

Memories are rushing back

Local resident and Society member, Rosie Bray, recently interviewed Trinnie Di Giacomo (nee Whittingham), a descendant of the Whittingham's of Greensborough. Trinnie recalls her days growing up in what was a small town, soon to be become a booming post war suburb. Rosie has captured Trinnie's wonderful memories in the following article.



The Whittingham Family were early settlers in the Greensborough district, who helped to shape the area. I was very grateful to be able to speak to Trinnie, the fourth child of Eric and Elsie Whittingham, recently even though she had only been discharged from hospital two days earlier. So thank you Trinnie. When we first began to talk on June 3. 2011, Trinnie told me that she may not be able to remember much, and then all of a sudden she smiled and said “memories are rushing back”, so here is Trinnie's story.

Trinnie was born Triandra Whittingham in Ivanhoe nearly 79 years ago. When I asked her about her unusual name, Trinnie thought it had a French/British origin, but she had been called Trinnie all of her life. Trinnie's parents Elsie and Eric (who was a WW1 veteran) brought their five children, Ethel, Eric, Doris, Trinnie and Elvie from their family house in Henry Street Greensborough to live on the farm on the Diamond Creek Road when she was very young. Eric (junior) Whittingham was nick-named Buster. Trinnie remembered that it was she who labelled Eric Buster, because she could not manage to say his name. The name caught on and most people called him Buster after that.

Trinnie remembered that life was hard on the farm, without mod cons, no electricity, only kerosene lamps, no running water and the constant farm work which included the milking of cows, morning and night. She reflected about how her mother had managed, coming from a more or less suburban house to an isolated farm coping with these conditions and raising a large family. However, all the family had their daily chores such as feeding the chooks and gathering wood for the fire to help out. They did these tasks before and after school. They all loved animals especially the big draught horses, which pulled the plough for her father.



Extract from 1945 aerial photograph
of the Whittingham farm
(Melbourne University)



Same view - latest satellite image
(Google Earth)

Trinnie smiled and remembered that there were some pleasures. They made their own fun on the farm. She remembers swimming in the dam and the children swinging themselves across on the boughs of the weeping willow tree. Sometimes they did not make it. Another enjoyment was a battery radio, which was only used at night. All the family gathered around the radio to hear and laugh at such radio programs as Dad and Dave. Cards were also played by the family at night (Trinnie still loves playing Euchre). Trinnie also told me that they had wonderful musical evenings; these were held mostly on a Sunday night. Eric, Trinnie's father had a wonderful voice, Doris played the piano and sang, and Buster (Eric) played the banjo. They sang all types of songs and hymns, even sea shanties. Trinnie said that she thought that it was these evenings that gave her the love of ballroom dancing, which she did six times a week when she got older. Trinnie also added that she taught dancing, and she loved doing that.

Trinnie also remembered that all the children attended the Greensborough Primary School, which meant a two mile walk to school and back each day. She loved to play sport at school especially 'rounders', and would throw the ball into the boys toilet, (she said that she was a naughty girl).....Trinnie went on to study at Eltham High School and later trained as a hairdresser, before working at the Bank of N.S.W for 15 years and later worked at Coles.

Sundays were supposed to be a day of rest. No sleep in for the Whittinghams. Elsie was up early cooking for visitors and the children did their chores before walking the two miles to the Greensborough Anglican Church. Trinnie remembers standing next to Mrs Corder senior and the Sunday school picnics.

Oral History

I asked about the family house in Henry Street Greensborough and she said that the Whittingham family owned the land from War Memorial Park to the Greensborough Township which also takes in where swimming pool stands. Trinnie told me that the big problem at that time was the high Council rates. She described them as a 'killer'. The old Whittingham Henry Street house still looks good and stands as a memory to the Whittingham Family.

Trinnie ends her story by saying that although her life has had some ups and downs, it has not been an unhappy one.

The Whittingham Family are particularly proud of their Uncle Henry Douglas who was killed in WW1, and whose name is engraved on the Greensborough War Memorial.

Thank you Trinnie for sharing your "memories that kept rushing back" with us.

Rosie Bray
June 2011
