

## The Green Eyed One- Esther's story.

Memories of my past, the year was 11th March 1922, when I made my entry into the world. My mother also had twins boys Gerald Michael and Edward George, they were 8 years old and Rita Violet was 5 years of age. Three years after me, a baby boy arrived John William (Bill ). He was a premature baby.

I only had my Mum for a few short years, about 4 years I think. So there is not a great lot to recall. I am told she was a very beautiful looking woman and a kindly loving nature. So now I will begin my life as I remember it.

My most vivid memory of my Mum, I do not know what age I was, I was very young I was an infant. Mum bathed me, I do not know if she was taking me to the bedroom to maybe dress me or put me to bed But I do remember she went to switch the light on, but the glob was removed and she was attached in the dark. I was thrown on the bed, poor dear Mum, young and all as I was never will I forget her screams of terror. I guess I was also screaming, more so I will never forget the man who attacked her. Ah yes, it was my father in a drunken rage.( not a happy memory is it)

The last time I remember seeing my Mum was in the Women's Hospital in Melbourne. My brother Bill and myself were there, I guess all the family was, she was crying," My babies, my babies."

**That was as far as I recall, was our last and final farewell.**

We went to my grandmother's farm at a tiny place called Nilma, in Gippsland Victoria. This was the first time I had seen a stream train. In time, my sister Rita took me back to South Melbourne, to live with my Mum's family. Grandma Brown, Auntie Gertie and Aunt Dolly, until Grandma passed away.

Then my father came and took me to back to Gippsland, gee did I put on a turn, I did not want to go back with him, but later when I was a bit older I found out why.

I was being abused by my Dad, my brother Ted and Grandpa Porter was very cruel to me Time went by and I stood up for myself.

**Why should I allow anybody to abuse my body?**

I also think that Rita also received the same treatment.

She ran away from home but would never say why. In time Rita and married Reg Sommers and had a family of her own. In time Dad remarried, but it fell through. I believe through the same treatment. No wonder none of us any had any respect for him either. But he died a very lonely old man. As I am told he fathered other children to various women, including married ones.

My Grandma Porter, she was a beautiful woman in everyway. It makes one kinda wonder how she ever managed to put up with such a cruel husband and a son just as bad.

Her other sons Ern, Len and Lewis as far as I know were all OK. She only had one daughter, Mabel Violet , who died at 18 years of age.

Two good things I remember about Father, he was not afraid of hard work and he was a good singer. He always preferred Irish songs.

I have only recently found out the reason Rita ran away, it was because she came home one day and found our father had lined up a few men, to take advantage of her. After Rita run away, I was living alone with my Father. The stationmaster of the town and his wife took me in to live with them, it felt very strange, and they had three children of their own. They were very strict with me. They cared for me and it was nice to have a nice bed to sleep in. and nice meals to come home to.

**Suddenly my life changed and I was taken to Notre Dame de Sion Orphanage, Raymond Street, Sale. Victoria. It was in the late 1920's.**

Later the name was changed to Our Lady of Sion. Orphanage. I remember my first day, a nun came along and said, " Sit down there," and she went through my head to see if I had lice. I felt awful, but not as bad as the three sisters who came later and had to have their heads shaved.

As time went on, during a sewing lesson, there was a girl Joyce, who got hit over the knuckles by Mother Agatha who had a thimble on her finger and Joyce's knuckles swelled up. Bonnie died of diphtheria and I can remember all of us being lined up outside and having our mouths swabbed with kerosene. At bath time the nuns would bath us in the same water. At bedtime we slept in a dormitory apart from the boarders, We were never allowed to speak with the boarders. Everything was so separate. Even down to the food.

I remember doing lots of cleaning, polishing floors and going up to the main convent and cleaning the parlor. Anyway, we were made to work!

There was no talking after lights out. In the morning we would have to strip right down to the waist and wash in cold water. Then off to church every day.

One time I was using the toilet and I don't remember doors on the toilets, another girl saw me wiping myself and she reported me to the nuns, that I was playing with myself, but I wasn't and I copped a good whacking

The nuns would often pick on me, calling me names like silly, stupid. They made you feel inferior. I feel I'm very wary even after all these years of when I go visiting people that I don't overstay my welcome. Because I feel a bit unwanted.

**I don't remember crying there, as I didn't want them to know that they hurt me.**

The nuns did allow me to go home for a holiday at Christmas time; I went to Darnum to Rita's house. I remember laughter and having fun when I went back to the orphanage I felt dreadful going back there.

I only remember my father visiting me once and I asked him to take me to buy a nice meal. The nuns wouldn't allow him.

We had to leave the orphanage at a certain age, and that age for me was 14 or 15. They got me job at Cawarr, doing housework. It wasn't too bad with those people. I was glad to get away from the orphanage.

I left at my own accord, as I wanted to go home to Rita's. She was a wonderful person, she mothered everyone.

When the war broke out I went to Melbourne and worked at the ammunitions at Gordon Street. Footscray.

On Sunday nights, at the Prahan Town Hall. A friend and myself would go to the air services dance, where I meet my husband.

His name was Bert. I knew that first night I was going to marry him. We got engaged and Bert left to go away and we decided if we felt the same about each other, we'd get married. He came home unexpectedly on leave and we decided to get married. We got married in Richmond and Bert left for overseas, Bert came back after 12 months and he got transferred to Bandiana, near Albury /, Wondonga.

Soon after I was expecting Carol, our only child unfortunately. I would have loved to have more. Carol was born at the private annex of the Albury Hospital. A Nursing Sister or Matron came into the ward one day and said to me “ **We are going to adopt your baby and she said “Come on we know you're not married, because you look too young,” and I said “No way, I will ask my husband to bring in our marriage certificate. That ended that conversation.**

Bert left the Army and we lived in South Melbourne, life was going good, I loved being a Mum and I loved my baby.

**I didn't have a Mum and I often wondered what it would be like to have one.**

**Before I got married I used to say to myself that if I ever had children, I would never allow anybody to ill-treat my children.**

My father in law who was nice to me, he passed away very sudden and my mother in law wanted my husband to help her on the farm in Beaufort. This did not make me happy as my mother in law did not like any of her daughters in laws and there were three of us. One-day my mother in law came to me and said “ Esther I'll give you \$500 pounds to leave Bert and Alice (my husband's sister) will take Carol and look after her.

I replied to her “Where I go I take my baby with me” I went through I lot to have her and I'm keeping her. When I told Bert and I later heard him say ”Esther's , not married to the family, she's married to me, she's a good wife to me and good mother to our child”

**I would often overhear my mother in law refer to me “as the green eyed one or the green eyed lady.” I think she was a woman who didn't like losing her sons to other women.**

When I told my mother's sister Aunt Liz that our father had died she replied thank god for that, he's gone to his proper place to hell, where he ought to be long ago. I said” Good on you Aunt I agree with you.”

I have one very special daughter Carol, whom I love very much and her husband as well. He is very good to me. I am lucky to have a good son in law. I love all my 4 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I think I learnt how to love through my sister Rita; she was like a mother to me. I would hate to grow up with hate.

I have often wondered if I hadn't married Bert, how my life would have turned out. I was determined that I would not marry someone like my father. I only wanted three things in a husband, respect, companionship and security.

**Bert never knew that I spent time in an orphanage, I didn't tell him because I thought people would look down on me, and I think I had been looked down a lot in my lifetime, through no fault of my own. I told people I had grown up in a boarding school, it wasn't a totally lie as there were boarders there.**

**That little green eyed one, made good.**

**She made a good Mum. And I had a good husband.**

**However, there is so much I don't know about my life, I think I have blocked a lot of it out**

**I have been independent all my life and my family knows that I like my independence.**

Last year I saw an ad in the Connections sections of the Melbourne newspaper, about orphanages and children's Homes. **I thought it was a hoax at first** and then I when I got a call from CLAN, it felt wonderful to speak.

I was made feel welcome to the heartache club. We talked for a long time. I said that I would think about joining CLAN. Twelve months went by and last Sunday I read the article in the Sunday Herald –Sun and I picked up the courage to ring and join the club

**This morning I have posted my membership to CLAN. I believe I will be the Victoria's oldest member at 82 years young!!!**

**I've told my life story and I feel good, like a weight has been lifted off me!!!**

This is Esther 's life story.

Esther Pearce.