

SENATE INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE

FROM: KEN FREER

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G.P.O. 1/11/03

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SUBMISSION RELATES TO:

THE SALVATION ARMY GILL MEMORIAL HOME FOR BOYS

GOULBURN NSW.

I would like to attend the hearings and give evidence when the Senate holds the inquiry in Sydney.

My submission is for open public record.

*This is a compilation of accounts & stories
of the period of time at Goulburn's 'Gill Home'*

Cootamundra (1933,34,35,36,37,38,39.)

I was born in Cootamundra and lived in 10 Warren Street .My parents were Dorothy May Freer and Leslie John Freer.My family numbered 3 children beside myself.They were Joyce ,John and Keith.Eventually we went to live in railway tents on Railway property.One thing I remember was the practice of drovers selling black sheep to the railway workers.This was a welcome practice which added to the variety of the current diet.

I was baptised in a home church in Wirrinya,near Forbes.My grandmother was a keen worshipper in the Methodist Church.She later went to worship at the Anglican Church in Cootamundra.I remember a sunday school picnic held in a local park.It comes to my mind that I had a fear of losing my mug which was enamelled and was tied onto me by a piece of string.

I was enrolled in Kindergarten at Cootamundra Public School and I recall that I had to take my shoes off before sitting on the mat.Also I remember that I had a sleep on the mat immediately after lunch. Mother made a fuss when she came to take us away from the school.This action was prior to the conclusion of the Custody battle which had not been resolved.The teachers were very annoyed at her persistence.and forced them to keep us from being taken away without the court's decision .

Dad was often away at work because he was a member of an emergency gang who were on call for problems on the railway.I can remember Jim Martin visiting our camp when dad was away.Dad was furious and vowed to get even with him.Somewhat dad was shot when the light rifle he was carrying discharged and wounded him in the head.

While dad was in hospital we were left in the care of mother who went to live with Jim Martin.When dad was discharged from the hospital he took us back into his own care.He won the divorce case and was given custody of the four children Joyce,John,Myself and Keith.Grandmather made an attempt to look after us but it was too much for her.

Another problem arose to worry dad.He was due to be called up into military service.He dedded to put the four of us into childrens' homes.Joyce disappeared and we learned later that she had been placed in a girls' home called St.Saviours'home for girls in Goulburn.Dad took us three boys to a home in Rockdale where dad's sister Pearl could keep an eye on us.Dad finally put us into the care of the Salvation Army in Goulburn.Dad took us and left us with a promise that he would visit us often but he did not keep this promise.

Ken Freer

Stories

1. "Presents From Dad."

2. "Divorce and Bitterness."

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4. "Holidays in Coota."

5. "Grandfather and His Rules."

6. "Grandfather Solves the World's Problems."

"Presents From Dad."

"Dad is taking us to the Shop to buy us all some presents !" Joyce was excited And this excitement was communicated to us. We had a feeling that He was worried about something. It seemed that he was giving us presents in advance of whatever that he was thinking eventuated.

"What's the catch?" Asked John who was a born cynic and he wondered at Dad's sudden generosity. Dad was always thinking and scheming and he hoped to eventually live a life of doing exactly what he wanted to do. without any let or hindrance.

He saw no need to tell us what he was thinking. It was left for us to figure out what was happening to us. We, or Joyce and John filled in the details which was showing up in Dad's behaviour.

It was 1940 and the whole world seemed to be dressed in Khaki. Clear evidence that the War was beginning to effect our town. There was a build up of the sinews of war in Cootamundra. The showground was the headquarters for the military and the sound of marching feet and the roaring of truck and tank engines filled us all with foreboding.

The airforce was also conspicuous with its planes (Spitfires and Hurricanes) flying to and fro with noise and speed.

We knew that Dad was of military age. We couldn't understand why he was averse to the coming call up for service, because he had been a light horseman during the peace which followed the First World War. He looked smart in his uniform with leather leggings and the emu feathers in his hat. But he was worried about the future. He had a family to care for he and mother were divorced and Dad had custody of us children. He found this responsibility too much to bear.

So off to the shop we went, our hearts happy with anticipation. It was a genuine country store and the owner boasted that he could supply anything that might be needed in Coota. The toys were displayed in a corner of the shop. We made a rush for the toys while Dad explained himself to the smiling shop owner. Dad advised us that we only had one choice !

John and Keith were quick to choose and they picked some sporting gear. I carefully considered the choices and finally was happy to choose a soccer ball. I then looked at Joyce as she chose her present. She picked a Magic Lantern. This was very high Tech. It had switches, a globe and some films to show on a wall or a sheet hangig og the wall.

"I want the Magic Lantern !" I yelled and threw myself onto the floor and kicke my legs and threw my arms about wildly. "What's all the fuss?" Demanded dad, "Get up off the floor and stop your noise. He continued with "Get up or I'll give you a belting ! He had a very short fuse and had bad temper.

Joyce was a 'softy' and said "Let him have the lantern" She did not want me to get into trouble. John and keith were disgusted but I was happy because I now had the Lantern. Dad was not called up because his job was protected for the national good.

Divorce and Bitterness.

"I'll get you for coming here behind my back!" Dad rushed at Jim Martin with a small bore rifle in his hand. Suddenly a shot rang out and dad fell to the ground. The rifle had discharged accidentally and the bullet, probably a ricochet, hit dad in the head. There was confusion and fear as everyone present dashed about here and there. Dad was taken to hospital and we were taken by mum to live with Jim Martin.

This was the culmination of years of bitterness between dad and mum which led to divorce and custody battles.

Dad was a fletcher whose job it was to put the railway line back in good order. He was a member of a special gang which went to repair lines which had been damaged. It was a large gang of about 30 men. The attraction of being in this gang was the increased pay they received. His work took him to far distant places and he was often away for long periods of time.

He settled his family in a tent village which was situated on the railway land near the line. Mum was very unhappy to live in such circumstances and developed the friendship of a former suitor Jim Martin. Jim came to visit her quite often.

Dad became aware of the clandestine visits and vowed that he would get even with them both. He grew more and more angry and he became really upset about the matter. His anger was blazing hot when he confronted Jim Martin. The final result of this altercation was first that dad was taken to hospital for a long period of time and second mum went to live with Jim and she took us children with her.

When Dad was discharged from hospital he took us from mum as he had divorced her and had won custody from the court. We went to live with granny Freer but this was not for long because she could not stand the strain of caring for 4 young children. It was at this time that we children became aware of the plan to put us in homes.

Dad and mum hated each other with a fierce hatred and this was illustrated graphically at the funeral later in our lives when the family came together for the funeral of John's son Colin who was drowned in the Molonglo River. From the moment they saw each other they loudly vented their feelings. They were so involved with their feelings that they did not attend the funeral service.

The bitter feelings were shared around among the different branches of the family. Joyce was spirited away to the Girls' Home in Goulburn and we were given no explanation of her going. We boys were taken first to Rockdale and then finally to the Home for Boys run by the Salvation Army in Goulburn. Dad assured us that it was only a short time measure and that he would visit us often and that he would send us some pocket money regularly.

He did not keep his promises.

He didn't come to visit us often and he sent no pocket money. One cause for our bitterness was that dad had written to say that he was coming to visit us and to take us out for the day.

We were to complete our jobs and dress ready for our outing. We were excited and completed our jobs and were dressed in our best clothes in record time and were waiting for dad to come in the reception room at the front of the home. We waited all day and at 5 o'clock we sadly returned to the routine of the home.

John and Keith left the home when they finished school and I stayed on to finish the LC. I had been in the home about 10 years. This was a source of bitterness for me.

During my time in Goulburn I became a Christian and I realised the truth of the Bible which said :

"All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose."

Robbed !

"And when we get to the zoo I want you to stay close to me and don't go too close to the animal enclosures!" said our Aunty Pearl. She fussed around keeping us neat and tidy.

"Will we be able to have a ride on the elephant?" I asked.

"Yes if you do as I tell you." Replied Aunty.

"I want to see the gorillas." piped up John

Aunt Pearl had come to the home in Rockdale to take us out for the day. It was exciting to go out the gate and to know that we had a whole day to enjoy our selves. We were dressed in khaki shirts and shorts, and hat.

After a long walk to the station we caught the train and were taken to Circular Quay. We had to wait for some time before the Taronga Park ferry arrived. We rushed on board to get good seats.

Aunty was nervous about the ferry trip. She wanted us to stay close to her in case we fell overboard. We were too excited to sit still. We rushed to the side to see the enormous ships sail slowly past our ferry. The ferry began to plunge about in a disconcerting manner as we went past the Heads on the way to the Zoo.

When we arrived Aunty gathered us to herself to start the adventure. We wanted to rush ahead and see all the animals as quickly as possible. We saw the giraffes, the lions, the snakes and lizards and the dingoes.

At last we came to the monkey cage and the monkeys were sitting on the tree branches defleaing one another. I leaned against the enclosure fence and suddenly a small monkey swung down and snatched my pocket handkerchief. He swung back up to his branch and put the hanky over his head and made noises.

I shouted at the monkey to give back my hanky. "Give it back!" I yelled. But my yelling had no effect at all.

"Let him have it, Ken." said Aunty Pearl "I'll get you another one. She bought me another, true to her promise. We made our way back to the Home in Rockdale. We had had a great day. But we were sad to return to the home again.

Holidays in Coota.

"Only 316 days until we go home on holidays!" We always calculated the number of days to go to the next holidays. We did this when we first came back from holidays. It was something to hang on to when we were discouraged by the prospect of the year ahead of us in Goulburn. We recorded the number of days to go and reminded each other of the passing time.

"316,315,314,312,311,310, etc,etc." Our excitement became more and more so as we came closer to the next holiday and freedom.

At last the magic day arrived and we prepared to leave Goulburn and travel by train to Cootamundra. There were many things to do before we could go. Tickets, Ration Books clothes and a hundred and one things which must be completed. At last we were all ready and we gathered up our belongings. We were escorted down to the Railway Station. We boarded the train at last and we were on our way.

"Hooray! We were on our way to Coota and holidays.

When we arrived in Cootamundra Dad met us and took us home to meet Grandmother and Grandfather. We were glad to be home once more but the truth was that we were eager to begin our adventures. The next day Granny reminded us to watch the time and be home early, in time for the meal.

The next day we went to the Stock Dam in Fisher Park, to see what we could do to begin our adventure. We were ready to catch Yabbies and we unwound the fishing line and tied the small pieces of savaloy on one end and a small stick on the other end. We made at least 12 lines and tossed them into the water and the sticks were pushed into the bank of the dam.

The yabbies were biting and we had strainer scoops which Granny had given us. This was a very slow procedure. We would pull the line slowly in to the shore and as the yabbies came closer and closer we could see them clearly. Then we would carefully place the strainer behind the yabby and catch it. We wanted to speed up the operation so instead of the strainer we practised catching them by hand. The yabby would be brought into the bank and we put our hand behind it and threw it over our shoulder onto the bank where we picked up and put it into our bucket. We got very good at this and finally we caught them in the water with our hand. It was good fun.

We needed money to set up our adventures so we planned to sell yabbies, leeches and monkey nuts. These last items were the seeds of the pine tree from pine cone. The local pub bought the yabbies and the pine nuts and the local chemist bought the leeches. The leeches earned us sixpence a dozen. We worked out that it was a lot of hard work for very little return.

The dog was used as a means of catching leeches. It was a smart dog and when we went to catch him to put him in the water he would make himself scarce. When we caught him, into the water he would go and we stopped him from getting out. When he had a lot of leeches on him we would collect the leeches and reward him with a feed of saveloys.

At other times we would get sheets of corrugated iron and build canoes. These canoes were full of holes and we put tar off the road into the holes to stop the leaks. It wasn't wholly successful and the canoes were always prone to sink. The only thing we could do was to tie a piece of light rope onto a loose board and it would float and help us find and refloat the canoe. We practised changing from paddling with our hands to change to a swimming stroke with our arms when the canoe gradually sank.

Our greatest adventure was after a house fire provided us with a raft of floor boards. We gathered some friends we played with and we carried the raft over and floated it in the stock dam. The raft floated about 5 centimetres under the surface of the water. It must have been an amazing sight to see us boys apparently running on water and diving into the water.!

The boards were not fastened securely and Keith broke through a board and he was caught by the leg between the boards. We pushed the raft to shore and I ran home to get a saw and we cut through the loose board. Keith was glad his ordeal was over.

Dad had taught us to swim in the dam. He used a brutal method to teach us. He had bought a small flat bottomed river boat and he asked us if we would like to have a sail in the boat. We were excited by the prospect of a sail in it so we gladly accepted the offer. When he was a fair distance from the shore he pushed us overboard with the oar and we were left struggling in the water. My experience was that I floundered about for a while and when I saw that Dad was rowing to the shore I tried dog paddling and then I gradually swam ashore.

Saturday and Sunday were Grandmother's Days and we were washed, cleaned and polished to meet her friends. On Saturday we made our slow way to the Matinee and the California Cafe where, if we were well behaved we would get an icecream soda or a Spider drink.

On Sunday we would be taken to the Methodist Sunday School and delivered to the minister. While she chatted to the minister we would sneak out the back door and via the shop where we spent the sixpence granny had given us for the collection and then home where Grandfather would have a laugh at granny's expense.

Granny showed a tear as she saw us home and I was ashamed of myself and vowed that I would not hurt her again.

We did not count the days of the holiday but they were soon over and we went back to Goulburn, to count the days to the next holiday.

Grandfather and His Rules.

When we arrived home for the holidays Grandfather would spell out the rules of his house. His first rules were his concern for regular punctual meals. You had to be on time and decently dressed. Children should be seen and not heard at the table. He had a small strap beside his plate and if you made a grab for food he would mete out a punishment for bad manners. Granny would encourage us by her kindnesses. If we couldn't talk we could not get things passed to us so she would anticipate our needs and move them towards us.

When visitors arrived we had to run to the back gate as soon as we heard the front gate open. Grandfather would check to see if we were where we were supposed to be. He believed that little pigs had big ears. We were not welcome to hear and join in adult conversations. We were not interested in the gossip we desired to eat some of the delicious cakes and biscuits that granny cooked for the visitors. She would bring the food down to us.

The reputation of the Freer family was jealously guarded by grandfather. The neighbours should never have any complaints or gossip about us. We had to respect and obey the policeman, the teacher, the shopkeeper and the minister of the church. Under no circumstances whatever would grandfather want to have a policeman stand at our front door.!

One example of this attitude took place near the end of the war. Coles store were selling army surplus equipment. We bought gas bag haversacks for one shilling (About ten cents) We were walking home for lunch and we were skylarking with our gas masks. The police sergeant stopped us and questioned us about the bags we had. He took us back to Coles and the manager told him that the Freer boys had paid for their bags.

The sergeant said he would take us home in the police car because he knew that Jack Freer was tough on his grand children. We imagined what would happen and begged the policeman to let us walk home; we would only be in small trouble for being late for lunch. Grandfather was not impressed and did not try to understand what the sergeant explained. He was noticing the curtains in the neighbouring house move as they witnessed the visit of the law.

The policeman left and we were hustled into the bathroom where we received the strap. The razor strap sounded worse than it actually was because the two parts of the leather smacked on each other and made a terrible noise, but it didn't hurt much at all. Granny was in tears and gave us a cuddle.

Jack Freer was a farmer and he used the house block to the best of his ability. He grew and harvested Rhubarb and figs. Gran made ginger beer. The rules forbade us to play on the verandah near the ginger beer and the rhubarb garden was forbidden territory.

At the foot of the entire exterior fence was planted rhubarb of every known variety. Granny could cook the rhubarb in a dozen different ways; we had jam, sweets, rhubarb cold and rhubarb hot. Grandfather loved it and had it for every meal. No one dared to refuse a second and third helping.

Granny's ginger beer was a powerful brew. There was a constant explosion as the bottles blew up in the laundry. We really did enjoy the ginger beer. Grandmother also made a great contribution to Christmas by cooking a pudding in the copper. This was a special pudding; the copper was scrubbed clean and the pudding containing threepences and sixpences were wrapped in the pudding cloth and the pudding was placed in the copper to cook.

The two huge fig trees were planted by grandfather when they first moved into the house. A swinging seat was hanging on the branches and gran loved to sit in the shade and sew.

After granny died grandfather went to Wagga Wagga to live with Ted, our uncle. Dad bought the house and immediately had the fig trees cut down and removed.

One day grandfather came to visit the house and he wanted to see the trees and the swinging seat. He was shocked to see the trees were gone and he turned on his heels and went back and sat in the car. He refused to go into the house.

We became adept at using the rules to our advantage and almost grew to like the old man who made them and administered them.

Grandfather Solves the Problems of the World.

Grandfather had a smoking corner in the kitchen. In this corner he had a comfortable chair and his rack of pipes and a bucket filled with sand. This had been his corner for many years and he loved to sit and smoke and talk. Dad was his usual audience and they discussed the reports of world happenings from the Cootamundra Herald and the Tribune which was the paper of the Australian Communist party. Ted was a member of the group except for his time in the army. He was stationed in New Guinea where he was in a search light company.

Grandfather was a keen admirer of Joseph Stalin the leader of the USSR. He followed Stalin's actions closely and almost every day he sang his praises. It was ironic that granny had lined the walls of the small kitchen with large pictures of the Royal Family even right next to his smoking corner. I cannot but accept the fact that she was poking fun at these armchair experts.

All women and children were barred from joining in the discussions. I had an ambition to join in the discussions of the group and I hoped that the time would come quickly for me to be old enough to join in. In 1956 I was studying at Wagga Wagga Teachers' College and I believed that the time had come for me to be able to join the group and I went to Cootamundra with that end in view. I was 22 and I presented myself to be part of the group but to my surprise grandfather refused to let me join in the discussions.

Grandfather was heard to mutter "What's the world coming to, with young whipper Snappers and 'Know alls' wanting to join in the talk of the elders?"

When the Allies were in Germany and deciding what their strategy was going to be Eisenhower asked Stalin what the Russians were planning for Berlin? Stalin took the opportunity to move into Berlin. The journalists flocked to the capital of Germany and everywhere they went the Russians got them to toast the successful end of the war with copious drinks of vodka. When they woke up from their drunken sleep the Russians were in Berlin.

Grandfather was delighted that his hero Uncle Jo had outwitted the allies and had stolen a march on them for the entry into Berlin. Grandfather had not really judged for himself that The allies were cautious about taking on the feeding of the people of the city; The Allied soldiers wanted to go home, and there seemed to be no strategic importance for the ruined city of Berlin.

He was a great letter writer and wrote articles for the Cootamundra Herald as feature writer. He covered the rail smash in 1934 and criticised the authorities for having the dangerous policy of locking all the train doors. He wrote letters to prominent Cootamundra residents about the dangerous driving of a sulky by one prominent citizen's daughter who had caused considerable damage to grandfathers dray, in a collision.

Goulburn.

We were in Goulburn for 11 years as follows:

1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950.
1	2	3	4	5	6	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th

John left school first then Keith. Joy was married to Bill Hudson. John went back to live with dad as did Keith. They both went to live with mother and heard her side of our sorry story. I stayed on at school in Goulburn, I passed the QC, the IC, and the LC. I decided to live in Goulburn and went to live with Joy and Bill. Later I boarded out in the city.

My job prospects were good as I was offered a position as a trainee accountant; a clerical position in a furniture store and a cashier in the City Council. I finally accepted the City Council position. I was determined to study to get a better qualification for future work. I was enrolled in the Technical College to study accountancy. I passed the Intermediate Accountancy course in Law, Auditing and Accountancy.

I met a girl named Noelene who had been in my class at the high school. We decided to keep company together. To secure our future we decided to complete my studies but I grew dissatisfied with accountancy. The principal of the Goulburn High School rang me one day to convince me to take up the Teaching scholarship which I had qualified for in my LC.

I was excited about the offer and tried to convince Noelene that the offer was too good to miss. She was not impressed and after several arguments we decided to separate and go our own ways. I went on to Wagga Wagga Teachers' College.

I was called up to join the army and was sent the Infantry Training camp in Ingleburn. My unit was the 13th National Service Training Battalion. I was in the army for 3 months basic training then 3 years of CMF membership in the Werriwa regiment. I also attended 3 camps at Singleton. We camped out at Middle Arm creek as one of the last training commitments. Our units provided personnel to line Canberra's streets in crowd control for the Queen's visit.

Story

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- 2 Primary School Days.
- 3 High School Days.
- 4 Sports .
- 5 Church.
- 6 Music.
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Home Happenings.

There were 80 boys in the home and a routine of activities had to be established and maintained. Every boy was put into a group to do various jobs throughout the year. The work roster was changed each school term. Pleasant jobs and unpleasant ones were shared evenly among the boys. A boy might be on dormitories one term and on scullery duties, cleaning pots and pans next.

An example of the sharing of duties was as follows: There were two dormitories to keep clean and tidy. There were six boys in the group. The rooms had to be swept and cleaned. On Saturday the beds were pushed to one side and the floor polished. The polish was applied by hand but the shine was achieved by using a heavy block of wood covered with a cloth with a handle attached. A boy would sit on the block of wood and two boys would pull him around at surprising speed. This activity caused quite a bit of hilarity, and a good shine was assured.

When the job was completed and passed inspection the boys would go down to the woodheap and cut and deliver a barrow load of wood to the wood store. When this chore was completed the boys were free to go to the playground.

A scary job was the upstairs toilets and stairway up to the tower platform. There was a belief held that the stairs were haunted. When it was your turn to scrub the stairs you were very glad when the job was completed. The wind howled through the windows of the stairway and imagination would do the rest.

Our group made it a good practice of working hard and to get into the playground first so that we could make use of the equipment. We had gardens (Vegetables) and we had spades, rakes and mattocks. We were keen to practise for the sports carnival which was held at school each year. We dug up a space and filled it with sand and removed all the rocks and sticks and made it a smooth and comfortable training spot. We were junior high school students and we were being constantly harassed by the boys who were in fourth year at school. They would threaten us and drive us away just for the fun of making us look silly.

We decided to get even with them. They were too big for us to fight so we used trickery to settle our anger. We dug a large pit in the training track. We used the track for long jump and hop-step and jump. The pit was too long for us to reach on our best effort but well within the range of the fourth year boys.

The pit was then filled with water and dirt to make a muddy mess. Sticks were placed carefully over the pit and these sticks were covered with cardboard and this was carefully spread with dirt from the track.

We made a great show of activity as we tried our skill in jumping and just missing out on the pit filled with muddy water. The bigger boys came up to us and with menace told us to "Get lost." We retreated and they took over our jumping pit. At a convenient distance we watched eagerly for the trap to catch its first victim.

But you can imagine our dismay when one of the carers strolled over to the pit to watch the training jump of the fourth year boys. The first boy to try the long jump disappeared with a great muddy splash into the pit. He was lost to sight and we feared that he might have been drowned!

The carer rounded us up and told us that seeing we were obviously keen on digging and watering we should expend our energies in digging the garden. We were upset that our free time was gone but we were very happy that our trap had worked.

Primary School Days.

The boys were taken to the primary school each day by a carer. There were about 50 boys in the group. We would collect our lunches and when everyone was ready we would walk down to the school in two lines. At the end of school day the carer would line us up we would walk up the hill to the home.

When we arrived home we would change out of school clothes and then we would polish our shoes for the next day. When this was done we were free to go to the playground.

It was wartime and the young men teachers were serving in the military forces. Their places in the classroom were filled by retired teachers. Our teacher was well over 70 and we found that he could be easily distracted from his lesson plans. He had two very interesting habits; He rewarded good work and behaviour with the privilege of putting resin on his violin bow.

If you had misbehaved and was about to get the feather duster you could remind the teacher that the resin needed to be put on the bow. He would entirely forget the punishment and give the pupil an early mark for being an observant pupil.

The other idiosyncrasy was to breathe on the window on frosty mornings and draw a number of egg shapes with his finger. This would develop into a picture he called "A Basket of Eggs." If the lesson was boring and you hadn't done the homework set for the lesson you simply asked him to show you how to draw a basket of eggs! He would immediately forget about the maths or reading assignment and show the class how to draw the eggs.

Quite often we would be thoroughly bored with the lesson so we would resort to other more interesting activities. One day I folded a piece of paper into a rocket. I threw it at my friend. He threw it back to me and I changed the shape slightly to get a straighter flight. My inventive genius was thoroughly aroused. It was certain that I must lower the front of the rocket. So I was trialling tying a match stick with cotton thread in the nose of the rocket. It took quite a bit of adjustment so I did not notice the Head Master come into the room to supervise the teacher and the class. I followed the flight of the rocket and observed the effect of the wind on the rocket.

There I saw the Headmaster and to my horror he asked me to come out to the front of the class.

"We have an inventive genius in the class," he said sarcastically. "Collect your plane and come into my class room. Now give my class a demonstration of your rocket". I was embarrassed and with shaking legs I threw the rocket. He then gave me the stick to help me be diligent in my class room studies.

During the last stages of the war we often had fighter planes fly over the school. This was particularly upsetting for the teacher who was on assembly duty. The pilots flew low and slow and would see a sea of upturned faces. There were many fights among the boys when they claimed the pilot had waved at them in particular. All I can remember was the deafening noise and I think that the pilot was actually trying to annoy the teachers!

High School Days.

It was two miles from the Home to the Goulburn High School. We walked this distance to school and back every day. Senior boys were chosen to lead a group of about 10 boys. Over 30 boys went to high school. It was a position of trust and most of the boys chosen lived up to the trust put in them.

I was a book worm and I usually read a book as I walked along. I depended on two friends to save me from running into things. However they could not resist the temptation to guide me into a pole. When I hit the pole I saw stars and I broke my glasses and had a black eye and a bruised cheek. The friends were deeply sorry for the action they had taken; they did not intend me to get hurt.

There were some eccentric teachers at the school and they were a regular source of amusement. The woodwork teacher was a wee Scot. If you did not follow his safety rules he would grab your hand and move it towards a sharp blade and He was too strong to resist

He was a strong disciplinarian and he was held in great respect. Whenever trouble broke out he would bellow "Take a walk into my office lad." He would close the door and everyone could hear the swish of the cane and the cry of the boy. The door would open and the boy would come out with his hand under his arm.

It was not realised what had actually happened because the boy was sworn to silence. My turn came to take a walk into his office and as the door closed he told me to put out my hand. The cane swished through the air and hit the desk completely missing my hand! He then told me to cry out and when I came back into the classroom I had to pretend that I had been hit. He swore me to silence He was a good actor and kept us guessing what he would do next.

Our science teacher Mr Fisher who was affectionately called 'Boom' Fisher was preparing a magnesium flash for the school play night. We were told to get on with private study. Boom was a showman at heart and when he had made a large amount of the chemical He tested a small amount of the mixture to see if it went off properly.

All eyes were upon him as he proceeded to prepare for the test. He set the small pile alight but to his concern a spark flew into his large pile and it exploded with a loud bang and the whole desk was alight. He singed his moustache and his eye brows and was named "BOOM" there after.

The PE teacher lectured us constantly about being properly dressed for PE. One day we dressed in army school cadet uniforms. We wore heavy army boots and overcoats. We lined up for PE and then we realised our mistake! The teacher congratulated us on our uniforms and then set the task to be done. We were told to double around the oval for 40 minutes. The laugh was on us.

We made another mistake when we challenged the senior girls' hockey team to a match. We were over confident. We were the rugby team and we thought we could beat the girls. The game did not last long because the girls played the man and not the ball. They were merciless. The game was not too far through when it was observed that there were more boys off the field than on the field. We admitted that the girls had the better of us.

Sports.

Don Athaldo was a hero to the boys in the home. He was a body builder who championed the cause of the weaklings. The advertisements he published showed a BEFORE and an AFTER sequence. The before was a sequence when a bully showed off in front of the girls and the weakling was embarrassed because he was too weak to do anything about it. After a course of Don Athaldo's exercises in body building the weakling was a weakling no longer, and when the bully appeared he had to face a well developed man.

We were healthy youths. This was the result of the rigorous life we led. We walked to school and back Monday to Friday. This was 4 miles each day. On Sunday we marched down to the city for worship and this totalled 24 miles each week.

We went to bed early and got up early. You could say that we were healthy and wise but not wealthy! The food was plain but there was plenty of it. On wet days we played rough games in the common room. These games were rigorous!

Our playground was about 1 acre in extent and it was sealed with bitumen cover. It had a fairly steep slope. The rules of the play ground were very strict. Rough play was not permitted but we were prepared to take a risk to use up our energy. Punishment for bad behaviour was to stand on line at the gate to the playground from 10 minutes to an hour.

One of the activities was to bowl truck tyres down the slope of the play ground. It became a weak activity until one of the boys bowled a tyre at his friend and called out to him to stop it. The aim was to deflect the speeding tyre or to grab it and deflect it over the shoulder. At first there were many miscalculations and a number of boys were injured.

The final development was to sit inside the tyre and be propelled down the slope. There were quite a few crashes until the boy who was the stopper was able to slow the tyre down and stop it. One boy crashed through the fence ;he didn't get hurt.

A feature of the playground was a hirdy girdy with 6 chains secured to a wheel at the top of the pole. Six boys would run around as fast as possible and when the speed was high enough they would lift their legs and sail around the pole. The activity soon became common place and it was decided that 5 of the boys would run around the giant stride and cross the chain of the first boy .When they had the speed up they would stop and pull their chain hard .The result was a tremendous fly around for the first boy who had to hang onto the chain for all he was worth. This activity was banned .If you hurt a toe and couldn't get a shoe on you could not march to church on Sunday. Matron was amazed at the number of damaged toes there were from accidents in the playground. In fact the boys tried hard to damage their toes on the Giant Stride.

We played many throwing and catching games One of the games was to knock stones out of a circle next to a wall. A tennis ball was used for the game. Brandings was another game we eagerly played. It was a variation of 'Countries' The boys were given numbers and when the boy threw the ball up in the air he would call out a number .When the boy caught the ball he would call out 'Stop' and then he would try to brand the nearest boy. Who became IN. The idea was to pick on the unluckiest boy and brand him 3 times so that he was OUT!

We had some quiet games and one of them was hopscotch. We became quite adept at the game. I have told previously the fate of our athletics disaster .

The carers must have had their hearts in their mouths as they saw our activities develop from innocent pastimes to extremely dangerous stunts.

Church.

We had a full round of religious services in the Home .On Sunday we had a morning service at 9 am and an afternoon Sunday School for 2 hours starting at 2pm.and an evening service at 6pm.On Wednesday evening at 6pm we had another service.

After breakfast each morning we would have 15 minutes of prayers and Bible reading and comments by one of the leaders.On most Sunday mornings we would march down to the Citadel in the city.

We were well versed in the scriptures and the subsequent biblical knowledge.We put this knowledge to work on our scripture teachers. the scripture teacher was a member of the Citadel congregation and when she introduced the story she had prepared for us we called out almost in unison' We know that story!'The teacher who was resourceful offered us another story but we said we knew that one too.Eventually the teacher gave up and we had private study under the supervision of one of the class teachers who was not kindly disposed towards us.We finally wished we could return to the scripture class but it was too late.

When the service was about to start the staff of the home or the citadel staff would process to their places on the platform.The boys would bet on who the preacher would be.The conversation would be sung to the hymn tune that was being sung .It was quite an art to make up the words to fit the tune. The boy who usually won the bet explained to us that the one who had the most books and papers would be the preacher.

Dad came to a service at the citadel on one of his rare visits.He came in and took his place nervously in a pew at the back of the room.There was a man kneeling on his hymn book and his mouth was about 5 inches from Dad's ear..

There was a custom of shouting out your response to what has been witnessed to or prayed for or read from the bibleThe response was usually 'Praise the Lord' or 'Glory be' or 'Hallelujah.'The man shouted loudly and dad jumped in fright.He was now more nervous than when he first came into the service.

The boys were a source of unrest in the citadel service. They were obviously bored and reacted accordingly. There was however a radical change coming. The manager of the Home decided to form a brass band. Shock! Horror! The band would join the citadel band to provide the music for the service. The move was a great success and went on from strength to strength.

On Sunday afternoon we had a Sunday School gathering and one series of topics was 'Great Heroes of the Faith.' Such people as Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jacob and David were used as models for us. The account of the hero's life was given then an appeal was put before us to model our lives on the Hero Of the faith.

One group of boys thought about the proposition and raised questions in the discussion time. A question was asked about the morals of David. Should we follow such an immoral man? He had ordered the death of Bathsheba's husband and had taken her as his wife! These facts had not been brought out in the recounting of David's life.

Each Sunday after that we questioned the lives of Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jacob and David. The leader was angry with us and dealt with us as trouble makers. We continued to ask serious questions and at last he told us to leave the gathering and report to the office where we were punished for being rude and disobedient.

It was not a disaster however for I asked myself the question What did David do to be the friend of God? God chose David to be the friend of God not because of his goodness; or of his good looks; God chose David and I wondered if God would choose me as his friend? If this was so then I must be a Christian. It was not my goodness but God's love that counted.

Music

"Very Good effort, You're in." There was a really competitive atmosphere in the Home. "The Boss" as we called the manager of the Home had decided to form a boys' Brass band in the home. We were very excited about the news. The advantage of being selected depended on our own efforts. We were given 5 Basic Music Charts to learn by heart.

There was an oral test to be passed in front of every one. This was a nerve wracking experience. A boy would be told 'You can choose an instrument and you must learn to play a tune.' All sorts of strange sounds came from the 20 or so instruments as the tune was practised. When my turn came I was nervous but I was able to play my tune and was told "You're in."

In time the band was formed with the keenest boys and there followed a time of intense practise of the tunes of the hymns. If you didn't perform up to standard you could lose your place in the band because there were other boys eager to be in the band. It was pleasing to find that no one lost their place. We practised the next Sunday's hymns until we knew the tunes well.

There was a feeling of resignation that the Citadel's music would be disrupted once the boys joined with the citadel's band. The people involved were fearful that the boys would not be able to resist the temptation to 'muck up' and spoil the worship of the church. They were pleasantly surprised to see the boys behave so well.

We did not look forward to our first band led march down to the citadel. Going down was easy but coming home it was hard work to march home up the hill.

We were invited to visit other towns to play. Dalgetty Show Committee invited us to play at their show. We were very well treated and had all the food and drink we wanted. This was great and we enjoyed ourselves. Someone challenged us to have a swim in the Snowy River. The water was deep but crystal clear. We jumped in all together and as soon as we hit the water we jumped out again. The water was icy cold.

A small part of the band was invited to go to Molong for the Easter Services. We took a small combination of instruments to play for the services. We visited the Abercrombie Caves on our way back to Goulburn. We heard many stories about the local bushrangers.

We took a combined band and springboard team to take part in the Sydney Congress of the Salvation Army. The first Congress Hall Band took us under their wings and helped us according to our instrument.

The band was a great influence on our lives.

Keith sent me a newspaper spread of his life in the 'Home'. I will ask him to let me send a copy to you. He (Goulburn Evening Post)

Goulburn City Council.

I was appointed as a junior clerk in the Cashier's office. I ran all the Cashier's messages. During the preparation of the Rates papers we were very busy. I had to join all the other office juniors to deliver the Council Minutes and papers to the City Councillors. There was a very strict protocol to be observed by the delivery team. The councillors expected due deference from the juniors and all supposed insults were duly handed to the Town Clerk.

The juniors were located in the Cashier's office; the general office; the Engineer's office; The health Inspector's office; the cost clerk's office and the typing pool.

We were always blamed for any mistakes that were made in the council offices. Once the rates papers were finalised and delivered to the councillors we were left to our own devices. Often we would be given jobs to do to keep us busy and out of mischief. One such job was to clear all the old books and other gear out of the fourth floor attic.

The spare instruments of the City Band were stored in the attic and you guessed it correctly we tried the instruments out. Complaints were made and we were disciplined. We were told to carry 2 books at a time down the 4 flights of steps and pack them up ready for a new storage place.

It was a boring job that seemed to go on forever so we used our imaginations and found an old blanket and loaded 20 books into its folds, and struggled down the stairs. Disaster struck and we tumbled down the stairs on to the mat of the hallway to the council offices. We landed in a cloud of dust. It was our misfortune that the Town Clerk was farewelling some distinguished people and he was very upset.

"Send them all down to the Council Overseer and see if he can teach them to drive!" yelled the TC. So we were given driving instruction on smallutes (A40's). When we received our driving licences we were sent by vehicle to deliver the council papers.

I bought a 1942 Harley Davidson motor bike with a sidecar. I decided to take the sidecar off and ride the bike without it. I had a trial ride at the back of the town hall and managed to ride the bike in the middle of a hedge.

One of our trials was our weekly interrogation by the Deputy TC who went over our week's work with a fine toothed comb and berated us on our mistakes. I was sent to work in the cost clerk's office. Each week I would prepare a broadsheet of council store costs and it had to be completed at 10 am on Friday. I wanted to see what the accountant did with the sheet but he refused to let me see it.

I lost interest in council's financial management and decided to leave the council.