

Oral History

WILLIAM ARTHUR CECIL

Written by Bill Cecil 2011

I was born in December 1930 at Alexandra Victoria into a sawmilling family. The mill was burnt down in the January 1939 bushfires. After the fires my family moved to Port Welshpool into a Post Office/General Store business. I completed eighth grade there and acquired my Merit Certificate.

During WWII Port Welshpool was an interesting place with minesweeper ships coming in for water and coal; on one occasion, when a ship had struck a mine and was sunk in Bass Strait, Port residents combined to house the twenty or so survivors for a few nights until they were sent to repatriation hospitals.

In about March 1944 the family moved to Greensborough taking over the Post Office Store from a Mrs Bulluss and her daughter Marie. Because of the lack of secondary schools during wartime, in 1944 I repeated eighth grade at Greensborough State School 2062 making close friends with the McDowell, Bruce, Roberts and Sondermeyer families and becoming acquainted with most Greensborough residents through mail delivery and grocery service. Mail delivery consisted of meeting the first train from Melbourne at 5.30 am, taking the mail bag back to the Post Office, sorting it into respective areas and delivering as required, then off to school.

During this time I, and occasionally Don McDowell, worked for Mr Ben Weir who ran a riding school in Alexandra Street Greensborough. On this same property was an excellent swimming hole in the Plenty River adjacent to the present Willinda Athletic Park. Summers at this venue were wild with high jumps from a thirty foot willow tree and trapeze tricks on a rope swing from the top branches of the willow, no serious injuries occurred mainly due to good luck. At the time we did not realise just how good we had it, our own swimming hole and unlimited horses to ride!

I attended Swinburne Junior Technical School for the next three years coming out with my Junior Tech Certificate. I then enrolled in Taylor's Coaching College Melbourne, intending to Matriculate and study Vet Science, failed miserably then worked full time, delivering mail and in the grocery department of the family store.

In about 1946, there was a move to re-establish the Greensborough Football Club with a meeting at Mrs Lobb's kiosk with people such as Dick Tooth, Alf Montfort, Stake Mountford, Doug Hall, Horrie Richmond, Bill Trevithick, Alan and Jack Partington, Snowy (Sid) Thompson, Jim Jowles, Jack McPherson and a hoard of teenagers ready to have a crack at The 'Boro'.

Greensborough enjoyed moderate success up to 1952 when Percy Adamson, who had seen active service in WWII, was engaged as coach. 1952 was 'Boro's year as we defeated Eltham

Oral History

in the Grand Final at Warringal Park and celebrations lasted the whole weekend, Jean Cooke nee Franklin (a lady who rarely had a drink) threatened to drink a full longneck bottle of Fosters, without a pause, if we won. An attempt was made, with only moderate success.

The mail delivery part of the family business allowed me the opportunity to meet all new comers to the town; one in particular was Miss Judy Boyd who moved into Alexandra Street in 1951. Romance blossomed and following a break, with Judy taking a trip to Britain and Europe and me working in Papua up to 1956, the relationship was renewed and we married in 1958.

During this time, in June 1953, Rudi Sondermeyer and I departed Greensborough for Mackay Queensland and cut sugarcane in the Eton district. An interesting comparison of wages, with my wage at the post office general store at 4 pounds 10 shillings per week: my first week's pay cutting cane was 30 pounds. This was the main reason I was not keen to return to the family store! After the cane cutting caper Rudi returned to Queensland and worked for Swifts Pastoralists as a cattle buyer, he met and married the love of his life and moved onto a large cattle property out of Townsville where he and his wife Coralie raised four kids and heaps of cattle.

Rudi's marriage faltered and he moved to the Queensland holiday islands where he studied for his Seafaring Master's Ticket, married again and eventually became a Tugboat skipper working out of Burnie Tasmania. He retired in about 2005 and now lives in Hervey Bay Queensland with his third wife.

I took a job with the Hutmill Stockfeed Company and spent the next 30 years establishing and developing the Hutmill Research Farm at South Morang which at its peak operation engaged 26 employees and ran 250,000 head of poultry and 100 head of cows and calves. I retired from the poultry farm in 1992 but remain in the Greensborough district.

The Post Office Store business was sold to a Mr Ron Hall who continued it in the same manner. After a couple of years the Greensborough Post Office was moved from the store location down Main Street to a new building on the opposite side of the road.

The store was taken over by Chris Barnett and Ian Smith who converted it to a "Cash and Carry", the forerunner of self service supermarkets, the store continued well into the 1960s in this manner with the freehold being sold to the Spotless Group who planned to install a large dry cleaning factory on site, this was not done perhaps due to plans for major redevelopment of the whole area. [Now Greensborough Plaza]