. Living conditions were excellent, as a group of officers including myself, moved into the empty residence of Brigadier Chiltern. It was set amongst a grove of coconut palms overlooking the sea.

At last our turn came, and a Liberty ship brought the rearguard back to Sydney. I had to wait a further two months for discharge and in that period I was posted to 113 A.G.H. at Concord. Professor Arnott informed me of a scholarship, granting one year's post-graduate training at the Northwestern University in Chicago. It would be offered to a Sydney graduate with a war service record. Brig. Gordon Rowell, A.D.D.S. at Victoria Barracks was a graduate from Northwestern in the pre-war years. He strongly advised me to apply. The scholarships had been discontinued during the war and now one person was to be selected from each of the five dental schools - Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, and Dunedin.

CHICAGO AND LONDON 1946 - 1947

In the meantime, while waiting for the scholarship to be granted, I worked part time in the R.N.S.H. Out-Patients Clinic and part time as tutor in Prosthetics at United Dental Hospital. The selection of candidates for Northwestern was made in May 1946 and contained the names of W.D.S., Sydney graduate, Laurie Williams from Melbourne, Roger Willoughby from Adelaide, Clive Hadlow from Perth; and George Davies from Dunedin, N.Z. I was a lucky fellow to be selected. Also my accumulated deferred pay provided enough funds to finance my travel and living expenses. (tuition fees at Northwestern provided by scholarship)

It is important to recognise the difference between the American degree of DDS offered by Northwestern and an Australian post-graduate degree. The DDS course was run at two levels, one for the final year undergraduates and a modified one for foreign graduates, who had come to the U.S.A. for the latest information on research and technology. None of the latter were specialists, but G.P.'s wanting to deliver a higher standard of treatment. The Australian Master's and Doctorate's degrees required original research and a thesis in a specific field. There was and is quite a difference in purpose.

I left Sydney in July 1946 on "Marine Falcon", a converted Liberty ship, together with an assortment of students, scientists, budding musicians and about 150 Australian girls. "Hold it, guys!" They were war brides at last able to travel to U.S.A. and meet up with American husbands, whom they had known for only a few weeks or even a few days. We were bound for San Francisco, via Suva and Tahiti. The accommodation was without frills - large dormitories below decks, each holding sixty wire stretcher bunks in

tiers of three. After life in the services, we settled in cheerfully, relishing the good meals, which were provided. Unfortunately the ice-cream, though in plentiful supply was tainted with kerosene. It was a luxury during the war years, as was decent coffee, so we had high hopes of the shipboard American cuisine. The voyage was smooth and uneventful, until early one morning the ship's engines slowed, the Golden Gate Bridge emerged from the typical San Francisco fog and a graceful yacht under sail and power hove to and despatched our pilot.
We had arrived!

On reflection, this record should contain some reference to the two years 1946/47, which had such a significant bearing on the direction my life would take.
So, very briefly, here goes!

From San Francisco, Laurie Williams, Roger Willoughby, and myself, travelled by Greyhound bus, going south to Yosemite Valley, and Los Angeles, across to Grand Canyon, Colorado and thence to Chicago. We arrived a week late, but just couldn't forego that scenic experience. We settled into Abbott Hall, the student residential building on the downtown campus and adjacent to the Montgomery Ward building, which housed the Medical and Dental faculties.

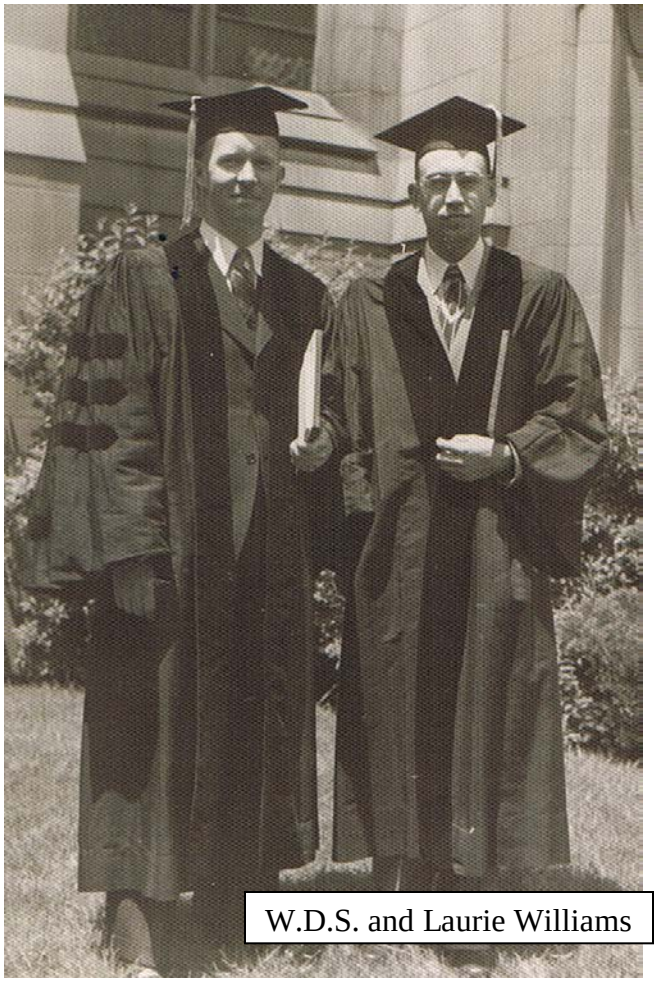
E. Chicago Ave – December 1946

There were 24 graduates from 9 countries in our group, so it was a wonderful experience to mingle with them over the year's course. I made many friends, including three special ones - Raoul Boitel, Ted Hyde and Hamish Thomson.

Christmas was spent with Albert Suthers, Professor of Comparative Religions at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware. He was my father's cousin, and that family -

Albert, Marie, and sons Rod and Derwent, have maintained a long and affectionate relationship with us since that meeting.

In the summer of ‘47 when the Evanston graduation ceremony was over, I was invited to spend a week (or more) at the Suthers cottage at Battle Point, Blind River, Ontario. George Davies accompanied me, and we experienced the Canadian equivalent of “Carawatha”. Then on to New York, a passage across the Atlantic on another Liberty ship to Plymouth. Having soaked up the very essence of England from books and magazines of the time, such as Punch, Argosy, Lilliput and Strand, I was the most ardent of Anglophiles, so the first sight of England was an exciting moment.



W.D.S. and Laurie Williams

Clive Hadlow, who spent the war years in London defusing bombs, referred me to Mrs Harris, a Scots lady in Earl’s Court, for accommodation and I quickly obtained a position, part-time in the Operative Clinic, part-time doing research with Gilbert Parfitt, at the Eastmann Dental Clinic, Grey’s Inn Rd., Kings Cross.

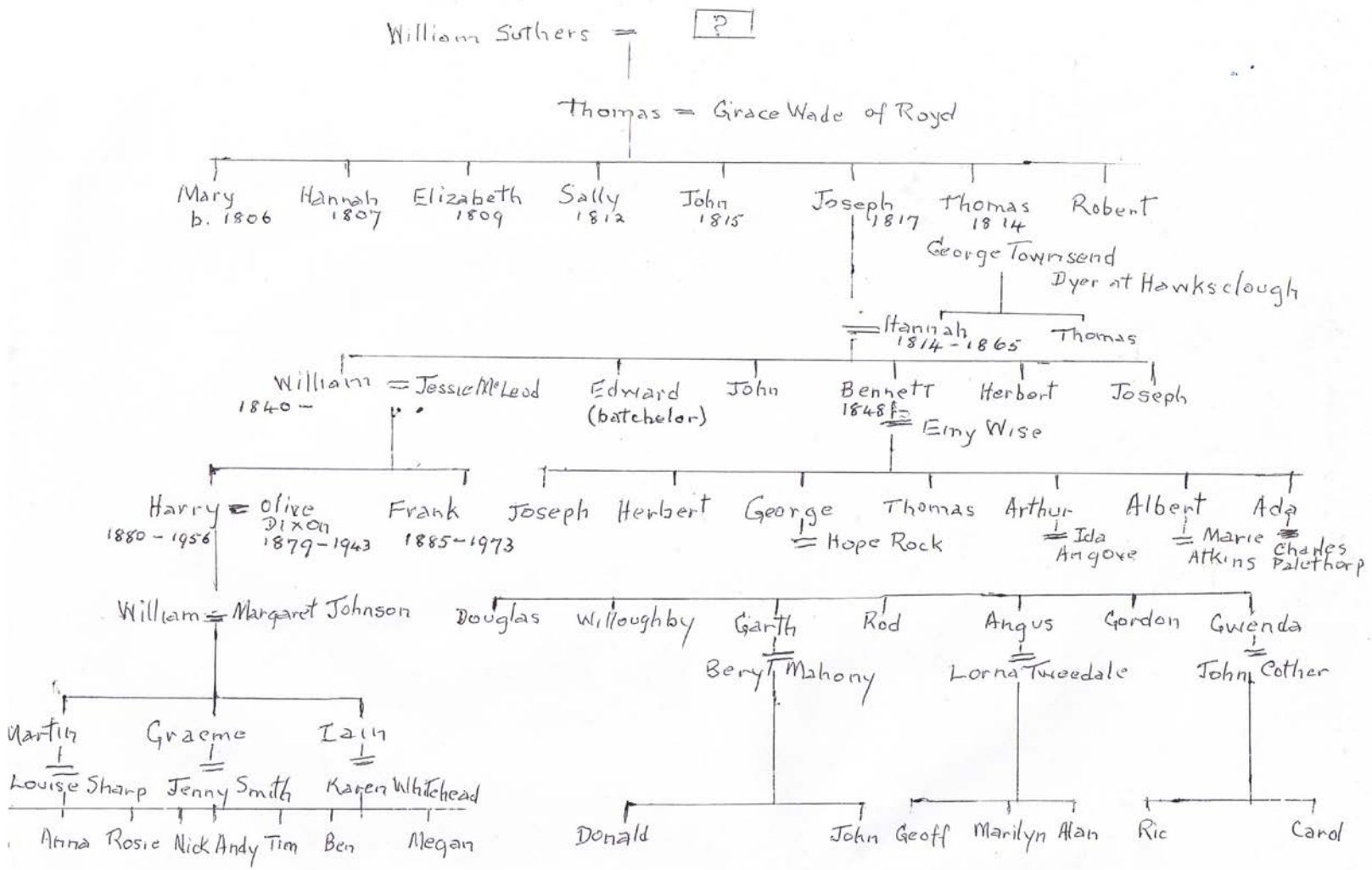
All Australians, on arrival, trek to Australia House in the Strand to collect mail or to make contact with someone or other. When I came to sign the Visitors Book, the list for that day included the name of Margaret Moxham, who had been a friend in Bathurst. My other Bathurst friend, June Wilson, was in London doing a three year course at the Royal College of Music. There was so much to see and do in London that life was one exhilarating whirl. The familiar names of Piccadilly, the Strand, Regent St. and dozens more, resonated in my brain, as I tried to come to terms with my dreams.

After some weeks, I contacted June, who invited me to a term dance of the College, to be held in a hall at Vauxhall Bridge. Having no partner, I invited Margaret Moxham to accompany me. During the evening, I was introduced to June’s English friend, Margaret Johnson, who was also a student at R.C.M.

I can’t remember just when I was smitten, but have a most vivid memory of leaning out of a window of the hall and seeing a figure leaning out of another window a few feet away. She was laughing at me and at that precise moment, cupid shot an arrow which hit me fair and square in the region of the heart. At the end of the dance, I escorted Margaret M. to a tram, thanked her politely and went back to meet the other Margaret. Two days later, June Wilson invited me to her digs in Barnes for a meal and would you

believe it, my heart throb was also there! So began the romance, which led to a long and happy marriage and the beginning of our own dynasty.

We were married on the 21st of December 1949 at St. Alban's Church, Lindfield.


William Suthers = ?
Thomas = Grace Wade of Royd
Mary b. 1806
Hannah 1807
Elizabeth 1809
Sally 1812
John 1815
Joseph 1817
Thomas 1814
Robert
George Townsend
Dyer at Hawksclough
Hannah 1814-1865
Thomas
William 1840 - = Jessie McLeod
Edward (batchelor)
John
Bennett 1848 = Emy Wise
Herbert
Joseph
Harry 1880-1956 = Olive Dixon 1879-1943
Frank 1885-1973
Joseph
Herbert
George = Hope Rock
Thomas
Arthur = Ida Angove
Albert = Marie Atkins
Ada = Charles Palethorp
William = Margaret Johnson
Douglas
Willoughby
Garth = Beryl Mahony
Rod
Angus = Lorna Tweedale
Gordon
Gwenda = John Cother
Martin = Louise Sharp
Graeme = Jenny Smith
Iain = Karen Whitehead
Anna
Rosie
Nick
Andy
Tim
Ben
Megan
Donald
John
Geoff
Marilyn
Alan
Ric
Carol

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William Suthers