

1

HEALING

My happy and cruel days spent at the Ballarat Orphanage at Ballarat. As you read this story you will notice I have left out those people names who did these cruel things to the children in this home. But I have all their names and other documents in my folder. Writing this story is not easy for me. It brings back memories that happen in all homes for children over the years. I have met lots of these children now grown up, not only at Ballarat but every State. Many of these people are no longer with us today and quite a lot continue to carry these bad days through out their life.

What are the governments and other departments doing about this? In my mind these are the suffering children who were not cared for. I call them the forgotten children. I have had many requests to write this story from Melbourne, Sydney, Tasmania as well as my children and grand children. It will provide some knowledge of what went on in those years. By Alan Robert Radcliffe. Age 72 years

My Father and mother lived at Maryborough Victoria my dad a was gifted member of the black and white minstrels he came to Australia from the Isle of Mann and because of the depression settled in Maryborough. It was very tough in those days. They had four children Syd, Elsie, Noelene and myself. Mum was a very good pianist singer. Mum and dad would put on concerts in Maryborough for the people out of work to build the tower on the hill. They were struggling themselves during one concert my dad fell off the stage and damaged his leg he was taken to Hospital his leg developed gangrene this disease was so bad that dad passed away. My mother had a break down with the stress of it all and could not look after us. Her sister Aunty Rose in Maryborough who had two children of her own assisted with our care. She took us into her home to look after us. It wasn't long before the children's welfare department called at Aunties roses home with a policeman Aunty Rose was told to pack our clothes. They took us to the Ballarat Orphanage on July 3rd 1935 .I was only 2 years old too young to know the ages of my sisters and brother. Aunty Rose came with us to the home. When we arrived at the Ballarat orphanage a lady came out and they then told aunty to say good bye to us. She shed a few tears they then told her to find her own way home. Aunt Rose passed away January 2005 but over the years she told us a lot that went on in Victoria. Now for the cruel things that happened us children's who were in the Ballarat orphanage.

I was placed into the toddler's section, my sister Elsie went to the girl's section and Syd was placed into the boy's section. The Ballarat orphanage was a very big home, which had about 470 boys and girls in it. . As a two-year-old older girls who were in the home looked me after. As I got older I they was placed into the boy's section. The home had a big farm a very big garden and their own school.

2

At Christmas we would go to the seaside at Queenscliff .The home was called the cottage by the sea. But we still had jobs to do. Remember those days there was a war on no social welfare or pension, a depression, people were given a rations cards to buy food.

These were very tough years. As the boys got older they had to dig trenches they were given a pick and shovel every day after school and on weekends this was their job A lot

of boys worked on the farm and garden. The girls made the boy's beds fixed up holes in socks worked in the kitchen and polished the passageways through out the home. Most of these jobs were done before school and after school. When we went to bed the siren would sound older girls and boys were allotted a number of children when the siren sounded they would collect the children then take them inside the trenches. I can remember rats as big as cats some of the children were crying all the girls and boys at the home were like sisters and brothers. My brother took up shearing sister Elsie went to work as a maid and Noelene was fostered out . We were never told we had another sister. I will tell you about her in later edition of how we caught up with her.

Ballarat orphanage had their own band when the Americans came to Ballarat they would play for them .The Americans would drive the boys in their jeeps around Ballarat, it was good fun. The schoolteachers were all good bar one. The headmaster when doing your work at school he would walk up and down the isle. If you were writing with your knuckle facing up, he would hit it with a one metre long ruler. You finger had to be flat on the pencil.

The man who looked after the boys was a cruel man. (I have his name in my folder with lots of paper work I received from the home.) If you were late leaving the farm to go to school he would chase you with a stock whip in his hand and wack you with it some of the boys would cry. This same man broke my tooth and split my lip he picked up my shoe and waked it into my face. I was only 11 years old I started to cry it hurt a lot. Them I said to him "when I grow up I will get you for doing this to me." He then took me to the first aid room and told the lady that I fell over. I had s sore mouth for a long time, I can not remember having any medical treatment for it. There was another man who worked on the farm he would put young boys in with the big bore pigs, the boys would cry, while he laughed. What a cruel thing to do I also have his name in the folder.

I can remember a boy who suffered with chalkie bones one day with two other boys we were working in the garden with him and helping him where necessary. The man in charge (yes I have his name also). Was nearby. This boy who had bone trouble fell down on the ground this man in charge saw this he came up to him and said "get up get up." Then kicked him a couple of times the other boys and I told him to stop then we pushed him to the ground and jumped on him. After we finished the garden work we were sent to the super intendants home who gave us a hiding .We had to bend over then wack with a big stick around the bum. I would be interested in whether the boy survived these years.

3

I can recall the days we spent at Queenscliff at the cottage by the sea. Older boys would go down and clean up they would paint the bunks timber with white wash There also was an army camp next to the beach.

Some days they would close the beach and fire canons from the cliffs at Queenscliff. A ship out to sea would have two targets behind it when they fired these cannons at night or early in the morning the boys bunks would rock we would put our heads under the pillow.

I can recall helping to load some cows and bulls on the truck then we would head off for the Melbourne show. After cleaning up the mess the cows and bulls made we would

walk around the show grounds trying to get a free ride on the merry go round. When the parade was on we had to lead the cattle on the grass inside the show ground. The boys who went with the cattle to the show loved it, it was fun.

When it was time for breakfast dinner or tea the boys would line up single file the girls would come in a different section we would march single file into the dining room and stand at our allotted place around the table. The superintendent and other man were in the dining room. We all stood to say a prayer before we sat down. If it were not loud enough the supervisor would bang the table and say, "Not loud enough, say it again". Following this prayer the two of supervisors would march up and down the aisle. If any girl or boy talked they would render a wack on their back.

On very cold day (Ballarat can get very cold) we had a boiler room where some of us boys liked to gather and put our backs against the wall to get warm. A worker I also have his name. This man always carried a stick with him. If he found the boys in the boiler room he would whack them with the stick. He would also use it on the girls I didn't like him and others who looked after the children. These people looking after the girls and boys at the home has the same brain and thoughts throughout the home. They have a saying if you told lies or the truth it did not matter you still got whacked. It was a no win situation. "How cruel can you get?"

The boys, who wet their beds, were treated badly, other boys to help them would wake them up during the night, so they could go to the toilet. Those boys who wet their beds had their faces rubbed in it and pulled by their hair. How dare they do this to boys who could not help it?

I had a job at the home driving the horse and cart into Ballarat to pick up the bread, meat, and cakes; we didn't get the cakes. I can recall trucks loaded with fruit given to the pigs at the farm. There were wooden cases not opened. Why didn't they give this fruit to the children.? Some of the boys didn't miss out we would wait until it got dark then collect the fruit in the cases, that were not open then hide them in the haystack. When no one was looking or around the boys had a good feed.

4

There were a few aboriginal girls at the home. We treated them as sisters, however I did hear a lady in charge of the mending room when she wanted a girl she called out "Come here darkie, I did not understand this title till later in life. They taught us their dances and a few skills.

There was one incidence where a boy had a wooden leg. We encouraged him to play cricket with us. While playing cricket one day, he broke a little window by hitting the tennis ball through it. The lady in charge of the girls, I have her name in my folder, came out and took him inside. He came out a few minutes later with his wooden leg missing. We asked him what happened to it. They told him it was broken I am quite sure it was punishment for breaking the window. Then some time later they returned it to him. It wasn't broken at all. All these people who were in charge of the children had their pet boys and girls. They would tell them what other boy's and girls did. There were two brothers who would tell the superintendent of the home if any thing went wrong. I have their names also.

As I grew older, I was placed at the boy's Hostel; they sent me to work at AG Healings. My job was dusting the shelves, sweeping the floor, cleaning the toilets out the back and taking parcels to the bus and station. There was a lane way between where I worked and another factory. The owner of this factory disliked orphanage Children as I went to clean the toilets out the back he would whack or kick me this happened to me a number of times. I reported him to the manager where I worked, he said he would look into it, but it did not stop. I then told the man who was in charge of the Boys' hostel the answer was stop telling lies. On Friday I received my pay packet to take to the hostel to give to the man in charge. It fell out of my pocket. The man from the other factory picked it up and refused to give it back to me. I immediately went to the police station and told them what had happened. The policeman was a very big man, another policeman was also there. The big policeman said you orphanage boys are always getting into trouble. If you come here again you will spend the night in the dark room. I went back to the boys hostel and told the man in charge of us boys, he said I was lying and that I had spent my wages No one wanted to listen to me 'I was called a thief You guessed it I lost my Job.

The next job was a farm at Coghills Creek the owner of the farm was a cruel man. I was placed at this farm where I was treated as an outcast. I never ate with the family for meals He would shout at me and say, "Boy your lunch is in the milk can hanging on the fence"; The food was always the same, It was bread butter and a little meat. I got this nearly every day, I was a very hungry young man I lived in a little shed inside was a fire place and a bed/ You couldn't swing a cat in it. Along beside the shed was chook pen. I was able to pull a board off to get the eggs, I was so hungry I would crack the eggshells and swallow what was inside. So that the owner of the farm was unable to find the eggshells I cut a hole in the bed mattress and pushed the eggshells inside.

5

My starting time to commence work on this farm was 5.30AM, the owner of this farm made sure that the workload was allocated so it would take till seven O'clock at night to finish the jobs he wanted done. One Saturday the family went to the races, as I walked past the house I smelt food, they must have cooked their tea before they went to the races. I was so hungry that I broke the window, I found the meat butter and bread and can assure you that my belly was full. When they arrived back from the races, the owner called out: "Boy come here. "Then he said, "Did you do this?" I said "Yes because I was Hungry". He then rang the Ballarat Orphanage Superintend I then went back to the Ballarat Orphanage .Yes; you guessed it, another hiding. "I was used of being whacked." I was okay, my belly was full.

I always wanted to be with my brother Syd he was working on a sheep farm at Campbelltown The owner of the farm was Mr Joe Fawcett I was placed with them, who were very good people who fed us well. The other farmers in the district would invite us to their homes, they taught us how to trap rabbits fire the shotgun and other things. These farmers were very good to us.

I then received a letter from the Ballarat Orphanage that I was to look after my own affairs (I also have this letter with lots of paper work, as well as a bank booklet which had no money left in it. Where did the money go? There were others boys who were also missing money from their savings. I have receipts for many shoe repairs; they had their

own employed shoe repairer. I commenced this next journey not knowing my birth date or age; I had never celebrated a birthday.

Mr Fawcett, Syd, and myself agreed that if a sheep died we had to pluck the wool from it for him. Any wool on the barb wire fence we could share. We saved our money from the wool and rabbit skins and bought a motor bike each. Syd's bike was a BSA and mine was a CZ Syd then went shearing for one year with shearing team. When he went I missed him, when he arrived back at Fawcetts we arranged with Mr Fawcett to have nine days off to travel to Queenscliff.

During our holiday at Queenscliff Syd and I went for a walk on the pier It reminded us of our younger days at the cottage by the sea. Remember early in this paper I spoke about the man who broke my tooth and split my lip, Syd and I were coming back from the pier and in the park a was a man I looked at him, my blood started to boil as I remembered his face. I turned to Syd and said, "Is that the man who was very cruel to me Syd's Answer was "Yes" I started to calm down and went over and sat opposite him. I said "Hello" and asked him did he work at Ballarat Orphanage and cared for the boys he said "Yes" My next question was "Do you know who I am' His answer was "I can recognise your face but not your name" "My name is Allen Radcliffe you broke my teeth and split my lip with my shoe" His face dropped down towards the table and a few tears from his eyes started to fall He took a little while then looked at me and said He has carried these cruel things throughout his life I guess he has suffered as well, because he has never forgot what he and others have done at the home.

6

Another man who was in charge of the boy's hostel was also harsh and cruel. If you were late for tea or swore, as you sat down for a meal he would get behind you open his arms wide and bang, against both ears, It would be interesting to do a study of hearing *problems of Clan children.*

When I arrived in Melbourne I went to see a Doctor for an ear test Due to frequent earaches I suffered. After checking my ears the Doctor told me I had permanent ear drum damage and will have hearing problems I have 70 percent deafness in my right ear (I noticed at a reunion of clan that several clans were partly deaf.

We were given a little square tin money box to collect money for the children's appeal When I returned to the Orphanage I was given one of these tins. On the tin read the Commonwealth savings bank of Australia The other words on this tin are 'So little to pay help on life's way children today'.

Bath time was a group effort I can remember the big bathroom this bath was filled with warm water then poured phenol into it. It was strong enough to rot your socks I wonder why they put this in the bath? May be, to kill the fleas or lice or keep the girls away from the boys.

All the boys would line up in the yard and were given each a half a cup of senna leaves to drink with water, I can assure you we would run as fast as John Landy but in a different direction.

During the winter being so cold you would get chill brains on ears fingers and toes, These chilblains would be coated with pig gauze to make them better most of the children suffered very badly from these chilblains.

I did not wish to continue the farming life, whilst at Queenscliff with my Brother I met a boy my age his parents owned the Ozone hotel at Queenscliff He offered me a job at the hotel His parents looked after me well, then my life started to change for the better.

Bertie and I both played football for Queenscliff he was like a brother to me, The Fitzroy club came down for a practise match which Bertie and I played in. I kicked 5 goals for the match. Two men from the Fitzroy club came over to me following the match asked me if I would like to play for Fitzroy I said yes. The following year I went to Fitzroy. They had arranged with Berties' mother and father and at the same time reassured them that I would be looked after.

When I came to Melbourne I was met by a young man called Frank who took me to a home in Hutton Street Thornbury, where I was greeted by Mr and Mrs Breen who treated me like they would their own son. Here I started to know what love kindness and respect was all about. I felt I as though I was born again. During my stay with this family I met boy called Neil Brown and other young chaps who lived nearby, Neil's father was a policeman his mother father and brothers welcomed me any time of day or night. Neil was like another brother to me.

7

Whilst training at the Fitzroy football club the players were much older than I was. My new found friend ships were so great that I left the Fitzroy football club to play with the Preston Football club. Neil and I continue to be good friend.

This paper concludes with many more stories to follow Clan has unleashed my past, which has been hidden for so long. I have loved and lived many happy times through out my journey in life. I have found family and friends I cherish from Australia, America and the Isle of Mann these stories are to be told in the future.