

There is no specific dates or periods I can associate these with but only the locations Victorian Children's Aid Society, Leonard St., Parkville A 'famous' businessman visited us in a large Humber Super Snipe, we were all allowed to sit in the back seat and wind the windows up and down (once each) on alighting he presented each of us with two lollies wrapped in paper; when we re-entered the home the Sister (Sister Locke - a tall thin unpleasant person - more of whom I mention later) took the lollies from us and told us we could have them back on 'tuck day' which was always Thursday at 10 am.

Yes, we did get them back but we had to forego our halfpenny pocket money which was kept for 'the poor people' in Camp Pell across the road. Several of the discipline measures used were: If you wet the bed, you were made to wear a potty strapped around your rear end all day - thus dis-allowing you to sit for meals and become the brunt of much humour. If you were suspected of being untruthful, swearing (Damn was considered a hanging offence) several drops of Oil of Cloves were placed on your tongue.

If you were seen without a smile on your face it was into the broom closet for the day 'to make you understand there is too much sadness in the world' Breakfast consisted of either porridge or left over 'piddle soup' from the night before. "Piddle soup" (the mention of which was rewarded with Oil of Cloves) was in actuality pea and ham soup of a thick consistency left to cool over night and sliced into squares - which you were supposed to eat with your fingers. An occasional treat was toast - but generally with twelve at each table there were four slices of bread for each table and a large tin of Monbulk jam - no butter but very very occasionally dripping, over which there was always a fight to get the brown jelly at the bottom.

There was an occasion of a fire in the ceiling of the boys dormitory which resulted in a large hole, however sleeping in the dorm was considered safe and it was with a certain amount of trepidation that we took it in turns to sleep under the hole until the roof was eventually patched.

One task allotted us (in turn) was to carry the laundry from the upstairs bathroom to the laundry at the back of the home - down a double flight of stairs and under the corridor and then round past the boiler room - this was generally carried out at night - in the dark - when the staff found it amusing to make the sounds of wolves and barking dogs thus causing the duty carriers to wet their pants - the result of which was to be told to sleep in the wet clothing - on the floor of the dorm with a blanket to cover and the potty the next day - this was a favourite of Nurse Locke

There was a rope hanging from a large peppercorn tree in the back playground on which we all swung and never an accident or comment was made - however after my father arrived in a Spotless dry cleaning truck and attached a proper swing for us - everyone was happier - except for Nurse Locke who was adamant that we were being spoilt and that I was not to 'show off' that I had a father

Summer time was a holiday at Gould Street in Frankston where we stayed in sleepouts - the real 'fun' was getting palliasses and having to fill them with straw every night - a feat at which I became rather adept since I had previous experience (Royal Park)

However I must admit that the time at VCAS was somewhat more pleasant than Royal Park .. I have made a number of attempts to contact inmates of the home over the years but the last success was about 1961-2 when I found the home still in Gould Street but since that time I believe I made a brief contact when the home was at Eltham(?)

Royal Park Children's home is a batch of memories I would rather not have and most of them are painful to recall - however some of them are: Being severely beaten for going up to the crèche area to visit my brother David Being beaten for helping a 'councillor' to build a log hut out of the fire wood Made to go without food for two days at a time (numerous occasions) for various "offences" such as being late for assembly, not emptying a palliasse properly, talking at the table, not standing still when a staff member spoke to you.

However I do have one specific fond memory and that was being allowed to dress in 'new' clothes and spending the whole day with my brother and we spoke to Santa on the phone (I still possess a photo of this occasion)

Bedtime was always a scramble - we had to (a) fill a palliasse with straw - at least it was always fresh) then (b) rummage in a large bag (about the size of a wool bale) for bed clothing which consisted of men's pyjamas - you were allow one jacket each or one trouser piece between two boys - this entailed getting into a leg each - which was preferable to the jacket which you had on your own - Why? because with two of you sharing the trousers you could double stack your palliasse - making the floor more comfortable - and still use your blanket to cover you, thus you had double mattress and two blankets - oh what bliss

these are just some of the memories I have and after fifty plus years they still live on in my mind - much to my wife's amusement when I've had a nip or two and start reminiscing .. Barry V Cook