

### **ERNIE (MICK) EVANS**

**Born December 15, 1913 at Yea - Died July 27, 2000 at Greensborough.**

Ernie was the kind of dinkum Aussie bloke who had no specific claim to fame but in his lifetime inspired and touched everyone he met. It was stated by his grandson recently that "when Pa walks into a room it's like the lights go on".

Ernest Henry Evans or "Mick" to his mates was the eighth child of George Henry and the first child of Maud Elizabeth (nee Youlden). George Henry was a farmer with considerable holdings and a local politician and Shire President. Maud Elizabeth passed away just ten days after the birth of her baby Ernest and with no mother figure and resentment toward the child after the loss of his wife, George sent the ten day old baby in a horse drawn dray on the long journey to Williamstown and into the care of his sister Agnes and her husband Charles Quarrier.

Ernie had an idyllic life with Agnes and Charles in Railway Place Williamstown and looked on them as his "parents", helping Charles with their acres of exotic bird aviaries where Charles bred birds for the great aviaries of Japan and other overseas countries.

About this time Ernie acquired a motor bike and side car and took great delight in showing his prowess to Clarice much to the embarrassment of his half brother who was a Detective Sergeant in the Police Force.

But life changed dramatically when in his late teens both of his "parents" died and through no fault of his own he was homeless and alone. Life was tough enough in the 30's, and with everything he owned on his back Ernie took to the road, working his way through Gippsland farms to survive, and sleeping in barns and sheds.

In 1933 he married his beloved Clarice. They settled in Port Melbourne and there they had three children. Ernie would ride his bicycle to Geelong everyday to work as a brickies labourer, never afraid of hard work.

In 1939 Ernie enlisted in the army and was given one week to organise his family and his affairs then report to the Melbourne Showgrounds. It was here that he got the nickname Mick and it stuck.

In the ensuing years he would see action in England (Battle of Britain), in North Africa and Tobruk and in the BCOF in Japan after the bombing of Hiroshima. He held the rank of Staff Sergeant in Japan and spoke with great emotion of the Japanese civilians and

## Oral History

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their suffering and did what he could on a personal level to assist them. He was a very caring bloke.

Twice during his military service Ernie was classified medically unfit for active service and ordered home, both times he went AWOL until his ship had departed. "I went for the long haul," he would say "not for a bloody holiday". He and Clarice moved to Greensborough in 1947 with their now four children. Ernie built the house around them, building materials were scarce; he brought pieces of timber and other materials home on the train and his bicycle

Ernie organised concert parties to visit and entertain servicemen and women in institutions around Melbourne, his mates were rarely off his mind. He made toys for local children whose parents had no means to provide them Christmas gifts. His generosity and spirit was overwhelming.

Over the years Ernie was heavily involved with the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital as both patient and service, even assisting in training sessions of staff whilst a patient. Along with the RATS of Tobruk, he has inspired many with the planting of a fig tree which was a cutting from the tree in Tobruk where the Army Headquarters was located.

In May this year Ernie was honoured by the Hospital with his image preserved for ever in a stained glass window in the walkway, dedicated to the Armed Services, and he was privileged to unveil the window along with his mate Bryn Griffiths.

Note: Compiled in 2000, by daughter Marj Pepper for a journalist from the Herald Sun newspaper who wanted to write an obituary for Ernie, after having read the death notices in the newspaper.

Condensed version for the Greensborough Historical Society