**My Earliest Memories** by Val Wilson (nee Rolfs)

I was 23 or 24 when I queried Mum about her and Dad’s 25th wedding anniversary. I had never known them to celebrate this occasion, but thought it must be coming up soon; it was too important to pass by, but after asking her, there was a small silence and she said, “You had better go and ask your father”. Off I went only to get the reply, “You had better ask your mother”

It worked out that the wedding anniversary was in March and my 25th.birthday was in the following November, oops this was the same year as their anniversary. So to save my poor Mum’s sensibilities on the matter, it is obvious that I arrived prematurely on the second of November 1936 (at a healthy weight) to Ellie and Gordon Rolfs at the Women’s Hospital Melbourne. I had a shock of black hair that the nurses tied up with a pink ribbon.

And no, they never did celebrate their anniversary.

My parents were Ellie Splatt and Gordon Rolfs and they were married at Diamond Creek during the depression. Times were very difficult, due to a downturn in the world’s economy there was not much money around and employment of even the most basic kind was hard to come by, so when they married their wedding present was a collection of household goods and groceries from both their families to start them off.

They began their married life in the front bedroom of Dad’s parents, Harry and Elizabeth Rolfs’ home at 78 Alexandra Street, Greensborough. Gran took in boarders, mainly young married couples who would rent Gran’s front bedroom, even Mum’s two sisters Joyce and Cora with their new husbands were, at different times, occupants of the Front Bedroom, to give it it’s proper title.

Gran would provide breakfast and an evening meal for them.

 Cora my aunt remembers with a laugh how horrified Gran was, when she discovered that Cora had no intention of getting up in the morning to get her new husband Tom Mitchell’s breakfast, and see him off to work. So Gran took it upon herself “ to do for” Tom, only Gran got her times mixed up, called Tom for breakfast an hour earlier than needed, and so Tom found himself sitting on the railway station, waiting for his train to work, with the morning frost settling all around him, for an hour more than necessary. Tom got himself off to work after that. Cora, as she said, had no intention of getting out of bed at that hour.

Pop had built a bungalow in the back yard, which was also let to boarders. I remember a lot of the faces that occupied the bungalow. I don’t think the Front Bedroom was let so much by the time I was 10 or 12, but the bungalow certainly had its share of occupants. One boarder was a schoolteacher who applied to rent the bungalow, Gran had already let it to a local man, but then Gran found out the schoolteacher had a car, and Eureka! The bungalow was his. From then on, he found himself every Wednesday night taking Gran, Pop, and whoever else was around, to the flicks at “The Orient” the movie picture house at Heidelberg. The poor man was no match for my Gran’s organizing abilities.

Gran and Pop were both born in Seymour in Central Victoria, and married there. The service was held at Pop’s parent’s house in Emily Street Seymour, they had 5 children, the eldest son died in infancy, then came Effie, Beryl, and Gordon. After moving from Seymour they tried their hand at a mixed business in Warrigal Road Hawthorn, but ended up on a farm at Plenty, outside Greensborough where their youngest son Len was born. Pop grew vegetables and fruit and took his produce into the market, he also had horses, that he broke and trained himself and had a trotter named Rollo, which he raced, I have no idea how successful that venture was.

It was in the early 1930’s that the family moved into the house in Alexandra Street Greensborough. The title of the house shows that it was put in the name of Elizabeth Rolfs as owner in 1944, which raises the question, how did Gran become the owner, and not Pop, it was most unusual in those days for the woman’s name to be on the title instead of her husband’s name. It may have been that the times they were living in had something to do with it.

 Pop’s father had been a seaman, born in Germany who jumped ship in Melbourne in 1881, as did many others in the search for gold. At the time Gran and Pop bought their house, due to the war between Britain and Germany there was a strong anti German feeling in the community, the Government was even known to confiscate houses and goods belonging to people of German or Italian descent, and the people themselves detained in Prisoner of War camps. So it is my guess that no stone was overturned at the time of signing for the house to ensure that the house would not be taken away from them owing to Pop’s ancestry.

They had been living in the house for some 10 years, it would seem in the old terminology they had been paying it off, and maybe it was the money Gran received from her boarders that had been a major factor in paying for the house, but it was a fine house and was where I started off my very early years.

 I don’t think Mum and Dad stayed at Gran and Pop’s for very long after I was born, as my very first memory is of living in a little house, only 2 doors down from 78 Alexandra Street, my memory is of being in bed and Mum lighting a small burner in my bedroom, I had croup, a nasty rattling chesty cough, and the vapours from this lamp were to ease my breathing, I thought this lamp was very pretty and would lay there and watch the stars of light that appeared in the side of this lamp.

 By this time Kevin my brother had joined the family, he had beautiful hair, long sausage curls down to his shoulders, Kevin’s hair must have been Mum’s pride and joy, and she would have been none too pleased when Dad, unbeknown to her as to what he was up to, took Kevin down the street and had all his hair cut off, poor Mum.

She would not have got much joy out of my hair, which was very black and very straight, and so fine it would not hold a hairpin or ribbon, unless of course the ribbon was tied so tight it felt as if half your head had been scraped into the bow.

I was very young when we all moved to Mountain View Road Briar Hill to live at the dairy with Mum’s parents, Dot and Bill Splatt, and her 2 younger sisters Cora and Joyce. I have definite memories of my Grandfather’s dairy; it was a brick building next to my Grandparents’ house. I think Dad was away working, there was also a period of time he was away at the war, I have memories of him being there, and then going again.

The Dairy had a cool room in it, where they stored the containers of milk. Pop, during the day would go and collect the milk from the various farmers around the district, and then the next morning, he became the local milko, taking off in his horse and cart to deliver milk to the waiting billycans sitting by the various gates.

I have a lot of memories of our time at Nan and Pop’s house, I was approximately aged between 18months and 4, I loved Nana, but mum’s sisters gave me a hard time, Cora and Joyce would have been about 19 and 16 when I was 4, Cora worked in the dairy, and maybe Joyce was still at school at the time, I know I did not have to do much to get on the wrong side of Cora, she once locked me in the cool room, which I remember vividly, as she was always telling me, you could freeze to death in there, and of course I was terrified.

I told Cora in later years, that if I had faults in my makeup, it was probably due to the child abuse, she dished out to me before I was four.

She just laughed and said I deserved it, but I was petrified of her, both Cora and Joyce had red hair and Cora had the temper to go with it. I think poor Mum got a bit frazzled at times, but the two aunts adored my younger brother Kevin, pushing him around in a doll’s pram, and making quite a fuss of him. I was a different kettle of fish, I think I may have been a precocious child, and Cora especially and I were always at loggerheads.

A very early memory is of my second birthday, and I was given a koala and a wicker pram, probably the same pram that my dear aunts pushed Kevin around in.

 I recall the kitchen, with a great woodstove on one side and a big window on the other, the table and chairs stood next to this window, and from there you could see right down the hill, a view I never tired of. I would often sit at this table with my colouring books and pencils and would inform anyone around that Pop is coming, or so and so is coming. It was in this kitchen that I pulled a kettle of hot water onto myself and badly burned my arm. I was able to later call out to the family “The doctor is coming”.

The road to our house could be seen winding its way up the hill and anyone walking or driving up the road could be seen from the window. I was only three in 1939 when Victoria was covered by bushfires; the fires must have been close by, as I remember being with all the family when they were looking out the window at plumes of smoke on the horizon.

Mrs. Ham lived across the road, and every Friday afternoon she would come and collect Kevin and I, take us across to her house, where she had just finished putting wax on the kitchen floor, she had made big pads of soft material, which Kevin and I sat on, and pulled ourselves around the kitchen floor, polishing the wax to a fine shine, giving us a biscuit and taking us home again. Where there is a will there is a way.

Joyce played the piano, Mum did as well, but it was Joyce who would sit and play for ages, all the latest songs that were out, and I would sit beside her, young as I was I knew all the words, and would sing along with Joyce, I loved it, when Joyce wasn’t there, I would get out her sheet music and study the words and the pictures on the covers, even today, I only have to hear a couple of bars of one of those songs, I will recognise the name of it, I guess that was the beginning of my love of music.

I accepted as a fact of life that Dad was not around very much, and an early memory is of him coming home on leave with a Golden Cocker Spaniel pup named Spag. I wish I knew the story of how Dad and this pup crossed paths, but they both just turned up one day. He was a beautiful pup, but when Dad left to go back to wherever he came from, Spag pined for him. He was not interested in anyone and took refuge under the house, I would crawl in and sit and pat him, and he had such sad and mournful eyes. Mum used one of her precious meat coupons to buy some meat to cook a tempting meal for him as he was not eating, plus milk from my Grandfathers dairy, he was a much cosseted dog. Eventually he came out from under the house, but let it be known he only tolerated us, but would stay with us and wait until Dad came home. When this happened he became absolutely delirious with joy, I think I remember it because it would have been the first time I had heard a dog actually cry; he was a lovely, silly dog.

 My Grandfather Bill Splatt was a very taciturn man, not given to light jokes and passing the time of day, listening to the seven o’clock news on the A.B.C. was almost a religion, and was his time of day, god help any child who uttered a peep during the news, just as well we were quick learners. I don’t have a lot of memories of him, I think we kept out of his way, my Aunt Cora told me many years later that her mother had some ladies in for afternoon tea one day, Pop Splatt came along with nana’s sewing basket, put it front of her and told her she may as well darn some socks while she was sitting there!

So I must assume it was a matter of children could be seen but not heard with Pop, although there was one time, Kevin must have been playing with Nana’s treadle sewing machine, when he stitched his finger, Pop first on the scene, just held him steady. Reversed the wheel and unstitched it. No fuss whatsoever.

When I started school, I had only turned 4 the previous November. I was very young compared to today’s school age. We were now living in a little house down by the railway line, so we had moved away from nanas, and away from the beloved aunts.

The year would have been 1940 when Mum and I headed off for my first day at the Briar Hill State School. We were walking across the playground towards the school, when I tripped and broke my slate.

What a disaster, there were skinned knees, blood, tears and my precious slate broken and we hadn’t even got through the door. I was heartbroken, I was so looking forward to going to school, and even Dad the night before had sat down with me to explain what an important step this was in life, although he had probably had his usual 2 pots of beer on the way home.

And here I was covered in blood and tears. I refused to go inside the school; all the kids were looking at me. So home we went for me to be patched up. Mum cleaned me up and we went back to the school at lunchtime, my mother would always say in later years, “ Val never does things by halves”, so it would seem that even at an early age, this was true.

We could not have been in that little house long when I started school, as I remember going back to Nana’s house after school and her being most concerned that I had forgotten I did not live there anymore.

 She sat me down and made me a sandwich with crusty bread, cold lamb, and slices of white onion out of the garden, (I had to go and get it for her), and salt and pepper. Out of all the sandwiches you could eat in your time in this world, I have never forgotten that one, it tasted delicious. I was then sent on my way to find my way home, 4 years old mind, can you see that happening today. I don’t think it worried me too much; my main memory was that delicious sandwich.

 It was about this time when Kevin and I were sent to Sunday school at the Church of England at Greensborough. This meant a walk of probably 4 k’s at least from Briar Hill to Greensborough.

We were dressed in our best bib and tucker and put out the door to set off for Sunday school; I have a sneaking suspicion Mum would go back to bed. After Sunday school we had to walk around to Gran and Pop’s home in Alexandra Street, where we would meet up with mum and dad for Sunday lunch. When I think about that walk now, it amazes me. Kevin was younger than me, and a plump little barrel he was too, the two of us trudging along, and then after spending the whole day at Alexandra Street, the four of us would set out to walk home. I think I remember a few piggybacks from Mum and Dad to get us home to bed.

It was the following year that Nana Splatt died, she was only 52, but had been ill for some time. I remember being in her bedroom with Mum …… Nana was lying in bed, she was holding my hand, I don’t think it was long before she died. Alice Lavinia Splatt was a lovely lady and a beautiful nana, I can only think of love and warmth when I remember Nana. I know the family was devastated by her early death, my Aunt Joyce told me later in life my mother said to her “I would give my right arm to see my mother walk through that door”, sadly many years later I was to find out exactly how she had felt.

It was after this the family moved back to Greensborough, Pop Splatt must have sold the Dairy as we all, Mum, Dad (when he was Home) Kevin and I, and Joyce and Pop moved into the house at 11 Eldale Avenue Greensborough.

Pop Splatt owned 2 houses in Greensborough, this one and another in Grimshaw Street; both of them had common borders with “Ashmead” Dr. Cordner’s lovely house on the corner of Grimshaw Street and Eldale Avenue. The house in Grimshaw Street had been Nan and Pop Splatt’s original family home where Mum and her sisters and brother grew up. When we came to Eldale Avenue, Mum’s sister Cora now newly married to Tom Mitchell were now living in the Grimshaw Street house, you could walk from one house to the other through the backyards. My first memory of these houses was the sight of the back yard of Cora’s home filled with row upon row of poppies flowering, they seemed to fill the whole back yard, many years later I mentioned these poppies to my Aunt Joyce and she laughed and said “Dad loved his poppies”. I wish I had got to know that Grandfather who loved his poppies.

The house in Eldale Avenue was to be our home for most of my primary school years, Dad was to come home from his war years, and I remember them as happy days.

I would have been 1941 when I started at Greensborough Primary School, I was 5 and in Grade 1, Miss Ladd was my teacher.

 Mum and her sisters and brother had also gone to Greensborough Primary as had her Dad and his brothers and sisters, Mum’s family were one of the original pioneers of Greensborough and were part of the history of the area. Of course I knew nothing of this only the knowledge that Greensborough was home and everything was in its place.

My first day at school was a bit daunting, the boy seated behind me, Trevor Partington I later found out, pulled my hair and threatened me with “my old man is a copper and will put you in jail”! I did not think I had done anything wrong, but maybe that was Trevor’s way of introducing himself. We became good pals over the years as I did with Pat Cairns who was sitting next to me; Pat and I are still friends 70 years later.

The Simon’s kids were part of our early life Beryl, Nancy and Len; they had an older brother Reg and a younger brother Donald, NEVER to be called Don. They lived down in Grimshaw Street. We would cross over the street in front of their house and down into the wild quince trees that grew just below Main Street. There is a swimming pool there now. We would play war games, cowboys and Indians, build cubbies and generally amuse ourselves until we got called in to tea, in those days we ate breakfast, dinner and tea, no lunches and dinners for us.

We built a cubby into the top of the cypress Hedge out the front of our house; the cubby played a big part in our fun. We had put planks of wood down on the branches, enough to seat us all, and with a break in the hedge above us, we could stand and see what was going on in the road below, and a wider view of all beyond, like a conning tower in a submarine. The top of the hedge was so thick we could climb up and out and walk along the top, There was one mishap when Lennie Simons from down the street fell through and broke his arm, although I think that was nearing the end of the hedge adventure, when we eventually got banned.

We had a food supply up there, we had dragged a box of apples from the garage, up into the cubby, and all the kids that gathered in the hedge were pleased to have one of our apples, I think that was till Mum found them missing. Every time I see Snow apples I think of the hedge.

If we kept our heads down we could not be seen from outside the hedge, although I am sure we could be heard for miles, but we made up the most elaborate dramas and playacting that kept us going for days. We had decided that the old ladies who lived next-door and very rarely showed themselves, needed watching as it was believed they were sheltering escaped Germans inside their house. We would lie on top of the hedge watching for movement in the enemy lines, and signal to the troops further down in the hedge when there was movement below.

One morning Miss Chivers came unsuspectingly out of her front gate carrying her shopping basket, intent on getting more food for the Germans. Upon getting level with the hedge she was mowed down by automatic machine gun fire, all the accompanying noises frightening the living daylights out of her and she complained to Army Headquarters, whereupon the General with her apron flying came storming out of the back door and sent kids scattering in all directions

If we climbed the hedge on the other side of the gate we could look over into Dr Cordner’s tennis court and watch the Cordners and their friends playing tennis, but if we were too rowdy the Cordner boys weren’t shy in telling us to bugger off out of that hedge.

Another day my brother Kevin was playing outside on the road, we could see him from our vantage spot in the hedge, when along came Metho Annie and got him to help carry her bags home, next thing I see is Metho Annie with Kevin toddling along beside her, holding her bag.

Well, down from that hedge as quick as could be, would you believe a real life kidnapping right in front of my eyes, much more exciting than anything my overactive imagination could dream up, down from the hedge around to the kitchen, “Mum, Mum, Metho Annie’s got Kevin!”

Mum calmly walked out to the street and explained to the lady in question that Kevin would love to help carry her bags home, but it was his lunch time so he would not be able to help her, I was very disappointed that this drama ended so peacefully ….

Poor Metho Annie, I don’t know if the name came from actually drinking Metho, but she was an alcoholic who if she got tired on the way home from the street would lay down and have a rest, poor soul.

But we didn’t comprehend this at the time, when she passed our house and we were in the hedge, we would hear her coming as she carried on long and abusive arguments with invisible people known only to her, this was another source of fascination for me, and I would listen carefully to try and hear everything she was yelling about, I am sure my knowledge of the world and my vocabulary widened considerably when Metho Annie passed by. There was complete silence, till she had gone, I guess we weren’t too sure about her. The cypress hedge eventually got banned as a playground and the days of stinking of pine with sticky sap all over our hands, then a layer of dirt stuck to the sap came to an end, but it was good fun while it lasted.

I loved Greensborough, to me it was a magical place, full of steep hills, winding roads, always something for my imagination around every corner, it was a green haven with gum trees aplenty.

The earth would bake hard in the hot summer sun, one of my pleasures was walking in bare feet scuffing the dirt, to me it felt like silk between my toes, and when the Northerlies blew they brought hot and dusty days. Greensborough certainly had its extremes of weather, as the winter winds were icy. When the winds blew from the south, my world would become white, a winter wonderland of morning frost. There would be the sound of crunching, a lovely sound, as we ran through the grass on our way to school. The enjoyment of sampling our frozen saucer of water we had left out over night, a delicacy! And throwing stones at the trees, each of us yelling and screaming when the fairyland of ice came showering came down on us.

 It was on the way to school one morning that I stopped at the bottom of the hill and saw that the pond was covered in ice.

I had just finished reading the book Silver Skates and my head was full of visions of sparkling skates flashing over the ice. I looked at the pond and could see no difference at all between Holland and this little pond tucked away in the bottom of Australia.

 So it was then I decided I had to explore the glories of skating and winning for myself. As ice skates seemed to be in short supply, I decided my runners would do the same job, so the next morning; I packed my runners in my schoolbag. It was not that easy to leave home with the runners, there was a discussion, as to why I needed them, sports day was not till the end of the week.

 But off I set for school accompanied by my brother Kevin and picking up the Simons kids along the way. When I told them all that I was going skating on the pond, I guess astonishment was the main reaction and varied cries of “mum will go crook at you” by Kevin to Lennie Simons solemnly stating an obvious truth “ It will never work”.

 By the pond I took off my shoes and socks and put on my runners, yes I thought, the pond was covered in ice, so off I lunged with what I imagined to be a swooping glide across the ice. I really did let my imagination run away from me. Instead of the glory I had imagined all I found was freezing slushy water muddy reeds and legs and feet that had turned blue. Kevin was dancing up and down, “I’m telling on you”; the Simons were standing staring at me with a look of sneaking admiration mixed with disbelief that anyone could actually be that stupid.

It was a look I was to come across more than once in later years.

 I had no way of drying my feet and legs so had to get my shoes and socks on as best I could and get myself to school in a hurry, very damp around the edges.

In those days there was always a fire burning away in the classroom. Upon getting to school I made straight for the fireplace holding out my legs towards the lovely heat. Clouds of steam rose from around me, my teacher Miss Ladd came towards me saying, “ For Heaven’s Sakes Valerie, what have you been up to?” and then the onlookers found voice, “She’s been skating Miss.” That look again, only in adults they manage to shake their head at the same time. When Mum found out, there was more than heads shaking, but after a smack on the backside she said to Dad, “Well at least there was no chance of her drowning, the pond would be lucky to cover her ankles!”

When I first started work in Melbourne, people I met, workmates etc. would ask “and where do you live?” On hearing the reply Greensborough, would invariably say, “Oh, I went out there on a picnic once,” and in those days there was no prettier place to have a picnic than Greensborough.

Even in early days, when the train line was newly opened, people would flock out to Greensborough, on special trains, to spend the day walking in the bush and go home with arms laden with wattle, while the little town maintained a rural aspect, there were picnics, all sorts of picnics,

Works picnics from factories, Social Clubs, Sunday school picnics, Bush Walking Clubs and yes, there were egg and spoon races, three legged races, and even Tug of War.

Every weekend my friends and I would be on the lookout for any furniture vans trundling down Main Street, full of people in the back on their way to a picnic, we would follow the truck down and hang around hoping to be asked to join in the races which was the reason we were there really, because then you could line up with the other kids for a bag of lollies or raspberry cordial.

We would often climb over the hills with our new found friends looking for wildflowers, Early Nancy’s, Egg and Bacon, Sarsaparillas, Chocolate flowers, Bread and Butter, Everlastings and Orchids were among the flowers we would find and pick, always hopeful that this time the flowers would last longer than they did last time.

Many a fine afternoon was spent down at the park enjoying other people’s picnics.

Most of these gatherings could be found down at the Bottom Park, nestled at the foot of Main Street, surrounded on all sides by tree clad hills, with the once pristine Plenty River curving around its edge.

There was a swimming pool built into the river down there, with the river water flowing through it, even on the hottest summer day the water was freezing, it certainly chased the cobwebs away, and as family legend has it, it wasn’t the only thing that was chased away down by the pool, when my aunt Joyce accidentally sat on a platypus!

Now that we were living in Eldale Avenue, we were once again living not very far from Gran and Pop Rolfs, Dads parents and of course Uncle Lennie who was an early teenager at this time and going to Collingwood Technical School. I adored Len, I was his shadow at every opportunity, but he was very good, and had all the patience in the world with me, chatting away and did not seem to mind me following him around one bit.

We spent a lot of time around at Alexandra Street. Every Sunday we arrived for a hot Roast Sunday lunch, once again Kevin and I going there from Sunday school.

 After lunch while the grownups dozed or read the papers, Len would take me bird nesting, over into the scrub where we would look for bird’s nests, find the eggs and bring them home for Len’s collection. When he got the eggs home, I would help him blow the eggs as he had shown me. You put a pinprick in each end with a needle, put your mouth on one end and blew the contents of the egg out the hole in the other end. Then they were laid on a bed of cotton wool in a box, according to type of bird, and we thought they were magnificent. I don’t think you hear too much of this hobby these days.

 He would also take Kevin and I down to the swimming pool when it was very hot, and when we were a bit older for a hit on the tennis court outside the Church of England hall.

Joyce our aunt who lived at home with us, was older than Len and was now working and had a boyfriend, so believe me she made it clear when she wanted us out of the way, and we got short shrift if we got in her way, so Len’s attention was most welcome.

Elizabeth and Harry Rolfs lived in Alexandra Street for many years and were happiest when surrounded by their family; their daughter Effie King and her family lived nearby in Broad Street and every Sunday saw the family gathered for a roast lunch and later on a drive to Plenty to go picking blackberries or mushrooms

They had a busy life. Gran was a great worker for charity, with money being raised by card afternoons. The ladies of the town took turns holding these afternoons in their homes. Card tables were set up wherever there was room, each table seating four. The ladies would play Euchre for 2 hours, then break for afternoon tea and then have another play at the cards, all the while passing on the latest gossip to be discussed and savoured. You knew when something being discussed was particularly spicy, as there would be silence whenever anyone approached them, and would be until you were out of earshot.

 Sometimes they would start earlier and the ladies would bring a plate, please understand that this invitation to bring a plate, meant that there was some suitable food for lunch on the plate! And it is at this point I remember Gran’s card parties, for if it was school holiday time she would issue orders for myself and sometimes Len my Uncle to be there, to pass around the sandwiches, replenish cups of tea, and generally be helpful! I was the eldest by far of the grandchildren, and I resented Gran’s dictatorial orders to attend, but it was expected of me, Gran’s word was law and that was all there was to it.

The money raised from these afternoons generally resulted in a certificate with Gran’s name on it, proclaiming her a Life Governor or Life Member of everything from the Red Cross to the Alfred Hospital.

Gran was very proud of her Certificates, she loved her cards, as did the whole family, every Sunday night after a meal of cold meat and salad, the dishes would be done and the table cleared for cards.

Pop was still breaking in horses in the empty paddock next door, which was between their home and the Carlon family that lived on the corner. The horses were then sold on mainly for the local baker, he had his vegetable garden and his chooks and would not go near Gran’s flower garden, “you can’t eat bloody flowers”, he would tell me. So I was the carer of Gran’s garden, another order issued and I would be there to do the weeding for her, but of course this was when I was much older. Pop was also the Goal Umpire at the local football matches, as kids we called him the ice-cream man in his white coat and he would chase us off with his flags.

 Gran also organised many outings for her family, she would hire a furniture van and put long seats in it and family, friends and neighbours would climb in laden with picnic baskets and off we would go for the day. I can remember going to Mt. Donna Buang to see the snow for the first time, a very exciting day, I can remember everyone in the van singing on the way home “You are my Sunshine” and arrive home about 10 O’clock at night absolutely worn out. Another favourite spot was Hampton Beach, although we often tackled this one by train, all the family travelling from Greensborough to Melbourne then changing trains to Hampton, Kevin and I hanging out the window chasing any grey clouds away that may want to spoil our day. Thanks to Gran we had many outings and a very busy social life also thanks to her fundraising; there were Fancy Dress Dances, Concerts, and Backyard bazaars.

Those childhood years are full of happy memories and when Dad finally came home from the war they were to build a home at 20 William Street Greensborough, a very exciting time for them. I was growing up and looking at starting Secondary School and so another chapter in life was beginning.

Val Wilson