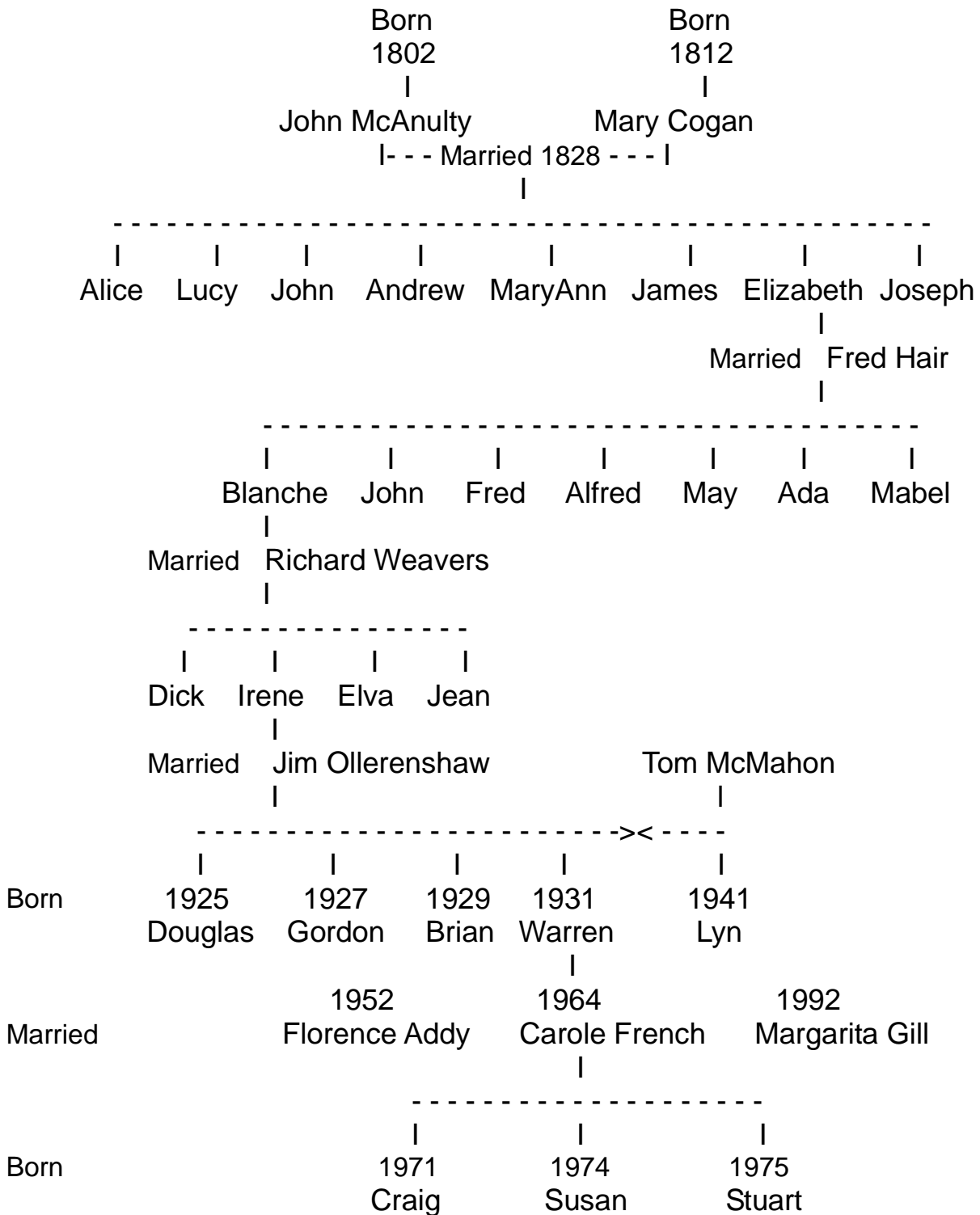


Nobody promised  
life would be easy.



**By Warren Fox.**

### Family Tree.



INTRODUCTION

“You should write a book Warren, about your life,” a friend told me.

“I’m not a writer and I’m no good with English,” I replied.

“Doesn’t matter. Just write the way you tell it. You’re a good storyteller and it’s a story that needs telling.”

Many friends told me the same thing but I kept rejecting the idea, until one day somebody suggested that writing my life story might be therapeutic.

I could see that it could be and not just for me alone. By reading it, others, who have had similar experiences, could benefit by it as well. My hope is that my readers will be inspired to rise above their problems.

This is the story of the struggles and hardship that I have faced and overcome, throughout my life.

In the early part of this book, I describe the old machines and appliances that we used in the 1930s and 40s. The way things were in days gone by.

I’ll relate the type of work I did in some of the 77 jobs that I have worked at and I’ll take you to the 80 homes that I have lived in. You’ll read how I came to learn Afrikaans and Esperanto. You’ll read about motor racing at Western Springs Speedway and Gloucester Park Stock car Track. Then learn how Lou Shilton and I progressed from racing motorbikes to inventing and racing Chassis Racers.

But most of all, this is a book about Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy and contains some very interesting case histories. It is also a learning book, for those who want to learn. But lets start at the beginning.

*For simplicity, I will use the present decimal currency in all money transactions and costs. Similarly, the names of places, streets and countries will be quoted mainly with their present names.*

*For example Pine Island will be written as Herald Island, as it is today.*

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**Struggle.**

1931-1938

Everything seems dark and is swirling around me. There is this terrible pressure all around my head, especially around my temples. Now the pressure has moved to the bridge of my nose and forehead. I've got tremendous tension in the back of my neck. I'm getting quite concerned as the pain is just awful.

Something has grabbed me around the head. Ow. It's trying to pull my head off. There's something very tight around my throat, choking me. Its got hold of my shoulders now, wriggling me from side to side. Tight around my stomach. Ah, that's better, I've struggled free.

My feet feel strange and I'm being moved too fast. The light is hurting my eyes. There's itchy stuff all over my face. Somebody's wiping it away.

I keep dreaming about my birth, over and over, for the next three days. Then I have other things to dream about. On the third day, the doctor has us all crying again as he performs a hasty and painful operation on all the boy babies. On the tenth day, Mum takes me home.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1931, Warren Allen Ollerenshaw was born to Irene and James Ollerenshaw at Greenlane Hospital, in Auckland. My mother's great grandfather was born in Ireland. John McAnulty served in India with the 38<sup>th</sup> Regiment of foot soldiers, for the British Army. After he left the army, in July 1842, he and his wife, Mary, moved to New Zealand, settling in Otahuhu.

They had eight children. Their daughter, Elizabeth, married Fred Hair and had seven children. One of these children was my grandmother, Blanche. She married Richard Weavers and had four children, including Irene, my mother.

My father's parents came from Lancashire, in England. They moved to South Africa, where Dad's father was killed, while working on the railways.

The family then moved to New Zealand where Dad helped his mother, to bring up the younger members of the family. Jim later married Irene Weavers and they had four sons. I am the fourth and last son born and now the family is complete.

One day, I tell Dad that I can remember being born. He immediately tries to talk me out of believing it.

"Who was there then?" he asks me.

"Just me and Mum."

"There you are then, you're wrong. Your brothers were born before you."

This is when I still believe everything that my parents tell me. I have still to learn to think for myself.

In the 1930s, New Zealand is in an economic depression and many people are unemployed. Fortunately, my father has a job driving tramcars. These are big mechanical monsters which travel on long steel tracks, laid down in the middle of the road. They pause at every tram stop, whether there are waiting passengers or not. The driver then waits until the conductor gives the signal to continue. The conductor, who collects the fares, gives a tug on a cord, which rings a bell in the driver's compartment. One tug for stop, two for go.

Sometimes there is a raised portion in the middle of the road called a **Safety Zone**, where the passengers can board or alight, without getting run over. At other stops, the passengers have to walk out from the footpath. It is compulsory for all traffic to stop when a tram stops but sometimes they don't. The driver has to stand up in the driving compartment but can drive the tram from either end, depending on which way it is travelling. When changing direction of travel, he pulls down the pole at one end of the tram and put up the one at the other end.

This pole goes onto a power line above the tramcar and feeds the electricity to the motor. The steel wheels complete the electrical circuit to earth.

The seats are also reversible. The conductor walks down the middle of the tram and pulls the backs of the seats over into their reversed positions. *Trams later become superseded by buses, running on petrol.* When the world runs out of crude oil, maybe we'll see the return of the trams in a more modern form.

Now, about all these homes that I have lived in. Because our family, like many others, is short of money, Dad tries to rent the cheapest house possible. Sometimes we live in a house for only a few days.

One day, we are driving from our last home to the next one. As we arrive, Dad sees a sign for a house to rent. We stop outside our new home and Dad tells us to start unloading the furniture while he goes to look at the other house.

When Dad comes back, we have half the stuff inside.

"Put it back on the truck. We're going to take this other place. It's cheaper."

It's 25 cents a week cheaper. We never know whether we are coming or going.

*(By the time I leave my parents' care, at the age of 15, I've already lived in 32 homes and live in another 48 after that, making 80 changes altogether.)*

When mum first brings me home from Greenlane Maternity Hospital, we live in Paice Ave. I'll call this home (H1). Then we move to Sandringham Rd. (H2) Next it's Taumata Rd. (H3) All of which are in Sandringham, Auckland.

One day, I am leaning out of the window, waving goodbye to Dad. I lean too far and fall head first onto the concrete footpath. I end up in hospital with a bloody face and broken nose.

While living in Taumata Rd, I see this Austin 7, trying to take a downhill corner too fast. Next thing it rolls over onto its roof. I'd like to drive a car one day.

A few days later, Gordon is playing with a wooden horse. It's like a broomstick with a horse's head on one end and wooden wheels on the other. The wheels are held on by two nails, which act as axles. He's riding around in circles until one wheel comes off. He decides to do another lap before picking it up. Instead he steps on the upturned nail. There's blood everywhere.

Soon after this, we are about to move house again. The boy next door says to me. "Warren! I wish you would hurry up and shift house. My Mum won't let me ride your trike until you leave."

I run off crying to Mum, because he has my trike, but this is an all too familiar event. Once again, Mum has given away something of mine, to save having to take it with us, when we shift.

We then move to Teddy Phipp's bach (H4), in Laingholm, for a short stay and then onto a farm in Boundary Rd (H5), Blockhouse Bay. This is where I first run away from home. The milkman, doing his deliveries, picks me up in his cart and brings me home.

The milkman drives a horse and cart and his horse knows where to stop for each customer, without being told. The milkman brings the milk in ten gallon cans. He uses a dipper to measure out the amount of milk we want into our billy. *(Later on, milk will be pasteurised and put into bottles.)* I think I'll be a milkman when I grow up and have my own horse.

We are living in the country, to save money and Dad rides a motorcycle to work. He has fitted a side-car onto it so that all six of us can go out together. Mum and I ride in the side-car while Doug and Gordon ride on the pillion seat. Brian sits on the petrol tank in front of Dad. I think I'd like to be a stunt rider when I grow up.

Dad works broken shifts, so he sometimes goes to the movies during the day. He has this

Idea of owning his own picture theatre. He wants to be the projectionist and have Mum sell the tickets. Doug will collect the tickets at the entrance, while Gordon and Brian will be ushers. My job will be to sell ice creams. Now there's an idea. I could be an ice cream salesman when I grow up.

That reminds me, I have a phobia about being choked. Maybe it started the day Mum takes me to this place, which turns out to be a hospital and says that they are going to give me some ice cream. They want me to lay on this table. Then they put a mask over my face and I struggle like hell. Later when I wake, I have a sore throat. In fact it's so sore that I can't even eat the ice cream. I'm learning that I can't trust what my parents tell me. I've just gone off the idea of being an ice cream salesman.

All the children are lying on mattresses on the floor. When I wake up, my brother Doug is there and he's got a sore throat too. When they take out tonsils in 1934, it's like Henry Ford's car assembly line. The children are all lined up in a row, while the Doctor come along, with his scissors and goes snip, snip, snip. There is no bedside manner for children.

Dad is having trouble coping with four kids. He reckons that he will build four baches, one in each corner of the farm. Then he will put one kid in each bach, while he and Mum will live in the middle of the farm. That way, he thinks we won't be able to fight with each other. This isn't the only trouble that Dad is having with us. He never remembers our names, especially mine. He calls Doug, "Douglas."

Gordon he calls, "Douglas, Gordon."

Brian he calls, "Douglas, Gordon, Brian."

While I am called, "Douglas, Gordon, Brian, you know who I mean."

It's hard for a child to identify with a name like, "You know who I mean." Maybe this is why I run away again and get lost on Herald Island.

We catch a boat over to the island and have a picnic. I wander off and get lost. I'm found just before the boat is due to return to the mainland.

*(The island has since been joined to the mainland by a causeway.)*

One day, Gordon takes me to the Boundary Road School. I let everyone in the class know that I can count. At first they think I am cute but after I get past 100, they tell me, "Alright Warren, that will do."

Yes I am called by my first name at school. Most teachers can't pronounce **Ollerenshaw** so they call me Warren. Later, I'm given the nickname of **Olly**, as all my brothers were before me.

As we are very poor, Mum makes most of our clothes. My pyjamas are made from flour bags. Northern Roller Mills sell their flour in cloth bags, under the brand name 'Champion'. So I go to bed with **champion** written across my chest.

Then we move again to Aunty Jenny's place (H6) in St George Rd, Avondale. This will be the third time that I run away. Mum is washing me in a small tin bath, in the middle of the kitchen. She has a thing about dirt and as she washes my ears, she rubs too hard. I'm protesting strongly but she just gives me a whack across the head. I jump out of the bath, in the nude and run outside. I crawl under the house and hide in the dark.

They are looking everywhere for me but can't find where I've gone. Then Dad looks under the house and calls out. "I can see you. Come on out." I just keep perfectly still and say nothing. Eventually Dad tells Mum, "No he's not under the house." I realise that he was bluffing and couldn't see me at all." So fathers don't always tell the truth either. About three hours later, I come out. Mum has cooled down a bit and is too frightened to give me another hiding.

My brothers make trolleys and we race down Chalmers Street, a steep hill in Avondale.

Then we race across St George street and stop in the church yard opposite. We have a lookout on the corner to see if there are any cars coming.

Next we move to 3 Mollyhawk Street (H7) Birkenhead. Here we form a gang of kids and we each have an old car tyre which we roll along the road like a hoop. We are not too popular with the grown-ups though. The tyres can be a threat if people don't get out of the way quickly enough.

One day a little old lady gives us 3 cents each if we get rid of them. So we run them off the end of the Birkenhead wharf. Next day there is an item in the newspaper about all these mysterious tyres, floating in the harbour.

The billboards are going up for the 1938 election and someone has been going around defacing them. Mum and Dad seemed pleased when Labour wins for the second time.

For weeks, I have been looking forward to going to the pictures to see Shirley Temple, but the night they take me to the movies, I fall asleep during the film.

We start building a tin canoe out of a sheet of old corrugated iron. We have hammered it flat and bent it into the shape of a boat. We have a sharp end in front and nail a square piece of wood at the back. When we have a hot day, the tar melts on the road and we scoop it up with a stick and plug up the holes.

When Brian and I paddle out towards Watchman Island, in the middle of the Waitemata Harbour, water is leaking in, so I have to bail as fast as I can. But the water is coming in faster that I can get it out and we are in danger of sinking far from shore.

\* \* \*



**Broken Home.**

1938-1941

We are losing the battle so we start heading back to the shore and get back just in time, with a sense of relief.

Then one day I get a splinter in my foot. Mum wants to stick this needle into me, to get it out. I won't let her, so Dad sits on top of me while Mum tries to dig it out with the needle. I start screaming at the top of my voice, "They're murdering me," but they carry on anyway. I haven't been too good with needles since then. (*Later I learn to block pain with self hypnosis.*)

Just after this I develop pleurisy. Mum's treatment is a form of torture. She puts a large, very hot plaster on my chest which burns like hell. There is more torture when she rips it off again. Her treatment for stone bruises is no better. Boiling hot mashed potato, on a bandage, wrapped onto my foot. There is always pain. Then one day, Brian tries to hang himself. Mum finds him under the house and gets him down.

We have a father, who doesn't remember our names or our birthdays, so he never buys us any presents, but Mum does. The next year, I start school at Birkenhead Primary. (S1) On the first day, I get into trouble for kissing a girl at the back of the classroom. You're not allowed to do that, apparently. Then the teacher tells me to draw pictures on the blackboard but I tell her that I want to have a pee. You're not suppose to say that either. I'm told to say, "Please teacher, may I be excused?" And the answer is, "No. You can wait until the bell rings, at play time."

This is punishment for not asking properly and for saying **pee**, but my bladder hasn't learnt to operate by a bell. So I urinate against the blackboard. Apparently you are not allowed to do that either. Then at lunch time, they have another bell system, where at the first bell, everyone must sit down and eat their lunch. Then at the second bell, they can get up and run around. Well I'm not born knowing all this either, I need to be told, but nobody tells me.

I'm looking for my brother Gordon, who has my lunch. I see him coming across the playground, so I start walking over to meet him. The headmaster spots me and yells, "That boy there, sit down." I keep walking towards Gordon while explaining to him that I'm going to get my lunch from my brother. Instead of listening to me, he smacks me on the bum and pushes me onto the seat.

I jump up and swear at him so he smacks me again and pushes me back onto the seat. We keep doing this over and over until Gordon arrives with my lunch bag, whereupon I sit down and eat my lunch. And this is only my first day at school.

They give us free milk to drink at school but sometimes it is too cold and causes a sharp pain in my sinus tubes. In winter we are given a hot cup of cocoa. We bring our own mug and they bail it out of a copper. In our class, we have an IHC boy called Sonny Brown. He disrupts the class, so the teacher asks him to check if the cocoa is hot. When he doesn't return, the teacher goes looking for him and finds him sitting on the copper, with his feet in the cocoa.

Then comes the day when I have to go to the School Dental Clinic, which we call the Murder House. The grumpy head dental nurse doesn't give a damn for the kids, because we don't pay her wages. She puts me in the chair and tells me to **swallow** but I don't know what she means.

"Swallow. Swallow. Swallow," she yells at me. I can't ask her what she means as I have a mouth full of dental equipment. The younger nurse tells her that I swallowed when she wasn't looking. Later the younger nurse tells me not to eat lollies as they will rot my teeth. So I stop eating lollies, forthwith.

Mum and Grandma know this old seaman, named Cassidy, who sometimes stays at our house. I've never seen him sober. One day he staggers home very drunk and tells Mum that there is a headless man outside. I'm afraid to go outside to the toilet, in the dark. The next day, he rolls in with a bottle of lemonade. We hardly ever have soft drinks.

"Rene! Get the kids. They can all have some lemonade."

We line up with our cups, while the saliva is already flowing in anticipation. Because he is drunk, he's waving the bottle all over the place. When he pulls the top off, it fizzes straight up into the air. As quick as a heavy handed headmaster, he has the bottle up to his mouth and drinks the lot, straight down.

"Caught it on the fizz," he slobbers. There are 4 thirsty kids staring in disbelief.

One night in 1938, he is heard muttering in his bedroom, "Hitler, I'll give you 24 hours to get out of this bloody house." I don't know who Hitler is. I think he might be the headless man, so I'm frightened again.

Dad is always telling us how good things are in South Africa and we are preparing to travel overseas. Just when we are nearly ready to leave, Mum gets a lump of meat stuck half way down her throat and she nearly dies, so Dad goes on ahead, as he has a job waiting for him in Sydney. The rest of us go to live at Grandma's place (H8) at 85 Lake Rd, Devonport, while Mum recuperates. A few weeks later, the rest of us board the Wanganella, bound for Australia.

The food on board ship is completely different from that which I had at home. Where I would have had weet-bix for breakfast, they now serve me fried bacon and eggs. The greasy bacon and the rolling of the ship make me feel sick. I go off greasy bacon for a long time. Two days out from Auckland, when I'm leaning over the rail, Mum calls out, "Warren" and takes my photo just as I say "what?" This photo gives the grown-ups ongoing laughter for years, at my expense.

"I can't see any lions," I tell my brothers as we come into Sydney Harbour.

"You should be looking for kangaroos."

"Why is that?" I ask Brian.

"We are not in South Africa yet. We've only come to Australia," he tells me.

Then we all go ashore and hear Mum say, "Don't look." So I look.

Across the road are two men fighting with 'cut throat razors'. The police arrive, only after one man is left bleeding on the ground. I don't like what I'm seeing and my stomach feels upset. What kind of country have they brought me to?

We now go to live at 351 Riley St. (H9) Surrey Hills. This is the slums of Sydney and living conditions are cramped and different from New Zealand. I think Mum is having second thoughts about the direction her life is heading.

Then we move over to the north shore, (H10) to Narrabeen. We rent a dairy on the corner of the Main Rd and Gondola Rd, opposite the Twin Lakes.

Gordon and I get a dinghy and he rows it off shore. I dive over the side and try to grab the boat again but he keeps rowing it away, out of my reach. On the third attempt, I turn around and swim to the shore. I've just learnt how to swim.

Just behind our shop are mudflats with a sewer pipe running over them. Some customers leave a little soft drink in the bottoms of their glasses, so I pour them all into one glass and drink it. Dad catches me and belts me with his razor strop. Later, he is down on all fours, studying ants. I sneak up behind him and throw a packet of weet-bix at his head and knock him over. He's up and chasing me but I run across the sewer pipe, where he can't follow me. Last time he chased Brian over the pipe, he fell into the mud.

I start school at Narrabeen Primary (S2) and we are put on a working bee, pulling out bracken. This is so the snakes can't hide in there. Snakes? We don't have snakes in New Zealand. We don't have any goannas either.

Gordon goes tree climbing and a branch that he grabs hold of, crawls away. It turns out to be a goanna. Then we go snake hunting but we don't find any. But up the hill there is this golf course and the road up to it is tar-sealed. We build faster trolleys and start racing again and this time we do have accidents.

In April 1939, Dad, Gordon and Brian, go on a ship to South Africa. We are to follow on later, when Dad is set up. It's hard to describe the feeling of loss, to have the family split up like this. I am learning not to make close friends as it hurts when I lose them. The sense of loss is awful. *(Mum never follows Dad)*

One day, I accidentally knock over a glass and it breaks. Mum comes after me with a toy wooden spade. I run into my bedroom and lock the door. Mum bangs on the door.

"Let me in," she yells.

"No. You will hit me, if I do," I reply.

"No I won't. I promise I won't hit you," she says.

I open the door and she rushes in, grabs me by the arm and starts hitting and hitting and hitting me with the wooden spade. I learn that I can't trust anybody.

*(I suppose she is under a strain after losing Gordon and Brian.)*

Mum is unable to keep the shop, so she sells it and we move to a house (H11) further down the road, on the corner of Verona and Gondola Roads. She brings some lollies with her from the shop and we sit in bed at night eating clinkers. Mum is spending a lot more time with me now that Dad has gone. She reads me stories and sings. One song she sings a lot is 'It's a sin to tell a lie.' She switches me to the Catholic School in Narrabeen (S3) and I'm the only kid who is not a catholic. Some children chant this charming ditty. Catholic, catholic ring the bell. Protestant, protestant, go to hell.

Then one day, Doug takes me to get my hair cut. It costs 5 cents or a zac in Aussie slang. Afterwards I ask Doug.

"What was that wet stuff that he sprayed on my hair?"

"That's called '**Come back in a fortnight**'," he tells me.

"Why do they call it that?" I ask.

"Cos it makes your hair grow faster and you need another haircut in two weeks."

As we walk home, we pass a circus where the merry-go-round is playing 'The Donkey Serenade.'

We then move further down Gondola Rd (H12) opposite Betty's place. Ah! Betty Clark. She is sort of my first girlfriend. She is older than me so she usually decides which games we will play, like mothers and fathers. One day, we are sitting on the side of the road talking when a Bull Joe Ant crawls inside my pants and bites me on the bum. I take off for home, yelling. Mum takes down my pants and dabs the blue bag on the bites. Just then, Betty arrives to see why I ran away. I'm really caught with my pants down.

A blue bag is a nob of blue stuff that Mum puts in with the washing. To do the washing she has to put firewood under a copper and boil the water. The boiling action agitates the clothes. When the blue bag is added, it turns the water blue. This in turn takes the yellow out of the clothes, making them whiter than white.

A few days later, one of the kids from school takes me out 'bird nesting'. He takes some baby birds out of their nest and kills them.

"What did you do that for?" I inquire

"It's sport mate," he replies

"Doesn't seem like sport to me." We part company.

For months it hasn't rained and the mudflats are drying up. I find a lot of fish on the mud, drying and dying in the sun. I know that Mum hasn't much money to buy food, so I put the fish in a sack and take them home. Somehow Mum knows before I get home and meets me halfway to the gate.

"No you don't. You're not coming in here with those stinking fish," she yells.

I think she's ungrateful and how did she know I had fish. By the way, did I tell you I have **anosmia**? Anosmia is the lack of a sense of smell.

After this long dry spell, the bush fires start. I use a branch to beat out some fires. I think I'll be a fire-fighter when I grow up. The bush fires drive all the creatures into the middle of the road, including snakes and butterflies.

Doug goes out and collects a shoebox full of butterflies. He puts the box on top of Mum's wardrobe. When Mum hears a fluttering noise from inside the box, she takes the lid off and some of the butterflies emerge. She screams and drops the box, letting the rest out inside the house.

Then Doug brings home a live crayfish and puts it into a pot of cold water and lights the gas. As the water heats up the crayfish crawls out. When I come home and look into the pot to see what's cooking, it nips me on the toe.

Then Doug brings home some tadpoles and puts them in running water. When they grow into frogs, they get into our water tank. We then have tadpoles coming out of the drinking tap.

Uncle Tom comes to stay at our place some nights and Doug sews up one leg of Tom's pyjamas. Tom is not a real uncle, we just call him that. Mum is having trouble managing Doug so Grandma comes over from New Zealand to stay for awhile. She brings my cousin Noel with her and we become mates for awhile. Noel is Grandma's foster son and is nine months older than me.

Where we live, there is a long driveway, with wire netting up both sides and across the top. There is passion fruit growing all over this netting and Noel and I sit on the garage roof and eat passion fruit all day.

At night, big spiders build huge webs right across the driveway. Not very nice to come across at night. Our outdoor '**dunny**' has a platform seat with a hole in the middle and a removable can, underneath. When I go to the toilet, I have to look for poisonous spiders on the walls and ceiling. I open the door and scan the wall and as much of the ceiling as I can see from outside. Then I jump inside and quickly turn around to examine the rest, always ready to jump out again. I'm in terrible fear every time I use the toilet.

One day, when I have just had a bath, I dab the blue bag all over the window, leaving a pattern of blue dots. I get dressed quickly and rush up to the toilet. When I open the dunny door, my heart races as I see a big snake, curled up on the seat. It slithers down into the space below the seat.

\*

\*

\*

**Loneliness.**

1941-1943

No way am I going to put my bottom and vital parts on that seat with a snake lurking down below. I rush down the path only to be met by Mum coming up the other way with the wooden spade. Mum is in her usual smacking mode.

“Did you put those blue marks on the window?” She asks in a threatening voice.

“Mum! There's a snake in the dunny,” I cut in.

She forgets about giving me a thrashing and rushes over the road to fetch Betty's father. Mr Clark comes back with his gun, not to shoot me for messing up the window, but to de-snake the lavatory. They look, but can't find the snake and I never use that toilet again.

Doug starts teaching me how to do things for myself. Things like how to separate two pages in a book by blowing on them. This is a prelude to losing Doug as well. Grandma, Noel and my eldest brother, Douglas, leave for New Zealand and life becomes lonely again. I've lost Doug, Gordon and Brian.

At 7 years of age I start getting migraines. They alternate between pains in the stomach or pains behind one eye. *(They are common with children and are called migraine equivalent.)*

We are short of money and can't pay the bills so they cut off our electricity. So we have no lights or radio. Mum finds a way to turn the power back on for a short time while her favourite radio program is on. We have to lie on the floor, in the dark, with the radio turned right down, so nobody will know. They always start Mum's program by playing '**The Mosquitoes are on Parade.**' But we have given up listening to '**Dad and Dave.**'

We also have to lie on the floor and hide whenever the landlord comes to collect the rent but eventually we are evicted and we shift (H13) to Manly. Once again I lose my close friends. This time I lose Betty and I never see her again.

In Manly, I go to another Catholic school, (S4) Manly Convent. The children here are very cruel. One hot day, they hold the arm of one of the kids against a hot metal downpipe, until his arm blisters. Another boy and myself are asked to take him to the doctor. When we tell the doctor how it happened, he exclaims,

“And this is a Catholic school. God help us.”

For about six months after I have left Narrabeen, I'm still jumping in and out of the indoor toilet, in case there are spiders or snakes in there. We live in a one bedroom flat and our beds have their legs in tins filled with kerosene to keep out the bed bugs. I have no mates now so I spend a lot of time alone at night. Mum has a night job, cleaning offices, when she can get work. At other times, she relies on getting a cheque from Grandpa. Some times when the cheque doesn't arrive, we know what it is to go hungry. I spend night after night alone, trying to amuse myself. Sometimes Mum buys me a comic to read. My favourite being 'Felix the Cat.' At other times, I play cards by myself. Whenever Uncle Tom comes round, he and Mum go out and I spend more time alone. I learn to go inside myself and daydream, or I invent imaginary friends with whom I play.

Every Saturday afternoon, I go to the pictures. It costs 5 cents and I especially enjoy the serial, Flash Gordon. This Saturday, we go to the Post Office, but the cheque still hasn't come. We've been trying for the last few days, so Mum and I have already discussed the possibility of not being able to go to the pictures.

Nevertheless, I am unable to stop the tears as I realise that there is no money. Then this woman come up and asks Mum. “Why is your little boy crying?”

“Because our money hasn't come from New Zealand and Warren was looking forward to

going to the pictures," Mum answers.

"And I said my prayers last night. I prayed for the money to come, but it didn't."

"Oh well, we'll have to do something about that," she says as she produces five cents from her purse. "Now your prayers have been answered."

"What do you say to the nice lady, Warren?" Mum asks me.

"Thank you very much. I will always remember this." **And I have.** At the pictures I find out about Adolf Hitler, the man that Cassidy had talked about.

Eventually, Grandma comes over again and take us back to New Zealand, on the Empress of Russia. It has an all Chinese crew and we sail in a convoy of 16 ships. We travel in a zigzag course to avoid enemy submarines. The trip takes 8 days instead of the usual four. Back in New Zealand we go to live on Uncle Wattie's farm, (H14) somewhere near Dominion Rd extension. He and his wife have two children, a boy and a girl, about my age.

Uncle Wattie can be a bit violent at times. One day he gets fed up with us hanging around, so he tells us to get lost. We go for a long walk in the bush. When we come back, we all get thrashed with the razor strop. He claims that he told us not to go away. Rubbish.

Another day we are sitting on the verandah rail, singing a song we made up.

"There isn't a Santa Claus, who brings all the toys. It's only your mother, it's only your father, who brings all the toys." Next thing, Uncle Wattie comes rushing out with an axe and chops out the uprights from beneath us. Seems dangerous to me.

We often hang onto the back of his truck as he drives off. One day we hang on too long and are going too fast to let go. Our legs are going faster than they've ever run before. Fortunately, he see us in his rear view mirror and stops.

Then Mum and I go to live with Grandma (H15) at 85 Lake Rd Devonport and I am reunited with Doug and cousin Noel. Noel and I start school at (S5) Belmont Primary and our teacher, who comes from England, speaks differently from us. She asks us to bring a pinny to school next day and we all turn up with a penny.

Then Mum has a disagreement with my teacher and I am removed and sent to St. Leo's Convent. (S6) The nun tells Mum that she'll have to pay school fees, because I haven't been washed in the blood of a lamb. The next day I hear Mum telling Grandpa, "I'll wash him in the blood of a bloody lamb, if it will save me from having to pay school fees."

At the catholic school they give us a smack across the hand for every word we spell wrong. We are given 10 words to learn every night and no matter how hard I try, I get 10 wrong the next day. The smacks don't improve my spelling but when the other kids go to mass, I am excused because I'm not Catholic. Instead I am given more spelling to learn. This does help me improve somewhat.

Noel and I join the scouts and we have to collect scrap metal and rubber, for the war effort. During the holidays, we work in a market garden, picking peas for 2.5 cents a box. As this is my first job I'll call it (J1). Then each night Grandpa tells us the latest news about the police killer, Stanley Graham.

My mother's sister, Auntie Jean, comes to live near Grandma's place, while her husband, Vern Harris, is a soldier in the war with Germany. After awhile, Jean has a baby, Patricia. Then Mum has a baby. I am ten years old when my sister Lynette arrives at Pentland Maternity Hospital in Devonport, on June the 29th, 1941.

This brings about another change in my life. With no father in the family, I take part in the care and rearing of my sister. Then once again I'm removed from my brother Douglas. Mum, Lyn and I, board a flying boat, bound for Sydney. Flying boats are aeroplanes with floats on the wings and land in the harbour. They fly slowly and take eight hours to reach Sydney.

This is my first flight and it's wonderful to fly right through a cloud. Down below I can see a convoy of ships heading for Australia. One is the Queen Mary, which has been converted into a troopship. As we fly over Sydney we can see double-decker buses, which, like the ships are painted in camouflage.

"Why are they painted like that?" Mum asks me.

"So the enemy planes can't see them," I reply.

"Well, how come we can see them?" Mum queries. "I don't know."

We also see cars with big bags on their roofs. This we are told is methane gas, as petrol is rationed, because of the war. Then we land at Rushcutters Bay and Uncle Tom meets us at the airport. He takes us to Hotel Ritz, (H16) near Hyde Park, We have most of our meals in a restaurant and they make lovely tomato sandwiches. Each morning, Mum sends me out with a billy to get the milk and I get a ride back on the horse and cart. This brings back memories.

Back at the hotel, when I'm alone, a drunk tells me that I'm going into his room and tries to accost me. His room is on the next floor. I race in and lock the door and he starts pounding on the door. Later he comes back to apologise and he wants me to open the door. But I'm too wise for that. When Mum and Uncle Tom come back and knock on the door, I refuse to open it until I'm sure who it is. This gets me into trouble at first, until I explain about the drunk. Uncle Tom is now a salesman, for an ice cream company and he wears detachable collars on his shirt, which he washes out every night, in the washbasin.

After living in a hotel-room for awhile, we go to live with Uncle Tom's brother, Uncle Frank, who lives in Randwick (H17) next to the Randwick Racetrack. For four days, at about noon, I get a very bad migraine. They last for half an hour and only end when I vomit down the toilet. I'm frightened, because I'm home alone and don't understand what is happening to me. Mum has gone out and taken Lyn with her. On the fifth day, Uncle Frank takes me out in the truck while he delivers comics and magazines to the shops. I'd like to be a truck driver.

Then we move to the Salvation Army Hotel, The Peoples Palace, (H18) in Pitt St. The first day, as we come out of the entrance, we see a barrow boy, selling tomatoes. "Come on lady. Tomatoes only a penny a pound. You won't see them at this price again." And it's true, we never see them at that price again.

Next we move to a one bedroom flat in Burke St, (H19) Surrey Hills. It is one story up and I have to sleep outside on the verandah. From up here, I overlook the local pub and it disturbs me as I often witness street fights. It also disturbs me when Mum loses her temper with Lyn and throws her dummy into the fire. The hurt look on Lyn's face stays with me for a long time.

Then I attend the tough Burke St school. They name their classes differently from New Zealand so I'm put in the special class to see where I fit in. (S7) This class has all the misfits. One kid is called out to get the strap for flashing his private parts in the classroom. When the teacher brings the feather duster down on his hand, this big kid grabs it and pulls it out of the teacher's hand and breaks it in half, then hands the two parts back to the teacher.

One of the teachers has written the school song:-

**We march to the sound of the fife and drum. Ready for school we come. We don't stay away. We attend each day. This is our golden rule.** Wishful thinking really. Mum keeps me home from school a lot. Any excuse at all and I have to stay in bed, so I miss a lot of schooling and find it hard to catch up. However I do like the banana fritters that Mum makes for me, when I'm home.

On Saturdays, I go to the local cinema. They have this competition where we have to guess how many peas are in the jar. One day I write down 2250 and it's the winning number. The

manager comes out onto the stage with a huge box of groceries for which Mum would give her right arm and half of her left arm. He calls out my name but I'm overcome with fear and shyness and shrink down into my seat. After three calls, he gives the box of groceries to the second place getter. Mum is not happy.

Later I go to the movies at night and see some horror films. Going home in the dark, I run down the middle of the road so the werewolf won't jump out at me. I decide to cure the problem by taking away the cause. I stop seeing scary films.

Uncle Tom is away a lot and we are poor, so Mum has to work, doing cleaning jobs. I am left to look after Lyn. She has become an important part of my life now, as I have no relatives in Sydney. Except Aunty Phyllis in Rockdale. When we visit her, I sit out in the shed and read the comics in the old newspapers.

When Uncle Tom comes home, he is pretty good to me. He buys me presents and takes me out. We go to the cricket to see Don Bradman. Another time we go to the Easter Show and a man is guessing people's weight. He is very good but guesses mine wrong by half a stone. I'm skinny and underweight.

Then my teeth decay something awful and go chalky because of the medicine Mum gives me on a teaspoon. I seem to get sick a heck of a lot. They are always x-raying my chest to see if I have T.B. Mum and Uncle Tom smoke a lot and I wonder if this affects my lungs. I know it's not good for anybody. Some kids at school smoke but I'm not interested.

Then we are on the move again. This time to 351 Reilly St (H20) Surrey Hills. This is a three bedroom flat and I have the front room to myself. It's mostly below ground level and the water sometimes soaks in. It has a small window looking out at ground level. Mum and Uncle Tom have the middle room and Lyn is put in the kitchen which is the back room. There are two more flats above us in this 3 storey house. All the houses are joined together and we have a small back yard. Then the Health Department condemns my room because of the dampness and the middle room because it has no window. So we all end up sleeping in the kitchen.

We have an outdoor flushing toilet but I still have trouble jumping in and out in case of snakes or spiders. Snakes aren't the trouble here, but rats are, big rats. They're everywhere, including in the outdoor bathroom. Inside we have mice.

This flat is more modern. We only had a safe in Burke St to keep the milk cool. Here we have an ice box. The iceman comes around once a week and puts a new block of ice in the top. This slowly melts away into a tray beneath, which we empty once a day. To do the ironing, Mum has 5 steel irons which she heats on the gas ring. As they cool, she changes them for the next one.

Then on my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, Uncle Tom brings me home a birthday cake, made of ice cream. This is a new experience, having a father figure who remembers my birthday. I am growing fond of Uncle Tom. But then, just on Christmas, Uncle Tom gets sick. Very, very sick.

\* \* \*



Chapter four  
**Alone Again.**  
1944-1945

17

Life is going fairly good for now, until one day Uncle Tom starts complaining that his throat is very sore. He is having trouble with swallowing food. Mum has to mash all his food, but eventually, he can only swallow ice cream. Even this is painful. As he can't live on ice cream alone, we are not surprised when he starts getting thinner and thinner. Eventually he goes into hospital.

As we don't have a phone, all our messages come through from the dairy. One day, I go to get some milk and the shopkeeper gives me a note for Mum. When Mum reads it, she has no need to tell me what it says. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1944, Uncle Tom dies and we are left alone again and destitute. The post-mortem describes the cause of death as cancer of the oesophagus. The next day, Mum keeps me home from school and when I do go back, she gives me a note for the teacher.

"Ollerenshaw. Why weren't you at school yesterday?" The teacher asks me.

"I've got a note here from my mother," I reply as I move towards him.

"Never mind the note. Why weren't you at school yesterday?" He insists.

"This note will tell you why," I explain, as my voice starts to quiver.

"I want YOU to tell me," he says.

"The reason is in this note," I answer as I hand him the letter. He doesn't open it.

"You tell me. Why were you away from school?" He demands.

"My father died," I mumble.

"Pardon?"

"My father died," I say more loudly as I burst into tears.

He reads the note and tells me to go back to my seat. He has never been less popular with the class than he is at this moment.

Things at home get rough after this. Mum has no money and she is under stress again. One time I have the iron thrown at me and the scissors thrown at me, on another occasion. Then one day Mum tells me to get some milk from the shop. When I get home she sends me back to get the bread. A short time later, she wants me to go back again for some cigarettes.

"But I've just been to the shops twice," I complain.

"I know but I forgot the cigarettes."

"Well I'm not going back again."

"Go back to the bloody shop," she screams.

"No," I answer defiantly.

She picks up a knife and hurls it at me. The steel handle hits me on the temple, just above my eye. Then she throws a fork at me as I put my arm up to protect my face. The prongs sink deep into my arm. As I pull the fork out, there are four spurts of blood, one from each hole. At the sight of blood, Mum faints. This gives me a chance to dash past her and up the stairs and away. I stay away for a long time, until she has cooled down. She says that she is sorry when I return.

I join the scouts and the boy who lives upstairs is also in the scouts. We go to Coogee Beach together, where he steals my money but pretends that someone else has taken my money and his as well. We start walking home but after a few miles, he mysteriously finds some money in his pocket.

The American troops arrive in Australia and some kids set themselves up in business as shoeshine boys. They carry a little box with a tin of polish, a brush and a polishing rag.

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