

WHEATLEY BEACH TALES



BY DON WHEATLEY & FAMILY
COMPILED BY KEN GRAY

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Cover

Top left Nancy Wheatley, Silver Threads celebrations. Top right Don Wheatley with WWII artillery shell. Bottom photo Wheatley family, standing left to right: Joe Olsen, Debbie Olsen (nee Wheatley), Don, Florence, Alfred and Peter Wheatley. Sitting, Alfred's mother with baby Jan Olsen.

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FOREWORD

Don Wheatley, and his wife Nancy, who died in 2017 after a fabulous 65-year partnership with Don, have contributed immensely to the community of Mission Beach. This memoir is created from notes written by Don and Peter Wheatley, Nancy Wheatley and her mother Rita Mitchell.

The memoir starts in 1913 for Nancy's ancestors and in 1930 for Don's early life in Western Australia. Don tells us how the Wheatleys made their way to Mission Beach by 1940 and relates his childhood memories. Nancy tells of her childhood in Feluga, while Rita's story reaches well back to early times in Tully.

In 2018, when researching our history of World War II, I was referred to Don. There are differences between Don's memories and the official war records, yet that matters little for Don's colourful accounts made the task of researching our war history easier and more interesting.

Don is an avid collector of history; and one of the most important pieces among his collection is a memoir by Nancy's mother, Rita; a history of her family at Banyan. We seldom see the records of pioneer women and this is primarily about the intrepid Nell Brett, Nancy's Granny. At only 23 years of age this young lady from Yorkshire resisted the pleadings of her distraught family and emigrated alone to Australia, sailing to remote Townsville in 1913 and coming to far-flung Banyan.

We included part of Peter Wheatley's memoir and while there are some overlaps with Don's memoir, it adds content and perspective.

During the compilation of this Wheatley history, the Mission Beach Historical Society was forming and this was a priority project. As we transcribed the notes, it was impressive to see what Nancy and Don did to help make our town what it is today. In 1961, Don, with brother Peter, overcame immense hurdles to bring electricity to their sawmill and, a year later, to the town. Don and Nancy subdivided some of their land and built The Hub Shopping Centre. It took 3-4 years to overcome council inertia, yet they persisted. The Hub was a catalyst for the town to grow. In 1989, Don and Nancy donated land for the Uniting and Lutheran Church and helped deliver that project. That has meant much to religious people for the last 30 years.

The Wheatleys are among our district's most remarkable and generous early families.

Ken Gray,
Mission Beach Historical Society, January 2021.

1930 | WHEATLEY BEGINNINGS IN THE WEST

I was born Donald Crosbie Wheatley at a private hospital in Albany, Western Australia on the 8th of November 1930. My father, Alfred Henry Wheatley, was born in Melbourne, Victoria around 1886 and married Florence Ruth Goudie who was born in Coolgardie, Western Australia in 1901.

Scribe: Albany, located on the coast of WA, 420 Km south of Perth, was the first town in Western Australia to be settled by Europeans. That was in 1826. It is now the fifth largest town in the state with a population of 29,000. Coolgardie is a ghost mining town, 560 Km east of Perth, with a population of 850 today. It was founded in 1892 in a gold rush and was once the third largest town in WA with a population at its peak in 1898 of over 5,000 people. Today it is a tourist town.

Florence came from migrant parents, her mother being English and her father Scottish. Her father became a Royal Mail Contractor for the City of Perth using horse drawn transport. Alfred's parents were both English; his father died when Alfred was only 12 years old. Alfred had two younger brothers and the family was unable to locate them. One of them went to Bowen gold prospecting.

Of four children born to Alfred and Florence, Deborah Jean, the eldest and only daughter, was born in Florida, USA whilst Alfred was studying there. A son, Peter, was born next and then came me. Around the time that Peter Douglas was born; Peter the first born son died in tragic circumstances.

The first five years of my life were spent on a property on the King River, seven miles out of Albany. The home was built by an old sea captain with convict labour. It was built of granite and had 13 rooms. Built on the bank of the river, the farm was mainly dairy with several acres of tea gardens beside the river. During our pilgrimage back to Western Australia in 1999, it was a great thrill to recognize the house, plants and trees still standing from my childhood. The property is still known as 'Happy Days', the name given to it by my parents, but it is now a tavern and caravan park, with the original house being used for wedding receptions and functions.



The paradise we left: 'Happy Days' Caravan Park remains a fabulous location today.

We left Western Australia in 1935. Alfred Wheatley was a Physiotherapist and Naturopath with a yen to find the ideal place to live and raise the family. We went to Sydney on the SS *Westralia* then we lived for some months at Bondi Beach with my uncle Walter, who had a gymnasium and taught physiotherapy. Then we left for Parramatta, Sydney, where I had my first taste of school life. However, before long we were on the SS *Katoomba* heading up the coast to Cairns.

The trip was not without event. When we reached Daydream Island, Dad placed a deposit on an island in the Whitsundays. Mum took one look at the island and said, No.

In Cairns, we had a house in Edge Hill on a nine acre lot with fruit trees and a grass paddock for a cow. I went to the Parramatta school. Dad opened a practice and built a good clientele. He was a dedicated and well educated man in his field. His University of Chicago studies included physiotherapy, medicine and naturopathy. He took further medical examinations in Australia, but his passion natural healing and he didn't believe in drugs.

We kids walked the two miles to school and used the bus when the weather was bad. Cairns was quite different from today; there were dirt roads, few shops, no high rise buildings and plenty of swamps. Swamps were drained in the war, as there was an enormous mosquito problem and a risk of malaria. I caught malaria twice and we used Leichhardt tree bark to treat it because of its quinine content.

In the wet, Peter and I paddled our canoes, made from a log, for miles around the back streets of Cairns. The area was snake ridden and I was bitten four times. There was an advertisement in the local paper stating that the Browns Bay Zoo wanted snakes, so Peter and I went out searching in old wells, and under logs and such places that you might find snakes. Deborah took pity on the captured snakes and liberated them.

Swimming was my favourite sport and we spend every afternoon at the "baths". This was a fenced in area on the Esplanade where the Hilton Hotel now stands. Deborah was the swimming club champion for two years in a row, but I was a very average swimmer. One day, while we were on our way to the baths, we saw a 12 foot crocodile that had been shot just across the road..

The only sandy beach was just north of the Cairns Base Hospital. We dug for crabs there. A friend, Neville Burman, owned an old flat bottomed boat, that he kept tied to a fig tree near the nurses quarters. He left his fishing gear in the boat from one week to the next and nothing ever went missing.

1940 | FINDING PARADISE

Dad spoke to a friend who said he knew of a beautiful property in a place south of Cairns called Mission Beach. He offered to take my father to Mission Beach to see the land. This was only three days before World War II broke out in 1939. It was a 300 acre property and house with 500 coconut palms and many fruit trees which were imported from Ceylon in 1917 by Mr E J Banfield of Dunk Island who also planted such trees on the island. There were a couple of dozen hens and 100 goats as well and Dad could not pass it up for £300. It was owned by pioneer, George Webb, and this was everything my father was looking for. Half a mile of absolute beachfront and a beautiful view of Dunk Island. So, he signed up for it there and then without my mother even seeing it or giving her consent but she fell in love with the place just as he had.



View of Dunk and Timana Islands from the Wheatley farm – from Facebook page of Wheatley Estate, posted 2013.

This was to be a great change in our way of life. George Webb had installed a caretaker who was from Helen Pedley's family. We came to know them very well when they stayed on with us for a month after we arrived permanently on 21 May 1940. The first home on the farm was made of sawn timber and split slabs, with an iron roof and timber floor, except for the kitchen. Dad called this the old galley. It was built apart from the rest of the house and had a compacted antbed floor.

In the old galley there were several barrels, some of which contained brined meats. We had a herd of 160 goats and brined some of the meat. The other barrels contained fish and scrub birds such as turkeys and pigeons. When something was plentiful we preserved it for leaner times. We also had a good vegetable garden fenced off from the goats.

The property had no reticulated water or electricity, but we dug wells for water and carried buckets of water up the hill to the house and made do. Tank water was used for drinking and cooking.

PETER WHEATLEY

Dad's ambition was to heal people by natural methods. He spent three years with Mum in the 1920s traveling and studying Swedish massage, chiropractic diet and diagnostics USA and returned in 1935-36 to study medicine at Chicago University. Here he experiment with pigs to develop cures for diseases by using different diets. He was 50 years ahead of his time.

Dad and Mum rented a shop in Asplin Street, Cairns and started a health clinic there. They were so busy that they left for work before daylight and got home after dark, only having Sundays at home. Debbie was at high school and Dad bought her a bike. There were no buses and money was scarce, so a bike was a luxury. Cairns was known as the City of Bikes with few cars, and everyone rode to town or work by bike. The streets were lined with bike racks.

Dad wanted a property big enough to build a health farm where people could stay and be treated. He also wanted a farm to be self-sufficient. Late 1939, Dad biked south to Mission Beach. On the north side of the 'Mission Station' lot vacated by the government after the 1918 cyclone he found a 300 acre farm owned by George Webb. It had 20 acres of cleared land with 500 coconut palms, 30 acres of orchards and vegetable gardens with 30 mango trees covered in fruit. Dad's favourite fruit was mango and he was impressed with the coconuts, as the oil that he used for his massage work was coconut which, because of the war, had become hard to get.

George Webb was living alone and made Dad welcome and invited him to stay. He was a policeman in Cardwell when he selected the block in 1913. He was a man of few words. Dad asked George if he would sell the block and George did not answer. Next day he said, yes.

Hollis Hopkins, George's brother-in-law came across from Dunk to see George, who told him he was selling the land to Dad and would he witness the agreement. Hollis was upset and refused to witness it, so Dad had to stay until after New Year when he and George rode their bikes to Tully to have a solicitor to settle the deal.

Dad soon had a Chev 4 Cylinder Ute and took us to see the farm the following weekend. The roads were unsealed and it took nearly a day each way but we were delighted with his choice of land. We made three trips with a load of gear to the farm, taking two days on each trip. On the first trip, I trod on a black snake when loading the ute. Dad put a ligature on and we went to Mrs. Percinas home and got a basin of hot water for my foot while Dad cut the fang marks with a razor. I had been bitten three times by snakes and each time we used hot water treatment and I didn't get sick. They rubbed condies crystals into the cut and bandaged it.

George Webb left for Victoria and purchased a small farm. Dad had Mr. and Mrs. Walker stay as caretakers while he and Mum wound up their business and sold their property in Cairns.

On the morning of the 21st of May 1940, we loaded the ute with the rest of our belongings and set off for Mission Beach. The family included 'Bonnie Blue Bell', our golden collie, who came all the way from 'Happy Days.' We arrived at 6pm. The full moon was rising over Dunk Island casting a golden path to the beach. and Mum said, 'What a glorious welcome'. Every year I looked for that to recur, and it took 30 years to do so. I have not seen it return since on May 21st.

The farm had three buildings. The sleeping area was a timber frame with flat iron walls, iron roof, concrete floor, only one room with a front verandah. The main house had one large room with a

wooden floor, chamferboard walls with a verandah with concrete floor on three sides, with two rooms on the western verandah. The south-eastern verandah was partly closed in for a sleep out.

Behind the main building was a large kitchen made of split black bean slabs attached to broad-axed timber beams, and an iron roof with a dirt floor covered with tar Congoleum. The fire-place was a ring of rocks with a beam across with wire hooks to hang billy cans and kettles on; camp ovens were put in the fire. Another beam carried wire hooks to hang salt meat and fish to dry and smoke. There was no refrigeration and dry salting and smoking was the way to keep meat and fish.

Dad was a champion cook and baker, and made fresh bread, scones, bread and butter puddings and roasts. They got a cow from Ron Flegler at East Feluga. Aboriginal man, Toby Nelson worked for Ron Flegler and lived on his block with his wife Nellie. Toby took the cow to our place on a lead for 16 kilometres. Mum made Toby a plate of roast beef sandwiches and after he had eaten some he asked her for a paper bag. Mum asked him why he needed a bag, and he said the sandwiches were so good that he would like to take the rest home for Nellie.

There was a large chook house made of pea wire to make it snake proof. Pythons, tree snakes, quolls and white-tail rats ate the chooks and eggs if they were not shut up at night. We split coconuts for the chooks to eat by pecking them out of the shell, but the chickens, ducks and turkeys needed the coconut taken out of the split nuts and minced. It gave us a coconut milk that was thick like dairy cream and could be used fresh as cream. If stood overnight and stirred well it turned into coconut butter or cophia. To make coconut oil it was left in a billy can for 3 or 4 days to ferment when the clear oil rose to the top. The nuts made good fuel if split into four pieces.

The roads were built from 1936 to 1942 and were cleared by hand by men with families as a job creation project. They set up camps for the families alongside creeks. They bought our fruit, vegetables and fish and we caught fish by dragging a 50 yard net near the mouth of the creek.

Dad did a deal with a local saw miller, Charlie Dickenson to supply sawn timber in exchange for logs to build huts for patients receiving treatment. He built a six room barracks style unit on four feet stumps. It had a wide verandah, wooden floor, weather board cladding and iron roof. Then an office and massage room. Later he erected a second accommodation building made with concrete floor and walls made of pea wire with cement plaster. After the war, we bought an army building as well. All of this we did by ourselves, and you did not have to ask anyone if you could or couldn't build or how or where. In those days, people considered themselves lucky in the bush if they had six sheets of iron over their heads and some Hessian bags for walls, and a dirt floor.

1913 NELLIE BRETT at BANYAN

Written by Rita Mitchell at the suggestion of her grandson, Gregory Wheatley, in memory of her mother and father.

Scribe: The author of this chapter is Nancy's Mum, 'Rita' (Margaret Emma) Brett (1916-2003). Rita speaks of her sister Olive, born in 1919 and of her father George Frederick Brett but mostly of her mother Helen (called Nellie) Brett nee Bately (1888-1958.) Rita's husband was Selwyn James (Jimmy) Mitchell (1907-1961).

My parents were from England (*Scribe: father initially from Wales*). Dad migrated to Canada but wasn't happy there, so came to Australia in 1912 because his brother, Alf had come to Western Australia. He arrived in Brisbane and heard that land was being opened in the north for sugar. He and Bert Harman from New Zealand selected adjoining blocks at Mena Creek.

My mother was merely 23 when she arrived in Townsville in 1913 aboard *Perthshire*. She was quiet and retiring and I often marvelled at her courage in leaving home and her family and coming to a strange land. There were many times when she yearned to return home, but when they were all saying goodbye at the railway and her eldest sister was persuading her not to go, one sister said, *Don't bother Annie, she will soon come snivelling home*. That biting remark kept her from returning even though, when she left, she had the money for her return ticket. She kept that money until she was married.

There were four children in Dad's family; one died in infancy. His brother, Alf in Western Australia, was a tailor who married and had a daughter, Thirza. That family was much more affluent than we were. We received lovely parcels from them; any parcel was lovely. Twice a year there was a parcel of Thirza's outgrown clothes. On one birthday, Olive and I each got a silver serviette ring with our names engraved on them. We didn't have use for such things although we always had a tablecloth on. Another year, we each got a beautiful crystal necklace. When Olive and I went to boarding school, we took our silver serviette rings. Cousin Thirza did pen painting and one year Mum received a nice black velvet cushion cover with a basket of flowers painted on it. At that time, we didn't have a chair suitable for a cushion so it was put away to be used later. Mum had a big cabin trunk that she had brought out from England. She kept all her treasures in this trunk, her crocheted doilies that her mother and sisters had done for her 'box', her mother's christening mug and a big photo album with family photos and cards of places in England where she had worked. It was often brought out when friends called, especially Mrs. French, who was also English. It was Mum's memory book.

Dad's sister, Gertrude had two children, Dennis and Joy. Joy never married and was still living in the house that my father was born in until she died in 1994 at 78 Suffolk Road, Ipswich, Suffolk England. My father was christened George Frederick Brett, he was a kindly, Baptist man bought up to attend chapel every Sunday, but when he came to Queensland there were no churches and eventually, when a Methodist church came to Tully, he went there. Mum was Church of England but not as devout as Dad. I was christened Church of England because Mum had me christened before bringing me back to the bush. Olive was christened Methodist because in those days living in the bush the only clergy were the ones who travelled by horse. A Church of England minister called and Mum asked him to christen Olive, who was two years old, but he said he couldn't because the father wasn't there. Mum said, *The next minister who calls I will get to christen Olive, no matter what religion*. The next minister happened to be Methodist.

Mum came from a big family of eleven children; she was the seventh. Her father was a stonemason and there is still quite a bit of his work decorating buildings in Darlington, especially over the entrance to the railway station. Her mother kept a market garden, I have often wondered how she found the time but I suppose the elder children looked after the younger and in those days, they started work very young. When Mum was twelve, she worked in 'The Big Houses' scrubbing the front steps and washing up. She had big hands and said it was because of all the scrubbing. As she got older, she got work that was higher up in the social scale in as servants in 'The Big Houses' had a pecking order. When Mum left England she was a parlour maid, which was pretty high up. It was knowing how to set the table, look after the silver, wait at tables and so on. She knew the etiquette and if the occasion had arisen for her to dine with society (whatever that means) she would know the order the cutlery and wine glasses were used.

When Mum left England, she came with a friend, Jessie Percy, who later married a Methodist minister and eventually lived in Fiji. The journey took six weeks and they had fun. The first port of call was Townsville where the two girls disembarked. They needed work, which they had been told was plentiful. Jessie met some people on the boat and was offered a job at Ayr. She went and that was the last my mother saw of her until 1956 when she came to see us on the boat as we were leaving for a holiday in England. They had kept in touch, writing at Christmas or on births or deaths.

Mum's first job was as a waitress at the Queen's Hotel in Townsville. It was Townsville's first-class hotel and is now the studios of Channel Seven and the exterior is part of Townsville's listed heritage. She stayed there a short time. Being a very shy person, she couldn't take the teasing and being called a 'new chum' with her 'pretty red cheeks', so she left to go into a private house, but what a disaster that was! How many nights must she have cried herself to sleep, and wished she were home, a lonely young girl knowing no one and in a strange country? In service in England, she was treated as a person, taking orders from and being trained by the housekeeper, but at this place she was spoken to as if she wasn't a person. The food cupboard was locked every night so she couldn't have any extra and was even accused of taking food to her friends. Dr. Brinal who visited, noticed how she was treated and offered her work at his home. His son became a well-known doctor in Townsville and only retired a few years ago. Mum was very happy working for the doctor's family and when she left, they said she would always be welcome back.

At this home, she met Mrs. Dean who with her husband had land at *The Banyan*. She had baby twin boys and asked Mum if she would like to go north to see some of the country. She went and helped look after the babies for her board - this was a way of getting a cheap servant. The Deans had land where the Tully high school is today from the railway crossing and stretching back to the hills. They had a small house where the poultry farm used to be. They had the post office and the mail used to come up from Cardwell to the Hull landing - it was a busy river in those days. For quite a few years our mail was addressed to 'P.O. Banyan' until the population grew and the town of Tully emerged.

The Deans always thought they were a couple of stations above us; the boys always called Mum Nellie, even after she was married and, in those days, married women were always referred to as Mrs. At any function, such as Olive's wedding, they said, 'when Nellie was working for us' but always found it convenient not to mention that she was never paid for her work. When they left Townsville to come to 'The Banyan,' they came by boat to Cardwell and then on a horse-drawn dray, which was a long, rough and tiring way to travel. On the way, they stopped at a house called *Bellenden*, owned by Brice Henry. Mum said the Deans went in and had afternoon tea and she was left sitting out in the

dray and wasn't offered a drink or a bite; she was seen as a servant. Mrs. Henry was a snob. Years later, Brice Henry, riding his horse from Innisfail called in at our house which was halfway and he was always drunk. He was given a cup of tea and a meal and helped back on his horse.

Meanwhile, Dad was gradually clearing his block preparing it for sugar planting. The vegetation was thick rainforest. Beautiful large trees were kept for the loggers; oak and bean to name a few. They were mostly cut by two men using a crosscut saw and were carted away by bullock wagon. Logging went on for years and one time, a bullock lying in the harness refused to work, so a small fire was lit under his nose - he soon got up and did his share of pulling!

Timber was cut by axe or crosscut saw, but it took two men to use one so, unless you could afford to pay a helper, you and a neighbour worked together. After the scrub was felled, they burned it. It took a few burnings before the paddock was cleared. Stumps were dug out or blown out with gelignite. It is surprising what was done with axes, a crowbar, a pick and shovel. The tools were well cared for because everything had to be sourced from Cardwell or Hull Heads by pack horse.

Besides Dad and Mr. Harman, there were only two other 'settlers' at that time, both Germans. In three or four years it was all settled. Pack horses carried goods or a horse dragging a sled was used. The sleds were cut from a fork of a good size tree with both sides adzed flat and a chain attached so it could be drawn by a horse. You stood on the top of the fork to drive the horse. Drays carried roofing iron, stoves and beds but there were no bridges so it was a rough trip. A large sack was used to make the pack, the middle of the sack was cut on one side then thrown over the horse and things were put evenly on both sides. Everyone had a riding horse and a pack horse.

When Mum and Mrs. Dean arrived, they were the only two white women in *The Banyan*, and that was so for the next four years. The Deans had the post office, which was the meeting place for the few settlers from Feluga to the Hull and Tully Heads. It was there that Dad and Mum met. When they decided to get married and set the date, the minister from Ingham couldn't make it across flooded creeks. They were married on 7 January 1915. Mum's mother and sisters sent nice things for her wedding and glory box; crocheted doilies and tablecloths and a white voile wedding dress and lawn petticoat. It was many years before the gifts were used but they were kept in that big cabin trunk. The wedding day was a jolly affair; the whole district was there. Mrs. Dean and Mum were the only women there, with Dad and Mr. Harman best man, and five other men. One of the men shot some wild ducks for the wedding breakfast. They left for their future home each on a horse, with plenty of rice being thrown and an old boot for good luck.

My parents' marriage was the first white wedding performed at Banyan, later to be called Tully.

The house Dad built was a modest affair with an iron roof and hand-split shingles for walls. The floor was also hand-split timber and there was a bed, a wood stove, a table and a couple of chairs and Mum's two cabin trunks. Cupboards were made of wooden boxes. It was built on the bank of the beautiful fresh, clear creek. Clothes were boiled in kerosene tins and rinsed in the creek; washing was done in this way for many years before she got a copper boiler, but the clothes were always rinsed in the creek and she would have a tub of blue water to blue the clothes and everything was wrung by hand. All sheets, underclothing, tea towels and table liners were white and the women were proud of their sparkling white wash. Mum said that soon after she was married, a goanna came into the kitchen

and she got such a fright she threw her rolling pin (a wedding present) at it and broke one of the handles off. I am still using that rolling pin, minus two handles and promised it to Bronwyn.

Mum chose not to have an engagement ring. She said her hands were too big and she didn't like attention being drawn to them, so Dad bought her a brooch. She was always known as Helen (called Nell) until she obtained her birth certificate and found her real name was Ellen. When she left England, her sisters gave her a signet ring with H.B. engraved on it. My parents' home was humble yet Mum said, 'you can make it look like home with bright curtains and red cushions.'

To earn income, Dad was cane cutting at Mena Creek and worked our 'block' in the off season. Many months had to be spent on the block each year or it was forfeited. They closed the door of their home and mounted their horses and away they went.

There were Aboriginals about and they were friendly; you wouldn't see them for weeks then one morning you woke up and there they were. They built their 'mia-mias' of palms and stayed a while, then one day they were gone. They were treated well at our place; Mum always had some bright pieces of material on hand to make frocks for the women and had plugs of tobacco for the men. The women liked tobacco too. They brought a handmade basket when they came. In later years, when there was only *King Billy* and his woman, he would ask for some money. I think they were Murray people and twice a year or more they arrived just to see *missus*, then went to the Hobans' place. When they were rounding up the Aboriginals to send to Palm Island, the Hobans sent their blacks up the mountain so they wouldn't be caught. It was very sad for some of them, one woman came to tell us her little girl Rosa had been taken and every time she called, she would cry about her Rosa.

The Hobans had them working a little on their farm, and in the evening, they would come to the back steps and she would give them a big pot of food and a loaf of bread. They liked curry. We never had any of them working for us. We played with the piccaninnies, but they were shy. The women always seemed to be laughing. I don't remember much about the men; I suppose they were away looking for food. At the back of our house was a fruit tree and fruit was gathered and the shell peeled off and the nut part pounded up for flour by the women.

We still have some of the baskets made by the Aboriginals. They are far superior in weave and durability to baskets made overseas. They would sell well in shops, but I suppose the art has died out now and in any case money comes too easily today. Once King Billy told my mother, *White man taste all the same Pig*. We were never afraid of them and had no trouble; they were always treated as people. Mum was pleased to have someone to talk to and as the years passed, they were all friends and looked forward to seeing each other.

In 1916, Mum went to Townsville for my birth. She went by boat embarking at Innisfail or Mourilyan Harbour. She was in Townsville for six weeks after I was born, staying with the Buntings. They were Phyllis Beatie's grandparents. I was christened in the Church of England. I was told I wasn't a robust baby, but I didn't have problems that needed a doctor's attention. Olive was born in the house prematurely at Mena Creek in 1919. Mr. Harman, who was living with my parents, was sent off on the horse to fetch the doctor, but by the time he returned Olive was born. One of the neighbouring women came in to help, but Mum was back to her duties in two days.

My parents had difficulty rearing Olive until she was seven. The first anxiety was when she started teething and had convulsions. I remember Mum on her knees by a tub of water ducking the baby in

and out; the home treatment in those days was into cold water then into hot. There was a time when she got *the spren*, it's similar to diarrhea. All home remedies failed, so it was off to Innisfail to the doctor who said it was caused by drinking creek water, so from then on, all drinking water was boiled. When Olive was three, she fell on a tin and cut her arm badly. Mr. Harman was the ambulance man. All he had in was bandages, cottonwool and candies. He bandaged it and she was taken to a doctor.

The railway line was not in so Olive was taken from Feluga to Innisfail by 'push and pull' - the trolley that line workers had to go to work on. Today they are motorized, but they had to use manpower, so the four men worked the trolley all the way to Innisfail. Mum stayed with me. Olive had her arm stitched and stayed in hospital. A week later, Mum visited Olive and returned with her because Olive had sores in her ears and wasn't properly looked after. Olive still carries a nasty scar on her arm, and when she was younger it looked bad as it was such a poor stitching.

Olive then had earache. They tried warm olive oil, then a hot pad and syringing, but still the ear ached. The Tully doctor found a piece of cotton wool jabbed in; causing an abscess. Once Olive jumped off a log and ran a lawyer cane stake up her foot. It took weeks to heal. There were no tetanus injections or antibiotics, just good old Lysol and hot water. Mum said she didn't know how Olive survived. Olive had a speech defect and only I understood her. The teacher asked me to interpret.

1918 brought the terrible cyclone. Before it came, Mum went to Townsville with me to a dentist. We arrived back to Dunk Island aboard the *Lass Gowrie* two days after the cyclone passed. It wasn't until we got there that we knew of the cyclone. Mum was worried about Dad, so begged Chris Wildsoet to row us to Bingil Bay. Chris and an Aboriginal man rowed us across and when we got there, Mum was thankful to find Dad was alright, although he had been caught in a flood in Maria Creek and had to spend all night clinging to the top of a tree. He couldn't swim so stayed there. His mate decided to swim but was swept away and drowned. [*Scribe: Alf James.*] The roads were impassable with fallen trees so we stayed at Bingil Bay. Dad was anxious to see how the house and property had fared so he walked from Bingil Bay to Feluga; luckily the house was still undamaged.

After the cyclone, they went to South Johnstone for work. Dad was walking along the mill railway line over the bridge and was shot in the stomach by a man who was shooting ducks. He was in hospital for six weeks. Mum was fortunate to have friends in South Johnstone nearby; they were Chinese called Ah Shay and took Mum and I into their home until Dad came out of hospital. Olive and I visited old Mrs. Ah Shay six years ago and she still lived in the large old home with one of her sons and daughter-in-law. She had lost a leg and was in a wheelchair.

In 1920, Mum and Dad rode from Mena Creek and from then on; Mum stayed on the block and Dad rode to work. Olive rode in front of Mum and I rode in front of Dad. When crossing Maria Creek near El Arish, there was only about a three-foot bridge and such a high drop. Mum went first on her horse, and when we got home Dad had built a new house. It was small home; one middle room on about three-foot blocks, a front verandah with the weather side boarded, and a back verandah which was the living quarters. The floor was of thick, hand-hewn bean, and the sides were split shingles with an iron roof. The shingles were made of oak; a log was cut with a saw into 2' 6" lengths then the shingles were split out of these using wedges and an axe or a mallet if you were lucky enough to have one. It was time consuming, but they lasted years and Mr. French even roofed his house with them. I have a photo of French's house which shows the detail of the work. There was a *lean-to* out from the living quarters. This was where the stove was and a bench for washing up. Mum and Dad had the

bedroom and the living area had Olive's and my bed, a table and four chairs, the safe for the food and a wooden box that the flour and sugar was kept in. There was a bench on one wall and some shelves where the china was kept. It was a real bush home, but we always had clean white sheets, a tablecloth for meals and curtains at the windows which were the push-out kind there were held up with a stick. The 'lean-to' out the back had a dirt floor but with constant sweeping and dampening down the floor became as hard as cement. Corn sacks were put down as mats. It was about then that 'the block' started to be spoken of as 'the farm.'

We had a couple of cows which Dad milked; the calves were put in a pen overnight and after milking were allowed to run with their mother. When they were weaned, they had a muzzle with spikes over their nose; it would allow them to eat grass but not suckle. There was no ice, so when the milk was brought in it would be put into a saucepan and scalded on the wood stove that burned all day. The cream we had on our porridge was lovely. Our jersey cow gave beautiful rich milk which was allowed to stand in a cool place. As the cream came to the top it was skimmed off and put in a bottle and after three or four days collecting the cream, butter was made by shaking the bottle. I started shaking but soon tired and Mum finished it. The bottle was shaken until the butter formed then it was washed and salted. We progressed to a butter churn which was a lot easier and later to a separator. If we had excess butter, Mum sold some or gave it to a friend. When the calves grew big enough, the steers were sold to the butcher and the heifers either kept or sold to someone who wanted a milking cow.

Mum kept hens, so we had eggs. She raised her own chickens and the roosters were eaten. She sold eggs and settings of eggs were exchanged to ensure new blood among the flock. Every now and then, Olive and I had to look for nests of hens that were laying away. We were excited when we found one. We locked the hens up at night-time; twice I remember Dad going with a shot gun for a carpet snake or a white tailed.

We had plenty of fruit with a nice patch of rough-leaf pineapples. We sliced the top off and ate them with a spoon. Banana bunches were hung up, and as they ripened we took what we wanted. We gathered wild black passionfruit by the bucket full and had paw-paws, oranges, pumeloes and huge puffy mandarins, and granadillas. Mum made granadilla pies. Everyone had a bush lemon tree; I haven't seen them in years. Cape gooseberries grew wild and Olive and I went out with a big billy each to pick them and Mum made delicious gooseberry jam.

Dad brought wild plums home from the scrub. They were furry and deep red inside and too sour to eat, but they made lovely jam. We had onions, potatoes, dried green peas and lima and harfiel beans, so although we were poor, we had plenty of food. There was a butcher at El Arish and if Dad was up that way, he brought a roast or corned beef and soup bones, otherwise it was tinned com beef.

From late 1920, Mum stayed on the farm. Dad worked on the farm during slack season and went to Mena Creek or South Johnstone to cut cane during the crushing season. He left home Sunday afternoon and arrived back Saturday night. Before going on Sunday, he milked the cows, chopped enough wood for the stove; we kids carried it in and stacked it. We also gathered the chips to start the fire and admit we didn't do it with the best of grace.

It was very lonely for Mum. We got a blue cattle dog and he was savage. If a stranger came, he had to be held. We had him 14 years and he just went to sleep one day at Mum's feet and forgot to wake up. If we were on the road and met anyone he bailed them up until we passed and called him.

Through the next few years, there were many 'swaggies'. It was after the 1914-18 war and they were going through looking for work. Many of them called in for tea and sugar or flour. Seeing that Dad had to carry it all down on horseback it put quite a strain on him but no-one was ever turned away. Only once did Mum have any trouble. The dog was tied up and a swaggie came and demanded food. He pushed his way in and said he would help himself. Mum said he was a big German; she sat on a chair with Olive on her lap and me standing beside her as we watched him scoop the flour into his bag. The dog was barking furiously and she told me to let him off but I was too frightened to move. After that she had a gun, but one day she saw some wallabies and decided to shoot at them because they spoiled the young cane. The butt kicked and hit her in the chin and there was blood everywhere. That was the first and only time Mum used a gun.

Christmas was always a special time; birthdays hardly rated a mention; there were no special cakes or presents for birthdays, but Christmas was wonderful. We looked forward to the great day, and Santa was very real. The cake and pudding were made weeks ahead. Christmas eve was all excitement - no trouble to get us to pick up the chips that day! We hung up our stockings and our beds were by the table. It was dark when I woke and felt on the table to see if Santa had been and then slept until daylight. There was always so much; a big lucky stocking and a doll and other toys, a box of table crackers and nuts - these were kept for the dinner table at night when the table was nicely decorated. Mr. Harman always had Christmas with us.

We always had a tin of green peas for Christmas; that was a luxury. We never got presents during the year and when a tin of green peas was considered a luxury you will understand how simple our tastes were. When all food had to be carried 30 miles by horse there was no room for extra tins like peas.

As the years went by, we received catalogues from the shops in Brisbane and what a lot of pleasure the women and children in the bush got from them. We kids picked out all sorts of things to write to Santa about. I think the lucky stockings used to give the most pleasure; I don't see lucky stockings in the shops these days like that. I also loved the dolls and tins of paints - we so enjoyed Christmas.

Easter was a day to remember but not with a big feast. We boiled eggs in onion skins to make them brown; it pleased us. One Easter, I got a small sugar Easter egg with a yellow chicken stuck to it. It was so lovely and I kept it for ages. That was the only Easter egg I received as a child. Another treat was a tin of 'Jones' Favourite' plum jam. It was like a conserve, juicy with whole plums in it. Dad brought a pack of lollies as a treat for Mum. She liked licorice-all-sorts and bulls-eyes, which were put in a bottle and we got one now and then. We never had soft drink until we had school picnics.

The railway line was making its way through. It was to meet at Tully in 1925. The line came through Feluga and the carpenters built the Feluga station master's house. With the railway the new settlers came. So many people wanted blocks that they had to ballot for them. The men came first and later their wives. Ten years after Mum first went there as a bride, she finally had female company. Mrs Borgna was a good friend, but I wondered how they understood each other. Mrs Borgna was Italian and her English was hard to understand and my mother was broad Yorkshire, but they were always pleased to see each other. Mrs Landau was married to a German, a good fellow but fond of the whiskey. She invited us for afternoon tea and when afternoon tea was served, we were allowed to come to the table with them. She had beautiful floral cups and cake dishes. I was fascinated by them because we had only plain white china, if anything got broken it was easy to replace white china. Mrs.

French was another friend. They were both English. Mrs. Hoban was Mum's best friend. They shared up and downs and that was like a second home to us all.

We met War Kee, a Chinaman who opened a shop on the bank of a creek near the rail. With him came his old uncle, we kids called him Uncle but I was frightened of him because he walked into the shop carrying a carving knife. The shop had a peculiar smell, Mum said it was the opium. When we went to the shop, we were given a paper twist of boiled lollies. Butter was in bulk and if we wanted a pound of butter it would be scooped into a paper-thin wooden container shaped like a boat. I often wonder how it was kept fresh enough to serve because the weather was hot or wet - if it was hot the butter would melt, if it was wet the ants would get into everything.

Our food safe had its four legs standing in tins of water, it was terrible when the ants got into the sugar and food. When I think of our Christmases, I always remember War Kee because there was a big Christmas parcel for us kids. There were fireworks, like throw downs, sparklers, tom thumbs, ink wells and a couple of bangers, and for Mum there was crystalised ginger, lollies and dried lychees. The lychees were delicious and I have never had them since. He built another shop with iron bars on the windows. He was there for many years, then sold his shop and lived on Jack Beattie's farm where he grew vegetables. He died there and everyone remembered War Kee with affection.

Another Chinaman had a market garden by the railway. He carried fresh vegetables on his shoulders in two baskets, hung each end of a pole and he trotted along. He was found dead sitting under a banana tree. The cemetery in those days was by where Cruipie's Panel Beating works are now. The story was told that he was put in a box and transported to the cemetery on the back of a truck and as the roads were so rough the box fell off a couple of times!

Before the railway, I only went to Innisfail once. I rode with Dad and he left me in front of a shop and told me to stay there, as he wouldn't be long. After a short time, I thought he had left me and started to cry. A Chinaman came out to see what was wrong just as Dad turned up. That shop was where On Tai's is now and I always feel sorry for children who have lost their mother or father while shopping. On the return journey, when we were coming over the range it was dark and raining and there were so many fire flies and they looked so pretty; Dad said they carried a little lamp under them.

With the railway it was quite a day out to go to Innisfail. We rose early to be at the station at 6.30am and heard it whistle as it left Tully. We knelt on the railway and put our ear to the line to hear if it was coming. The train was called 'The Sweeper' and there were thirty-three stops between Innisfail and Tully and the carriage was full as we got closer to Innisfail. There were many Italians who were happy and we were intrigued by the languages, always wondering if they were talking about us. I remember one Christmas the Italian children all getting off with a big lucky stocking. I was so envious.

Olive and I liked the window seat. We looked at all the stops and got cinders in our eyes and Dad would dig them out with the corner of his handkerchief. When we got to Innisfail, we walked from the station, but sometimes we took a taxi. You don't see taxies these days like they had then. They were big DeSotos and Buicks. There was room in the front seat for the driver and two passengers and between the front and back seats were two 'dicky' seats that folded up into the floor that were pulled up for children to sit on. Most times we walked. There was no bitumen and there was a big swampy paddock. When it rained, which was often, we walked in our bare feet in the mud and when we got there, we went to the ice works because we knew someone who worked there and we washed

our feet. After Mum finished shopping, we walked to see a friend who lived by the cemetery, then walked back to Dad and were home by 7.30pm. It was a long day, but Mum looked forward to it. My parents wrote for grocery orders to 'Wilson and Morgan' and they were sent on the train.

There were now twenty-four settlers from Feluga to Euramo planting cane to get it to a mill when the rail came. Planting was done by hand. Dad chopped it into 12-inch lengths. Mum held the sacks open, and Dad filled them then tied the sacks with wire. The filled sacks were dropped at intervals and Mum, and sometimes us kids, carried them in our aprons to the holes Dad made. There were still stumps in the paddock, so we couldn't use a plough for drilling. The holes were opened up with a mattock and a plant put in and covered. The first crop was railed to a mill in Giru and some went to South Johnstone. Dad cut the cane, loaded it into a dray and took it to the Feluga railway station, transferred it to a *derrick* where it was loaded into trucks and then transported to the mill.

Dad was a mild tempered man, and the only time I ever saw him in a temper was one night storming in and grabbing his gun and saying he was going to shoot the horses that were eating his cane. The horses were pulling cane out of the trucks and eating it. He didn't shoot the horses but stayed there all night to keep them off. The *derrick* was worked by a horse that kept going around the same track raising cane off the dray into the rail wagon. I can imagine the joy and sense of achievement my parents felt when they received the first cane money. They received little as most went to pay bills.

The cane paddocks had to be kept free from weeds and Mum did all the chipping and liked working outdoors. One year the paddocks caught fire. They could only stand and watch it burn. That was a total loss. Burnt cane was almost a total loss because the mill paid so much more for green and if fires did break out, everyone close by hurried to help put it out.

More people moved in, so farmers built barracks. Mum cooked for the cutters. It was a hard thankless job; no refrigeration, hot wood stoves, three big meals a day to cook and smokos. She also cooked for the schoolteacher. In three years, she saved enough money to go to *home* to England for a holiday. If anything was made in England, it was 'bound to be good'. When it came time to book her fare, she couldn't leave Dad to look after himself, so bought our first car; a Pontiac.

Tully was quite a town by then, and we did all our business and shopping there instead of Innisfail. Mum went 'home' in 1935 with Olive, three years after Dad died and 24 years after she emigrated. She went again in 1956 with Jimmy and me. Both times she was quite happy to return to her real home.

We now needed a school. I was doing correspondence lessons, which came by mail and were returned each week. The work came back with mistakes corrected and comments. Word got around that there was a meeting to be held to discuss a school. After writing to the education department, they were granted a school at Midgenoo in 1923. It was held at Beattie's residence about three miles from where we lived. When I started, I stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Hoban and went home on the weekend. When Olive started, we had a horse and sometimes there were four of us on the horse. We had to catch it after school and saddle it then it was led to a stump for Olive and me to climb on. I was last on and was worried I would be left behind.

We started walking to school. It was three miles but didn't bother us. Later they built a school by the Midgenoo railway. In 1927, the families at Feluga asked for a school and those of us who lived at Feluga left Midgenoo. Feluga school is still going but the Midgenoo closed in 1933.

My fondest memories of school days were breakup picnics. Everyone was there. There was plenty of food, soft drinks and boiled lollies and what fun the races were; sixpence for the winner, three pence for second and a penny for everyone else. The best part was the Christmas tree. It was decorated with a toy for all kids. After the clearing up, everyone went home; the end of a glorious day.

In 1922, the Premier of Queensland, Ted Theodore came by buggy to meet the settlers and discuss a sugar mill. Everybody gathered at Beattie's home. The ladies spent hours preparing a feast. When they made the brandy sauce for the plum pudding they couldn't find the brandy. Fred Landau, who was fond of the drink, had drunk it. Our family went in the sulky, three miles, taking cutlery and crockery. Mum tied coloured cotton on the handles of her cutlery.

The mill was in full swing for the 1926 crushing. Dad used horses for ploughing and all farm work. He built a good shed and each horse had its own stall, they were fed cane tops chopped up with corn mixed in. We had a 'chop-chop' machine; you turned the wheel that had blades on it. We kids helped.

Farmers who didn't build barracks rented from the ones who had. Dad built barracks and we moved into them to live and for a few years Mum cooked for the gangs. The men stayed in Harman's barracks and walked to our barracks for meals. There were seven men in a gang and it was a six-month season. Mum also had our washing and ironing to do; flat irons; no modern ones. Dad became a Councillor in 1924. Meetings were held in Cardwell and he and Mr. Hoban, who was also a Councillor, rode their horses to Cardwell meetings. It took three days for travel and the meeting and Dad's name is on the Council plaque on the old council building in Tully. He was a Councillor until his death in 1931.

Dad looked forward to having proper home for Mum. He purchased quality presents for it and bought furniture. Dad didn't live long enough to know the comfort of a nice home, and he never had a holiday. He died aged only 48 years. After a bowel operation, the doctor told him not to work for several weeks. He went to work too soon, driving a tractor and died in three days. Mum was devastated. The hospital was a converted house and the matron was the anaesthetist.

In 1927, Mum's brother Harry and his wife Annie and baby Florence arrived from England. In England, he worked in the mines, but in 1926 there was a big strike. Dad needed help on the farm, so they nominated Harry and his family for migration. Harry failed the medical examination because of his hearing, but somehow my parents scraped up enough money to pay their passage. They landed at Brisbane and came up by train, which was pretty slow. When they got to Townsville there was a rail strike on, so Dad had the added expense of sending a taxi to Townsville to pick them up. Eventually they moved into the little house that we used to live in.

After Dad died, Mum had to decide whether to run the farm herself or sell it. It was a traumatic time for her, she had lost her husband, had us two girls to consider and felt responsible for her brother and his family. The next-door neighbour offered to lease the farm with a guarantee of work for her brother. The lease was drawn up ready to be signed when Mum decided to run the farm herself. She ran the farm successfully for 23 years often chipping every paddock by herself. If things on the farm weren't done properly, she certainly let Harry know who was boss. The other farmers had a lot of

respect for her as a farmer and a hardworking woman. You saw her out with her hoe, wearing long sleeves, a high neck blouse and a hat. She had lovely smooth, fair skin all her life.

In 1933, she built a two-bedroom house, painted inside and out, with a desert scene 15 inches deep around the walls of the front room at ceiling edge. Radio came so she bought one, a piece of furniture! Radios were run on car batteries, and the butcher used to take them into Tully to be recharged and return them so you had two batteries. There was a bathroom with a vanity set and a deep plunge bath and all blue tiles. The bathroom was a real luxury, as prior to that, bathing was done in a large iron tub or in the creek in summer. She also had a flash kerosene stove.

She had the home she deserved. Mum didn't spend money, saying it was too hard to come by and always paid cash or went without. She supported both churches and the two ministers visited when they were near Feluga. There was morning tea and a discussion of events. They never discussed religion but had a prayer. She never went to church because the Church of England were, 'a lot of snobs' and the Methodists were, 'all hell fire'. She read her Church of England prayer book and bible.

Mum didn't like ladies' afternoon teas as she was no good at small talk, but she could discuss world events and politics and spent her spare time reading. By 1953, more than 20 years after Dad died, she was tired, so in 1954, after assuring herself that Harry had work, she sold to her friend, Joe Borgna, one of the first farmers in the district. I don't know what her thoughts were as she left the farm that she had gone to as a bride, when there was nothing but a horse track, scrub and a slab hut.

She died peacefully after a short illness in 1958 aged 70 years.

1941 | NANCY'S FELUGA CHILDHOOD

My mother, Margaret Emma was known as Rita and was born in 1916 and my aunt, Olive Gertrude was born in 1919. After a few years of growing sugar in Mena Creek they moved to Feluga. During the early years there was much rivalry amongst the Irish, Italian and Australian gangs. Fights in hotels often occurred. My grandfather was shot while on the push and pull trolley coming back from Innisfail. He never really recovered and died not long after.

My father, Selwyn James Mitchell was born in Wales and migrated to Australia to stay with cousins in Ipswich in 1926. During the Depression, Dad and a friend moved north for work. They were cutting cane in Feluga when he met Mum and after a short courtship they were married and settled in a small house next to the school. I was born in 1935, the year before the Tully hospital was built. At that time there were four private hospitals in Tully which later became private homes.

Our home near the school was small and we had little furniture, but we had the essentials. Dad cut cane and Mum learnt to cook, knit, do fancy work and crochet. Her handiwork has long been admired. I was very happy in that home. We often went on picnics with our friends. We all rode bikes. I sat on a carrier on Dad's bike. They usually found a suitable picnic spot near a creek. We swam, talked, ate and laughed and were so happy. Mum and Dad played tennis and Feluga had a cricket team. We played competition games against El Arish and Cardwell. We loved those outings travelling on the back of a truck, taking a picnic lunch in a blanket and cheering for each run our team made. Wet weeks Mum and Dad played cards with Uncle Harry and Auntie Annie and I played Snakes and Ladders or Monopoly. We only had kerosene lamps or candles for lighting.

Dad gave cane cutting away when he damaged his back while lifting rails. He enlisted in the army and never let on about his back and was accepted for overseas duty. He travelled on a troop ship to the Middle East and hoped to visit his mother in Wales on the way, but that did not happen. He was classified as unfit for service, suffering from osteoarthritis so was discharged and returned to Brisbane for an operation. Mum joined him in a rented room at Camp Hill. Mum found work in the munitions factory and Dad started a long series of operations. I looked forward to the school holidays when Auntie, Granny and I went to Brisbane on the old steam train to be with Mum and Dad. Dad and I sometimes caught a bus and he showed me places such as the museum in City Hall. My favourite outing was to Coles cafeteria and riding the escalators. This was new and exciting.

Annie and I spent most of our days swimming, exploring and catching yabbies. I still believed in Santa Claus when I was 10 years old. Granny told me right from wrong, good manners and never to misbehave as there was always someone watching. Her favourite saying was, *Sad's my heart and good my reason, got a chap but seldom sees him*. I realize now how lonely she was. She was a quiet, shy, hardworking lady who loved her two daughters and me. We were all she had during the war. During the war years we did exercises to the instructions of Captain Hatfield on the radio.

The Methodist Minister, Mr Morton rode his bike to visit Granny. She got out her best teacups and they discussed many subjects. She had a piano and we had lessons, but none of us showed potential. During the years with Granny we cleaned the copper with salt and vinegar on washing day and boiled the water and clothes before rinsing them in the creek 20 yards away. Annie and I caught yabbies by putting bread in the end of a kerosene tin, laying it in the water and when they went in we pulled the tin up quickly. Granny made herself cups of tea on a 'metho' burner which seemed to cure all ails.

We spent hours looking through store catalogues and went with Granny in her car to Townsville once. It took us six hours to get there. We celebrated Christmas with a roast meal. In the evening we played records on the gramophone. I was very spoiled. For a special day out, we caught the rail motor at Feluga station and did a day shopping at Innisfail. Greeks owned the cafes and a highlight was lunch at Bluebird Café. Peas, pie and potato and a milkshake was the favourite order.

During the war, many families went south for fear of a Japanese invasion. Granny refused to leave and put her precious items in a four gallon kerosene tin and buried them near the house. Granny was well dressed by her Italian dressmaker, Mrs Toressi. The dresses had long sleeves and high collars to cover her delicate skin from the sun. The shows were one of the most exciting days of the year. We went to our dressmaker with a picture of the dress we wanted, and it was always a perfect fit. We had new shoes, hat, gloves and purses to look our best. Tully Show was usually wet and there were no cement pathways. We walked in mud with our new shoes but always enjoyed ourselves meeting friends, eating fairy floss, hot dogs and my favourite, a toffee apple. I remember winning 1st prize for my fairy cakes when I was 12 years old.

At Feluga school, we assembled on the front lawn each morning and saluted the flag, sang the national anthem, then marched to our classroom; no talking. A fence divided our house from the schoolyard so I didn't have far to go. Mr Woolley was our headmaster for the duration. Trenches were dug along the fence line at school and when a practice siren went we all had to run to our allotted spot in the trench, crouch down and stay there until the siren went again.

Cricket, baseball and rounders were the main games played. The children played hide-and-seek, hopscotch and marbles. Everyone looked forward to the break-up. Families gathered to watch the children compete in races such as the three legged race, egg and spoon, thread the needle, sack race and the relays. I always did well, but Annie was much better.

I lived with my grandmother from the age of five to ten years old in her home which seemed grand compared to most the others I had been in. Dad wanted to own a shop, so when Granny wrote and told them the Feluga post office was for sale they came home with £400 they had saved. Roy and Auntie went in as partners and with £150 of their money they went to Thomas Brown and Sons in Townsville and bought supplies to combine a small grocery shop with the post office.

Mum worked long hours keeping the books, cooking and cleaning. Dad delivered the groceries. We lived in rooms behind the shop and after a year Mum and Dad bought an old house across the road. Dad made it comfortable with three bedrooms. Roy took over the Caltex petrol agency and sold his share of the shop to Mum and Dad in 1949. The Feluga Hotel was next to us and the Feluga Hall was over the road. The Dooleys owned the hotel.

During school holidays, we went camping at Bingil Bay, swimming, fishing, looking for shells and exploring. I remember a mango plantation with a haunted house and an old piano. The area is highly populated today. Dad loved to fish off the rocks and I collected 'Cats Eyes'. Granny bought a beach block at Porters Creek, and we had a hut built. One large room with shutters all around. We all had stretchers to sleep on. We caught fish in a net every morning and Auntie Annie cooked it on an old wood stove. We had great gatherings there; it was so peaceful, no arguments, we just relaxed and enjoyed each other's company. When the area became populated the hut was demolished.

During the last couple of years at the Feluga school the grade 7 pupils travelled into Tully on the train to attend Rural School. The girls learnt cooking and sewing and the boys learnt woodwork. Roy owned racehorses in the late forties. The racetrack was behind Lawson's sawmill, close to where the aerodrome is today. In 1948, Roy entered his horse, 'Fill-line', in the Banyan Cup and it won. He couldn't do heavy work because of an enlarged heart and at 48 he died during his second heart operation. Auntie then sold her Tully home and had a house built on Granny's beach block.

The hub of Feluga was the shop, the hotel, the railway station and dance hall. The school and Catholic Church were nearby and that was it. We had dances often on a Saturday night. Bertie Wagner's band played and people came from near and far for those dances.

In the late 40s, Auntie Louise (Dad's sister), Arnold and their baby daughter, Janet, were sponsored by Mum and Dad to come out from England on a £10 bond. On arrival, they bought the Feluga bakery and worked hard. They kneaded the dough by hand, there was no electricity and the wood-burning ovens made it almost unbearable for them at times. Coming straight from the English climate, they found it hot at any time. They stayed a couple of years then moved to Morisset, NSW where they were employed as nurses in a mental home. They had trained for that in London. I was close to Auntie Louie and loved listening to the stories of her work. Arnold was a quiet, caring man and they were a close-knit family and they soon made many lovely friends. On one of my visits, Auntie Louie took me to meet some of her *beautiful patients*. Only a very dedicated, caring person could call them beautiful. I found myself walking as close as I could to her and not making eye contact. Arnold's best mate was killed by one of the inmates.

I passed a scholarship exam in grade seven then went out to Charters Towers and enrolled at Blackheath College, the Methodist School for girls. The girls lived at Blackheath and walked to the Methodist Boy's school, Thornburgh, each day for lessons. I made friends easily. Dulcie Childs corresponded with me until she died in 2009. I was homesick and cried each time I received a letter from home. When Dad came to visit me one long weekend and saw how homesick I was, he took me home. I started work at Lloyd Bell, the solicitor, but needed shorthand, so I moved to Dafforn and Andrews to do their bookkeeping and stayed there for three years until I was married.

1941 | NELLIE & TOBY

My main job as a boy was extracting coco oil and feeding the stock with the by-products. Horses readily ate it, but cows would not touch it. I would also send coconuts to southern markets. There were islands south of Bowen that had coconut palms, but while the palms grew there they did not provide fruit, so they purchased coconuts from us for tourists.

We imported more than 1,200 coconuts plus many tropical fruit trees. I saw many Aboriginal artefacts including a dilly bag and a shield from the Mission Beach tribe. I also found an Aboriginal woman's message stick and a couple of music sticks.

At the eastern end of the South Mission Beach (Coconuts) caravan park the graves of John Kenny, superintendent of the 'Hull Mission', and his daughter are buried with three Aboriginals who were killed in the cyclone. Aboriginal friends, Nellie and Toby, were informative on local events. Nellie was from Dunk and Toby was from a tribe between Bingil Bay and South Mission Beach. They visited us often and we learned much about the area and its history from them. Toby told us where the Kenny graves are in the camping ground. He knew exactly where they were buried near the beach and that differs with others who say they were buried on the hill near their house.



Nellie and Toby were interesting and informative Aboriginal friends who visited us often.

1942 | WAR INTERVENES

In the second year of World War II, goods were hard to get with petrol, sugar and tea being the first items to be rationed and we had coupons such as those for petrol.



A one gallon petrol ration ticket.

During our first years at Mission Beach, most families left; our family were the only residents at the south end until the arrival of the Campbells who settled at Clump Point in 1944. There were others at the north end and at Bingil Bay and Garners Beach of course. Kerosene was scarce, so we learned to make oil from coconuts which we would burn for lights. Dad dug a cellar in the hillside where he made cheeses. Milk was in abundance, as we replaced the goats with dairy cows. Webb's Creek, now known as Wheatley Creek, was abundant in fish, including barramundi and mud crabs. We netted fish in the ocean, and surplus fish were preserved by smoking. We had low-fat dairy products even then. Dad mastered the art of making yoghurt, junkets, butter and all types of cheeses. We had an ice cream churn for special occasions like birthdays and Christmas, when we would buy extra ice to make the ice cream.

In 1941, people were evacuated to below the 'Brisbane Line', and this included our family. Deb joined the RAAF and became a sergeant drill instructor. She remained in the RAAF until her marriage in 1944 [*Scribe: served in Sydney and was discharged at rank of Sergeant, 26 September 1944.*] She came home to live while her husband was serving overseas in New Guinea. About a month after Deb signed with the RAAF, we came home to Mission Beach. [*Scribe: Deborah enlisted 12 May 1942 so Peter and Don returned to Mission Beach mid-June 1942, five weeks after the Battle of the Coral Sea.*]

This was just before the Battle of the Coral Sea. We were amazed at the number of planes flying in waves. I'd say there were at least 500 planes in groups of five and ten coming from Townsville or Mareeba. We heard the rumble of gunfire from the navy boats and bombs dropped by the planes as clearly as if they were just out near Dunk. In the evenings, we sat on the beach to see the light flashes of the battle on the horizon. We didn't know what was going on, just what we could see and hear, as we only had a battery wireless, which we used sparingly. The news reports were vague.

One day soon after the Battle of the Coral Sea was over, Peter and I were visiting the Rupert family. We climbed the hill at Bolton's Saddle and saw at least a dozen war ships anchoring a mile off the beach. There was one aircraft carrier, and other battle ships. We could not make out what flags were flying so ran home as fast as we could, as we were sure we were being invaded by the Japanese. Not long after, we spotted American sea planes and breathed a sigh of relief. There were boats between

Dunk Island and the beach on and off for about four years after this. In the early stages, these boats were stripped of flammable materials which were thrown overboard and replaced. There were supply boats going between Dunk Island and Townsville the whole time these boats were anchored. [*Scribe: Records from every Allied war ship in the area show no aircraft carriers came to Dunk Island during the Pacific War and none of the cruisers or destroyers involved in the Battle of the Coral Sea were at Dunk until six months after that battle. We merely agree to differ on aspects of the war and record Don's recollection as he has written them.*]

Apparently, the fighting was a lot closer than we had heard on the wireless. Some of the sailors were recuperating from wounds received in battle and some days there were hundreds on the beach. They came ashore to have their feet on dry land. One day Peter and I were swimming in Webb's Creek with about a dozen sailors when some of us were stung by box jelly fish. One of the sailors lifted his arm screaming, then passed out and was rushed to his ship but was pronounced dead. After this, swimming in the ocean was off limits, but it didn't stop the numbers of men coming ashore. The commander of the Australian Fleet was Admiral Critchley (sic), and he was posted on the Carrier HMAS *Melbourne*. The *Melbourne* came and went and on its return, the Admiral visited our humble home and Mum had a cup of tea and fresh scones ready. He called our place, 'the Park', and said he always enjoyed the visits. Mum corresponded with him for several years after the war. [*Scribe: Victor Crutchley came to Brisbane 13 June 1942, 5 weeks after the Battle of the Coral Sea. The HMAS Melbourne was not built and commissioned until October 1955.*]

Admiral Critchley said they fought a running battle half-way across the Pacific and without a doubt they were heading for Mission Beach as that gap in the reef was the only one where the heavily laden cruisers with troops could cross. The other deep channel entry was in the Torres Strait. Admiral Critchley said, on more than one occasion, 'You don't know just how close to Mission Beach those bees came!' [*Scribe: Royal Australian Navy records show Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley led Task Force 74 on the HMAS Australia II taking over from Rear Admiral John Crace in Brisbane. Crace was the commander of the Cruiser Task Force during the Battle of the Coral Sea.*¹]



Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley, image courtesy Wikipedia.

We always knew when there was an American ship like the USS *Phoenix* around, as the tide washed up turkey necks and wings. Amongst other things we found washed up on the beach were cases full of troop rations. There were tins with biscuits, coffee, sugar and small slabs of a type of dried fruit. They were American made and good. The evenings were not a good time to go into the ocean at high

¹ Navy serving with pride, Sir John Gregory Crace, accessed May 2022 at <https://www.navy.gov.au/biography/admiral-sir-john-gregory-crace>

tide as sharks would patrol the edges of the waves looking for food that would wash up from the garbage thrown overboard from the boats.



1952 Don Wheatley, 51 Infantry Battalion, Home Training Parades.

1942 | MINES AND MINI SUBS

Four days after the bombing of Townsville in late July 1942, we were awakened at about 4am to the sound of several loud explosions to the north of our place. Herb Jones was the head of the Voluntary Defence Corp Spotters, who had a look-out station in Bingil Bay and another in Clump Point. He and his wife visited our parents and said a mini sub was found at Mission Beach. Herb asked Peter and I if we wanted to see the sub raised. They reported sighting a Japanese mini-sub to authorities in Townsville. The Air Force acted immediately and dropped depth charges on it, disabling it.

Three frogmen kayaked out to where the submarine lay and hooked a wire cable onto it and winched it ashore near what is now the Council Caravan Park. Herb begged the soldiers to open it, but they refused. The submarine was black, and around 7 feet high with a 4 foot conning tower. It was in reasonable condition. When loaded onto the tank carrier it overlapped the vehicle by 7 to 8 feet. A Tank Carrier and a 6x6 truck loaded with 44 gallon drums of fuel came and took it away. Airforce people on Dunk told us of another submarine being sunk at the north end of the island at about the same time. I approached Mrs Jones after Herb's death and asked if Herb had any paperwork on the sub. She said the Defence Department sent three plain clothes men who claimed they were empowered to search all documents and she had no power to stop them.

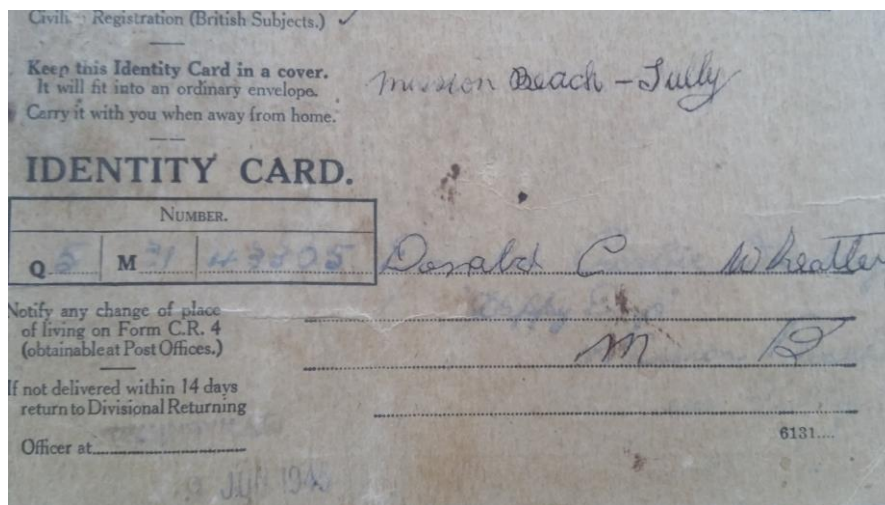
Towards the end of the war, a few large sea mines washed up on the shore, their chains rusted through from being in the seawater so long. The navy sent a special crews to deactivate them or blow them up. A blown mine left a hole in the beach 100 feet wide and 30 feet deep. I recall 20 mines being blown up. They were about five feet long and a meter or so wide and had up to 20 brass spikes protruding from them. If a spike was hit it released acid to detonate the bomb and sink a ship. I used to have a couple of the deactivated mines but they rusted away. Strangely, they were all German made and there was a rumour that were laid by a German schooner based at Dunk Island before the war. The schooner was reputedly owned by Count von Luckner, the brother in law of Hugo Brassey. Locals who visited Dunk during the pre-war days said von Luckner was a high flying, partying type of fellow and would never let anyone go down to the bottom deck of his boat.

1943 | GAS TESTING and MYSTERY SOLDIERS

The army arrived. They came to do jungle training and experiment with chemical warfare gasses and drove steel spikes into large milky pine trees then stretched a white calico sheet on top of the tall trees. The steel spikes were 15 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch wide and were used as a ladder to climb the trees and fasten the sheets into the treetops. This showed the bombers where to target their drops. A plane would then fly over and drop a square kerosene like tin that was a gas bomb filled with awful white powder. The gas spread over the trees across an acre and slowly everything in the area died.

For weeks you could smell the chemical residue. We found two of these poisoned areas on our land. No one sought permission to use it and we accessed a cow paddock there. Many more trials were carried out in the beach area that were never disclosed, and these mainly involved gasses. For weeks on end, wherever we went there were strange smells. This was not a restricted area for nothing. I still have a four inch gas cartridge and shell that was fired. I dug it out of a creek bank, (Stoney Creek) and believe that another shell was unearthed in the same area in the year 2000.

We had to have military identification cards to enter or leave the Mission Beach area. I still have my card. There was a sentry box at Hoban's Creek and another on the El Arish track. In 1944, the security was relaxed and we did not always have to provide our permit to come and go. The council started to improve our roads, and people from Tully and El Arish started to visit the area once more.



My war time ID card for permission to enter or leave the area, dated June 1945.

There was another strange incident during the war. A party of Asian soldiers dressed in American Army uniforms set up camp in front of our farm for a month. They were Chinese, Japanese, Malaysians, Indonesians and Timorese of many religions and some worshipped idols they placed on a mound of sand. They told us they had escaped from the Japanese when they invaded Dutch East Indies, their homeland. It was occupied by the Dutch for 180 years apparently. Six of them went to Dunk Island in elaborate looking kayaks and, on arrival, they were imprisoned by the RAAF. They remained in a makeshift lockup for a couple of weeks until their identities were confirmed by the American military. The Chinese and Japanese members of the party told me that their parents were merchants in the Dutch East Indies. These soldiers who joined up with the American forces gave me my first international coins, which started my extensive coin collection over the years. They lived on coconuts and fish but visited us often and we gave them fruit and water so we saw them often.

1943 | SCHOOL AND TULLY

Life at the beach was not all holiday time. We had lessons by correspondence, and the events around us created a distraction. I eventually learned a few lessons after my mother was driven mad trying to keep my mind on the job. Sometimes, due to floods and other things, lessons were delayed by up to two months, then there would be a mad rush to cram them all in at once. I lost interest and feel that I learnt much more after school. There was no high school in Tully, so I missed that.

When daily lessons were over, we all had jobs to do. Dad, being also a masseuse, used the oil for massages. The Tully chemist sometimes asked for the oil for suntan lotions. I had several little enterprises going when I was a kid. As well as selling coconut oil, I made up and supplied two dozen bamboo skewers to each of the two butcher shops in Tully every month. I also gathered a fern called Evergreen Zanier to supply the Tully hotels and cafes. That was good pocket money.

Dad tried to visit Tully once a fortnight. Our Model A Ford was a reliable wagon. However, when it became impossible to buy tyres, we stopped using the Ford. It was incredible the lengths we went to keep that car on the road. When a tyre blew out or split, Dad bolted on another piece of tyre inside and stuffed the tyre with grass or wet bags. You could get one slow trip to Tully from a tyre treated that way. The Japanese controlled most the rubber plantations, so tyres were scarce. There were a couple of dozen rubber trees growing on the banks of Wongaling Creek, and the government of the day took charge of them. They tapped the rubber for a couple of years and gathered the seeds which were planted later at South Johnstone. I never learned what happened to them.

When the Model A Ford eventually went up on blocks, we could walk or ride a bicycle, or if we had a load to carry, we used the horse and dray. However, the bicycle was most popular, and thank goodness when tyres became available again in 1944. It did not matter much which way you travelled as the road was either boggy or rough, with two ruts for the wheels and grass growing in the centre.

When we could use a vehicle, we carried an axe to cut poles to lay in the creeks and wet muddy patches. Up to 1944, there was little work done on the roads. After 1944, there were work camps established in the Stoney Creek area, and the road improved, but it was only being made trafficable for the army whose trucks cut it up so much that we were worse off than before.

1945 | YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Peter and I decided to grow a few crops. We were already sending bananas packed in very large ½ bushel cases to Townsville. They were the improved Lady Finger variety and were getting the wonderful price of £1 per case. We husked coconuts and sent them in sacks to Tully or Townsville. In no time we were also marketing pineapples and paw paws. Towards the end of the war we were producing pumpkins, cabbages and tomatoes which proved to be a very good crop.

For five years, we grew tomatoes from March until November. We sent 600 cases a week and our record was 960 cases. We were the main NQ suppliers to Sydney. None of the local sawmills cut cases, and if they did a special order you couldn't guarantee the quality. Peter suggested that we mill our own so we built a saw bench. A Jack of all trades, Freddie Quinlan, showed us how to use the sawmill. For power we had an old Fordson tractor.

Our demand for cases grew, so we improved the mill. We bought ex-army 4WD trucks to snig logs and purchased three Hart PA tractors for power plants and a Bren gun carrier. This proved to be more mobile in the scrub than the trucks. This made ploughing easier than with a horse and a stump jump plough, which means when the plough hit a stump it would roll over it rather than breaking.

The Reid brothers were dozing contractors and purchased the Bren gun carrier in a swap for their services. We planted in ploughed ground instead of digging holes among stumps. We felled the scrub then burned it and cut up the logs by hand. Our tools were brush hooks, axes, crosscut saws, wedges and a couple of crowbars. You dug around a stump then cut it off with an axe. This was known as Yanky grubbing.

I obtained a hawkers license and sold the tomatoes to cane gangs from Tully to Innisfail. I did the rounds once a fortnight. We had 20 acres of tomatoes growing in the days before Bowen became the main growing area. Then we eased out of them and started supplying tomato cases for the new growing areas. Eventually, we gave that up too and concentrated on the sawmill and making banana cases. For three years, we made more out of the sawmill making cases than we did selling fruit or tomatoes.

In the late 40s, we bought one of the first four Ferguson tractors from the Tully garage. It was the first tractor to be fitted with a three point linkage. We snigged logs, ploughed, and did every other job you could possibly do with a tractor and Peter still had the original one in his sheds when he died.

The banana industry was just getting started in the 1940s, mainly in Mission Beach and Tully and our banana cases were in demand. We acquired an old sawmill near Innisfail and rebuilt it. There are many homes here that were built using our timber. We had three sawmills over time. The second one burnt down but the third one was excellent and we had a beaut power plant driven by a Caterpillar D7 motor but engine breakdowns always impeded us so, as our electricity use grew, we applied to the power company, FNQEB (Far North Queensland Electricity Board, now Ergon) for supply from El Arish to South Mission Beach. After three and a half years of persistent bartering with the FNQEB, the power was connected to our sawmill in 1961.

We had to provide a £130,000 bond for them to consider our application. We borrowed £90,000 from Archie Warb then raised the rest by subdividing our land. Every block that Peter and I created had to pay a £50 a FNQEB power guarantee bond as well. The land sold quickly to cover the bond. A year later they brought power to most of the town.

By then we were licenced to take timber from Crown Land. We cut a substantial volume of timber from King Ranch when the owners were clearing land for cattle. Then the Government shut the timber industry in NQ and that was the end of our mill and most others.

At 18 years old, I started work at the Tully Mill on the fuggals. then tried lumping sugar in huge bags on wet days when the mill could not crush. Soon I had the job I hoped for on the locomotives and worked there for four years. Some weekends I went on Surf Lifesaving Carnivals and was one of the original members of the Surf Lifesaving Club in 1944.

When we built our second sawmill, my brother-in-law came to live on the farm. He was a cabinet maker and I helped him build a new home for Mum and Dad. I always liked working with wood. At 13 years, Peter and I built a boat. We dug a hole in the ground and rolled a log over it the took it in turns in the hole working an old pit saw we found on the farm. The boat turned out OK but was slow. Our first boat was a dugout canoe with an outrigger and a sail. That was fun. Later we owned several fibreglass boats.

1946 | FISH TRAP CONFUSION

Just after the war, the Campbell boys, Doug and Ken, with the help of Peter and I built some fish traps at Clump Point. In 2010, the people in *Terrain* generated a '*Final Mission Beach Habitat Plan*' and in this claimed that the Campbell's fish trap remains were of Aboriginal origin. A photograph was published with a row of stones stating that this was evidence of an Aboriginal fish trap.

Doug Campbell and I both made official statements declaring that this was not correct but *Terrain* retained its false references to these stones. There were almost certainly Aboriginal fish traps in this area earlier on. I was told by Bert Wildsoet that there was a trap originally at the south end of Bingil Bay but that area was greatly modified by the Cutten Brothers when they built a loading facility to export produce. Then Council modified the rock outcrop, pulling out the old posts and pouring concrete there to create a boat ramp. Chunks of that concrete remain there. Perhaps that is what *Terrain* are thinking of, but there is no doubt at all that the Clump Point fish trap was not built by Aboriginal people.

The two traps we created, one at Clump Point and another at Wee Beach, were a means of catching fish to sell. This was a common practice on the coast and the Campbells got a permit first. The traps were remade each year to replace the wire and were constructed of solid timber stakes and galvanized wire netting. To support the bottom of the wire, we searched the bay for rocks and found them mainly near the outlet of Wylie Creek and carted them in a flat bottom rowboat at low water, then stacked them on the wire to hold it down. The same rocks were used repeatedly year after year and are the same ones that remain there. Few rocks of any size were at either location before that.

1951 | ROMANCE & MARRIAGE

The Campbell family came to Clump Point in 1944 from Cardwell and Peter and I were close to them. We went camping and fishing with Doug and his brother Ken. We knew the residents on the islands, and they welcomed us as visitors were rare. The spears we used were made from a pitchfork prong welded onto a length of conduit pipe, and our goggles were army gasmasks. One of the most memorable trips was to Hinchinbrook Island. We did not camp on the beaches after seeing croc tracks everywhere so camped mostly on the boat.

We made several trips to Hinchinbrook. We had many adventures and some misadventures when engines broke down or a shark took a fish out of my hands. In later years, when Nancy and I were fishing off Purtabo Island once, a whale swam by and rubbed on the anchor rope and the hull. We could not lift the anchor as it was stuck in the coral and we were in a tiny 12 foot boat, so we cut the rope. On another occasion, I was trying to hop from one boat to another at the back of Dunk when a swell moved the boats and I ended up in the water with a large shark close by. I don't think I even got wet! The sharks around Dunk Island were large. Workers on the island set a line attached to a 44 gallon drum that had a bell on it. The bait was taken and the drum disappeared for about 15 minutes then emerged with the remains of a shark that was around 12 feet long and still hooked to the chain.

Dunk Island became a popular tourist resort. It changed hands several times, each time getting bigger. I was a supplier of gas to the island and demand for gas became so large that we were filling two ton tank on barges. When that no longer handled the volume, gas was shipped directly from Townsville. I had the Boral gas dealership in Mission Beach for 22 years.

In 1951, while I was working at Tully Mill, I met Nancy Ruth Mitchell. I was entranced. We spent afternoons swimming near Feluga where the Mitchell's lived. Nancy's parents owned a shop. Her mother was the postmistress and her father was a cane cutter. When I moved back to the beach after the sugar season, initially I visited Nancy on my motorbike, but after an accident I always took the car.

In three years we were married. I started to build a home on the old farm with a sea view.



Nancy: I was born in Tully in 1933 and met Don just after my sixteenth birthday, the week after I started work in Tully. We went to the Tully Show two weeks later on our first date. Mary, Nora, Ann Stuart and I caught the rail motor up to Innisfail and we all stayed in one room at one of the Innisfail hotels. We spent the day together and had tea at the Bluebird Café; it was a fun day. We had a large wedding. 230 people attended with the reception held in the Feluga Hall. Mum, Auntie and friends did all the cooking. Mrs La Spina made my wedding dress. Annie, my cousin and Theresa Salleras were my bridesmaids. Dad and Mrs Rackley (both Welsh) sang a few songs. We honeymooned in the Tablelands and Cairns. There were no motels, so we stayed in the best looking hotels.

I fell pregnant immediately. Our roads into Tully were corrugated and flooded in the wet season. Gregory was due in March, so flooding was a worry. Don's brother Peter told me if I couldn't get into hospital that I wasn't to worry as he would be able to deliver the baby having helped cows when calving. After hearing this I made sure I was staying with Mum well before the baby was due.

In 1955, Mum won a half share in the Golden Casket. She had returned a lost wallet she had found belonging to Charlie Borgna, and he had bought a ticket between them. It won 1st prize; £15,000. [*Scribe: Sounds like a small amount yet using the RBA inflation calculator, that is equivalent to over \$500,000 in 2019 dollars.*] Mum and Dad sold the shop and went on a trip to Wales so Dad could reunite with his family.

Granny went with them then up to Yorkshire to meet with family. We lived at South Mission Beach for seven years. That was a simple, happy time in our lives, our house was never finished and we had little money, but it never seemed to matter. Peter married my school friend, Theresa Salleras and lived in the family home a few hundred yards away. They were the only company we had when Mr. and Mrs. Wheatley went to Cairns to live. I made a lot of junket and custards. Don built a picket fence to keep the cattle out and the odd cassowary would get too friendly and try to enter the house. We didn't have screens and often had huge spiders or the odd snake inside. The March flies were bad and we often had to get under mosquito nets for respite. Once a week, we visited Mum and Dad in Feluga and got our groceries from their shop. £5 usually bought all we needed. Mum and Dad sold their shop a year after we were married and built a house in Tully. Two years later, Roy and Auntie bought a house near them. Mum started work at Nolan's and Dad was at the sugar mill and became the gardener for the mill houses.

The road between North and South Mission was poor and at times Don couldn't get Gregory to school. It was then that Mum and Dad offered to lend us money to buy a block of land at North Mission and go into business on our own. We moved to a liveable shed at North Mission on Doug and Lyn Campbell's farm which was beside the block of land we had bought. We soon moved into our house which had two liveable rooms; the bedroom and kitchen. Don kept adding to the house when he was able. I was happy when he added another room or extra flooring. It was a big home and he added a flat at the side for the boys. We didn't like them driving home from the El Arish hotel after spending evenings there. In those days, the police were less strict on the alcohol and speeding limits, so to have them driving home over the range was a worry for us. Our friends were mainly banana farmers of our own age group. Doug and Lyn Campbell, Laurie and Joan Porter,

Ab and Gloria Porter, John and Muriel Hathaway and Jim and Colleen Grove who built the first caravan park in Mission Beach. In 1964, Bronwyn was born and we had electricity which made our living easier. We now had a telephone, TV and a washing machine. Life was good.

Dad was never a well person, suffering from his back injury and high blood pressure. In 1961, he walked out of Townsville hospital knowing that the end was near and died two weeks later with Mum by his side. It was a sad time, being an only child; we were very close. He loved watching his grandchildren grow and praised them continually for any achievements.

Don bought a boat when the children were young. We camped on Wheeler Island and all fished. We had the island to ourselves and on one trip Margaret caught a large Trevally. We often went to Dunk and had a drink at the bar. Sometimes the motor failed and our outings weren't so enjoyable. Lyn Campbell started the ladies afternoons in 1961. In those years we made lifelong friends. There were up to 15 ladies and as many children at the events. Imagine preparing for that many people without electricity. Gordon and Hazel Cavanagh from Townsville bought one of the blocks subdivided and built a beach house. Gordon was a taxi driver in Townsville.

In 1961, Jack Romano built the Moonglow Motel which was the first in North Queensland. We had a lot of fun there. We loved to eat and order cocktails there. They had the same menu for years but that didn't matter. Bill made pretend cocktails for the girls and they felt important. Eric and Jean Bull bought the post office off the Wildsoets in 1966. When Nolan's Store was closed down in 1970, Mum was out of work so decided to sell her house in Tully and have a new house built on our farm.

Don: In 1957, Peter and I applied to Council to build a marina near Wheatley Creek. We had access to finance and owned the land and creek and we had machinery as well as a rock quarry and could access an engineer. Council was enthusiastic about the idea and held a full meeting on site. It was pretty much unanimous; the proposal was ideal. When Council applied for permission from the State Government, the answer was that the "Beach Protection" department would not allow any development on the beachfront unless it was at least six chains from the high water mark. So, disappointingly, it ended up as just another good idea.

Tully was initially built on sugar farming with some timber production. Cane farming, cutting and hauling was all manual in the early days and the cane knife was invented for the job of cutting sugar cane. Previous tools for the job were nowhere near as effective. The Tully Sugar Mill opened in 1924 and by the mid-1970s cane cutting was almost all mechanised. That may have been the end for the humble cane knife, but it remained in use for cane planting and it gained a new lease of life when banana crops came along.

It was used for planting bananas as well as for harvesting bunches. Then it was used for stem cutting; cutting out spent plant stems. So, the handy old cane knife remained a vital tool in North Queensland and when we returned to banana farming in North Mission I made sure we had four or five of them in the shed. I first purchased a cane knife in the 1940s and paid 12 to 15 shillings for them, and now they cost up to \$60 for one and they are not plated in gold. The humble cane knife has played a wonderful part in the development of the cane and banana industries and I am sure it will be around for a long time yet.

1976 | DEVELOPERS RETIRE

I always liked the idea of developing our land as the population grew. We had some spare money, so ventured into real estate. In 1976, we built the first shopping centre in Mission Beach. This was the first stage of the Hub Shopping Centre. The second stage came 12 years later. It had 17 shops and offices and was the start of the town centre. After that, the town grew quickly and we subdivided our land near the shops so a town soon sprung up. Council was averse to the development as they did not want to bring services like water, waste disposal or street lighting to Mission Beach.



Artists impression of our shopping centre development; The Hub.

The shopping centre drew in more entrepreneurs and businesses and helped the town to grow.



In 2002, we sold the last parts of our property and the hill area including the family home. That was sad, but we bought an acre of land at Conch Street and built a large storage shed there for all of our possessions to be stored while our home was being built. The house was completed October 2002.

Nancy: *The Hub* had a post office, a restaurant, real estate, kiosk, gift shop, supermarket and one-stop shop that sold fishing and camping gear. I operated the Sea Breeze gift shop for a few years. From the time *The Hub* was built at least one family member occupied a shop in it until we sold the Early Birds Café. While the shops were being built, Don and I went on a *Woman's Weekly Tour* visiting England, Wales, Scotland and a three-week tour through Europe.

1990-2010 | SILVER THREADS

Don and Bronwyn with Trudy Tschui: The Mission Beach Lions Club started in 1979, and we became a club in June 1980 with thirty two members. John Matheson was Charter President and Nancy was the Charter President of the Lioness Club. The club helped in clean ups after cyclones, ran different stalls for different charities around the beach, were heavy contributors to the Blue Nurses, even purchasing a car for them at one stage. Lions Park was originally the land near Castaways, but the Council wanted it back as they were using it for a base for resources, and then the Club acquired land on Reid Road, which is being used today as Lions Park. The Lions Club put \$10,000 towards it, and the Council were also going to add \$10,000. However, the Council would not provide that money, so the club asked for their funds back, which they did receive. Lachie Rick might have a record of those details.

The Club made the Kiosk in the undercover area at MARCS Park into something worthwhile, as there was nothing there before. Charles and Lachie Rick and Don Wheatley are all still members of the Club, which continues today. The monthly meetings were first held upstairs at Friends Restaurant, and then went to the Progress Hall, and many years later, they were held at the Lifesavers Club. The last three or four years, the meetings have been held at Mission Beach State School. The Club was the major fundraiser for the School at the annual Banana Festival, running the bar. All funds raised went to the school. The Lioness Club was very strong in its day and did charity work with old people.

Nancy also formed a group called Silver Threads, where ladies met monthly to play games, cards, do crafts and share conversation and cups of tea. They also had outings. These gatherings started in the Community Hall, but this only lasted a couple of months, and they shifted to the Wheatley residence on the hill. There were often thirty to forty people gathered, and this continued to the new Wheatley home, when Don and Nancy shifted.

Nancy was born in Tully in 1935. Don met Nancy just after her sixteenth birthday. Nancy ran the Seabreeze Gift Shop when they first built *The Hub*. She also helped daughter Bronwyn and son Greg when the Bakery opened in 1988 (where Peppervine is now). The Bakery then started to sell bread where Earlybirds was because it was a better location. Daughter Margaret Wheatley helped out in the bakery a few days a week, but was asked so many times about coffee, that she decided to buy a coffee machine and started serving coffee. Bronwyn thinks that Earlybirds started as a coffee shop in 1992. Bronwyn also had a shop in *The Hub*, called Brons Brikabrak 1994/95. Nancy and Don had a gas fitting shop and then a health food shop when *The Hub* was first built in the late 70s.

Nancy Memoir: In 1990, I started *Silver Threads* and for 20 years ladies and the occasional gentleman in their senior years came to our home for a social afternoon to play cards, Scrabble or bring craftwork and have a chat. I always provided a lovely afternoon tea which they looked forward to. Silver Threads was a Lioness project, a way of giving something back to the public for all the help and donations we received. I have a tablecloth with 70 names written on it, each member who attended wrote their names on the cloth and then I fancy worked over their handwritten name and crocheted around the edge. A few names are missing as I started the tablecloth a few years after the club began. I made many friends and felt sad each time one of the ladies passed on or moved from the area. I started the club for Mum and Auntie and a few of their friends for in those days there was very little on offer for them to do. In December 2010 I bought the club to a close. On closing Silver Threads, I was invited

to a council meeting in Tully and was surprised and happy to receive five awards, one from the Prime Minister and others from different ministers and Mayor Bill Shannon.



Class of 1995; Nancy is in the front row, second from the left.

An example of the strong participation at Silver Threads is provided by a list of attendees during 2005. 33 people came during the year and the ones who were at two or more meetings were: Marie Watson, Betty Honeywell, Ruth Gimbert, Daph Wildsoet, Olive Langley, Noelle Henry, Lorna Baker, Marj Sanderson, Sheila Priestley, M Haratsis, E Needham, Audrey Ward, Helen Jonas, Peg Sabadina, M Hathaway, Joan Hall, Chrys Macdonald, Joyce Lidden, Dot Watts, Lynette Hodgson, Isobel Butler, Joyce Kuchler, Joan Todd, Betty Carter, Theresa Wheatley and Shirley Butler.

RECALLING EARLY SETTLERS

Don: I can try to remember some of the people who were here in the early days, but it will not be easy. Before George Webb left Mission Beach we saw quite a bit of him. He stayed with us for a while. Strange bloke really; lot of stories and some said it was no wonder his 'missus' went back to England. You would tell him a joke and see him three weeks later and he was still laughing about it.

The land of the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement extended north to about George Webb's land. In 1918 the Settlement land was returned to the Crown and I put in for 500 acres and was granted it.

Peter White later owned extensive holdings (*Scribe: Hollis Hopkins' land*) that extended to the south to Tam O'Shanter Point. Peter did the early South Mission Beach subdivisions. He purchased a lot near the Hull River and ran Clydesdale horses on it and supplied them to farmers. To the north of our farm was the Reids' lot originally. The Porters came early and left, but kept the land then their offspring returned. They originally selected land at Carmoo but found it too difficult to live there because of the mozzies, snakes and crocs so went further north and selected three lots. Where I am now is on land once owned by Laurie Porter.

There were two Alex Dunlops', junior and senior. They owned land on both sides of the road at the Hibiscus Van Park. There was a squatter on the land there near where the big cassowary is in 2021, He was a friend of George Webb's and mentioned often in his diary. This man was known as *Gunboat Smith*. He swore like a trooper and lived in a long tin shed.

The guy called *Nonda* was Greek and was brought out from Greece to be a yardman by the owner of the bottom Tully pub, also Greek, named Ceremus. Nonda married an Irish girl and I think he gave up working for the pub and Ceremus set him up to go fishing here and probably bought a boat and the land for him. We dozed seven acres of the land for him and he farmed it a bit but soon gave up and it reverted to bush when he moved into a house near Castaways.

Rupert Fenby was always at our place and was friends with George Webb before we came. He had my mother write four wills and the first one was in favour of the nurses at the hospital who saved him at one stage. Fenby was fond of nature but did shoot snakes because they would eat his chooks. He fed them to the chooks after he cooked them. He had a garden fenced in with chook wire; about an acre. He bred old black Orpington chooks. He traded eggs with people like Ted Boyett to keep the breed strong and traded eggs for groceries at times.

We did not know the timber getter Jack Bunting junior well but he left his horse here occasionally when he wanted to go on the bike somewhere and I knew that he built a rail line with wooden rails to the Hull from where Rotary Park is now. He used 4x4 hardwood for rails and had an iron wheeled tractor that still lies in the swamp behind the dune somewhere.

I met the Macknesses at times, mainly Len and sometimes his sister the school principal. George Morris was on Dunk at the outbreak of WWII and left for Orpheus Island but returned after the war. I went to the Alexanders' place in Bingil Bay a few times on my horse but did not know them. The old lady had a big box tucked under her arm and held it in your face when you spoke so she could hear you.

The land that the David family owned at Mission Beach joined up with Fenby's land. Bill David or Bluey went to school in Ingham so was not here during the war apart from days he was on leave. We

farmed their farm for 41 years after they left the area. I purchased that land in 1961 and gave the part that is now Royal Palms to my son Neville who did that subdivision.

I saw Noel Wood occasionally and Bronwyn nursed him at the hospital late in his life. He did a pencil drawing of my father that I have and I made a copy hoping that Bronwyn would paint it in colour one day as she is a good artist and has a studio. The Hilchers were from Tully yet spent a lot of time at Mission Beach; one son had an MG and flew a Tiger Moth but tried to fly it under the guidelines for the power and was beheaded.

I knew the Holts well when I was young and Zara called herself Polly. I used to run errands for them when they were on their way up and started their gas fridge and stocked it a little. Zara was quite eccentric and was invited by the local ladies to a hat party once and turned up in her daggy straw hat and an old dress so was not playing high society games while she was here.

1989 | CHURCH

When Nancy and I first moved to North Mission, we made a move to start church services in our home. Two other families took it in turn to hold services, but we found it unsatisfactory for many reasons. We then had the idea of building a church for the community and made two attempts on different allotments. Both were rejected by Planning in Council on the grounds of there not being enough space for parking or noise barriers.

I was a member of the original building committee of the Mission Beach Lutheran and Uniting Church and was a signatory to the contract for building the church. That was the first step in planning a place of worship for our congregation at Mission Beach.

We started to negotiate a joint agreement with the Lutherans to build the church on a one acre lot which we believed was owned by them. After signing an agreement to pay 50-50 for the building, I contacted a well-known local builder, Geoff Davey (Sudsy) who began building in 1989.

Church services have been enjoyed by many in the community for 30 years now, locals and visitors alike. The congregation at times is close to filling the church demonstrating the community support for it. It would be hard to find a place large enough and suitable for so many to gather for a prayer service if we were to lose our church.

A partnership with another group would not work easily. A back room is used by craft ladies and once a month by a Scrabble group. These people make small donations for use of the room. Sunday School and church meetings are also held there.

2017 | NANCY, THE LOVE OF MY LIFE

Most Australian blokes of my era find it difficult to speak of feelings or romance. I am no exception. However, I shall make an exception and acknowledge Nancy's immense importance in my life.

I was so lucky to be born when I was; and in the place I was. We endured the war and were lucky it ended up not affecting Mission Beach. And we were lucky to have the parents we had; who nurtured us and encouraged us to be self-reliant and entrepreneurial and to try things and learn.

Yet the luckiest thing I ever did was to meet and marry Nancy.

Nancy led such a full life. She was an active member of so many community groups. Her church played a large role in her life, and she did much for it with her persistent and successful efforts to fund and build a local church here. Both of us were Charter members of the Lioness and Lions Clubs for around 30 years. Nancy organized 'Silver Threads' and was President of the Probus Club.

Nancy was a big part of our farms and businesses and with all her community work she had barely a minute to spare. She was a fabulous bean picker but drew the line at picking pineapples. The mark of success for a family is how happy, successful and respectful your kids are and Nancy passed that test easily: she was a five star Mum.

Nancy collected things as I did and had so many memorabilia. That gave her much pleasure. She was given old china hand me downs and bought some good quality pieces to augment that collection with many old English replicas of houses.

Late in life, Nancy developed severe atherosclerosis and was diagnosed with a 70% blockage in three main arteries. The surgeons would not operate until they were 90% blocked. Visits to doctors in Cairns became frequent; weekly in her last years. Over a period of six months she lost weight and was becoming frail and there was little that we could do for her. Our girls took her for tests at times and she always immensely enjoyed the contact and help. She always delighted at returning to her home and said that was her main pleasure in life.

Having Bronwyn next door was such a blessing and, being a nurse, she was able to help Nancy greatly. Bronwyn was a registered nurse with experience in Aged Care. Her extended family visited and that made a huge difference to Nancy's life, it always gave her great pleasure to see them.

Nancy was very much aware that her end was nigh and had come to accept the fact, but I found it difficult to accept. Our Nancy died on 07 January 2017. Fortunately, at Christmas just before this she had a wonderful time with family and friends. Her one wish was to end her days at home and that is how her life ended. She died peacefully and was mainly asleep on her last day with us.

Nancy was given a wonderful service that will not be forgotten by those who attended. A dozen Lioness ladies had a guard of honour and some Cook Islanders sang hymns. Our girls and their friends catered. We had a marquee in the back yard and the place was packed to the rafters.

63 years is a long partnership and it ended in a day. I must admit that I have often been desperately sad and lonely since she left us. I have to give our chooks special treatment as they loved her coming and feeding them. The ginger kitten misses sitting on her lap. I had learned to cook over the years and can fend for myself and I have my pet fish and chooks, my volunteering work and many interests to keep me rolling along.