

**My recollection of the period of my life spent as a Ward of the State
In the care of the Child Welfare Department.**

Church of England Girls Home, Adelaide Terrace, Perth

Swan Boy's Orphanage, Middle Swan WA

The Child Welfare Receiving Home, Walcott Street, Mount Lawley WA

Presbyterian Children's Home, Byford WA

When I was about 3 years of age about the time of the depression, my mother deserted my father and they were subsequently divorced on the grounds of my mother's adultery. My mother was deemed as being the offending party.

My father, with the help of my grandmother continued to care for my sister and myself while my father continued to find casual work. He walked great distances to save the cost of fares travelling to various locations where casual labouring work was available.

Workers receiving sustenance were only allowed to work 2 days per week during the depression.

My father even scoured the tips and eventually had enough parts to put together a bicycle enabling him to ride greater distances to obtain work that enabled him to meet his rental payments and provide for my sister and myself.

I believe my father had visited the Church of England Girl's Home, Adelaide Terrace, Perth to receive what I believe were food vouchers for people working on what was known as Sustenance as there was no such thing known as the Dole in those days.

At this time I was about 4 years of age, my sister was about 20 months older. Although I have no recollection of the event, my sister can recall that I was hanging on to my father's leg and refused to leave him, I was physically removed from my father, my sister can still recall to this day the tears streaming down my father's face as we were led away.

For the period of time I spent at the Church of England Girl's Home, Adelaide Terrace, Perth, I have absolutely no recollection **what so ever**. Although my sister can recall never seeing me during the day as I was placed in the Toddlers Section but she believes she could hear me crying continually well into the night.

The only time she saw me was when my father came to visit us on weekends. This was a sad time for her as dad would leave with tears running down his face and I would be returned to the Toddlers Section.

Then after a period of time she never saw me again.

Flash back: Although I have stated I have no recollection of my time at Church of England Girls Home - this is true. But when I was in my mid twenties, I was being taken for a drive in a friend's vehicle, it was a small 1936 Austin 7 covered-in van, there was no seating and we just sat on the floor.

Also there, was my sister and several small children. As soon as the doors were closed I had a terrifying feeling that I had been in this situation before and I was returned to my early childhood. The van had no windows, only a few louver type slotted air vents that let almost no light in.

It was very traumatic, I believe that it's possible that I was transferred from the Church of England Girls Home to the Swan Boys Orphanage in this type of vehicle. In my flash back I appeared to have been screaming for a very long duration of time.

At the Swan Boys Orphanage although I would have been there for a number of years, I have no recollection of the day-to-day events or people.

The only recollection of Swan Boys Orphanage I have is one of where we were in a line heading for school and were marched past the kitchen area and each boy was handed a nice freshly baked rock cake with sugar sprinkled on top. It was a bitterly cold morning and I put the bottom flat side of the rock cake against my cheek and was enjoying the warmth when a loud voice shouted "to stop abusing food or I will have it taken from me and punished."

My second and only other recollection was one evening about dusk I was taken with about 6 boys to a little church in the grounds of the orphanage known as St Mary's Church of England and we were all baptised at the time, I did not understand what had taken place.

It was not until my wife and I attended our church to hear the bans of our wedding read out. . During the service a young child was baptised. After the service I said to my wife that I could remember having that done to me. (I was twenty-seven at this time)

I have over the years also mentioned this to my sister. My sister explained to me that it was something I had dreamt up over the years.

Over the years my belief that I had been baptised while at Swan Boys Orphanage became stronger, although I have my original Baptismal Certificate from the Presbyterian Church of St Andrews St Georges Terrace, Perth dated 16th March, 1932.

My wife and I decided to search the Archives of the J.S. Battye Library, Perth, we spent 4 hours going through records and microfilm of St Mary's, Church of England, we discovered a record on microfilm that I had indeed been baptised as a Church of England in 1937.

Although Child Welfare Department Records of my detention as a destitute child it records my religion as being a Presbyterian. I believe that something as important

as changing my religion while in the care of the Child Welfare Department should have consulted my father for his approval for such an important decision.

In the Child Welfare Department record where it states that my detention as a destitute child, it also records my fathers address as last known c/- Big Bell Gold Mine via Cue. Cue is a gold mining town 649 km, north east of Perth, it also recorded that he was working on 'sustenance'.

My paternal grandmother who later became my guardian informed me that my father was devastated to be sent such a distance away from his children. He had no alternative but to go because if he refused he would loose his sustenance entitlements. My grandmother commented that the authority had no consideration or feelings for families that they had inconvenienced or the disruption they had caused.

My grandmother also informed me that my father had fought desperately over the years to try and have his children returned to his care, but he was continually refused because of his status in life, as by being a divorcee they classified him as a single person and not able to care for his children.

My grandmother even tried desperately to have her grandchildren released into her care, but because she was a widow she met the same fate as my father. My grandmother considered it was my father's desperate wish to have his children returned to him after the continual battle with Child Welfare Department.

My father finally remarried and shortly after I was united with my father and step mother. I had a few problems adjusting to life after being released from the Swan Boys Orphanage, which was when I believe I was about 8 years old. Settling down to life outside the orphanage had its problems.

Firstly I had to get to know my father all over again, I was very nervous every time he spoke because I believed that an adult voice meant authority. I would tremble if my father had to raise his voice if I were outside or at another part of the house if he called me.

My father was sharing part of a house in Goderich Street, East Perth, on the eastern side of St Mary's Cathedral. I can remember there was another person who shared the other part of the house, he always referred to me as being a puny little fellow this annoyed my father no end.

One evening after work my father told me to get my shoes on my feet as we had a long walk as he was taking me to see somebody, it sounded important. I remember my footwear looked like a pair of black or blackened sandshoes. My father remarked that they were 'on the nose' and he would get me a decent pair next payday.

We went for a long walk to a house down Newcastle Street, West Perth it was about dusk, I can still remember the house to this day, it was a doctor's practice. I was examined I can still remember the name he mentioned to this day, but I did not know what it meant at the time. He told my father I was suffering from

Malnutrition and that after a few months of home-cooked tucker I would probably return to my normal weight.

My father told the doctor that he had not seen me without a shirt on as I had just been returned to his care after being in the orphanage. My father said to the doctor he believed he could play a tune on my ribs because they were very prominent. My father was furious at the condition I was returned to him from the Child Welfare Department

On payday my father arrived home with my new shoes, I believe they were Tan; my father put the laces in them and asked me to try them on. I struggled with them, while my father informed me I was putting my shoe on the wrong foot, I asked my father to show me how to identify which shoe went on which foot. He told me to put socks on with my shoes. It appeared the Orphanage did not give me any socks to go with my smelly Sandshoes. My stepmother had her son who was about my age living with us. Dad borrowed a pair of his socks, and told me to put them on, I became very frightened, I just kept looking at the socks. My father said have you got a problem with the socks son? I very nervously asked my father if he could help me identify which sock went on to the correct foot as he had done with my shoes. My father was not amused, he thought I was trying to be funny, until he realised later that socks were never worn at the orphanage.

(at the orphanage shoes and socks were only ever worn on special occasions)
(I never ever saw my smelly sandshoes again)

On the Friday before I was to start school my stepmother took me across a large Park called Wellington Square to the East Perth State School to be enrolled as. I were to start on the Monday morning. On the Monday I believe I went with my Stepbrother when we got close to the school he met up and ran off with several of his mates and I was left at the edge of the park. The sight of children running all directions across the school grounds and not knowing where to go or who to see I was frightened to go into the school grounds. I looked to the large park that we crossed I could see several tennis courts with a very high fence around them. At the bottom of the fence there was very long grass that had not been cut almost like a small hedge, I walked over and sat behind the long grass I could see through to the school, when anyone walked around the school grounds I would lay down behind the grass, I continued this for several days. I was frightened at the thought of just going into the school ground, (I don't know why) I have no recollection what so ever of attending the East Perth State School.

Several weeks later my sister was released from the orphanage on September the 10th 1939, that evening we were sitting around the table having our evening meal my Father asked me to pass something to my sister, I just looked at my father and he said son did you hear what I asked you to do, I answered yes, but I did not know I had a sister, I don't even know her name.

My sister recently commented that to this day she has a very vivid memory she said, her first memories of seeing me after she was released from the orphanage were that I was a very skinny, frightened little boy.

Shortly after the arrival of my sister at the house we were sharing in Godrich St, East Perth, we moved to a house in Wittenoom Street, that we did not have to share it was closer to the East Perth School, we did not stay there very long I don't know why. We moved again to 233 Royal Street, East Perth, this house was situated at the corner of Clotilde Street, (this is where the Community Development Department Offices are situated today.)

While living at Royal Street we began receiving visits from an officer, from the Child Welfare Department checking on our welfare. My sister can recall that she was a very arrogant woman. She use to carry a large handkerchief in her handbag and would wipe the chair before she sat down, she would even wipe the table before she put anything on the kitchen table. Although my sister can recall wiping the table and chairs even before she arrived.(As this was one of her chores)

This officer would always down grade the area where we live and this would always make us feel inferior partly as we had just left the orphanage after many years. While living at Royal Street my father enlisted into the army. Shortly after my fathers enlistment we again moved to a very nice house at 42 Regent Street, Leederville.

This is possible because of the insinuations by the Welfare Officer referring to our residence at Royal Street.

Once again I went through the procedure of being enrolled at Leederville State School. Once again I have no recollection of having ever attending the school. Although I have a very clear memory of the surrounding area of our residence and the people we associated with.

The army unit my father enlisted in was the 9th Auxiliary Horse Transport Company; the unit was based at the Claremont Royal Showgrounds the showgrounds was chosen because of the large number of stables, that were used to house the animals that were being judged at show time. There also were a number of halls and pavilions and outbuildings that were used to accommodate the men. On one occasion the camp had an open day for families to visit and enjoy the horsemanship display in the show arena. Our stepmother took us to town to buy us a new outfit of clothes for the occasion. My sister received a very pretty dress and a nice wide brimmed hat and a very nice pair of shoes. I received a very nice grey college type suit, a very nice striped tie and long socks and a pair of shining black patent leather shoes, we looked very smart in our new outfits.

After our visit to the army camp our stepmother seemed to change, not long after my sister would receive a belting with the electric iron cord for the slightest thing. Although I had the occasional hit with the iron cord, I believe that I was lucky because when I required chastising my stepbrother had been also involved.

Not long after our visit to the army camp my sister used to have to sit at the back gate where she could see my father approaching across a large paddock from the tram stop when he came home on leave.

My sister would have to run to the back door then call out to our stepmother when our father was coming home, this went on for sometime.

One day our father arrived home unannounced, my sister was not at her usual spot at the back gate. When my father entered the house; he caught one of his officers in the front room with our stepmother. The officer then dived through the front window; my father chased him up the street, when he returned to the house there was a terrible argument. Some time later two very big Military Police arrived at our house to escort our father back to camp, I believe they were tipped off, as he was AWL. (Absent without Leave)

It was stated in my fathers army pay book that he had broken out of camp and had been taken on strength for this he was fined two days pay it also mentions in my father's army pay book that now the Child Welfare Department is receiving his Army allotment

Shortly after the above events we never saw much of our father, I believe he was conveniently transferred to Rottenest Island and was attached to the large naval gun emplacement. His team of army horses were used to transport the large ammunition to and from gun emplacement, as there were no army trucks on the island. Our father would be away up to one month at a time. In his absents the officer still continued to visit our house.

Some time later my sister and I were dressed in the cloths that were previously described above, we were taken into Perth for lunch at Boans Cafeteria.

I did not know what the special occasion was. After lunch we walked across to the Perth Railway Station. My stepmother spoke to a man at the station, she told him that she was taking us for a short tram ride and would only be away a short time.

I was carrying an Iced Cinnamon Bun that I had not eaten for my lunch, I asked the man to hold it for me until I returned. (I had no reason to believe that I was not going to return to the station for my bun).

Our tram ride finished at Walcott Street, Mount Lawley, I remember being taken to a building in Walcott Street and walking up the steps and through the main door.

After a short discussion my sister and I were lead away. I never ever saw or heard of my stepmother or her son again. Little did I know at this point of time my sister and I were about to become under the control of the Child Welfare Department again.

Later I learnt that the building in Walcott Street, Mount Lawley was known as the Child Welfare Department Walcott Street Receiving Home. I don't know how long my sister and I were held at the home but once again my memories of being in an institution are a complete blank

Little did my sister and I know that after the doors closed behind us at the Walcott Street Receiving Home that we would loose our freedom that we had enjoyed for approximately two years, getting to know each other and also our father, aunties, uncles and cousins as yet I had not got to know my grandmother, as when she paid a visit to us I was either at school or out playing.

We did not realise that we would be institutionalised and ostracized from society and used as child labour for the remainder of our childhood.

When later as a teenager I was released into the care of my grandmother who then was my guardian, she told me that she had paid a visit to our residence at Leederville to take some cloths for my sister and myself. On arrival at the residence she found the doors open it was evident the house was unoccupied, she was horrified not knowing what had happened to her grandchildren. She was also surprised that it had not been ransacked.

I don't know how long it was before my father was informed of the situation.

My grandmother explained to me that my father was devastated not knowing where his children were and later to discover that his wife had deserted him. (*This is the second time in my father's life that a wife has disserted him*).

He later discovered us children had been transferred to the Presbyterian Children's Home at Byford, which is situated about forty five km's from Perth it is about six km's into the hills on the Eastern side of the South West Highway.

The devastation affected my father to the extent that although the war was still in progress and that he was stationed at Rottnest Island that was classified as a battle station, his discharge papers from the army showed that he received an immediate discharge on compassionate grounds.

The date on my father's discharge papers from the army re-cords that he was discharged on February the 28th 1942 this is an official document, but I am confused because the dates of my admittance to the Presbyterian Home, Byford, it's recorded in the minutes book from the matron to the church office committee that the two xxx children were admitted on February 23rd 1942 from the Child Welfare Department. Although my father was discharged five days after my admission date, my sister and I have vivid memories of my father visiting us at Byford wearing his army uniform on many occasions.

I can remember the first visit from my father at Byford he looked like an old man compared from the last time I saw him. I did not know if it was because he had walked such a long distance up the steep hills on the rough gravel road or because of his thick army uniform and heavy boots he was wearing. (I did not know the trauma my father had been through)

I don't know how long we were held at the Walcott Street Receiving Home but one day we were taken to a Church Hall at the rear of Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church in Pier Street, Perth. I can remember attending this hall while we had been released. I possibly attended Sunday school there as I recognised a metal spiral staircase that led to the upper floor. We waited a while until a truck arrived to take us to the Presbyterian Church Home at Byford it was driven by a man that I later became to known as Mr Turner. He had the lease of the dairy farm at the home.

The truck was loaded with farm produce and general supplies for the home. There was only enough room in the cab for my sister and I think a staff member, they had to arrange the load on the truck, they had to move bags of chaff and tins of lighting kerosene to make a space on the truck for me. I had to sit with my knees doubled up against my chest. After driving for a considerable time Mr Turner stopped the truck because it was a very hot day and bought an ice cream for my sister and myself. This would be the last ice cream we would have for a long time.

It was about an hour and a half drive from Perth, when we arrived at the home my face and the tops of my legs were badly sunburnt.

At Byford there were two extremes of temperatures, the summer was extremely hot and the winter was bitterly cold, there was frost on the ground for most of the winter, (I had not seen frost before).

Our first day at the home started by rising at about 6 am we had to make our beds and stand by them while they were inspected. Later we had to line up a long slopping ramp outside the dinning room, when breakfast was served the dinning room door was opened and we were allowed to enter in a single file and we received a plate of porridge, then a plate stacked with bread and jam was placed on the tables, we were only allowed one slice regarding the age of the child. The bread was always stuck together and soggy, it was very unpleasant. The washing up after breakfast was rostered this also applied to lunch and teatime. Each child rostered had an amount to wash or dry it was usually divided that each child was either assigned to large plates, small, cups, knives, forks or spoons, while others were assigned to wipe down the tables and chairs, mop and sweep the dinning room, there was also sweeping up around various areas of the home daily before going to school.

Saturday mornings was polishing day. The large dinning room, recreation room and the dormitories all had jarrah flooring. The floors were divided into sections each child was assigned about 6 or 8 boards each. One group would apply the wax polish to the full length of their section; another group would remove the polish and shine their section. Nobody left the room until the polishing had been approved to the satisfaction of a staff member.

The school we attended was a small 3-roomed cottage; this was situated on part of the farm property approximately 1 mile away from the home. The cottage had a wall removed from between two of the rooms this was the main classroom for the grade 1 to grade 6 children, the other was used for the infant classes there was only one teacher for the whole school. The average number of children fluctuated from just under 30 and sometimes just over 30, conditions were rather cramped.

Apart from the children from the home there were children also from 4 nearby farms

To get to school we had to walk part of the way down a rough bush track then along a gravel road, we then had to either walk over a log or jump the creek and then walk across a paddock. In the summer the ground was extremely hot, in the winter we use to slip in the mud and walk on frost, which crackled under foot as we walked across the paddock, because we wore no shoes I had continuous blisters on my feet for the period I was at Byford. On many occasions the blisters bust and became poisoned, on many occasions I would kick my toes and would go through the painful period until I lost the toenail

A male schoolteacher taught us by the name of Mr Raymond, he insisted that he be addressed as Sir Raymond not Mr Raymond.

My problems at school started almost immediately he would walk to the back of the class and as he approached me from the back, I would receive a hit across the hand with the cane, he would tell me this was for writing with my left hand, he made all the left handed children sit on the left hand side isle to make it easier to inflict the punishment. This was applied regularly as trying to write with my right hand slowed me down considerably. For this reason I regularly changed to using my left hand to catch up with my lessons.

Because we were not a regular government school we had an inspector who used to arrive, about every quarter to check our books and give random assessments of the children's activities. On one occasion the inspector was sitting at a table at the head of the class when he looked up and saw Sir Raymond hit my hand with the cane, my

pen tore the page and went flying across the room, he called the teacher and myself to the front of the class. The inspector asked Sir Raymond why he had hit me, he told the inspector it was because I was writing with my left hand and that he would belt writing left handed out of me even if it was the last thing he did.

The inspector replied that it might be the last thing you do as a teacher if I report you for such an act, as it was not the policy of the Education Department not to change the hand that a child writes with. The inspector asked me to read a passage from a reading book he had on the table. I had quite a noticeable stammer and was inclined to stutter. The inspector informed Sir Raymond that he was never to inflict punishment on me again, for writing with my left hand; he believed that this was possibly the cause of the nervous stammering in my voice. I can recall that on next occasion the inspector visited our school I was the first person he called out to the front of the class and asked to read for him. He asked if I had been punished for writing left handed and I replied no and said to Sir Raymond that he could notice an improvement in my speech.

About 6 months after I arrived at the home I received another chore, this was to go to the dairy and bring the milk back to the home. The dairy was situated about 500 to 600 metres down a steep hill from the home. Also assigned to this chore was a good friend of mine named Alf, he was an aboriginal boy. Alf was about my age, he arrived at the home soon after me from Broome, with his father and 4 sisters they were evacuated after the Japanese bombed Broome.

Carrying the milk up the steep hill to the home was very difficult, the container was very heavy, it took us all our time lift it. We used to slide on the gravel track and fall many times, because we were frightened of spilling the milk, as we fell we would hold the milk container very tight with one hand and place the other hand out in front of us and when it made contact with the gravel and our hand would be badly grazed, our knees would also be continually grazed from falling on the gravel track.

As the milk was not always ready for us to pick up when we arrived at the dairy Alf and I would help Mr Turner around the dairy as it was difficult to get labour during the war years.

We started off separating the milk, pumping water up from the creek (using a hand pump), filling the cow bales with feed, cutting chaff, feeding the separated milk to the calves and the pigs.

These chores although they were not all carried out every day but spread out over a period of weeks. It was some weeks later Mr Turner agreed to pay us 2/- per week for our help in the mornings, then some time later we started helping out at the dairy after school. Mr Turner agreed to pay us 5/- per week for our help.

It is reported in the Children's Home Council Minutes Book No 2 at the J.S.Battye Library Perth, dated 2nd October 1943, as follows;

Report Re Alf Brown and Ray Stewart; These boys have been Helping Mr Turner at the dairy and have been working long hours, they have now been instructed to report for duty at 5-45 am. They do not get back until 8-30 am for breakfast.

They then go to school and after school back to Mr Turner's and remain until 7-00 pm, when they come home for tea, thoroughly tired out. They work all day Saturday and part of Sunday.

Last week they bought home 4/- each for such a weeks work. (This report from the J.S. Battye library is basically correct but it does not say that we had to rise at 5-00

am in time to report for duty at 5-45 am and that prior to attending the dairy on a regular bases morning and afternoon we got 5/- a week not 4/- as stated in the report.

It also does not state that I had to carry out my regular chores back at the home before attending school, as it was considered necessary for every child to contribute to their share of chores.

The reason being working at the dairy was considered a luxury to as Alf and I were being paid by Mr Turner.

Mr Turner always made sure we returned to the home in time to attend school but by the time I had breakfast and did my chores at the home this usually made me late for school.

The following entries from the Children's Home Council Minutes, book No 2 at the J.S.Battye library, the entries are as follows regarding the two Stewart children were obtained after searching the minute book no2 over a period of 4 days, this book is 100mm thick it began from the 31st May, 1940 and ended 14th December, 1945

Admissions: 13th March 1942

Two Stewart's 23rd February 1942 from Child Welfare Department.

Leave to children 10.4.42

Applications have been received from the home of the two Stewart children for a weekend leave.

It was not thought to be in the best interest of these children and the home to have these breaks, and we are supported by the Child Welfare Department.

12-6-42

Shirley Stewarts foot is not yet right and she still complains of it .She is still under medical treatment.

Special shoes were obtained but they do not seem to have made very much difference.

It is a great pity this child's foot was not attended to earlier.

Note (The reason her foot never recovered is because she never ever received the special shoes as mentioned as above)

10-7-42

It is proposed to put Shirley Stewart on the Trainee list as Junior Housemaid as soon as she reaches 14 years old.

14-8-42

Shirley's foot has greatly improved and we believe has almost recovered.

We are unable to place Shirley on the trainee list as a mistake was made in her age, She is only 13 this year and not 14 as thought.

5-8-43

It was suggested that parents visiting children should receive a cup of tea.

Note (My father use to leave home early in the morning to catch the train to Byford then walk 3 miles over a rough gravel road with many steep hills. He would stay all day, then return late in the afternoon to the Byford railway station, often in extreme heat, he was never ever offered a glass of water or a cup of tea over a extended period of time while visiting my sister and myself.)

15-8-43

Ray and Shirley Stewart got leave to have school holidays away from the home.

2-10-43

Ray Stewart has had a poison foot but it is improving.

14-7-44

Matron suggested that Shirley Stewart one of the older girls now nearly 15 years old be placed on to Staff. No action on this can be taken without consent of the Child Welfare Department, as Shirley is a state ward. Matron has contacted the Child Welfare Department in this respect.

Shirley Stewart has been put on the staff as from 1-7-44 at 10/- per week as directed by the council

She attends the dressmaking class at the Perth Technical School on Mondays with Laurelle Brown.

13-10-44

*Mr Telfer took residence on Monday 23rd and received much help and co-operation from matron and staff and two (2) boys. As he was working the boys far too long and they had been late for school on some occasions, I informed him of the attitude of the Child Welfare Department in this regard and asked him to see that from 3 to 4 hours a day was the maximum time they were to be kept at work. He promised that they would be **observed***

Mr Radd reported that a difference of opinion had arisen between the home and Mr Telfer over the scalding of milk cans and the employment of the boys for some hours each day. Mr Radd explained to Mr Telfer that the Child Welfare Department had definitely ruled against more than approximately 3 hours a day and the decision must be adhered to.

*An exceptional case might occur but that must be treated as an **exception**.*

In connection with the separator the council agreed on the matter, which was left in the hands of Mr Radd to finalise with Mallocks. Lengthy discussions took place on the lack of co-operation between the Home and Mr Telfer.

Matron had called at the office and made a statement re Mr Telfer's telephone calls to Mr Radd, which conversation she could not help over hearing.

*She denied that the Home had refused to, was the milk cans and said that the position was a very **unsatisfactory one for the boys**.*

The secretary reported that on the first serious complaint to reach the office about the hours the boys were being worked, she had contacted Mr Telfer, telling him of the Child Welfare Department's attitude to this matter and that we did not want the Home involved with the Child Welfare Department by disobedience to its wishes. Mr Telfer promised to respect the hours

10-11-44

Mr Radd introduced the subject of the boys working at the farm. The secretary reported that at the moment only 2 boys were at the farm and they were Mr Tulloch's wards.

She reported that during the visit Mr Bracks, Rev Victor Coombes, Mrs Jackson and herself on Friday, November 3rd one of the boys a State Ward returned from the farm crying and on being questioned said he had been kicked by Mr Telfer.

Feeling that this was a serious matter and might have repercussions with the Child Welfare Department. The secretary gave instruction that **Ray** was not to go down to the farm again until further orders. As Mr Telfer had previously sacked 2 boys it meant that only 2 were going down to assist with milking.

The secretary asked that her action be endorsed, Mr Radd moved. Dr Pearson 2nd. Dr Pearson asked that matrons letter re the boys and the farm be read-received and filed.

Carried Mr Radd moved Dr Pearson 2nd that boys 11 years of age and over be given instructions in farm work and be under the farm leaser's discipline and control for 3 hours daily. Carried Mrs Jackson, asked that her dissent be recorded, Dr Pearson moved and Mr Radd 2nd that matron and farm leaser be informed of the council's decision and that the children must be punctual at meals and at school.

Carried Mr Christie moved 2nd by Dr Pearson that Mr Telfer report to matron any irregularity in discipline and he be informed not to inflict **corporal punishment on any of the boys.**

10-11-44

Premiers Department contacted for special Concession Ticket for Shirley Stewart. It was costing 11/6 per month for the ticket. A special arrangement was made for us. We now pay 3/6.

15-12-44

Child Welfare Department, re-release of Shirley and Ray Stewart.

Child Welfare Department numerous communications have been received from Child Welfare Department on various matters **two of their wards.** In connections with Shirley and Ray Stewart's removal. I advised the department that we would be very sorry to see the children's removal at this stage as they were both showing the benefit of our care not only in body but in character building. Shirley too is one of our trainee staff.

The department have promised to make every exhaustive enquiry before releasing them to their father. Also in connection with the departments permission for them to spend 6 weeks holiday with their grandmother. I pointed out that as Shirley was now on the staff, she was not entitled to be away for 6 weeks and it's disrupted our staff arrangements at this time. The department expressed their regret that they had done this without consulting us, and asked me to contact the father asking that Shirley return to us at Cottesloe on 3-1-45.

Note. (Though Shirley was considered to be staff at 10/- a week, she ate her meals in the kitchen not the staff dining room. She did not enjoy the soft padded chairs by the open fire in the staff lounge listening to the radio but sat on a wooden chair in front the kitchen stove. Sometimes peeling vegetables for the next day's meals. She worked 7 days a week and did not receive any rostered days off as that of the senior staff, as Shirley was still a ward of the state).

13-12-44

Ray Stewart and Bob Carter started working for Mr Elliot every Saturday and received 5/-per day at the Lavender Farm.

Note. That Ray only worked several weeks for Mr Elliot before returning full time to the farm.

Ray Stewart won a prize for woodwork at the Byford Show.

9-2-45

Visit to the home on Saturday with view of ascertaining how matters stood, inconection with the farm. He found that Mr Telfer was away for the weekend dairy deplorably dirty, and two boys (his own wards) left to manage the milking etc.

The chairman reported that Mr Brown and boys could carry on temporally and that Mr Abernethy had a married couple at Dandalup that might suit us.

Note. (I was one of the wards; it is understandable that somebody from the city arriving during milking time would consider the dairy deplorably dirty considering none of the cows where toilet trained).

Laurelle Brown and her father were leaving the home. This means we have to replace two staff, as Shirley Stewart could not possibly do all the kitchen work on her own.

24-4-45

Ray Stewart is now 14 years and his maintenance was stopped by Child Welfare department. I interviewed the officer in charge and it will be restored for a year.

October 45

Shirley Stewart trainee has been removed to live with her aunt at Fremantle. We are sorry to loose her as she has developed into a very fine girl and was so thoughtful and helpful in the house (secretary report)

Matron said she was so helpful in so many ways.

Note. At this point of time I have not been able to obtain any records of when I left the home. This has always concerns me because I don't know how old I was or what year it was?

All of the reporting obtained from book no2 from the J.S.Battye Library, reports between the home and Child Welfare Department indicates that they had concerns for the hours I worked at the farm, for my education and being late for school. It appears nothing was done by either the home or Child Welfare Department as I continued to work the long hours and continued to be late for school until I left the home as a result I received a very poor education.

I have previously stated Mr Turner did not contribute to me ever being late for school, the problem started when Mr Telfer took over the farm, from Mr Turner who left due to ill health.

Mr Turner was a good man to work for, he taught me many skills that I still use today.

When I started helping Mr Turner he was milking about 24 cows by hand twice daily, later Alf and I each contributed and were milking 6 cows by hand before and after school. Mr Turner later received a contract to pool his milk for the armed services, he got a special permit to purchase a milking machine and a diesel engine if it was not for the armed services he would not have been able to receive the diesel engine although it took 3 months to get the first drum of diesel fuel after the after the milking machine was installed. Mr Turner taught Alf and I every aspect of

operating the milking machine, the daily dismantling and cleaning. There was also a weekly inspection of all the components and the cleaning and sterilising that took place on Saturday mornings. By this time we were milking in excess of about 36 cows. Later Mr Turner was forced to leave the farm because of his health, which Mr Telfer took over. After Mr Telfer took over, Mr Turner gave Mr Telfer full instructions of every aspect of running the dairy. Mr Turner told Mr Telfer he could rely on Alf and Ray if he got into difficulties.

It states in the report that while working for Mr Telfer that I had been late for school on some occasions, where in fact I was late for school almost every day. It also states that we were only to work 3 hours per day where in fact we were working morning and afternoons.(see report 2-10-43)

It does make mention that we worked all day Saturday and part of Sunday (just the milking alone on Sunday would be about 6 hours).

On the 9-2-45 it reports a member of the Church Council visited the farm, with asserting how matters stood in connection with the farm. He found that Mr Telfer was away for the weekend, the milking was left to be managed by 2 of us wards, although it was only reported once this happened many times, there was one occasion we were left on our own for up to 1 week. It does not mention that Mr Telfer did not arrive at the dairy in the mornings until the milking was almost finished on many occasions.

Mr Telfer was very lucky that their's only one report to the Child Welfare Department of him inflicting corporal punishment on me.

All of trouble started with Mr Telfer soon after he arrived, he said that dismantling, inspecting and sterilising the milking machine was a complete waste of time and he was always trying to take short cuts. All he wanted to do was put a bucket of hot water through the machines; he thought it was good enough. Alf and I insisted that the machines required to be dismantled so that all the internal parts could be cleaned correctly with the special brushes that were supplied by the manufactures. He still insisted it was a waste of time and would fly into a rage.

It's also reported a council decision that the children must be punctual for meals and at school. It was impossible for us to be punctual for breakfast, it stated we arrived back at 8-30 am for breakfast, breakfast was usually served at about 7-00 am. My breakfast was usually left on the side of the kitchen stove. (My porridge was always like a piece of rubber).

The teatime meal was served generally around 5-00 pm. It's also reported that we remain at the farm until 7-00 pm. My evening meal was also generally left in the kitchen.

My education also suffered as one of my duties on arriving at school during the winter was to light the fire, as there was no wood supplied for the school, I had to scour the bush around the school for branches I could break as there was no axe at the school to chop fire wood. Sometimes I would be lucky and pick up a few foot blocks of firewood that had fallen off the back of a passing wood truck.

At this time we had a new teacher her name was Mrs Gannon, she felt very sorry for me and at morning playtime she would have a nice hot cup of Ovaltine for me. She

provided this at her own cost during the cold winter months. As she was concerned for me, as I would be shivering when I arrived back with the firewood. (Byford was a bitterly cold place during the winter).

Another unpleasant job I had to do with another boy at the school was to empty the toilet pans. This took us from afternoon playtime until the end of the school day. (The school had no septic system). We were not allowed to bury the contents on the east side of the school, as this was a paddock where a lot of the children passed going and coming to school. We had to bury it on the west side, which was all bush, the digging was very hard as the ground was full of roots from the surrounding scrub. The pans were very smelly and heavy to carry. We had three pans to bury; we got three pence each per pan, regardless of whether we emptied once or twice per week. (This was time away from the classroom).

Regarding my education there was an occasion when I arrived at the home for lunch I was asked by the matron to report to Mr North's market garden to help pick peas. Mr North had a contract with the Plaistow Company who was canning the peas for the army. After picking peas for a short time the education inspector arrived at Mr North's farm I was out in the blazing sun with no sun protection, he asked me why I had not returned to school after lunch, I told him that the matron had told me to report to Mr North and help him pick his peas. The inspector insisted I return to school, as my education was more important than picking peas. Not appearing to be disrespectful, I said Sir this bucket of peas would feed a lot of soldiers, I think he could see my point. The bucket I was carrying contained about 40 pounds of peas (I received a penny per pound for picking the peas).

The inspector had been at the school all morning and I had not had been given my assessment. I told the inspector I did not want to be disobedient at his order to return to school, I asked him to confirm with the matron for her permission to leave the farm.

He asked me if I had any problems with Mrs Gannon, he asked was she making me write with my right hand, I said no she is a very nice teacher. (I think he must have remembered me). He left me to carry on picking peas and said he would see me the next time he would be in Byford.

I was finally released into the care of my grandmother, who became my legal guardian. The visits from a women officer from the Child Welfare Department began again to my grandmother's house, as I worked near by I used to come home for lunch. The woman seemed to time her visits when I arrived home for lunch; she was a very arrogant person. She would look into my grandmother's food cupboards, with out being asked, she would walk into my bedroom, look into my wardrobe and pull back the bed cloths she would even ask when was the last time my sheets were washed. My grandmother would say to me it's my greatest wish, God willing that I be spared and live for the day that you are eighteen and no longer a ward of the state and we will not have to put up with this insulting women. (My grandmother passed away one month before my 18th. Birthday. I never did receive any acknowledgement that I was no longer a ward of the state).

Special Occasions

The special occasions I would look forward to while at Byford are:

Firstly spending school holidays with my grandmother, especially at Christmas.

I would look forward all year long for her home cooked Christmas dinner. She would prepare and roast one of her chickens it would be stuffed with Sage, Thyme and Marjoram herbs grown in her garden. The baked vegetables Potatoes, Onions, Pumpkin, Tomatoes and Peas with Mint were also from her garden. Then there was the Christmas pudding, that she started mixing the ingredients early in the morning, my job would be to polish the copper in the laundry with salt and vinegar, then get the water boiling. Grandma would spend about 6 hours attending to the Christmas puddings while they boiled in the copper.

Although we had our fill with the Chicken and vegetables, my sister and I would always find room for a slice of Christmas pudding with custard, hoping to find a 3 pence or 6 pence that our grandmother had placed in the pudding.

The downside to our Christmas holidays was returning back to the Byford Home. On arriving at the Byford railway station, my sister and I had to trudge in excess of 3 miles along rough and gravel road with very steep hills carrying a case full of our belongings. We would arrive back at the Home thoughly exhausted, it was usually extremely hot weather and we walked this distance unable to even have a cold drink of water.

Secondly were our day's outings for the year, sponsored by The Watersiders Union and The Daily News Paper on this occasion it meant an early morning rise and about 1 ½ hour drive, to the city. We travelled in a cattle crate which was a tubular pipe structure covered with chain wire mesh just like a big cage mounted on the back of the Home's 1 ½ ton truck, it was a very tight squeeze to get all the children in. When we arrived in the City we parked near the Saint Andrews Church in Pier Street, we were then marched 2 abreast up Pier Street then down Hay Street to the Ambassadors Theatre. We felt inferior marching the street as people would just stand and gaze at us. I guess it could have been the very plain clothing we were wearing. On arrival at the Ambassadors Theatre we were given a bucket of Peters ice cream and a bag of sweets, we then entered the theatre and were entertained by a movie. After the movie we went to the South Perth Zoo, on arrival we were given a paper mug of Ginger Beer and another bucket of ice cream, we then had a picnic lunch. After a few games we were ready to return to the truck and the long drive back to Byford.

Thirdly was the annual holiday at the beach we generally went to places like the Coogee Youth Camp, A camp in Waterman's Bay, Trigg's area and sometimes at the Deaf and Dumb Institution at Mosman Park. (In those days there was no such thing as Slip, Slop, Slap and wear a hat), as I was very fair skinned I use to suffer from very bad sunburn and would generally blister, I never ever remembered receiving any sunburn lotion to ease the pain.

On one of our holiday outings on the arrival of the Deaf and Dumb Institution at Mosman Park I spent the whole of the holiday period confined to bed I had contacted a very severe bout of Gastric Interitus. The first three days I lived on boiled water I could not even hold that down, after the third day a doctor visited my, I heard him say this boy should be in hospital. For the next two days I was given a Liquid Glucose substance, three times a day because I could not even hold this

down. The doctor arrived again 2 days later, I heard him say why is this boy not in hospital, he said you are lucky you have not lost him, because I could not tolerate the liquid Glucose the doctor prescribed Powered Glucose, it was just like sugar, I had this sprinkled over Grated Apple. Unfortunately in those days Apples were seasonal and were unavailable from the local shops in the area. The doctor obtained some tinned Apples from a hotel in Perth that the American navy had occupied. I later received a visit from two American Navy Officers they arrived with more tinned Apples they were based with the Submarine Fleet at Fremantle Harbour. They told me they were leaving that afternoon on a mission and would be away for a few days. I often wonder if they ever made it back. One of the American sailors gave me a American 10 cent piece which I still have to this day. With the diet of Apples and Powered Glucose I slowly improved but remained confined to bed for the remainder of the holiday at Mosman Park.

Another special Occasion

Alf and I would treat ourselves to a lunch, which we would prepare for ourselves in the bush. For most of the time Alf and I were at the home, we never had weekend meals in the main dinning room with the rest of the children. This started about the time when we started going down to the farm.

We disappeared as soon as our Saturday morning polishing of our elected area of floor; after it had been approved we were hardly sited for the rest of the weekend around the home. Over the weekend we use to help Mr Turner with Hay Carting, Chaff Cutting, Repairing Fences and general small jobs that required attention and the weekly dismantling and sterilising the milking machine as previously stated. We even helped Mr Turner over a period of a few months with the re- building of the dairy to accommodate the milking machines and to meet the specifications of the Health Department before the milk could be supplied to the armed services. After these jobs were completed the rest of the day was ours. Alf and I would spend hours just roaming through the bush, shooting at 28Parrots with our gings (catapult) they were considered a nuisance around the fruit trees, We often stopped to have a swim in the creek that we had dammed up, just before we would prepare our lunch in the bush. Alf used to use some of his aboriginal skills for the cooking. He showed me how to light a fire without using matches. For our lunch in the bush we would dig a rabbit out of a burrow, this was hard work, we later found a rabbit trap in the bush which we later used to catch rabbits. We had a supply of Potatoes, Onions and sometimes the odd Carrot that we would also roast in the coals of the open fire. We used to pick up the odd potatoes and onions as we passed through the kitchen to deliver the milk. We sometimes picked up a meat bone from the kitchen and would use it to catch Yabbies from the creek that we also cooked for lunch. After preparing and eating our lunch we often finished off with some fruit and Walnuts that we would pick from an abandoned orchard. Then in the afternoons we would have a good rest on the mattresses in the cubby house we built from bags and corrugated iron covered over with a few tree branches this was built into the side of a hollow tree. Which was situated about 100 metres behind a large water tank, which was in the thick bush over looking the home. We called the cubby house our humpy. Inside the humpy we had 2 chaff bags stuffed with grass these were our mattresses we even had the luxury of a sugarbag stuffed with grass we used this as our pillow. The pillow was indeed a luxury, as the children were not allowed to have a pillow on their bed for the duration that I was at the home.

In the humpy we also had a little shelf built into the hollow, we had some small jars, that we had some salt and pepper in, we had another small screw top jar that we stored our broken assortment of biscuits that we would often take a handful from a big bin as we walked passed, the bin was in an area where the dishes from the meal table were washed and dried. Mills and Wares now known as Arnotts donated the broken biscuits.

Alf and I enjoyed our lay down in the humpy after an enjoyable day until it was time to go back to the dairy in time for the evening milking.

Reunions:

About 4 years ago a reunion was held at the Pines Restaurant in the Observation City Hotel, Scarborough, W.A. For those who were the children of the Presbyterian Home, Byford, this was about 56 years since I had left the home. In excess of 30 people attended the reunion of those who attended the lunch there was only 4 women and 1 man who was at the home during my period. The first question I was asked from this man was, was I continually belted, I told him I can never ever remember being belted at the home. He told me that he was belted nearly every night, after he undressed to have his evening bath by a staff member who wore a very wide leather belt, which was considered part of her uniform. He told me that first thing in the morning she went through the beds in his dormitory and every boy who had wet the bed received a lengthy hiding with her belt.

The women were telling similar stories of when they were girls during there time at the home.

Because it was such an enjoyable reunion it was decided that we would try and organise a reunion at the premises of the Home in Byford in twelve months time.

About 12 months later the reunion took place, there were in excess of about 50 people attended the reunion. Some people bought their children and even their grandchildren. This was 57 years since I had left the home. There were 8 women and 4 men who were children at the home during my period it was as though we had never been apart. The home is now only occupied by a caretaker but it was opened for our tour of inspection the polished floors still remained through out, although coated with a very heavy layer of dust the shine was still there.

The three men I met up with all asked the same question that I had been asked at the Pines Restaurant 12 months earlier. All three had received the same treatment, but over lunch one women in our group heard us discussing the treatment that the three men had received while they were children at the home. She told them, although I had told them that I had never received the same treatment as them, she advised them on one occasion she had witnessed me being thrashed by the staff member with her leather belt. This woman who witnessed me being thrashed said the staff member was determined to make me shed tears and cry, apparently I was just as determined and never did. She said there was other witnesses that saw the thrashing, as she described take place but never ever knew why.

A further 12 months after the reunion at the home my mate Alf's sister Laurelle travelled down to Perth from Derby in the Kimberley's to celebrate her birthday with her sister and some of her children who now live in Perth.

Laurelle visited my home in Beechboro to meet up with my sister, as they had never met or corresponded over the years since they both left the home, where they were responsible for cooking and preparing meals for the whole of the home as junior workers.

Laurelle said during conversation she recalled witnessing the incident of me being thrashed through the kitchen window also viewed by many of the children who were passing by.

To this day I have no recollection of the incident described.

My Comment:

After leaving the home at Byford and going to live with my grandmother, as I was ashamed of having been institutionalised as a child over such a long period of time I began to live my life as a lie. I did not even tell my employee's, my workmates or even my closest friends. I did not even tell my wife and children of growing up in different orphanages. I did not even tell my wife to whom I have been married to for in excess of 40 years until about 6 years ago. My children still do not know the full extent of my life growing up in institutions but no doubt reading this submission one day will describe some of the shame I have carried over these years because I still remain stigmatised of my childhood growing up as a Ward of the State.

My main ambition in life was to full fill the great Australian dream of owning my own home. Home for my wife and children, and to obtain secure employment, unfortunately to provide a roof over our head meant long hours of overtime and having to leave home early in the morning and arriving home late in the evening as I had done working on the dairy as a boy many years ago. Working 6 days a week over most of my working life..

This meant I was unable to spend the time with my family while my children were growing up This meant I never got very close to them, because I never received any affection while growing up in institutions, I found it hard to return affection to my family.

One day they may understand what I went through.