

Chapter 8

The Upside-

Down

War Years

Upside-down World (War Years)

A Life Without a Husband and Father World War 2 Memories (as recalled in 1995)

In 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of WW2, all TV stations and radio were recording the events of that time. Young men - soldiers of the future - leaving their homes, their loved ones, the Pearl Harbor bombing, America coming into the War and night after night another chapter would unfold and then the dropping of the Hiroshima bomb - war was over and home the boys came - the lucky ones, the joy for some, others black despair - temporarily. Fortunate women got their lives together and carried on and gradually the hurt dimmed.

I was listening to all this and it was so compelling, I had to. It made me think my life had been so busy, that I had never dwelt upon the lives of those left behind during the War.

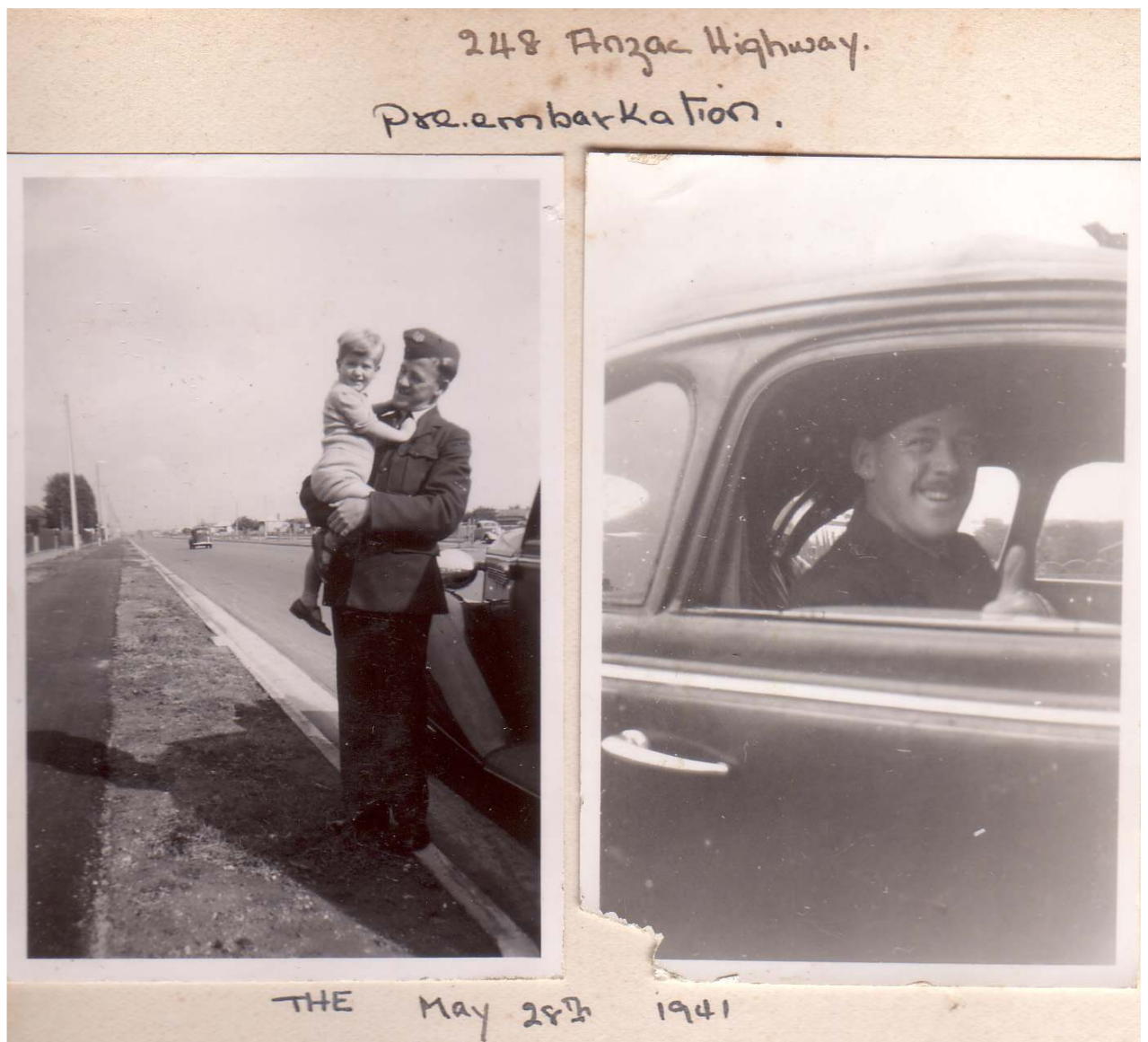
I was one of those women left behind with my two little ones, our lives shared alone waiting for Daddy to come home; a large hole left where his presence had been. This aspect of the War had not been mentioned in the coverage or if it had been was of little importance compared with the men who so bravely gave their all to save our way of life. "Yes", I thought, "Why don't I put down on paper, as much as I can remember of those war days; someday, somebody may find it interesting, perhaps dull, ordinary, definitely not interview-able material". I could not see myself on television reminiscing my heart out before the eyes of our critical public - viewers.

We had only been married about one and three quarter years when war was declared. Although initially enlisting in the Army and training at Warradale, Ian then enlisted in the Airforce, and was accepted to be trained at Parafield, twenty minutes drive from Adelaide. We rented out our Renmark West house 'Tong' as it stood, finding a dear little cottage at the rear of an old North Adelaide home (286 Ward Street), no doubt a coachman's or head gardeners abode of days gone by. Whilst in residence here, our daughter, Josephine, was born.

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When Ian received his call-up, he arranged for us to live in a maisonette at 248 Anzac Highway as I think he wanted us properly settled before he left for overseas. Soon after our move he was posted to Melbourne for further training. Our furniture from our home in Renmark was delivered and installed in this new maisonette.

His next move was over to Pearce in WA for three weeks and when this was completed, 'The Day' which my being had been dreading, came by letter - two weeks pre-embarkation leave - "home in two days".



Ian with Hal on Pre-embarkation leave May 1941



Rail station May 1941 – off to Europe

Our son Hal, 2½ years old and I waved him goodbye at Adelaide Railway Station in May 1941. No clinging, tearful farewell, just a quick loving kiss, very matter of fact, 3 years of marriage. He was twenty seven (two months off 28) and I was twenty six and a half.

Little did we realize, that it would be four years and three months later that we

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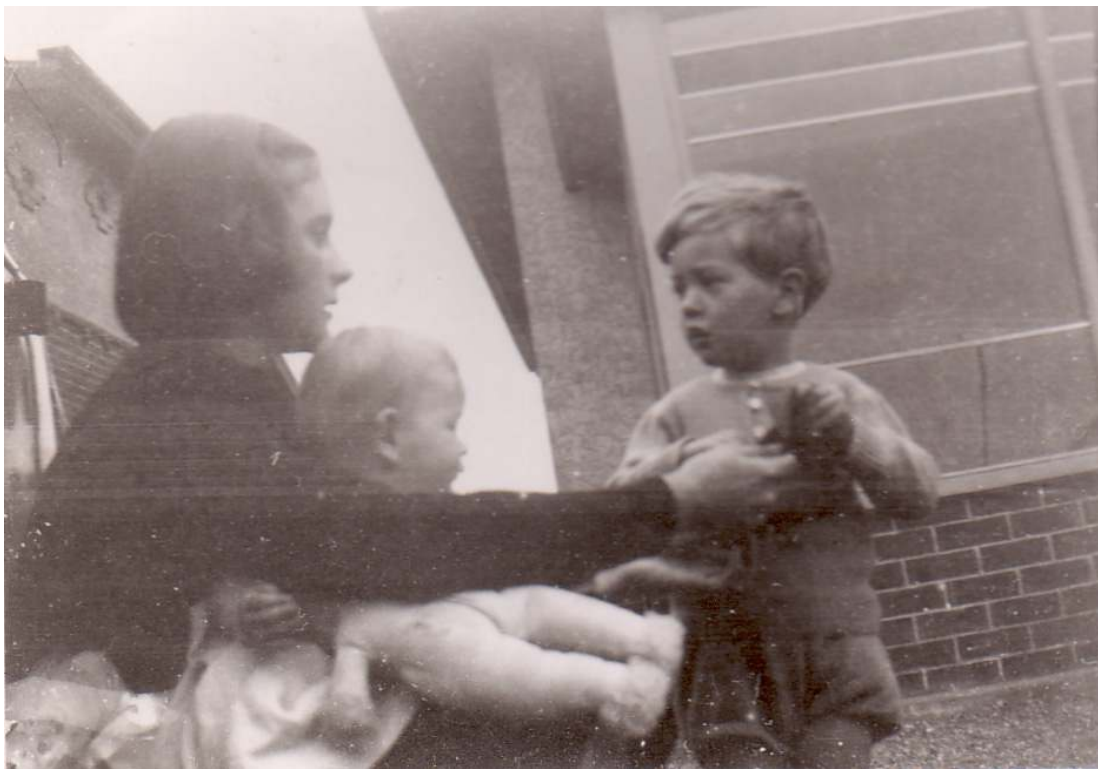
would meet again at this same railway station – a sea of uniformed young men, young in appearance still, but old in experience.

My daughter Josephine tells me that I said “there he is, there he is”, but she did not know which was “HE”. He laughed when he caught up to us. I did not remember his laugh.

And so life of a different kind began for a re-united post war family.

Now to return to the war!

Our rented maisonette, where we lived, was situated on the main highway between Adelaide and the then beach resort of Glenelg – 248 Anzac Highway. Along this road, the Bren gun carriers trundled. From the sun-room window my little boy and his little sister watched the world go by, the jabber jabber, prattle prattle subdued by a steadfast gaze and a manly pat on the head – he was engrossed.



Our rented maisonette, Jose & Hal at 248 Anzac Highway, 1941

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Petrol was short, but every Sunday, the children and I drove up to No 3 Brougham Place to my mother in law Mary's home for a wonderful lunch and motherly support. Mary was a very fine woman, working in the "Cheer up Hut" in North Adelaide, for six days of every week, for four long years, helping to "feed our boys". So much pride and joy went into these words. She was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for this work, receiving the honour from the Governor at Government House, with more pride and joy.

Because of rationing, especially for us, petrol was the toughest. Legs and the pusher were our main means of transport, which was difficult, squashing a big two year old into a tiny tots arena. His little legs became so tired. Luckily a shop with all commodities was just across the road and the little tin post office, best of all, just a block away.

We spent a quiet time. I did enjoy the occasional friend popping in – air-force friends of Ian's and I also corresponded with a childhood friend whilst he was in Syria.

I was lonely and wanted something to welcome me home. For company, I decided to get a dog. So on one of my rare visits to Renmark, I acquired a liver and white springer spaniel from Mrs Smith - a very lively, busy, girl puppy.

The people in the other part of the maisonette were Percy Belleau and his wife, Mrs Cotton.

Of course being a pup, Flip took great delight in interfering with Mrs Belleau's pot plants. Mrs B told the land agent instead of telling me. The agent came to my back door, which was opposite her spare room window. She must have heard our conversation and my remark "Oh, these old girls and their pot plants" must have upset her so completely that never again did we exchange neighbourly greetings in any shape or form.

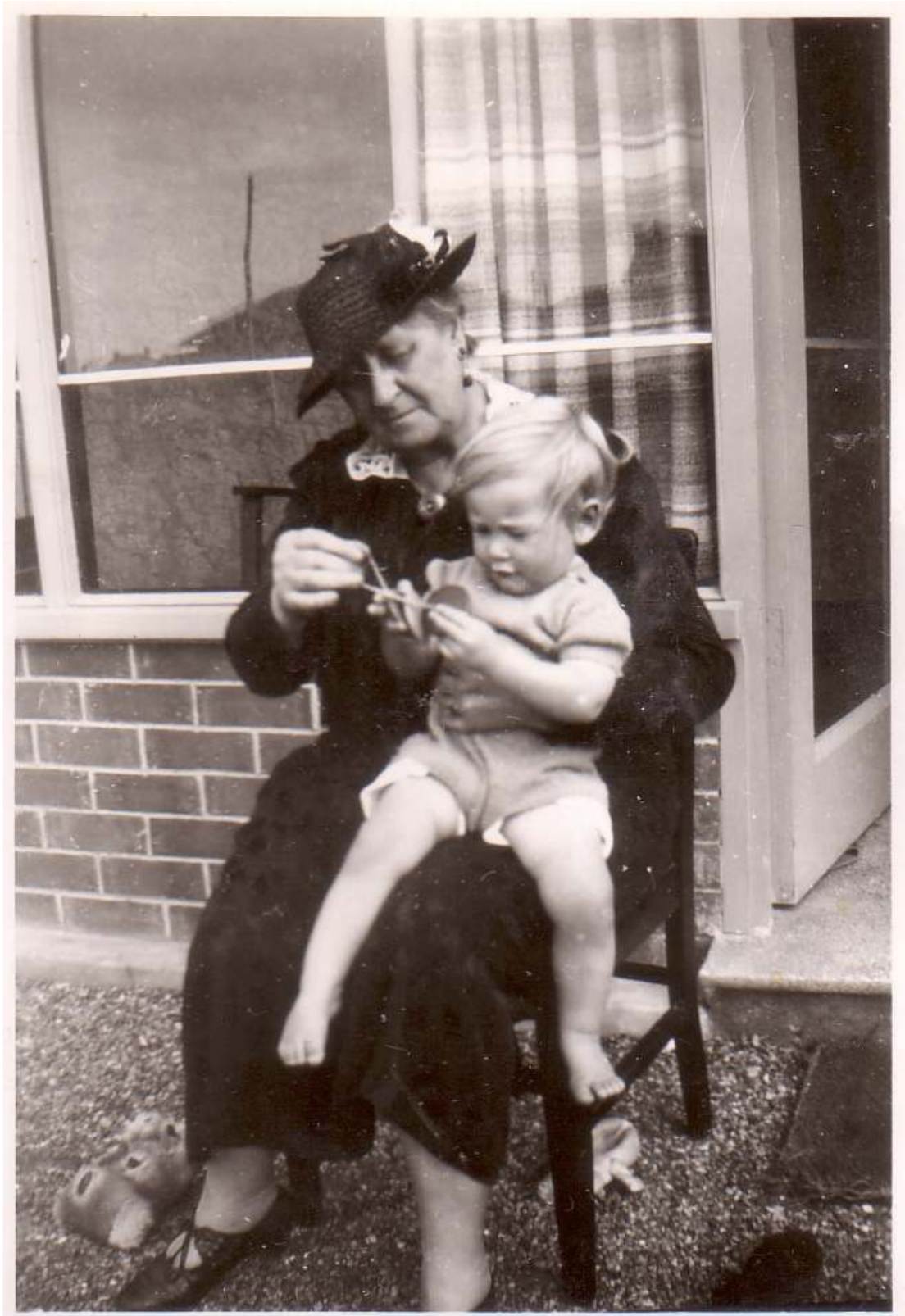
This made us more unpopular than ever with Mrs Belleau, because 'Flip', had a great fascination with my neighbor's pot plants, which were her pride and joy. Unfortunately, heartbreak or not, I had to return Flip to Mrs Smith. We did miss our dog. I needed her.

We had few ailments, but my little boy, Hal, began having feverish attacks quite regularly every two weeks. So it was off to the best children's doctor in Adelaide. He diagnosed removal of tonsils in the Children's hospital. I felt such a criminal leaving him there. He cried and called me. I walked away and did not return for a whole week, when I collected him. I thought it was best. Such difficult decisions had to be made for a young one-parent family as I know now, but at that time I accepted things and dealt with them as I thought fit. The only time we 'caught' colds, was when a young nurse friend visited. She invariably had a cold and left it with us. I was not amused.

We spent one year in this maisonette. It was four months before I received any news of Ian from overseas. I wrote long letters, a page or so each evening and posting once a week. On his return, he told me that he rarely read them, but handed them around to the boys to read who didn't receive any mail - true or false - by this time he was at home again and so it didn't matter, but I remember thinking, what a waste of effort. I was talking to the man of my life, telling him what his little family was doing, for him to share our lives and it was therapy for me too.

During this time, the children and I visited my father-in-law's (Harry Showell's) cousin, Ella Bailey, a very intelligent, straight laced English spinster living in an Adelaide suburb. She was very fond of me and for some reason regarded me as a perfect lady. I tried my best, but children often down the idol. It so happened on one particular afternoon visit. We were outside sitting on a garden seat, the children playing about. Cutting through the crisp air came a clear five year old voice, "This blasted gravel sticks to my shoes". My elderly cousin looked in horror at me saying; "Fée you don't allow Hal to say words like that do you?" I tried to cover it up. Not such a successful afternoon.

Occasionally Cousin Ella and I met for afternoon tea in Adelaide, the children being left in the care of my mother-in-law's daily help. Cousin Ella was a large woman and quite formidable. As we walked down the street, she cleaved a pathway for me. People just melted – it was quite amusing. I enjoyed our times together, although I never really felt at ease with her. She was well educated, very correct, could speak and read Esperanto, played the Cello and she designed and embroidered chair and cushion tapestries most wonderfully.



Cousin Ella and Jose, Dec 1941 – she was a quite formidable woman

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With the 'Japs' landing at Milne Bay, their presence was getting too near for comfort, so I decided to return to the country for safety and for parental support. We had been living in Adelaide for almost two years since Ian was at Parafield training and the birth of our Josephine in 1940.

The manager of Mr Showell's estate, Mr Alexander, would not allow us to return to our Renmark home, because labour was difficult to find and the man he had living in our house was an excellent worker. So my mother and sister went house hunting, finding a freshly painted rather small and ramshackle house at almost the end of a long metal road - 28th Street, five miles out from Renmark town, but within walking distance of my parents home.

This dwelling built at the end of a long drive, very muddy after rain or irrigation, situated next to long racks, farm implements and a good deal of rubbish. Three rooms in a row held together by a mosquito wired-in verandah, a tiny kitchen at one end and a tiny bathroom at the other end. Sheets of galvanized iron had been roughly attached to this end just near the rainwater tank. I fixed canvas blinds to the wired-in verandah for protection from the elements. Wash troughs and a 'copper' for boiling the clothes were outside the bathroom in the sunshine, the rain or whatever the day brought forth.



March 1943 Hal and Josephine playing at the rented 28th Street house



Racks and shed at the 28th Street House – and Dorothy Brocksopp (nee Coombe) with her son John and Hal and Jose.

Adult enjoyment was rare, occasionally I arranged with my lady friends to meet along the way and we would bike into town to the local cinema. Our bicycles had lights and in those days traffic was scarce, so we were quite safe. My brother Ivan very kindly spent the evening caring for my sleeping children. He also did odd jobs for me, especially the unpleasant task of attending to a bucket type lavatory, the contents of which were buried in the 'block'. On the odd occasion I had to manage this myself.

Whilst here in our 'palace', a friend Peggy Baly and her three year old Sara came for a week's visit. Being the same age as Hal, Sara and he did not see eye to eye and hence the atmosphere was disastrous. We only had one outing using precious fuel. We picnicked at the River, which the two adults enjoyed.

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It was about two miles walk to my parent's house, this we undertook quite often. I devised an excellent means of transport by attaching Hal's little red "Cyclops" cart onto the back of Josephine's pusher. I was the horse. Gee up Neddy! It worked very well.



Renmark, March 1943, With petrol rationing, my means of transport for Hal and Jose – 2 mile round trip to my Mother's house, towing Hal's Cyclops cart connected to Jose's pusher - (with their Aunt Betty pulling in this photo and me taking the snap)

On one such day during the 'cart/pusher/horse' period, we had heavy rains. I needed to get out, so we mounted our vehicles and marched off, only to find that the middle part of the journey was extremely muddy. I remember looking long – "shall I or shan't I?" We had come this far, mud was not going to stop

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me. So we set off trudging, with aching arms and weary legs and taut tummy muscles. We reached the other end! A woman standing at her front gate called “I’ve been watching you. I didn’t think you would make it”.

Later when the children outgrew this method, I looked at my bicycle with eager eyes. What could I do with that? I fixed a cane seat onto the parcel carrier for Josephine, and wired a wooden bar across from handle bars to seat and strapping a cushion onto it for Hal. That worked well until my darling one year old caught her foot in the wheel necessitating a doctor’s visit. Luckily no bones were broken, only dented, the x-ray showed.

Light planes occasionally flew over our house. My little one year old, on hearing them, would look up, grin broadly and excitedly utter “Daddah, Daddah”. She understood that he was flying with aeroplanes, then she would say “Baa (Josephine) luth (love) Daddah – and Voo (you)”.

Hal lovingly took a ‘King Dick’ spanner to bed, placing it on his pillow each night - his most treasured possession from his father.

I would either read to him or tell him a story. Aladdin and the fabulous cave of jewels was a favorite. Invariably I would fall asleep, little fingers would open my eyes and a little voice would say “open little eyes”. This particular evening I was amused to hear, “Open Sesame”. I taught him to recite poems of John Masefield’s “Slowly, silently now the moon etc”, at four years he was word perfect.

Sand storms were fairly frequent in those days. I remember Josephine as a small child looking out of the kitchen window one winters’ morning “Come and look at the dust storm” – it was a thick mist.



At Mum and Dad's (Else & Frank Cunningham's) home with Josephine at 11 months, 1941

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My mother visited us frequently once we returned to Renmark and we also spent hours at her home.

She would rest after lunch, lying down with Hal on her bed or on his. Before long two sweet voices could be heard singing “Sing about the birdies on the garden wall etc”. My plain little Josephine grew sweeter and at four years, with her long, fair curly hair, she was an adored grandchild. My mother took great pride in washing, drying and brushing her lovely locks in the sunshine, describing them as “spun gold”, her favorite words.

My mother arranged for our washing to be attended to, whilst we were here, which was a great help. The line was long, washing appliances primitive and dealing with the elements made matters difficult. Dear Mrs Lawrence came to my rescue. Mrs Lawrence was a lifelong helper to my mother who cared for the Cunningham kids when needed.

My children had few toys. Hal became quite adept at making imaginary cars or tractors from boxes, chairs, anything we could find which would suffice and make fun as well. His remark on one occasion, was “children do prestiate (appreciate) fings (things) their muvvers do for vem”.

We spent a lot of our time playing outside; each afternoon we walked down the road, where we made many stops to explore and to satisfy an inquiring mind. Josephine in the pusher, Hal walking.

In our decrepit bathroom, I kept a bottle of kerosene to clean the old tin bath. Josephine escaped my notice, luckily only briefly as it happened. I caught her with the bottle up to her mouth. Not knowing whether or not she had drunk its contents, I frantically gave her salt water to make her sick, to no avail. I hastily grabbed her, ran madly for five minutes down the drive, over the road to a neighbor, who was a trained sister. No luck with more salt and water, so it was decided that no kerosene had been taken. Josephine was fine and not ill from all the excitement.



Flight Lieutenant Ian Showell on leave, Trafalgar Sq, London

There were two other families in this street whom I knew, but neither made any attempt to visit or ring. At the time it never occurred to me that they should be solicitous, until four years later they uttered words of remorse at their lack of thought. We lived our own lives independently.

Being alone in this remote spot, decided me to have the phone connected. The firm's (Harry Showell Ltd) Manager disagreed. He maintained that as Ian no longer worked for the firm, I was no longer eligible for the 'perks' - I could not possibly afford the 'luxury' from my Air-force pay. I must have looked helpless, or pathetic, or put my case well or whatever. It was that he had a change of heart and allowed me to go ahead with it. In the country, down a lonely road, not near neighbors, it was essential to have the telephone.

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When connected the first thing I did was to ring a cable through to Ian, telling him as much as I could with as few words as possible. Next day the post office rang to say that the cable had been censored. I was furious. Anyway, I re-worded it in plain Post Office English, and it was accepted.

Whilst living here in 28th Street, we had a storm – What a storm! I was lying in bed frightened out of my wits – listening- the tank rumbled, 'tin' sheeting fell off the outer wall of the ramshackle bathroom wall, the house seemed to quiver and then the blind fell down in the mosquito wired verandah. I flew out of bed, raced into the children's bedroom and climbed into the cot with my one year old. I was so frightened.

After the terror of the storm, I looked around for another house.



Xmas 1944, Hal, Fee & Jose at Zelda Guinand's house 21st Street and Bookmark Avenue – Betty taking the snap.

Zelda Guinand, a friend, was leaving Renmark to live in Adelaide. I could rent the house for two years at thirty shillings a week, a big hole out of my meager air-force wife's allowance, but we managed.



Xmas 1944, Hal mowing at Zelda Guinand's house.

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In these two years, quite a lot happened. A childhood friend lived down the road. Her father in-law kindly offered to teach Hal to ride his bike. He was a big boy for five years and found it difficult to keep his balance. It was not an easy day for pupil or teacher, but the day came with great excitement. They had ridden to my parent's house five miles away and phoned to prove the deed.



Xmas 1944, Betty & Jose

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This achievement meant that now Hal, Margy Archer's daughter, Jenny accompanied by their respective mothers with Josephine sitting on the parcel carrier of my bike, could ride two miles to the main Avenue each morning to catch the bus. This bus carried the children into town, where they were met by Valerie Geneste, who walked them to kindergarten. The same procedure only in reverse began at 2.30pm. Their bicycles were left at a friend's house during the day.

The local irrigation pumping station always blew its whistle at 12 noon – lunch time for the workers – and my children.

During these years the children and I sat down at 12.00 each day for lunch (a session called "Health Chat" on the radio, advised parents to be "regular with your children's meals") and that lucerne cooked as spinach was most nutritious – tried once and was received with childish disgust.

'Fat hen', a weed, was another green vegetable so full of iron our teeth would be 'on edge'. They quite liked 'fat hen', and Hal wanted to know how all the tin got into the leaves.

Our routine; we stuck to regular meals viz Lunch 12.00, bath 4.30, dinner 5.30. They awakened between 5 and 6 am, so our day began with an early breakfast. In winter time it was very cold, so I always lit the fire on arising, and mostly kept it going night and day.

My friend Valerie, the kindergarten teacher, had a funny story to clear up. At twelve o'clock the 'pump whistle' was heard, Hal walked out of his classroom, collected his bag and sat down to eat his lunch. She was quite mystified by the unusual behavior – 12 o'clock lunch time!

One chilly winter's day I decided to place a huge mallee root on the sitting room fire – what a wonderful blaze in a huge fire place – then I heard a roar and raced outside to see flames three feet high flaring out of the chimney – it was on fire. The house was surrounded by tall pine trees and the consequences could be disastrous. With my heart thumping, I raced back shut all the doors to minimize the draught and quickly rang the father of my land-lady. His response was electric – within minutes he arrived and placed a large piece of iron across the opening of the fire place – gradually the roar subsided and the flames disappeared.

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What a shock – my being felt shattered for some time – what could have happened, uppermost in my mind, and a lesson for the future.

We went ‘dogless’, until we returned to Renmark after the Japanese landed at Milne Bay in August of 1942. I thought we would be safe there.

My mother presented us with a little Australian Terrier; company for me and a playmate for the children and above all else a ‘watchdog’. I don’t remember his name or that we truly loved this little dog. I do remember that he was very lively. Being a good watch dog was one thing - one continual bark – the wind rustling the leaves, a bird scratching for worms, a rabbit running by, the rare visitor, and of course he had to tell me how touched he was to see the wonderful full moon rising above the pine trees. My thoughts rose to romantic thoughts too, mentally enthralled with Richard Crooks serenading me with “Oh, moon of my delight that knows no wane”. Instead of being a helpful caring watchdog, he was fast becoming a nuisance, putting my nerves on edge.

Living alone with the children was beginning to tell. I decided to part with him and arranged for Hal’s cousin and playmate Ron Weste to have him. It was really very sad, as he never forgot us and when we saw him, he always wanted to join us and be with us. Regrettably, I know not what became of him.

The children and I were off to the seaside for a week holiday. Luxury could not be afforded and so we stayed at a guest house about five minutes quick walk to the sea.

Our first breakfast was marred by a five year old complaining loudly “there is a blasted codlin moth in my pears”.

For several weeks prior to our departure, I had been busily sewing after the children were asleep. On this particular evening, quiet and warm, a peaceful mother engrossed in her machining, when a soft walking was heard – pad, pad, pad. I called, “Is that you dear?” No answer! I thought one of my children had awakened and was looking for me. I called again and still no answer. I froze. “Oh God”, I thought “there is someone in the house”. I picked up my tennis racquet and walked to the children’s room – both sleeping peacefully. I returned to my sewing, settling down with a beating heart.

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The noise came again and on listening closely, I realized that it was possums in the ceiling.

In those days, I never locked the doors or windows. I didn't think it was necessary. My sister had advised me to do so when we were living in the Adelaide maisonette, but the possum episode unnerved me considerably and I locked doors from then on.

The sitting room in this house was large with attractive glass doors divided into small panes, with wooden cleats, like an area of picture frames joined together. I placed my round table near these doors. Here I sat each night, writing our daily doings to Ian, in his weekly letter. Sometimes I would reminisce through my photo album, getting nostalgic and Ian longing, long past my nine o'clock bed-time. Sometimes Richard Tauber records would soothe the wound - I always imagined that one day I would look up and see my blue uniformed man looking in on me - a big surprise.

One day this surprise did happen, but it was a friend, Willoughby Basey, returned home on leave. He had been in England for a short time with Ian. It was wonderful, nevertheless.

We promised to visit his old mother, which we did a few days later. It was quite a long walk for Hal and me pushing the pusher. We arrived home tired and hungry. I hastily heated soup and poured it into three bowls. Josephine pulled the bowl towards her, tipping the soup down her tender little chest. We were in bed early, but at eleven o'clock, Josephine awakened and could not be pacified. It was the first time in three years that I rang the doctor for help.

He came immediately but could find nothing wrong. Years later, I realized that it was the shock from the burn, although her skin was not burnt. I was told later by a friend, Ella James, how concerned she was that I was alone with two small children.

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It was during this time that the Showell property manager, Mr Alexander, had a fatal 'accident' - he shot himself. My brother-in-law, Lynn who was stationed in Australia, came home to take over the management. He arranged for the foreman to leave our own home and for the children and me to return to 'Tong'. It was another house move, the fifth one in four and a half years.

The house needed cleaning and parts repainted. With Hal at school and Josephine on the pillion seat, we biked to the house each day. We took food using boxes for table and chairs and picnicked - getting ready for the big day - excitement in the air.

It was Spring-time, the road we took was alive with new growth and blossom and resonant scrub. Suddenly one morning, I espied bushes of wonderful yellow Boronia in full bloom. I said aloud, "Oh darling, look at the wonderful wild baronia". A little voice from behind said, "Mummy will it bite?"

I don't remember the final move and settling process - who helped and what happened, but eventually we were once more in our home - 'Tong' on the corner of Ontario and Arumpo Streets.

My cousin Lucy (née McDougall) Turner and her small son, "Napier" came for a week visit at 'Tong', just after Josephine came home from the hospital, weak from a tonsil operation - poor wan little girl.

Lucy and I concocted a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, to the effect that my husband had been overseas for three years and we wanted him home.

I received a letter, crest and all, explaining that he held a very responsible position, Engineering Officers were in short supply and it was with regret that he could not be released - or words to that effect. But he was one of the first personnel to be released when peace was declared, so possibly the letter did have some bearing. During this time Josephine spent another week in hospital with suspected Diphtheria and this tiny child was shut up in isolation.



Ian, London 1942

In our last year my children and I sailed happily along. Hal biked to the Renmark West School, Josephine was put on the bus and spent her time at the kindergarten in James Avenue, Renmark.

This year and the previous year, the children and I spent our leisure time with two other families, one a pretty English girl Cassie Woodman and her two boys and the other family Gwen Sage also had two boys. Cassie Woodman's husband had been taken prisoner by the 'Japs' in Singapore and she and the boys had been evacuated to friends in the South East. Gwen's husband Ted Sage was in the army and, like me, was a Renmark girl "keeping the home fires burning" and strangely enough, we were the last two families in Renmark to be re-united with their husband and Daddy.

The three women and six children were a most compatible group, spending 'sleep-overs' at our respective homes at the weekends.

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There were internment / prisoners of war camps here, of which we were never told. Upriver from Renmark, there was a Japanese internment camp and after the War we visited the area, where there was still evidence of their habitation and at a sale we bought a small heavy wooden table and stool made by them. At Loveday 15 miles away there was an Italian prison camp.

Talking with Josephine (2003) she reminded me of pages of coupons issued during the War, for tea, butter, sugar, linen. She remembers us shopping at Richardson's store situated where (Weirs and then 'Fred's Mini-Mart' later established) and me handing over the page for Mr Richardson to cut out the sugar etc coupons and placing the necessary ingredients in paper bags – nothing plastic in those days.

Three incidents stand out clearly and vividly in my memory of the war years;

1. An orange dust storm building up to its finale in a tremendously strong wind, bringing with it dust and debris flying everywhere only to leave the calm after the storm in deathly silence. We watched it build up from my friend, Gwen Sage's back door; here could be seen the vine trellis in full leaf, looking like a mystical fairyland shrouded in this wonderful orange glow.
2. A white frost with the 'horse dam' frozen over and charming and unbelievable frosty patterns clearly visible on the glass of the kitchen window and the taps when turned on refused to relinquish their necessitous liquid.
3. To the delight of three year old Josephine, two visitors regularly catching their fish breakfast from the 'horse dam'. Tom and Dim (Jim). Tom was silver-grey Heron and Jim a sleek 'Spoonbill' – white.

Other incidents not quite so pleasant;

1. My shock and horror, when France capitulated. I was sitting listening to the wireless in Mrs Brown's "little house" which we were renting whilst Ian was at Parafield.
2. When Ian and I were first married, he planted up the cow paddock at 'Tong' with oranges and grapefruit. During the war, Lynn Showell had this fruit picked and the proceeds £4, put into management - the 'Harry Showell Ltd' bank account. I was furious and spoke my mind to Lynn viz. *"These are our trees, that is our fruit, Ian is at the war fighting for you, I am entitled to have that money."* – It was "my" treasured fruit!

Lynn gave me the money. We were the best of friends after that. Lynn is a good solid man, and I am very fond of him.

2. Another incident was also a disagreement with Lynn – I arranged to have a portion of the verandah filled in to make another bedroom, without telling management what I was doing. This was wrong of me, but that too was accepted and paid for.
- 3 We were visiting my parents - the two children were playing near the back door; to the left of the house was a huge paddock where the children played and the neighbor adjusted his two draught horses unbeknown to us. On this morning, both horses had escaped but found their way back by pounding up my parents drive around the back and through the gate nearby. Only seconds before this I had called the children inside - the shock of what may have been - two little children squatting on the ground and then pounding hoofs - the horror fills me with dread even so, fifty years later.
4. Although America was our dearest ally, the only time I saw any soldiers was the time the children and I were spending a week holiday in Glenelg. The handsome GI invariably had an attractive blond girl clinging to his arm.

In August 1945, four years and three months after we saw Ian off at the Adelaide Railway Station we met again - a sea of uniformed young men, young in appearance still, but old in experience. The Ian that came home was a different man to the one we saw off.

My daughter Josephine tells me that I said “there he is, there he is”, but she did not know which was “HE”. He laughed when he caught up to us. I did not remember his laugh.

And so life of a different kind began for a re-united post war family.

See other chapters and the complete Fée Showell biography index at www.feeshowell.com

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