

Oral History

EVANS FAMILY MOVE TO GREENSBOROUGH

11 Anama Street.

Ernie (Mick) Evans was in WW11, he was one of the "Rats of Tobruk" and also served in the B.C.O.F. in Japan. When he was discharged and received his gratuity, the first thing he did was buy a block of land in Greensborough, Lot 109 Anama Street on top of the hill, where he built the family home. At this time there were very few sealed roads in the area. He had full time employment – shift work – with the Melbourne Harbour Trust, where he worked before the war and returned to after he was discharged.

Ernie and Clarice (Young) Evans and three of their four daughters, Shirley, June and Marjorie moved to Greensborough in early 1947 into the family home which Ernie was still building. Betty my eldest sister, stayed with my grandmother for awhile at Port Melbourne, I can't quite recall whether it was her last year at school or her first year at work.

At the time, it was just to lock up stage; the interior had no plaster or any type of lining at all. The main factor, been lack of funds, another was to save time; they were living in Port Melbourne, and did not own a car, dad used to spend hours travelling by train and push bike every time he wanted to work on the house.

He would catch a train, taking a push bike with him, from Port Melbourne to the city, then change trains and come out to Watsonia, then ride his bike, more often than not with tools or timber strapped on the bike, to the block. Timber was in short supply at that time, so any timber that was suitable and he could get his hands on would be used. If he was on a late or twilight shift, he would sleep on wool bales or whatever he could find on the wharfs, and catch a few hours sleep until the first train left Melbourne for Greensborough, usually about 5.30am. On these occasions he would camp overnight.

When dad stayed overnight, mum would take us on the train to visit him, this was quite an adventure to us, going to the country when living in suburbia, also we rarely had reason to use trains, because buses were always close to where we lived, we would return home on a late afternoon train.

As a child, I thought nothing of this, it was dad doing the sort of thing our dad did (at some point in time, I realised that our dad did so many things that nobody else's dad did). As an adult I have to say "What an amazing man he was", also, this is only one example of this incredible man's ability and determination to achieve and succeed, and he did. I doubt that many could do what he did.

When we moved in, as I mentioned before, no plaster on the walls, my sister Shirley used to "walk through the walls" saying, look at me I'm Jesus, I can walk through walls. Soon after my youngest sister Marj, who had just turned three, cut her head open, falling on concrete stumps dad had made for the house, I remember, her face and hair were covered in blood.

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Not having a car, dad picked her up and ran all the way from Anama Street to Dr. E.R. Corder on the corner of Grimshaw Street and Eldale Avenue. When he arrived the doctor lectured him about working on a Sunday and didn't want to attend to Marj, however Ted Corder saved the day, he stitched her wound. Ted was her doctor from then on, until not long before his death in 1996.

The external walls were weather boards half way, then fibro cement sheeting because of the shortage of timber. There were three bedrooms, lounge, kitchen, bathroom and laundry, later a sunroom was added to the back.

In the kitchen dad "built in" a table and bench seats, cupboards and an alcove for a stove and another for the refrigerator, which we had never had before. The only thing moveable in the kitchen was the refrigerator, the first refrigerator mum had ever had.

In two of the bedrooms there were built in robes and dressing tables and the beds were built into the frame work, when the walls were being plastered, the base of the beds were plastered, the same as the walls. There was no moveable furniture in two of the bed rooms.

In the bath room we had a pedestal basin, a bath and a glass shower recess; we had never had a shower before, we had only had a bath. There was a large built in linen cupboard outside the bathroom.

The laundry was a reasonable size and had double troughs and a copper, not a wood fire one, which was what mum had had before.

We found it hard getting used to an "outdoor dunny", and a man coming to empty it. Yuk!

I am not sure when the house was actually completed, but we had no problem living as we were, it was rather exciting, and something was always happening. Poor mum!

The very first person we kids made friends with was Val Rolfs, who lived in William Street. There were no houses between Rolfs back fence and our house, Val would often be standing on the back fence calling out to us. About the same time or soon after, we made another friend, Diane Taylor who lived in Mayfield Street, the same story, no houses between Taylors back fence and the front of our house, and Diane spent a lot of time hanging over the back fence. A short time later we met the Polkinghorne kids, and our friend, Faye Partington when we started school.

Going to school, remember we are city kids, we used to run down the hill, where cows were grazing, one of which belonged to the Roberts family, it took awhile to get used to this, down to a gully, about where Jessop Street is now, and up the other side, crossing Lorimer Street, to get to school. Prior to moving, Betty, Shirley and I had started school at Nott Street State School, in Port Melbourne, Betty finished school there, and Marj, started school at Greensborough, Shirley and I finished primary school here, it only went to grade six.

June (Evans) Hall

2011