

The Sydney City Boys Home

"Stonehaven"
Springwood N.S.W.

Introduction

My name is Denis Vincent Robinson, I was born on 09/04/37 at Mudgee N.S.W. I have one older sister and two younger ones.

I attended Mudgee Public School, half way through the year of 1942 the family moved to Kanwal on the Tuggerah Lakes.

It seemed that my father who worked at the Mudgee Railway complex got himself into some sort of trouble and was transferred to Wyong Railway Station.

Kanwal was a scattering of some houses and the school consisted of only two rooms. We lived there for about one year and suddenly left to live with an aunt at Mortdale, two families living in the one house. Evidently the reason being that my mother had an affair with a local poultry farmer. We again moved very suddenly.

One evening I caused the trouble this time, so we up and packed and went to stay with a maiden aunt in Stanmore. She lived in one room which was L shaped. Seven people in one room.

My aunt got in touch with The Sydney City Mission in a very short time. My two younger sister went to a S.C.M. home at Cronulla, my elder sister went to a S.C.M. home at Bowral, called Mt Gibraltar, I stayed on for a week or so in order that arrangements could be made for me and eventually I was packed off to Stonehaven.

The S.C.M. Headquarters were in Bathurst St Sydney opposite St Andrews Cathedral. I remember walking past the Regent Theatre where a horse trotting picture was showing.

It was late afternoon and the people in the missions offices introduced both my parents to a Mr Ingish who took me into his control in order to take me to Springwood. Mr Ingish was a man of about 68 years of age, stout of about 5' 9" and quite solid, I believe he was a business man who worked in the city and travelled to work and back to Springwood by train Monday to Friday. He was a strong pillar of strength within the Methodist Community of Springwood. The train we caught (I think he travelled with two male companions) was "The Fish" and the train arrived at Springwood early evening on a week day.

I was handed over, with my suitcase to two big boys from the Home, we strolled down Park Road towards the Home, we passed a house where Finey (the bohemian) lived, he drew political cartoons for the Daily Telegraph and became a well known identity in Sydney newspaper life in the 1950s He wore a hat similar to the one that Manning Clarke used to wear, he also had a daughter

named Jill who was in my class at school. The last house before the Home was where a kid named Bruce Montgomery lived, he was also in my class at school. Bruce when he was younger, fell out of a tree and broke his arm, the bone never knitted properly so he used to walk around all day with a bent arm, he could play cricket but not rugby league.

We walked down a stoney path from the small front gate around the back of the home and up a big flight of stairs, on to the back verandah of the Home where upon I all of a sudden became a "Home Boy".

It was a particularly strange feeling! Everything was so strange and different I did not know a soul or a thing.

I (not knowing) was going to endure a life of nearly 2 years you would not wish upon anyone:-

Loneliness

Coldness

Neglected

Unloved

I left a world that any boy of my age enjoyed and experienced. A world of uncles, aunties, cousins, friends, mates, friendly enemies, next door people you liked and disliked, shopkeepers, friends of your father and mother, even families who live around the corner.

You left the real world somewhere behind and entered a new world of - not make believe but one of unmakebelieve, the real world was outside the boundaries of the Home whilst you were on the inside one.

~~Let us~~ ~~do not~~ believe we were ever excepted as residents of the town, that is the good and ordinary citizens of Springwood, to them we were referred to as the "Home Boys".

The real world had passed as all by.

The conditions at the Home were so draconian the Charles Dickens could write a novel relating to the lives of those boys at that time its title may be

The Home Boys

Or

Stonehaven

It did appear that we were being punished by the existing establishment for reasons that could never be worked out.

The Proprietors

When I arrived originally at the Home, those in charge were Mr & Mrs Barclay. He was the typical Sunday Christian. They were always called Matron and Sir.

He was about 40, about 5'10", a bit chubby and a bit overweight. Mrs Barclay was fairly pretty, slim about 5'5". They had two sons about two and three years younger than me. From time to time they used to eat with us but mainly in the kitchen with their parents. Not too hard to work out, for in there, their food was different and better.

We used to go to the Methodist Church.

All the boys used to go to Sunday School and also Christian Endeavor. The big boys used to on occasion go to the main church service. The main service was changed later from afternoon to morning. We never went at night.

However, Mr Barclay was a lay preacher and the big boys had to go and listen to him. He was quite boring and the good Methodists of the township of Springwood used to stay away in droves.

At the same time he was a hard task master and really stood over all the kids. Anyone who stood up to him even when right, you got a beating, punches, canes, straps across the head, face and neck. You could see at times and even hear, Mrs Barclay having a go at him for his harsh treatment especially relating to the little kids some of whom were 5 and 6 years of age and very skinny.

Under Barclay there were about twenty boys at the Home, their ages ranged from 5 to 12.

He was, after about 6 months transferred to Cronulla and replaced by a Miss Ingish.

Miss Ingish was the daughter of our Mr Ingish, she would have been about 35 to 40 years of age.

When you are a kid you remember lots of unusual aspects of life in general like Miss Ingish.

She was ungainly, average height, dark hair, had a light moustache, uneven teeth, no figure, wore old fashioned stockings and wore flat heeled shoes.

The same church attendance was retained under her authority.

The food became a little worse and there were very few boys there at the time, about 12.

She left us to our own devices and was very aloof. She was not suited to the job. She used to attend the Methodist Church not always when she ran the Home and not when she never ran the Home.

One memory of her stands out. How she treated boils. I had more than my share of the damned things, but luckily they were either on my legs and arms. One day I was in a sick bed with around three boils on my right arm near the elbows, she came to see me and had in her possession a big enamel basin/dish full of boiling water, in the water lay a piece of terry-towel about 8"x 8" surrounded by half a pillow slip. The steam arose, she squeezed the terry towel by turning the ends of the pillow slip in opposite directions and subsequently dropped it onto my arm. Well, did I jump, yell, squeal, bellow, you name it, about two days later my arm had large blisters everywhere I pointed to her what she had done and she said it was my own fault for if I had not moved my arm the padding would have gone onto the boils and I would be better. A stupid woman. She was there for about three months.

Then came Mr & Mrs Borden, they were about 70 years of age and went occasionally to the Methodist Church. Again we were left alone to do our own thing to a limited degree.

The food was the same again.

At this time again there was very few boys at the Home, but there was one boy in particular, his name was George Harris and came from Paddington Mrs Boden found out that he was a boy soprano and sang like Bobby Breen. She taught him the words and how to sing the hymn "There is a Green Hill Far Away". Then one Sunday at church, the service was stopped and George and Mrs Boden walked out to the front of the church to sing this hymn. George started to sing but Mrs Boden never moved. While he was actually singing she stood in front and to his side and started to conduct him, arm up and down, backward and forward right through the four verses. All us kids sat there our eyes nearly popping out of our heads. Was this phenomena really happening, did things like this really happen in real life. One looks back and tries to think of something to say constructive of the event but one cannot.

No one at the time knew of this George Harris, in the church he had a halo above his head but at the Home he turned out to be the biggest thief I have ever met, he was extremely lucky he was at the Home at that time for if he was there under Barclay or Nuendorf he would have been killed. I must point out that the congregation thought that George was just marvellous and great credit was given later for the work done at the Home by the Bodens. They were there for about three months.

Then came, horror of horrors the Nuendorfs, he was a big man, big shoulders, big arms, in his early fifties had a roundish nose it was also big and about 16 1/2 stone.

If you would like to see a caricature of him, have a look at the comic strip the "Katzenjammer Kids" and find the character "Der Kapitan" he is a dead ringer except Nuendorf had no moustache. He had a very strong accent. Mrs Nuendorf was a big woman but had no accent. She would have been about 13 stone.

They had a son and daughter who came up to the Home occasionally, both of whom would have been in their early twenties and both could play the piano.

I have yet to meet anyone who would have been more religious than the Nuendorfs, however, I am convinced that the term referred to as a Sunday Christian derived from his treatment dished out to the Home kids. They were both called Matron and Sir, I remember one incident with Matron, we had a broken cricket pitch in the play area and I bowled a ball to a kid that just missed the off stump, Matron was leaning over the verandah watching I called to her that the batsman was lucky, she replied that there was no such thing as "luck" there was only "jesus".

I thought about this statement made at the time and came to the conclusion that it was fair comment, however later, I pondered about it trying to make out an earthly meaning of it, none came. It never did. I put it away for further calculation but it has been in my miscellaneous tray ever since.

Classifications

There were the Big Boys
There were the little Boys
There was No 1
There was No 2

Big Boys generally were boys that were in classes at school ranging from 4th to 6th Class.

Little boys ranged from kindergarten to 3rd class.

In the dinning room there was a round table that could sit 6 people. ~~I have sat~~ ^{There} at the odd times with the Barclay kids when it suited their parents. There were two very big tables one was referred to as No1 table and of course the other as No2 table, at each end was a larger chair where the sergeants sat, they were the Big Boys appointed by the "Sirs" on their left hand side sat the corporals also appointed. There was also a piano, a fireplace (only used by the Nuendorfs) various cupboards and a servery, the floor was brown lino.

There were two bathrooms connected by a common arch, again called No1 and No2.

At the back of the home between the washroom shed and the duck pen were two connected toilets septic tank system. The toilets were always broken with water continually running all over the concrete floor. *There was No1 & No2 toilet*

You were either a No1 or a No 2 and/or a big boy or a little boy.

From:
To:
Sent: Sunday, 11 August 2002 11:31 AM
Subject: The Recreation Hall

The Recreation Hall

The recreation hall under Barclay, Ingis and Bodens (Bowdens) was a hell hole.

It was directly under the dormitory and was virtually the same size. The two end walls were both timber, the southern wall was sandstone blocks and the northern wall a combination of fibro and glass windows. The floor consisted of timber planks and sloped towards the fibro wall and in the floor there were holes where our marbles disappeared into.

It was poorly lit and consisted of about 4 x 40 watt globes, at the western wall were clothes hooks on which we hung our woollen overcoats.

Between 5pm and 6pm the furnace which supplied the hot water was allowed to go out.

After tea (dinner) if it was still light the little boys went out to play and soon after were called up to have their baths. If it was dark (winter) they had their baths straight away and went off to bed. The rest of us went out to play and if it was dark, cold or rainy we went straight to the Recreation Hall. There was no heating what so ever, we played in there for some time until it was our turn to have a bath. It used to get very cold and to warm ourselves we used to sit up against the western wall and put our coats over us, as some of the boys went up to have their baths we took their overcoats and put them all over us. A lot of the boys were barefooted and at times we would have had up to 4 coats over us but, we still shivered. As the coats were made of wool this retained the dampness after it rained, so if you have any imagination at all it is plain to see how we suffered.

When it was our turn to bathe out we went into the prevailing weather conditions, into the dark, up a flight of about 10 - 12 steps which was about 20 yards away.

Under the aforementioned proprietors, we were not closely supervised, we worked it out with the other boys not to ever let out the water until the water in the taps were checked. If the water got too cold, we retained the existing water, at times we were clever little buggers. But, you should have seen that water after about ten kids had used it. Sometimes we were checked out and had our necks scrubbed and our ears cleaned out and boy did it hurt. I can also remember seeing the black dirt in the web of our fingers and the water made streaks from the palms of our hands down to our elbows and under our arms.

Under Nuendorf things changed so much for the better. The furnace was permitted to burn on and was fuelled more competently. It was a rarity for me up until then to have a hot bath let alone a warm one.

However, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday nothing changed as far as the Recreation Hall was concerned. However, on Friday nights we had games, supervised by Matron and Sir. We played London Bridges falling Down, indoor quoits, hoopla, tug-of-war and various forms of foot running. Such games went on for more oe

11/08/2002

less as long as we were still able to perform.

I mentioned before how our marbles used to fall down into the holes in the floor, well one kid unbeknown to me lost some of his marbles down them. He went outside, lined up the hole at the base of the fibro and bashed it in with a big rock, he got quite a lot of marbles out.

The Bodens ran the home at the time. This lended itself to an impetus for the rest of the kids. Over about three weeks we must have bashed into that wall about 14 holes all shapes and sizes from about 8" long to about 6" high. What we had going in our favour was that there was a garden bed in front which contained shrubs of about 2 1/2 feet tall, we used to push the branches aside to get to the wall, so these hid the holes to some extent. The Bodens were elderly and not to observant and never noticed anything or said anything. Those marbles must have piled up over many years as we would have got out about 300.

It took Nuendorf some time to settle in. He had to find out the whats, the where's and the who's. About a month after his arrival he noticed the holes. He was completely mystified, the home was really in good shape and this situation never fitted into the ordinary things of the day. I came upon the conclusion he thought that it was done by some incompetent tradesman in days long gone by. I believe he had them filled up with cement. This whole episode put smiles on our faces.

Denis Robinson.

PS Shirley I have found out through my son how to get this through to you via computer.

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The Cook

The cook was a Mrs Puttock, she was married to the local bootmaker.

There is a small complex of about 4 shops (I think they are still there) anywhere from about 15 to about 40 yards west of the Presbyterian Church in Macquarie Road. In one of these shops he carried on his boot and shoe repair business.

They had two daughters one was about 7 and the other six. They were both quite pretty, used to come to the home now and again and attended the Public School.

Mrs Puttock was unusual woman, she was a bit tall and wore her hair quite short in, I presume, a home perm, her glasses of which the lens were as thick as the bottom of coke bottles, she had nothing of a figure, and so help me it looked as if the varicose veins on her legs had varicose viens her legs were that bumpy, her voice was somewhat high and shrill. I had nothing against Mrs Puttock, I virtually had nothing to do with her. However, some things do stand out in my memory more so than others.

I saw in the SMH Obits. about three years ago that she had passed away, she had been in a nursing home in Leura, she was in her 90s, Her 2 daughters were mentioned in the obituary and I think their names were Ann and Shirley. There was no mention of her husband.

The Dormitory

The dormitory was really a big veranda. It measured about 35 yards long by about 12 yards wide.

The eastern wall was constructed of half timber and half glass. There was four beds there. The southern wall (35 yds long) was constructed of sandstone blocks, here there were about 10 - 14 beds, behind this was a room called sick bay that contained four beds. The western wall was all timber and there were four beds there. The northern wall, the bottom part of which was timber framed but made of fibro whilst the top part was wire gauze, to cover the gauze wire^{N/45} about five big canvas blinds, the bottom of the blinds contained heavy wooden poles about 3" thick, these y were to help keep the blinds down and still and they were also tied down with thin rope. The blinds were kept down at night and also when it rained.

This was all very good indeed however, there was a gap between each blind of about 1", so in came the cold, the wind, the rain and the fog.

The floor sloped and was made of wooden planks. There was no heating what-so-ever. The sheets on the beds were those really shiny white ones and were really very cold. What we all generally did was to rub our feet up and down as fast as we could about 15 times, this warmed you up some but this activated chilblains which quite a few of the kids suffered from. We were never treated for this ailment but were just to shut up and go to sleep. In winter at times it was colder out of bed than in it.

Many times at night it was an ordeal to be experienced, a lot of the little kids would sob and whimper, this had a roll on effect on some of the other kids. It was not only the little kids that would cry. So in order that the "authorities" did not hear you (their bedroom was near at hand) these kids were encouraged to put their heads under the blankets so no one would hear them. There was little need for this as your head was under for it was that cold. Sometime Sir or Matron would come out an console you other times you were threatened with a belting.

I would say that 90% of the kids at the home whilst I was there were away from their friends, mothers, fathers and their homes for the first time in their lives. You could not relate this as to being a member of the boy scouts. What made it even worse was the amount of time they spent away from their natural surrounds.

What was allowed to happen was the little boys were encouraged to sleep with one and other. This alleviated the loneliness to a marked degree and added warmth to their bodies.

Out in the playground there were some very big gum trees, often some of the kids would hide behind them and cry, and at the same time trying to muffle the sound. There was no compassion at all, Barclay used to at times bash them up.

1. Try and tell someone what it is like to eat lobster.
2. Try and tell someone what it is like to twist your ankle.
3. Try and tell someone what it is like to experience a *nightmare*

4. Try and tell someone of the thrill of telling someone what it is like to come first in a major exam at school.

• These are all easy to explain when you compare them to loneliness.

Often a big kid would be woken up by a little kid getting into bed with them, much of the time this lead to both of them dozing off to sleep. However, sometimes this lead to the big kid becoming quite startled and kicking the little kid out, he would fall on to the floor, hurt himself, then scamper off to his own bed, which may even be up the other end of the dormitory, climb into bed and cry himself to sleep.

Parents from time to time would come up to see us however, when they left to go home a lot of the kids would cry, some uncontrollable, sometimes they would cry as their parents left, other times an hour or even many hours later.

There is no doubt kids of our ages can live in their own world and come up with the most improbable stories. Subsequently when they informed their parents of the harsh conditions that they were experiencing, these grown ups would say "yes dear, yes dear"

"now dear, things are not like that at all"

"I believe you of course darling"

so nothing much was ever done.

Try and tell someone what it is like to be lonely day in and day out, night in and night out for some considerable time when you are just a young kid and so far away from home.. It is beyond realms of believability. So many people would experience the previous mentioned 4 points but not the latter.

Why There

Some of the kids were very skinny so I believe they went there for health reasons (sorry! But I am laughing).

Some kids came from broken homes, I do not remember, but do not believe any had asthma.

I do, however, remember one little boy who had to have a rubber belt secured around his stomach, it had an attachment like a baby's dummy that had to be turned in towards his stomach. The majority of kids only stayed for about 3 months.

Most of the kids all looked healthy to me.

One thing stood out, when the parents found out how harsh the conditions were they were whisked out in no time. It would appear that these parents were of the opinion they were doing the right thing by their children by sending them on a holiday up to the Blue Mountains.

There always seemed to be more little kids than big kids.

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Food

You had to eat everything on your plate.

In the dining room at breakfast in the winter, it was extremely cold and the fireplace was never lit.

Breakfast consisted of porridge with lumps in it. We also had mugs of milk. All the big boys would try to coerce the little boys to try the milk before the rest of us had a drink as it was nearly always in various degrees of going sour. It often took some doing to get the little kids to do this. Some of us would hold our breath and drink as much as we could very fast. In the middle of the table were two big plates of bread and butter with vegemite, peanut butter and jam.

Lunchtime was always terrible. On your plate was often stewed meat that contained fat and gristle. You had to eat all of this. Mashed potatoes with lumps and water in them. The boiled pumpkin more often than not had bone in it, you also had to eat that, and, of course the worst vegetable ever grown, broad beans was too often served up to us. I never knew any kid who liked them. Often a kid never got back to school as he had to sit at the table until he had eaten everything. Sometimes they got a beating. Then got to school late but no dinner that night, some time the kid never even got to school. Quite often kids vomited. Some times the kids smuggled food out in their pockets, if caught they got a beating, then at times they got away with it, but some were unlucky in that when their clothes got washed they would be found out. Stale food still in their pockets.

Under Nuendorf, if it rained prettily heavily the little boys stayed at home and the big boys took a cut lunch off to school. Perhaps these were our best meals, we got 2 sandwiches the bread was quite thick and the fillings were very generous indeed we also got either fruit or cake, we all wished it would pour rain every day.

For some reason or another I don't remember much about our dinner meals. Of an evening (as with other meals) we use to line up along the back veranda to wait for, when ready, our meal. We were then 15 yards from the kitchen, the aroma coming from there really got our hopes high-roasts, chops, steaks, sausages. Walking past the kitchen with our tongues hanging out we expected a kid's delight. But alas, we generally had something cold. But, every time this occurred, for some reason we still thought we were going to get something nice to eat. However this never happened but we still lived in hope.

The Barclay kids mostly ate in the kitchen, now you know why. We at times used to hat them because of this.

We never had hot food on a Sunday, the reason being that you could not work the cook every day or it was the Sabbath.

One thing really stood out with meals on Sundays, we generally had cold mutton with plenty of fat in it. So who had the hot roast mutton? Not too hard to work out. Again you still had to eat the fat.

Churches

Under Barclay, Ingish and the Bodens, all the kids went to the Methodist Church. We all went to Christian Endeavour in the morning. After this, the little boys went back to the Home. The big boys stayed on and went to the Church Service.

When the Reverend did not preach, then the lay preachers did. Barclay and Nuendorf preached but the people stayed away in droves. The big boys attended the night service on the odd occasion. Attendance at the church also depended on the prevailing conditions such as the weather, it was at times erratic. If Barclay preached then all the big boys did attend, however. However, under Nuendorf things changed dramatically. The big boys went to church 4 times every Sunday and we had scripture lessons every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

All the big boys had grey suits with short leg pants. We all wore red badges on our lapels with "Jesus Saves" inscribed in white on them. We always wore them to church.

The Methodist Church

Reverend Evans was the Methodist Minister. He lived at Woodford. His "diocese" extended from Woodford to Valley Heights, so you can see he was unable to preach at Springwood all that often. He was somewhat progressive in that of a night time, he used to hook up loudspeakers to a gramophone and play a 78rpm recording of bells, they were really loud. This reminded the good Methodists that the church service was soon to start and their attendance was requested. They were also heard by the bad Methodists and if they had nothing better to do then they should do it in church. Reverend Evans definitely knew how to belt out a hymn, he certainly did sing loud. He would wear his black "robe". He would swing to the left, swing to the right then swing to the front of the church with that "robe" following him around all over the place, it often got in his way. Singing hymns as loud as can be. However, he never always got things his own way, there was this lady in the congregation who would also sing loud. I often thought she used to sing the lead role in Carmen at the local School of Arts. She was about 35, dressed well, rather good looking and always wore big hats, and she could belt out a good hymn. Then of course there in the congregation was our friend, Mr Ingish, he was a cross between a tenor and a baritone. He used to hold his hymn book so far out in front of himself it must have been so hard to read the words. When the three of them let loose the roof of the church rose about one foot. After such a service us big kids used to get together to see who sang the loudest, Mr Ingish used to win the contest everytime. When the good reverend preached the church was always full but, when the lay preachers preached there would be about 20 people there. Twice a year it was "Harvest Time" and the front of the church was full of vegetables and fruit, I think there may have been tins and jars of fruit. We used to sing "Bringing in the Sheaves". Most of the produce used to finish up at the Home, not so much the fruit (as we hardly ever had fruit) but most of the vegetables did so, especially those vegetables we all hated, namely-pumpkin-marrows-squash and grammas, they were a kids nightmare. We always got to church early, and this enabled us to check out the hymns we were to sing during the service. If they were composed by Charles Wesley or Isaac Watts we would have an enjoyable service. We all liked Reverend Evans, he used to shake our hand hands

quite firmly and patted us on the back, he had some tome for the Home boys.

The Presbyterian Church

After Sunday School in the morning at the Methodist Church, the little boys went back to the Home and the big kids went to the service ,at the Presbyterian Church, the good folks of Springwood must have thought that this must have been very strange to say the least, why we did it I'll never know. So Sir (Nuendorf) and about five to ten boys (depending on the mix of boys at the Home) used to march across Macquarie Road into the church, the main trouble here was , the service was always in progress, and did we make a racket, 11 kids all entering at once, too many in one pew and going out as there were too many people there, tripping, dropping hymn books and bibles, shuffling and talking, you could hear the old "rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb" here and there and the cold look from the reverend. The reverend was preaching at the time we used to make our grand entrance or the choir was singing, he used to say "sch" in front of nearly every word like "sch love", "sch home" "sch church" but never took much notice of us. However, a lady in the choir took exception. I suppose it was tradition that members of the choir always sing and look at the hymn book all the time, she never, as soon as we entered she used to continue to look at us until we all had settled down. Then she returned to her hymn book. At the end of the service, the reverend used to shake our hands rather limply and the look in his eyes was "Why do you attend my church?".

The Gospel Hall

The Gospel Hall was a wooden building, almost like a big shed, it was located in a paddock just past the Roxy Theatre. I think a farm animal or two used to graze in there from time to time. In the hall there was an assortment of chairs and stools, plus a piano, two sisters used to take it in turns to play the piano. The better looking one used to play all those extra notes between each line of the verses. The other one did not and had puffy cheeks and used to slightly talk out the side of her mouth, which side I now forget.

The whole show was controlled by a Mr Stapleton, he was a tall man about 6'1" a bit stooped, I think he was a timber merchant from Valley Heights. He had a son about two years older than me who used to play cricket quite well and used to open for the school. He never attended the "Hall". We attended the Gospel Hall on a Sunday night, that is ,under Nuendorf. We would have gone there about twice a month. We used to love the last Sunday of the month as this was "Fellowship" night, whilst the congregation was singing choruses, tables were being ste up for the serving of cakes, sandwiches and soft drinks, if the weather was kindly we ate outdoors. Sir always told us to eat the sandwiches first and not to be gutses but, you try and tell that to us kids, the cake of the day was a square yellow one with pink icing on top containing hundreds and thousands. The service always started off with chorus singing, the chorus book of which was about 4" wide about 10" long and contained about twenty pages. Someone was elected to go to the front and the rest would raise their hands, and if selected would say the number of the chorus, say No 25, we would turn to that number and sing that chorus. The choruses were all taken from the popular hymns od the day. This would last about a half hour then Mr Stapleton would take over and run the service. The hymn book was thick, red cover made of a sort of canvas and was called The Redemption Hymn Book.

The hymns were mostly, but not all, sad ones ` , one that was often sung was "Just as I am with only one plea". At times the services were run by a "passing evangelist" (my terminology). There sermons were always similar "Jesus Dying On The Cross", "The

Repenting Of Sins", "Fire And Brimstone". Their text from the bible generally "God Gave His Only Begotten Son", regularly the preacher finished with tears rolling down his cheeks.

It was decided one night to hold a contest for all the kids who attended the G.H., that having to learn off by heart all the books of the bible. I believe we had about 2 months. Unbeknown to all and sundry, the Home kids had a head start, for we had bible reading every other night, so Sir got us stuck into it from the word go, we practised every night. It was pretty hard remembering the last part of the Old Testament containing the prophets from "Nahum to say Zechariah" but Sir got us into a kind of a rhythm of saying their names and so we found it fairly easy. So came the night! A couple of locals got up and recited about five books of the Old Testament and about five books of the New Testament and everyone thought that, that was okay. The it was Graeme Smith's turn, Graeme was in my class at school, he was good at school work and good at cricket and wore shoes and socks to school everyday. He was very popular everywhere a good type of a kid, always dressed well and was always the centre of attention. Graeme rattled off the first 20 books of the Old Testament and about 16 of the New Testament, there a thunderous applause, clapping of hands and stomping of feet, that's our Graeme! Graeme went and sat down. There goes the winner! Why should anyone else dare to have a go. Then the first Home kid got up and said them all without a hic-up, there stoney silence, this kid must be the devil, then all hell broke loose, this kid must be Einstein, no one could be that good. There was a tumultuous ovation. But lo and behold every other big Home kid said them all barely making a mistake (a fumble here and there but no mistakes) without any prodding from anyone. The congregation could not believe it. I think in the future we were all shown much more respect. Sir was ever so proud.

This story contrasts most vividly with the one above.

This night for some reason or an other, the big boys were split up, some were at the back of the Hall with Sir, the rest down the front, I was at the front, halfway through the service we got the giggles, what made it worse was that the preacher had tears streaming down his face, you could hear the congregation go-"oh no" "how awful" "I wish they would stop". We never laughed at the preacher but like some kids just got the giggles now and again. After the service we made our way back to the Home and nothing much was said. We got changed into our pyjamas and got ready to hop into bed, before doing so some of us were invited to go back into the ironing room where our presence was required, of course this was where all the ironing was done and also housed all the sheets, towels and blankets etc., It was only a small room the sides of which were all made of sandstone. Nuendorf walked in and gently closed the door. Nuendorf had a regular shaped mouth but he had about 1/2 " of lip too long, it looked as if he needed an operation to have some of it cut off. You know how when a dog growls and his mouth curls up, that's what Nuendorf looked like, it was like the shape of the edge of a giant clam. I tell you who else he looked like, remember Charlie Chaplins main adversary, he was a really big man with a very untidy long beard, he had very pronounced eyebrows and hard looking eyes. In one of the silent movies, this character had his leg encased in plaster and Charlie Chaplin kept falling over it.

Anyway Sir walked slowly towards us, there was five of us, we knew something was wrong as he had a feather duster in his hand, but, he had his hand around the wrong end. The colour in his face had gone from his normal whitish off brown to red to purple, he was livid. Have you ever seen a movie or a documentary whereby the characters have a machete in their hand, hacking at each side in order to cut a path through the jungle. Well,

that's what Nuendorf did. Whack whack whack whack to the left, to the right, to the left again, to the right again, across our arms, legs backs, backsides, shoulders, I suppose even our heads, there was no escape as the room was too small. We yelled, we screamed, we ran, we pranced, he never gave up, I believe he came really close to loosing his mind, he was approaching madness. I heard him say he had never been so ashamed in all his life. I am glad Kevin Barton was not there. (see later), Kevin undoubtedly would have called him "an overgrown ape" as he would have snapped, dropped the cane and choked us to death, he was a big man with big shoulders, big arms and big hands, there would have been no stopping him. I don't know who tired the quickest him or us, it all eventually came to an end and did we finish up sore.

The Dining Room

Under Barclay, Ingis and Boden, when the evening meal was finished, the dining room was cleaned and closed down. However, under Nuendorf we had scripture every night of the week apart from Sundays, when it was cold believe it or not the fire was lit. Matron used to play the piano, Sir would stand out in front and we would sing choruses. Sir would have a little talk and then we would have prayers, the followed the bible reading and some talkback. Sir would have a bit of a sermon and one of the kids would say the departing prayer and then off to bed.

We had to learn the 23rd psalm of by heart. Some kid whose name I forget, when he was at home in Sydney and at his Sunday school, had to learn off by heart the 91st psalm so we all had to learn it. It was really hard and long to remember. He went home early in the piece and every one including Sir lost interest in the matter and so it was left to rest.

Denis Robinson

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Letters

Every letter you received was read by the proprietors and every letter you wrote was given to Sir or Matron, they would read it and post it. Some kids were given their letters back to rewrite them. In most cases it was because there was something in the letter that would make your parents worry over you. Further, you were not permitted to say that you never liked it at the Home or that you wanted to come home. (well for heavens sake who else was there to worry over you)

You were not allowed to go to the Post Office or to be seen in its near vicinity. Some kids did manage to smuggle a letter out and some kids got caught doing it. Barclay was very severe in this regard. They got a real beating and he was not afraid to use his fists and backhanders on the kids.

There was a phone near the building on the western side of the school, some kids knew how to use a phone and tried to ring home, but I think the country exchange may have beaten them. However, if a kid did get a message out in some way they would have had to have been very smart not to say anything to any other kid because we were told to inform on one and other.

Medical

Under Barclay and after about a week at the Home a new kid was taken to see a doctor, it was a check to see his standard of health. I do not believe there was any follow-up. The practice ceased after Barclay.

I do not remember any kid going to see a doctor nor a doctor visiting the Home. However, a doctor may have come to the Home whilst at school. The sick bay was utilised while Barclay was in charge but not under Nuendorf. I think he believed that it was too cold and lonely in there for a sick kid.

Like I said before the kids got their fair share of boils and of course were treated at the Home, and of course there was the chilblains, not only on the feet where most of the kids got them but also on the hands as well. There was no treatment for these.

Another major complaint that the kids suffered from was stone bruises. I had never heard of them prior to the Home nor after. The kids played on the Home grounds bare-footed and the ground consisted of many small stones. A small stone would enter the hard part of the foot and the foot would swell and fester, it became acutely sore and made life miserable, you could not touch it and the only treatment was to wear 3 or 4 pairs of socks and no shoe. The complaint had to run its course and when this came to an end the bruise would burst, puss would seep out and pass the stone at the same time. The whole episode would take about an week and a half.

Chores

We all had tasks to perform. We were woken up by a bell about 6.30 – 7.00 each morning. After dressing ourselves, we then had to help the little boys dress, they then went off to play or pick weeds out of the vegetable gardens.

We had to make our own beds (properly). We all went off to do different duties, while some of the big boys made up the beds of the little boys. The most important task of the day was to get the furnace going. This supplied all the hot water to the Home and was coke fuelled.

Two big boys went off to the dining room to prepare the two breakfast tables, one boy fed the ducks and the fowls which were in two pens, they were fed mash first then wheat.

Under Nuendorf they had their mash mixed up with vegetable peelings, these were put in a big iron pot at night time and boiled, this all went a dirty brown colour and the poultry never liked it much at all. The ducks had a cement pond that was hosed out every Saturday and filled with fresh water. Big boys used to pick 2 bags of grass as extra feeding.

The worst chore of the lot was marching the little boys to and from school. You marched off to school all the little boys in pairs and when you were out of sight of the Home you got them to run as you never liked being late for school. When school recessed at lunch time you had to wait for all the little kids from kindergarten, 1st class and 2nd class in order to march them to the Home for lunch, again you got them to run down part of Park Road. After lunch you had to march them back to school whereupon you were late nine times out of ten. You then had to wait for them when school was finished. This was the worst time as some of the school kids laughed at you and pointed their finger at the same time.

Two big boys used to run to the Home at lunch time to prepare the dining tables and when lunch was finished they had to tidy up, quite often these kids were not late as we used to run across the railway line outside the Home, you used to come out in the backyard of a big hardware shop.

Amazingly, when we were all called upon to weed the vegetable gardens, a lot of the broad bean plants would either disappear or mysteriously die

Nuendorf, thought that it would be a good idea if some of the big boys helped with the weekly washing which was done every Saturday morning, this was a task which took most of, if not, all morning.

Nuendorf decided that he would collect his own firewood, he had this very big cross-cut saw. We would go down into the gully and cut up some of the giant logs, they would be cut up into pieces about 35" in diameter and about 30" wide, we would help Sir saw, which was ever so tiring and then push them up the gully which was really hard work. Sometimes the logs were too big for us and Sir used to help, sometimes we would falter and the log would

get away from us. This was highly dangerous and in such an event we had to yell our heads off in order that those in the gully could take evasive action. Quite often the kids were that scared they would run halfway up the gully on the other side.

The coke used to be delivered in big chaff bags and about ten at a time, a coal scuttle was used by the kids to pick up the coke and this also collected a lot of coke dust, so much at times that the furnace would go out. Nuendorf decided it was time for a change, as soon as we got a new load of coke, a few of the big boys had to empty all the bags under the Home and then search for pieces of coal and put them in buckets. Coal burnt a lot faster and was much hotter than coke. Then the long tedious task of filling up about ten buckets with coke piece by piece. What a job it was, but, we did get very hot baths.

Denis Robinson

Missionaries

Located at the side of the kitchen were two dormitories containing about six beds in each, they were only utilised whilst I was there by the missionaries, these were young ladies their ages of which I suggest ranged from 18 to 28 years old, they usually stayed at the Home around 5 to 10 days. They were always a happy lot, very outgoing and fun to be with.

They used to play cricket with us and they would sing the popular songs of the day, we were never able to join in as we were never in the position to learn the tunes. They used to go into the gully by themselves, pick wild flowers and just enjoy themselves.

We took them from time to time down into Sassafras Gully Swimming Pool, it was such a long way away and at times they thought we were all lost, especially when the paths were overgrown with vegetation and another path ran off in another direction.

They used to run ahead of us and got there before us as they were bigger and older, however, Back to the Home was uphill all the way and we used to leave them for dead.

I was in sixth class at the time and so were a couple of the other big kids. We knew about sex but that was about all. We often wondered when we went down into the gully, we could have paired off as there were plenty of places to go. They could have shown us how to do it "Missionary Style".

There were two missionaries I remember particularly well, one was a Miss Huston, she had come to the Home on two separate occasions, after going home to Sydney for the second time she was going off to India to preach the gospel, so, the kid who lead our evening prayer in the dining room, asked god to bless Miss Huston.

One Sunday evening we had our meal quite early, as one of the Missionaries was taking about five of us big boys off to the church service at the Warrimoo Gospel Hall, Off we went, on foot, in broad daylight down Park Road, across the road wherein was the Catholic School, down the gully road where there was a big nursery and keeping the railway line on our right. We reached the Great Western Highway at Valley Heights, here the GWH went under the railway bridge and then it was called Macquarie Road. We proceeded through Valley Heights on towards Warrimoo. The only trouble was, for every bend we walked around there were two coming up. I don't know how many bends we walked around but, they never seemed to end, it became dark, we eventually came upon Warrimoo. It was very dark at night in those days and we had to ask for directions in locating the Gospel Hall, we found it and it was in total darkness. It was decided that to walk back to the Home would take too long, it was too dark and moreover, very dangerous. We strolled up to the Railway Station, a passenger train eventually came along, we alighted at Springwood and walked down the very dark Park Road, however, the lights at the Home the majority of which were on, the time would have been anywhere between 11.00pm and 12.30 am, it was one of the greatest adventures I had ever experienced.

Most of the Missionaries were good looking and had good figures and I'm sure Miss Huston would have been about 30 years of age.

What us big kids also used to do was pick out the better looking ones and hang around with them all day.

Why not when you have nothing better to do, check out how far we walked that night.

Shirley more to come Denis says another 12 pages to come.

Regards Anna

Entertainment

We were never encouraged at any time to go outside the Home to play with any other kids nor were they encouraged to enter the Home grounds to play with us. Even the boy who lived next door to the Home and who was my age never came in to play.

Cracker Nights. I was up at the Home for two cracker nights. In those days it was called Empire Day. We had a bonfire on both occasions and the nights very cold. Believe it or not, a kid who lived next door to the school, his last name was Sykes and a year younger than me, both his parents and Sykesie came to the first cracker night. I think the reason was he had lots of crackers and was persuaded to share them with us, at one stage he gave me a Roman Candle and I chased him with it, it sparkled some and then three big coloured stars shot out of it, two missed him and one hit him on the back burning his shirt a little and his back a little also. He cried for a time but things were not that bad and so the night continued on successfully.

The second time Nuendorf was there. He had matron there and about six other invited guests. We had a bit of fun with the Catherine Wheels, Flower Pots, Double Cannons, and the big Double Bungers. Then came the Flying Imp, we had one the previous year so we knew what they were all about, you placed one down on a flat surface, light the wick and then run for your life, this is what we did and hid behind the big gum trees which grew near by. However, the adults stood their ground. The Flying Imp took off, up into the air,

round and round in circles up and down, it then after, went into a straight course, right at the adults. The firecracker went straight through Matrons hair and it started to burn. There was lots of yelling and people running all over the place. It must have slowed down a bit as it went through her hair and so it burnt her a bit. Us kids were very bemused by the incident and we all thought afterwards that it was the best cracker night we ever had.

The Pictures. Both of my parents came up to see me one Saturday and off we went to the Saturday matinee at the Roxy Theatre. Well, we never saw Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Shirley Temple or Gloria Jean but a melodrama starring Charles Boyer, I think the title of the film was "A Women Scorned". All they did in the movie was to sneer, smoke, talk, talk and talk again, grimace now and again. There was no action so we walked out after about 30 minutes. Nuendorf found out and I was told not to go to the pictures again. One particular day the Primary School went to the Roxy to see Hamlet, it was a very spooky film and more than likely a bit advanced for kids our age.

Christmas. My second Christmas at the Home Nuendorf decided we would put on a bit of a concert, about thirty good folk of Springwood were invited we sang xmas carols in the recreation hall while the audience sat on stools and listened. We were never taught singing nor were any of us trained, after singing the first verse you could hear some of the audience snigger and giggle. We were not very good at all and moreover, we had about five more carols to sing, you should have seen Nuendorf's face, I bet he wished he had that damned feather duster at hand. Our visitors brought along presents, one being a junior cricket set, two bats, six stumps and two balls, I am pretty sure Nuendorf was more

thrilled than any of us and was pretty keen to have a game. At the first available opportunity we were all ready for a game. I told Nuendorf that before you could use the bats that they had to be treated with linseed oil, he wouldn't have a bar of it, I persisted, he just wouldn't listen to me, I told him that we always used linseed at school as it hardened the timber. He relented somewhat in that he gave me only one bat to look after. After getting some information from the big boys at school I got started. For about one week I rubbed the oil into the bat so hard that the friction almost burnt my hands, I left the bat out in the sun all day, face up, face down, right way down, wrong way up, wrong way down, it turned finally a rich golden brown colour (they were made from wattle and were very white) and had a very hard finish.

Well, all the other kids had been using the other bat for about three weeks before "mine" was used. The other bat had turned a dirty grey colour and as the wood was fairly soft the face of which had become quite dented, uneven and depressed, no one wanted to use it, comparatively it was like the Bad and the Beautiful. I became a regular hero for I knew about cricket bats and I believe that Nuendorf never took to kindly to me as I had shown him up in front of all the kids.

Some Saturdays, Sir and the big kids would go up to the local oval with the cricket set. Sometimes via the gully, other times up a side path which eventuated into a road, at times we had the grounds to ourselves, other times a major cricket game was in progress so we went back to the Home. A few times there were some kids having a game and we would join in other times we either waited until they finished or we went home.

The school was divided into two houses, Macquarie (Red), Phillip (Blue) and we used to play rugby league and cricket at the oval. The trouble was that the school is too far from the oval so we never had that many games. Further, the Principal of the school, a Mr Davies, was anti sport, so that never helped.

One day I was vice captain of the "B" side to play the Blue Mountains Boys Grammar School at cricket, the captain was Tony Lauer who later became NSW Police Commissioner.

Boxing. Under Barclay, when two of the boys had a bit of a difference, it would be settled of a night time, in the dormitory. We were all ready to go to bed and in our pyjamas and Barclay would put boxing gloves on the two combatants, they then would slug it out, sometimes blood from a wounded nose would squirt over some of us, sometimes one of the kids would cry and the fight stopped. Often Barclay would try to match up two even kids, mostly the kids didn't want to fight one another as they would be good friends. I believe Barclay got a thrill out of the boxing.

The Wireless. One Sunday Nuendorf invited all the big kids into the lounge room, the only time I was ever there. He put the wireless on 2KA Katoomba and we listened to a German Evangelist preach, apart from the ABC broadcasting to the school, that was the only time I heard a radio.

I never read a magazine either, there was always plenty of comics around to read, but I never saw a newspaper. When we lived at Kanwal my father used to buy the Sports Novel and the Sporting Life which, when he finished I used to save. I also used to cut out of the newspaper photos of racehorses and jockeys and paste them in books. I sorely missed all this.

To be continued

Entertainment Cont.

Trains. As the Home was close to the railway line we loved to watch the trains go by. The rail gradient between Valley Heights and Springwood was considerable, consequently most trains had two engines. We got to know the passenger trains pretty well, eg 30's 31's 32's these were all similar. The 36 was a much bigger engine and then there were our two favourites, the green 38 and the green C38. We always waved. We often waved to the "Fish". There was another special express passenger train that ran over the Mountains in those days. The carriages were blue and yellow and the name of the train was painted on the side of the carriages, it may have been called The Blue Mountain Daylight Express but this is only a guess.

Then there were the goods trains, the main engines were 50's 51's 52's 53's and 54's. The 55 was different and the 56 was always an oil burner, then came the big 57, it was much bigger than the 36. finally there was the Garrett (spelling)?. This was one of the biggest engines ever built, I believe it was imported from England, when it was being filled up with water near the station, all the kids at school used to climb up on the back fence just to watch, it was awesome. The trains did add a lot of interest and enjoyment to our dreary lives at the time.

Football at the Home. We used to play a game called Forcing Back, all you had to do was to start at halfway and kick the ball as hard and as far as you could towards the other team the ball had to go about 50 yards either end and if it went over the end line you scored three points. Nuendorf used to enjoy the game and often played in one of the sides. Like I said before he was a

big man but somewhat not athletic at all, he could hardly run and never wore shorts. He could really kick that ball, the trick was never to kick the ball to him as the opposing player who caught the ball had to kick it back. He could hardly catch the ball, sometimes the ball would come off the side of his foot and sometimes he even missed kicking the ball altogether. This made all the boys laugh and he used to get quite angry at this but always got over it in a little while. (When we played rugby league at school, that is even the non Home kids, we generally played bare footed and in our ordinary school pants and shirt. up at the oval playing House Football, we were given the school jumpers to play in. One House would play in the jumper which was red with a blue vee and the other House would wear the jumper inside out to distinguish the two teams)

Katoomba & Lawson. One Sunday, Nuendorf took about five of us big boys up to Katoomba. We went to this big rambling house that had a veranda all around it. There we sat, walked around a lot, looked at some religious books and generally did nothing. It would seem that we went up there for some church service or a religious meeting that never eventuated, so we went back to the Home.

Another time we went up to Catalina Park. The park was called Catalina because in the park there was this big pond of water in which floated a world war 2 Catalina Flying boat. At the shore line were a couple of small rowing boats and we hopped into these and rowed out to the aircraft, we were able to go through the plane, front to back and the kids got a real thrill.

One Saturday, Nuendorf took us all up to the Lawson Swimming Pool, the pool was situated in a big park on the same side as the shopping centre but east towards Sydney. It was a fair walk and you had to go through some bushland. The pool was big and round, there were wooden jetties or piers projecting from the shoreline and in towards the middle of the pool. I dived from on

of these jetties into about 6' of water. The bottom of the pool was covered in about 6" of gum leaves and the water was very murky. It consisted of fresh water but of course there was no chlorine in it. I do not know for sure if it was running water but I don't think it was.

Sassafras Gully and Pool. We often hiked down to the Sassafras Swimming Pool. It was really a big natural water hole and was not cared for by the local council. It was a long trip. Off we would go on some Saturday mornings, along Park Road, over the railway ramp, along past the Roxy Theatre and past the Gospel Hall where upon we would turn left at the next road, the Blue Mountains Boys Grammar School was on our immediate left. We all went bare footed as the gullies were often damp and there were plenty of running creeks to cross. Matron and the little boys would stay at a tin shack that was about halfway down the first gully. Here they would talk about Jesus, play a few games, pick wild flowers (I believe there were Flannel Flowers and Bacon & Eggs etc), do their own thing for about an hour or so and go back to the Home. Us big kids would continue on, as it was mainly down hill it was easy going but a long long way. The pool was about 20 yards long and about 15 yards at the widest point. It was an irregular shape, it was filled by a narrow creek one end and the water ran out via another narrow creek. The water was running all the time which made it extremely cold. On one side were trees, some shrubs and a big boulder, on the other, white sandstone sand. Very few kids went into the water as it was too cold but paddled in the shallow parts. Some of big kids used to climb over to the other side and step down into a ledge of rock about 6" down into the water. Freezing! You never dived into the water but belly-flop onto it and swam like the devil. From time to time you experienced that feeling when you swallow too much ice cream-it was like as if there was a tight metal band around your head that was gradually being squeezed. When you

got out of the water you froze.

We used to make a fire out of brambles and cook sausages on the end of sticks. The outsides burnt and the insides remained raw - they were never nice. Originally we brought big potatoes with us and cooked them in the ashes but this was not a success. The next time we took little ones with us and they were nice. We also took along a tin of raspberry cordial. This came in a dirty big looking tin of about 3 or 4 litres and we drank this with running water that came from the nearby creeks. It was real lolly water. We also took along sandwiches. We also took along tennis balls and threw them to each other across the pool. On one occasion I missed catching a ball and turned real fast around to retrieve it. There was a broken branch of a tree near me and I walked right into it. It penetrated my right eye brow and bled profusely. I was lucky not to lose my eye. I still have the scar.

Back to the Home was one big trip - all up hill. But all in all it was good fun as most of us were in good nick. As we were bare footed most of the time we experienced many cuts and abrasions to both feet and legs. Further, your feet were that cold you only noticed your injuries when you saw the blood. Next day when you put your shoes and socks on to go to church that was when your feet really played up.

Most of the kids by now were really tough by now and got used to anything that was served up to us.

Nearly at the end of the saga

Shirley

Regards Anna

The Front Garden

The Home had quite a big garden out front, however, the existing soil was not very fertile. The main flowers were really Oleander Trees. I remember Oleander Trees very well because some kid, somewhere in NSW, died from eating the leaves. Further, butterflies that were in frequent number in Springwood, namely "Common Crow", "Brown Wander" and the "Blue Triangular", used to lay there eggs on there leaves. We studied them at school. Barclay treated the garden as a hobby and watered it quite frequently.

He also promoted the Home by organizing garden fetes occasionally, many of the good folk of Springwood attended such occasions and from memory Barclay could entertain effectively.

The garden was let go under Inghis and Boden (Bowden).

When Nuendorf arrived he carried on the tradition of Barclay except for one small difference. Why should he water the garden when he could get the kids on the job? What a task! Especially in summer! You would get home from school, start watering, have dinner, then finish the job off in the dark, and of course kids being kids, we would finish up soaking wet.

Nuendorf continued on with the garden fetes. On one particular day, Nuendorf organized myself and two other big kids to take into the shopping centre a number of leaflets promoting the fete. We went to all the shops giving them a leaflet each in order to put the leaflets in their front windows. Three other kids were given the task of distributing the leaflets up the Great Western Highway from about where Macquarie Road goes under the railway bridge heading west, they were to put one in each letter box and finish up at a bigish building such as a private college or a house with a name like "Green Gables" or "Kennelworth" etc. They failed to recognise where they were to finish and decided to call it quits when they got to the Church of England church. These kids were given quite a big bundle to put in each letter-box on the way so they decided a good way to finish early was to put two leaflets in each letter-box. Nuendorf was advised of such goings on and of course out came that feather duster, again.

Its funny but we did do lots of things in threes.

Not much more now Shirley Denis

Park Road

The Home was in Park Road. Park Road sort of finished at the Home. There did appear to be a continuance of the road further eastward, then turned left and then right and met a bitumen road not far from the Catholic Church and School. That part of the road running past the Home was overgrown with grass, weeds and rocks etc. There was never any real need for any motor vehicle to use this section. Park Road was a gravel road. It was badly lit. Not many people living in Springwood in those days had cars and even so very few ran down the road. Subsequently us kids used to, when out of sight, used to walk upon the road and not the footpath. It was right next to the railway line, not very straight, and wide and narrow in different sections.

We would walk that road 8 times of a Sunday and 4 times of a weekday. It was always a bit of a challenge coming "home" of a Sunday night after church and during a very thick fog. We knew all the houses front fences and generally got "home" safely. However, at times some of the kids would enter someone else's front yard.

The road was generally a mess. The footpath even worse, at times the local council would lay ashes on the footpath, it must have been the "in thing" then. This always presented a dilemma, if the weather was dry, then the ash would get into your shoes and socks and make a holy mess of things. When wet from the rain, even worse, your shoes would be caked in it and become heavy, it even went above your shoes, when you stepped off it you had to jump up and down and get a stick or stone to scrape it off, for if you did not it would set hard on your shoes, it was hard to get off.

Where the road reached the railway station it used to open up into a sort of square. Something like the market place in those big rural towns in Europe.

Where Bathurst Road came out from under the railway line bridge and then straightened up into a westerly direction, there on the right side stood Kirklands Hardware Store. I may have been in that shop 4 or 5

times. It appeared to only stock buckets, pans, billycans, mops and brooms, nothing else. And of course also there was the railway ramp, if any of us kids could get across it (when going bare-footed to Sassafras Swimming Pool) without getting splinters in your feet, it would be a miracle.

Its timber construction I suppose was what the railway sleepers where made from but not as big. When the wood was exposed to the weather, the grain or texture would splinter and split quite easily. Some of the kids would climb on to the cyclone wire protection fence and walk sideways for a while, however, this eventually hurt your feet and you had to climb down. At times the timber planks had to be replaced and these were nice and new and smooth and shiny, and no splinters at all and so we had to jump over the old ones to get to these. So you would see us kids getting across that damn ramp in an unusual manner. What we also used to do on the bridge was what some kids loved as a challenge, others did not care and others ran for their lives; was when we were on the bridge part and saw a train coming we would stand over the line on which the train was coming on, sometimes the engine driver would see us and blow its whistle. The steam from the train would completely engulf us. It was hot and damp and was a lot of fun. It was a different matter when there were 2 engines approaching and they were blowing black smoke, some of the kids would not even get on the ramp at all. This smoke would completely black out the entire ramp and at times on a still day the ramp could not be seen for a minute or so, you would have to close your eyes tight and put one hand over then the other hand would be over your tightly closed mouth and nose. Not only was the smoke hot but it contained very hot and hard cinders, the cinders would get into your clothes, ears and hair. You would stand your ground. You were determined however, it was very hard to take. You would try to find your way off the ramp by holding on to one and other. Actually, this was not fun at all. The smoke at times would easily cover the hotel across the road.

Denis

The Furnace

The task of looking after the furnace was not a pleasant job. If it ever went out you were in trouble and; you had to ensure there were full buckets of fuel on hand to replenish it especially when you were at school.

It was allowed to go out fairly earlier under Barclay, Ingish and Bowden but as it was made of iron it would stay hot for some considerable time.

We used to make use of this. The furnace was in a tin structure, about 9' x 9' square with a cement floor. There was no light in there nor a door, some of us big kids used to huddle around it to keep warm in cold times and when it got too cold we used to find our way out into the dark and into the recreation hall where we put our overcoats over us.

We never toed the line all the time and used to get up to a few tricks now and again, we used to get into that furnace area and roll smokes out of paper. Some of the kids couldn't do it properly, they would roll up a piece of paper about 7" long and only around three times. The "smoke" used to catch on fire (flames) and the smoker would run outside and light the whole place up. We used to run out and extinguish the flame as soon as possible, other times they would roll up some paper roughly about the same size but never put enough spit on the side to make it stick, subsequently the kid would have hanging out of his mouth a piece of paper about 7" x 3" in size, all aflame, he would soon drop it in a hurry. We used to race out for safety, as the furnace area was well alight but we had to race back in to see what else had caught on fire.

We used to save up some of our fire-crackers and one in particular was the "Tom Thumb". There were two lots of 25 crackers tied together with thin twine and they were red and green in colour and as thin as a match stick and 1" long. Instead of lighting them all at once we used to undo them and let them off one at a time. The we found a better use for them, without the other kid knowing we used to stick one in their smoke. Mostly they were fizzers and never went off. Well—other times--! The kid smoking would have his smoke blown to pieces, some

times in his hand other times in his face. As the furnace room was very small you can imagine the noise. Who it frightened the most we just never knew. It was a wonder no one ever choked to death.

We eventually perfected the rolling of the smoke. The paper not to be more than 5" long and wrapped around about 8 times, a lot of spit had to be put on the side to make it stick together. This in itself had its faults in that your lips often burnt and excessive heat went into your mouth. We never did it too often. Amazingly we were never caught.

Denis

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Odd Bodds & odd Bits Cont.

Robert and Warwick Baxter, of course they were brothers but.... Warwick I believe repeated classes about 3 times. They were both in my class in 6th grade. He was a big boy (almost a man). He had reddish brown hair and he would have been about 3 or 4" taller than most of us other kids and about 2 stone heavier. He was an out going type but he was somewhat not very intelligent, as you would gather. When we played House rugby league he was on the other side and boy could he run roughshod over us. (The two House teams at the school were Macquarie – red and Phillip which was blue) No one liked to come in and tackle him as he would just push us off so easily, that is until we learnt to tackle him properly, you would put you arms around his waist, clasp hands firmly, then slide down his legs. This brought him down quite quickly and it used to hurt him, and he never liked it at all and eventually did not like playing. Apart from the fact that the sportsground at the time consisted of sparse grass, lots of plain dirt cover, and lots of little stones, all the kids used to finish up with grazed knees.

Robert was more sedate, not quite as big but much bigger and heavier than the rest of us. He also repeated class.

Cecelia Whitehead; also in my class. She was blonde and a good looker, and like me, was very ordinary at dictation. I can remember one sports day having to stay in class and write out 100 times all our spelling errors.

Whilst employed on the clerical staff at Sydney City Council's Planning Department, I happened to see a Development Application submitted by a Cecelia Whitehead. I never rang the number on the application as I thought I may have been exceeding my authority, and, anyway I doubted that she would have remembered me.

About 25 years ago when I had a motor bike, I called in and saw, Ronnie Davenport, he never remembered me at all but I brought up Cecelia's name. He said that she had experienced trouble in her marriage.

Going Home

Going Home never really excited me. When I was told that I was to go home it was almost like saying that you were being asked to leave The Home.

Having lived in Mudgee for nearly nine years (all of the years of your life) and then your having to leave to go somewhere (anywhere) else to live was beyond my comprehension. This only happened to other families. The borders of my whole world were contained within the borders of Mudgee, the, having to live in Kanwal – a village, was like going to live in a prehistoric era. Then moving after about a year to Mortdale in the city was likened to moving into the future. I just went placidly along with everything. And then, shut away in the Home for two years; so you see, nothing exciting ever had any effect, after moving - it was quite to the contrary. I just went along with what was to be the next stage in my life. I suppose psychologically, this was my present home and now I was being moved somewhere else to live.

The new route for the Great Western Highway had taken place. Survey and markings went through most of the Home. I am of the opinion that the existing Home kids were to go to Haddon Hall at Woodford. This was a Boys Home. These kids played a few games of cricket against the Public School and won on all occasions. They all seemed much bigger than us, as if they were High School standard. What made these kids stand out was that the Public School kids played in their whites, whilst these kids wore (evidently, their Home uniform) Khaki shirts and grey woollen pants. The last I saw of Haddon Hall it was a B & B establishment.

I always dreamed and often thought that when I ever left the Home (maybe I was going to be a kid all my life) I was going to go back to Mudgee to live and make up for all the lost time I had lost. But, this was never to be, as the train left Springwood it did not head west but east. The carriage window of the train was down and I leant out to wave to Sir and Matron who stood in the Homes ground. All the other kids were there too – and we all waved together.

At the Sydney City Mission office in Bathurst Street, Sydney, my mother was waiting for me, and after formalities we both left to go "home".

We caught one of those red rattler electric trains and headed for a suburb called Herne Bay. On the way my mother told me I was to have a new father. Again, this was of little consequence to me and you just went along with it as that was how things were. But, I did wonder what he looked like.

We did arrive at Herne Bay and walked up the main street, Belmore Road towards Punchbowl. After about 300 yards we came across an unusual building complex, it was of long rows of huts all of which were connected by wooden ramps. The roofs of which were a corrugated, fibro, the walls consisted of half grey wood and half grey fibro. It had been an American Army Hospital during ww2 and now was a housing estate controlled by The Housing Commission of N>S>W>. It was now known as the Herne Bay Housing Estate.

There were three such settlements in the region and they were a blot on the rest of the community. It was a bad place. After the demolition of the settlement, Herne Bay still suffered badly from the stigma which arose. Subsequently at a later date the region was renamed Riverwood and so was the railway station.

I met my new father that evening. Well you would never guess. It turned out to

be Mr Dyer, the poultry farmer from Kanwal, whom my mother had had an affair.

My three sisters did not arrive home for about one month. And so our family life started off again, however, things were never the same, they couldn't be. We were never a close family again.

The End

Further to running away

I think that running away from the Home brought shame
On the Home itself as well as the proprietor. It was the
worst thing to happen on this earth.

I never knew who consisted of the search party, the police
or other key members of the Springwood community.

When word got around to us kids, we all underwent a great
change in our attitude, feelings, emotions and even in our
behavioural characteristics.

We all felt alone, yet we were all together, it was eerie. We
were not our natural selves for weeks.

Matron and Sir's attitude seemed to change. They acted quite
differently towards us as if we had some prior news of the
"escape" and you could say that the word escape was used
correctly.

When in bed at night time the atmosphere became even worse.
We spoke in whispers and only if we were game.

Once the escapee was caught and severely punished he was a
total stranger for some days to come.

Believe it or not, I expected to be punished for the kid running
away.