**STARLING FAMILY INFORMATION**

John Henry (Harry) Starling (1883-1966), public servant, was born on 15 January 1883 at Greensborough, Victoria, son of John Henry Starling, carpenter, and his wife Jane, née Gapper, both English born.

Educated at the Greensborough State School until aged 15, he won a scholarship to Stott & Hoare's Business College, Melbourne. Having joined the Department of Lands and Survey in 1900, he transferred to the Commonwealth public service in 1902 as a clerk in the Governor-General's Office where he was assistant to (Sir) George Steward.

Starling became a licensed shorthand writer (1906) and an accountant and auditor (1908) before being promoted to the Department of External Affairs in 1909. On 15 February 1911 he married Sarah Elizabeth May Price (known as May) at St Katherine's Anglican Church, Eltham.

He transferred to the newly established Prime Minister's Department in February 1912 and was appointed chief clerk in September 1917. As second-in-charge of the department, he took a large part in its organization and development through World War I.

In June 1919 he succeeded Steward as official secretary to the governor-general and secretary to the Federal Executive Council, holding office under Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, Lord Forster and Lord Stonehaven. Responsible for the governor-general's correspondence and his establishment's expenditure, Starling also encoded, decoded and dispatched correspondence between governments, and between the governor-general and the secretary of state.

He was an associate (1920) of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and was appointed O.B.E. in 1920 and C.M.G. in 1925. After the Imperial Conference (1926) resolved to alter the existing channel of communication, a system of direct correspondence with the British government was taken over by the Prime Minister's Department in January 1928. (Abolition of the official secretaryship to the governor-general was postponed until parliament transferred to Canberra in 1927.)

Starling continued as secretary to the Federal Executive Council until 1933, but in July 1929 was promoted assistant secretary of the department's territories branch. In 1933-35 he was secretary to the Prime Minister's Department and secretary to the Department of External Affairs; he was first assistant Commonwealth Public Service commissioner in 1935-38.

Starling was active after his retirement in January 1948 in the Canberra branches of the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Council of Churches and the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Starling died on 5 April 1966 and was cremated. Two sons (John and Philip) and a daughter (Eva Jean) survived him.

Benjamin Alfred Starling, brother of Harry Starling, died in action March 1917. Eva Jean Starling arrived in Canberra from Melbourne as a teenager in 1928 and lived with her family at 66 Dominion Circuit, Forrest. She became Canberra’s first community librarian and established the library in the rear of Acton House. In 1938 she travelled to Britain and undertook a librarian’s course at London University College while working at Oxford City Library. In London when war broke out, Starling volunteered for the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and trained as a specialist photographic interpreter. Now Flying Officer Starling, she served at the Central Interpretation Unit (CIU). The CIU played a crucial role within the planning stages of most RAF operations, and with every aspect of intelligence. She was employed alongside 1,700 other personnel to analyse and interpret at its height a daily intake of 25,000 negatives and 60,000 prints from which 40000 intelligence reports were ultimately produced. After the war Starling returned to Australia and worked at the National Library before joining the Department of Defence and later the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. She died in 1998.

From the “Jean Starling Papers 1940”, an unpublished manuscript found on Trove.

**Researched by Norm Colvin July 2020**