

### **The Vickers Family Story, by Marilyn Smith**

Tom Vickers was the well known chemist in Main Street Greensborough from 1941, when he arrived to manage I.J. Thompson's Chemist shop which became Vickers Pharmacy until he retired in 1977 and you can't think of Tom without including his wife Beryl who was his total support and help mate until he sadly passed away in 2003.

When you think of Tom and Beryl Vickers, you think Greensborough, however neither was born there, Tom was born in Warrnambool on August 15 1913, the Vickers family consisting of father Thomas, mother Jessie, three boys and two girls.

When Tom was five years old the Vickers family went to live in Nhill, Tom completed his secondary education at the nearest High school in Horsham but these were 'hard times' so in 1931 Tom worked at his Aunt's farm and taught as a teacher at the Panmure State School.

Always active in sport Tom played football in the Wimmera League for Nhill and later Horsham however in 1934 Tom returned to Nhill to begin a Pharmacy apprenticeship and attended the Pharmacy College Melbourne in 1936.

At this time he worked at I.J. Thompson's Chemist Fairfield then he went on to I. J. Thompson's Eltham Pharmacy in 1939 and on to the Greensborough shop in 1941.

Beryl (Clarke) was born in suburban Northcote, attending the Westgarth Primary School and later journeyed to Zercho's Business College to learn typing and short hand which became a valuable asset when she married Tom. Beryl thoroughly enjoyed working at A.M.P Alphington, and met Tom at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Fairfield.

Beryl recently told the Vickers family story to Marilyn Smith and Fay Forte:

Tom and I were married on October 18 1941 at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church and went to live at the back of Thompson's Pharmacy in Main Street Greensborough stayed there for 10 years until our third child was born.

In 1951 Tom and I established our own home at 205 Grimshaw Street Greensborough and later we moved next door to 203 Grimshaw Street because it was a nicer and bigger house which we paid £7.000.00 for.

Tom worked as managing resident chemist for I. J. Thompson Pharmacies for 19 years and most of that time being the only resident chemist between Heidelberg and Hurstbridge.

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I remember Tom working closely with Doctor E. R. Cordner whose rounds stretched from Greensborough to Hurstbridge, Nutfield and Strathewen.

Doctor Cordner would deposit all prescriptions on to Tom's counter at 4pm each week day and these prescriptions had to be dispensed and packed ready to be transported on the Hurstbridge train that night.

The prescriptions were then delivered to their destination by horse-drawn coach as soon as possible and sometimes it was a race for Tom to get to the train and this is where Tom's sporting skills came in handy fortunately at times the train guard would allow Tom more time to get to the station.

In 1960 we opened the Vickers Pharmacy in Main Street Greensborough.

Tom was always there at the grass roots level dispensing first aid to fire fighters and fighting early bushfires himself and he often used to tell of a fateful day during the 1939 bushfires when the fires were all around and it was 120 Fahrenheit in the shade.

I remember at that time there were bushfires every four weeks or so and in later life working with Toc H Tom helped install emergency alarms in homes of elderly people living independently.

Among the memories Beryl related was the time that someone's chooks got out of their yard and ran across Main Street, the owner in swift pursuit and the chooks found refuge in the window of the Chemist shop.

Everyone was unflappable and the chooks were taken home safe and sound with everyone laughing, Beryl goes on, there were not many cars around in those days and Tom and Bob Willett (who owned the butchers shop next door to the Pharmacy) used to play footy together at lunch times in Main Street Greensborough.

Beryl went on to reflect that she and Tom were always community minded right from the beginning of their marriage attending the Greensborough Methodist Church (now the Living Faith Church.) Tom was the longest serving Elder in the Church, and he was a trustee of the original Methodist Church for 40 years.

Always encouraging young people Tom and another Church member Les Hayes established the Church boys' club in 1953. The club began with 10 members but very soon it became so successful that they had to have various classes.

Beryl remembers that Tom was appointed to the Diamond Valley Hospital Board from 1942 to 1965, and served the role of Vice President for 15 years. He repeatedly

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declined to accept the Presidency, preferring to work behind the scenes as unofficial Public Relations man in Greensborough and his service was of inestimable value.

Tom was a member of the Rotary Club of Heidelberg 1960-1968 and in 1968 he was Charter President of the Rotary Club of Victoria and was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship for his service to Rotary and the community.

Beryl says that she and Tom were always involved with local choirs their long involvement with music included being founding members of the family carols committee which organises the community carols each Christmas.

They both sang with the carols choir for 60 years, Tom was also a foundation member of the Probus Club of Diamond Valley (third President), foundation member of the Nillumbik Historical Society and involved in establishing the Batman Walking Trail through the area.

From 1981-1985 Tom was a "Justice of the Peace" and was recognised for his service to the community with several awards, a Commonwealth Government Award for Senior Australians in the year 2000 and a Jaga Jaga Australia Day award for service to the community in 2003.

Beryl supported Tom in all things as well as keeping the home fires burning with a growing family of four children....David, Margaret, Janet and Merrin and in later life Tom and Beryl moved to McLaughlin Lane Plenty.