

Val Flitton Interview Transcript

Amy: This is Amy Tsilemanis here in Apollo Bay recording this interview for the Apollo Bay and District Historical Society, and it is April the 6th, 2023. Can you just start by telling us your name and where and when you were born?

Val: Valma Joyce Fliton now. Well I was born in Carlton, the women's hospital, on the 24th of December, 1924, the second child of Elizabeth and Evan David, so that's where I started. My grandfather was Welsh and I believe David was a common surname in Wales.

Amy: So what was your early life like?

Val: It was a bit up and down because my mother and father separated when I was only, I would have only been three years old. There was my younger brother born 1926, so he was only a year old and we came to my grandmothers who was here at Apollo Bay and she was one of the very early settlers, she and her father and her younger brother.

Amy: What was her name?

Val: His name was Frederick Lang. And she was Christina Lang, and her brother was Charlie.

Amy: What do you remember of her when you came to live here?

Val: Well, I suppose my first memories, because I stayed with her, and my younger brother stayed with her. And I remember her taking me to school when I turned five. I remember she milked two cows. And she came down after milking and said, You're going to school today. And I had no idea of what school was. And she put me on the bench, because there was no hot water in the house or anything, washed my knees, and took me up to our school. And it was on top of the hill there in Noel Street at that time, between Noel Street and, Nelson Street. It was all a bit traumatic, wondering what was going to happen next. And Miss Conn was the teacher for the, they just had first grade and second grade. There was no kinders or anything like that. And she was lovely. I loved her. And so I was keen to go every day then just to be there with Miss Conn.

Amy: What kind of things did you do at school?

Val: Well we had, for counting, we had the little buttons from the periwinkle shell. You know, the little white button. And that's how we learned to count. And we had a slate and pencil.

Amy: How did you get to school?

Val: I just walked. Grandmother lived just on the corner down here in Pasco Street, behind the supermarket. So it was just a case of walking there. But then, when I was six, my mum had the opportunity of a job with her brothers up in Queensland. It was a siding called Wanderoo, just topside of Mackay. And so there, my uncle's sugar farm, which they were just developing, was about five mile away from the school. And so we had to learn a horse and cart. My brother who was two years older than me, he was the driver. And so we'd have to get up early, harness up the horse, and then drive it into the Wanderoo school. And so that lasted about three years with different adventures. And then we came back to Apollo Bay. And by that time, I'd be ten year old. And then I went to live with my aunt. And my brother stayed with my grandmother. And my brother Ronald stayed with another aunt. So our childhood was rather fractured.

Amy: Was that to share around?

Val: To share around. And fortunately my mum had that support from her family.

Amy: And what was your mum like?

Val: I can always remember, you know, how I loved her. Because, you know, to me she was marvellous. Someone I always loved. But I suppose she had her funny ways.

Amy: She must have been quite an independent woman.

Val: Well, [00:05:00] she appreciated the help from her mother and sisters, but she had to be. I don't know what happened to my father, but I don't think he helped much at that time.

Amy: And then would that have been in the depression years as well?

Val: Yes, there was the depression and later on, a fair bit later the war, and the tragicness of war, and I believe my father joined up. I think he was doing a good thing for his country. And he was going to look us all up when he came back.

But unfortunately he didn't come back. He was a prison of war with the Japanese. That was a big gap in all our lives.

Amy: It sounds like there was a strong family here though, with all the aunts and uncles. Did you have cousins and things as well? Yes. What kind of things did you do for entertainment?

Val: Well in those days you just made your own entertainment. Luckily we were near the Wild Dog Creek when I was on the farm there so we could just go down and swim. The beach was handy. Spent a lot of time on the beach and, you know, you had your own games of hopscotch, skipping, couldn't read much because we didn't have books. But we had our chores to do, which took up a bit of time.

Amy: What did you have to do?

Val: Well, my job for my grandmother was chop the kindling and provide that every night. And my younger brother had to chop the wood and bring the wood in. Yes, and you know, you took your turn at scrubbing floors when you got a bit older, and do other things you were asked to do.

Amy: Did you go back to the same school?

Val: Yes, it was up on the hill still.

Amy: And what was the area like then? Would it have had the golf course and things?

Val: Yes, the golf course was there, not in the super doop condition it's in now. And there was a main road right through it, down the middle, round to the rocket shed, because in those days there was a lot of shipping and they had a rocket shed there too, you know, if they were ever needed.

Amy: Because you lived in town, did you sort of walk everywhere, or were there other kinds of transport?

Val: When I got a pushbike, rode everywhere on the pushbike. Or walk, you know, or run. I liked running.

Amy: Oh, what were you like as a child?

Val: Well, always active. And school teachers would call people out who did the wrong thing and get strapped. It was used a lot in those days. Would be a bit intimidating, so I always tried to do the right thing.

Amy: Did you know Miss Penn at all?

Val: Miss Penn? Ah, yes. My children were taught by Miss Penn. She was a character in herself.

Amy: What was she like?

Val: Well, I was never one of her pupils, but my children were. And she frightened them a little sometimes with her teaching routines. But she was well liked.

Amy: Why do you say she was a character?

Val: Well, she was her own person and I can remember her being in her car and a big red setter she had sitting in the back. Must have been an open type of car because I can still see it. You know, and she was a golfer, she played golf. And would join in with community things. Because she had sisters who lived in the town as well. I was in Forrest just the other day and I saw there the Anglican Church and the land was donated by Mr. Pengelly. So he was a generous soul, they were both very well liked and old Mrs Pengelly was wonderful in the hotel. She would help do what she could to help the people and if they got enough liquor into them, she wouldn't serve them again. She was mother.

Amy: How long have you lived in this house?[00:10:00]

Val: We built it in 19, started 56. We moved in halfway through 57. And so my late husband unfortunately died in 59. And while we were waiting, we were renting a little place. There was just a lane at the back where Wheelan Street is now. And we were renting a place just up on the corner that belonged to Mr. Otto Henriksen. And it was so thrilling, I couldn't believe how wonderful it was to be building our own home. It was just wonderful. And he did a lot of this woodwork because he worked out at the cable station. When it was working as a cable station still.

Amy: Amazing. What was his name?

Val: James. Or we called him Jim. Jim Fliton.

Amy: What was that like when he was working out there?

Val: Oh, it was good. Lots of equipment. You know where they've got a lot of exhibits now. That was full of equipment. And the battery room, and no, it was very different.

Amy: Yeah, can you tell me a bit about that, the changes of how people communicate that you've seen through time?

Val: Communication. Well, when he came here as a telephone technician, that was 1951. The telephones, the people who had them, were run on batteries. And so if you talk too much, you'd flatten the battery. So he had to, he did the whole district. Out Johanna, Lavers Hill, and up around a bit. Didn't get as far as Forrest, but there were little places where someone had a phone. And that was his job, and he was kept busy enough. Or anything that might have gone wrong. So then he did another bit of the course and moved into the cable station.

Amy: What was his role there?

Val: Well there was one man on duty each shift. And the shifts were 7 till 3 and 3 till 11. And there was a supervisor, he was called the one who was in charge and he lived in the house out there. He only worked from 9 till 5. There were two around when he was on duty.

Amy: And do you know what he had to do in his daily work?

Val: I suppose it was to be there and if calls came in, because that was the only place where phone calls came in from everywhere. And from Tasmania then, they'd have to put the call through to wherever they wanted to be throughout the world.

Amy: And did you have a phone here?

Val: Yes, we got a phone.

Amy: What was that like?

Val: Well, it was wonderful for me. I remember I hadn't used a phone until I had to pass the test when I was a girl guide, you'd have to ring on the phone. And so... you know, you'd go down the street, how we used to have telephone boxes, put your two pennies in for a local call and if you wanted to make a trunk call, it was all extra.

It'd be three minutes, are you extending? And so you'd say, oh yeah, so it'd be extending for another three minutes. But it got very expensive so not many could afford trunk calls. But it was wonderful for the wives, or whole families, you know, isolated on farms throughout the district. And they'd have party line phones: A family would be on one line and if you wanted to call one family, they'd have one ring, another family would have, say, three rings. And you weren't meant to pick up the phone if it wasn't for you. But I'm afraid that probably happened. So that existed for quite a long time.

Amy: And the postal system, did you use that much?

Val: Well, you did in those days because you'd be writing letters and getting letters back, it was used [00:15:00] a lot. Tuppence for a stamp. I think at first it was only one and a half pence. Mm hmm. Because there was pound, shillings and pence then

Amy: And now you're using a mobile phone and doing text messages.

Val: Yes, learning the iPhone. You can have FaceTime with your loved ones. Even my granddaughter from Germany can ring me up and have FaceTime. It's like a visit isn't it? It's marvellous. Easy to get in touch. Yes, it's incredible. My mind boggles really. How it's improved over my lifetime. You wonder how it's going to improve over the next 50 or 60 years. You'll be struggling to keep up yourself.

Amy: Yeah, okay, so let's go back to when you started your nursing.

Val: Ah yes, well my mum had a little shop down here when I left school at 14. She opened this little shop, a delicatessen. There wasn't another one in Apollo Bay at that time. And for the ice chest, she had to get her ice from I think it was Mr. Fisk had a ice works on that corner where the Shire office is now.

Amy: What was the shop called?

Val: Just a delicatessen, run by Betty David. We had ice cream. Yeah. fruit and veggies, and she cooked all her own cold meats and and the little cocktail sabs and a variety of what was it called? You know it was round, there was pork. I just can't think of it at the moment. Lollies, all sorts of. Half penny, all sorts. And those little balls you'd buy. Twenty a penny. She was doing very well. And then the war started. And so, I must have been nineteen. When it wasn't making enough to keep the both of us going, so the idea was I would go to Melbourne and get work, and come back and help her in the Christmas season.

I think it was about July I went to Melbourne, and it was very seasonal then in Apollo Bay, not like it is now. And but, but still the town died nearly because all the men enlisted, most of, and my mum had to just close up shop. And went to Melbourne to work, and there was manpower restrictions in force then.

So I had to go to this office and they had a list of jobs that you could volunteer to work. You weren't told you had to go and work there but the list wasn't that long. And munitions was very strong because they wanted workers in the munitions factory. When I went to Melbourne I went up with a friend and we took this job at the Mercy Hospital on the domestic staff because they provided accommodation and that was a good result. So we were accepted there. I worked there for two and a half years. And then was led into nursing by the nuns. Because to join the land army, and my two friends joined the land army, and I thought I'd want to join the land army too, because women were allowed to drive trucks and other machinery, but they wouldn't sort of sign my release, and the head nun said, but if you went nursing, did your nursing training we'd sign the leases. [00:20:00] So, that's how I was led into it. And, I absolutely loved it and never ever looked back. So, I've got them to thank for that, because I would never have thought that I would have prospered there.

Amy: And what was it like being a teenager during those war years?

Val: Well, down here, I was here until I was 17 and a half. I was involved in the guides. And there was always something to do that I loved doing. You know, running on the beach, and of course you started working as soon as you left school at 14. Dancing. We had old Mr. Fred McKenzie taught us how to dance. Which was wonderful, and I loved dancing. And it was different then. It was like a family community gathering. You didn't have to go with a partner. You'd just get asked for a dance. And we had a local band. Oh, Mr. Dave Ferguson, I can remember. He was a drummer.

Amy: What kind of music?

Val: Well, it was all sorts. Mrs. O'Meara played the piano. Fergie on the drums, and someone else had a saxophone. It was just all local people. The accordion, the floor of the old mechanics was great.

Amy: Yes, I was going to ask, where were the dances held?

Val: Yes, in the mechanics. And do you know, later on, when I came back, I came back in 51. Tommy Fry was very active with community. He was a great man with the people.

Amy: Who was he?

Val: He was the secretary of the Otway Council, because we had the Otway Council then. It was before they amalgamated with Colac. And he had a gift of organizing, community events, you would say.

Amy: Do you remember any other of those events?

Val: Big Queen Carnivals he'd run. There'd be 400 people stacked in the Mechanics Hall and everyone would get a supper. all pulled out into the centre of the hall and when the supper was on. And dear old , Mrs. Hazel Felman, she'd make this beautiful coffee in a copper that was in the kitchen of the hall. And you know, she did a marvellous job with a lot of helpers. I wish I could name them all, but wonderful people.

Amy: And what kind of food?

Val: Oh, people would volunteer food and bring it along and they'd make sandwiches. A lot of people who'd cook sponges. It was incredible. 400 people. It was incredible, really.

Amy: Do you remember, a few people have been talking about the fisherman's balls?

Val: Yes, I remember them. I didn't get to them a lot because by this time I was on my own and had the children but I remember them happening. Yeah, they were always popular.

Amy: Okay, so you came back 51, and then the house was being built. Yes. And then you lost your husband. That must have been really hard.

Val: Tragic, really. Yes. They weren't able to do much at that time to help that sort of problem. And there's still a lot of our young men affected with the same problem. It's cruel, really.

Amy: And so you had little kids.

Val: Yes. You just had to get on with it. I'd get on with it. Had a lot of support though. It was wonderful, from legacy. And the support from my friends in town. Then I started later on when David was either 14 or 15. I did a couple of shifts up at the local hospital and Matron Taylor was there then.

Amy: Tell me a bit about what it was like being a nurse.

Val: Well, I always found it wonderful. The caring for people. It involves something you, you find within yourself as you look after people. You don't know what sort of a nurse you are yourself, but it was something that I always loved to share with people. I was never a trained midwife, but I would help the mothers when I was called on to help.

Amy: It must have been special.

Val: It was special. And especially now I see some of the little children who are half, halfway through their lives.

Amy: You would have known everyone around town, I'm sure.

Val: Well, you did in those days.

Amy: How much has the technology changed in the hospital?

Val: Oh, a lot. It's very different up here now to when I worked there. It's not even a hospital now. It's just a medical centre. But it's good having it and the care you get when it's needed. And we have lovely, wonderful doctors there now, full time.

Well, I suppose when I did my 18 month training at the Alfred. For general nursing, because I started at Fairfield Infectious Diseases, where there were mostly children. It would concern me that there was things, it didn't matter what you did, it was hard to relieve people who had broken hips. They were in these four poster situations, and they couldn't move much. I can remember a lot of the poor, poor folk that you couldn't do a lot because their hips wouldn't heal. That's amazing what they can do today, isn't it? Today, they brace them and it doesn't matter how old you are, you can still be helped. So, you don't have that sort of thing in hospitals now.

Amy: And did you just walk to work from here?

Val: Oh yes, just ran actually. I was always late leaving home. Well, I got there a minute in time. It was a good run.

Amy: Oh, that's good. And your kids went to the local school?

Val: Yes. By that time it was where it is now.

Amy: And you would have seen the population grow a lot?

Val: Grow a lot. In the buildings now. You know, all the development of the different old farms that are opening up now for development. It's amazing. It's something that was never thought of back in those years, that this would happen to Apollo Bay. You know, and the Great Ocean Road, the icon that it is now, was never pictured. That it would be as popular as it is.

Amy: yes. Do you remember the road being built?

Val: Not really remembered it because I was a bit young. I remember nursing people who had worked on it. I know how everyone was thankful. And the transport of the produce, like the fishing. The casino went down in 1932. And that's when the Ocean Road opened to Apollo Bay, so that's when the transport changed to trucks.

Amy: Yeah, Val [Cameron] was telling me about the volunteer ambulance drivers. Everyone really just pulled together in the community, didn't they?

Val: Yes. Otherwise it was difficult to get to Colac. Mm-hmm. Before the hospital was built.

Amy: Yeah, when was that?

Val: It wasn't open as the hospital when I came in. 51.

Amy: Do you feel proud of your work you've done there?

Val: I don't know whether I'd use the word proud. thankfulness, I think, and the joy. My memories are good, yes.

Amy: What would you hope for the future of the town?

Val: Well, that it can work together, because going forward is inevitable. And just that the best is done for the town. My days are numbered here now. But I can see a good future. The local people are very keen,[00:30:00]want to do the right thing for our future. I think it's in good hands.

Amy: Do you have any favourite places around town you like to go?

Val: I suppose up around Paradise, the Barham River Road. I used to love Mariners Falls. Spent time there with the children. Sad that it was closed, and sad that Paradise is neglected, the way it is.

Amy: Can you tell me about Paradise? I don't know much about it.

Val: Have you been there? Oh, it's worth a drive if you've got time. But the very early years, it was I know Uncle Vic Cawood and his brother Bill, and I think some other folk discovered it, more or less, after the First World War, because he was a soldier. And it's in this beautiful valley with tree ferns. And back in those days there was a little track and a little bridge up to a waterhole at the turn of the water. For the children, it was wonderful. It was safe. And they could swim in this waterhole, or down further where the picnic tables were. It was shallow, and little kids could paddle in it, have a lot of fun. Yes. And whereas now it's still lovely in its own way, but it could be better, but the government doesn't seem to want to spend money on it at this stage, whether they will in the future. We hope all that will come to pass, but it's worth a look though Amy.

Amy: I will go there for sure. Would you have any life advice that you'd like to share?

Val: Life advice? Well, I think too, the fact that I found Jesus Christ in my life. And the help I've received and the healing and searching for that joy and happiness and freedom. Well, that's my answer. May not be for everyone, but the freedom is ours to search, which I at 38, no 34, I was, I went searching for the truth and this is the surprise I found, and it was wonderful.

Amy: Oh, what set you on that journey?

Val: I think something is within ourselves, that search for our inner being, health and happiness. Somehow you feel there's more to life than this, when you're in that place of wondering. I can't think of a better word at the moment.

Amy: That's a good word. What's the sort of church life like in Apollo Bay

Val: Well, it can improve itself a lot, I'm finding.

Amy: You're going on a walk, is it tomorrow?

Val: Yes, yes, it's called Stations of the Cross. So I'm praying. There's so many people who need help and support. But, I pray for Mr. Putin, hoping in some way he'll see the damage, perhaps, that he's doing.

But it's happened before. They never seem to learn or come to the realisation, do they, how they're wrecking people's lives.

Amy: Do you think war will ever stop?

Val: Well, you pray that it will. And people learn to love and help each other. But that's it. I don't know the answer to that.

Amy: And you're 98 now, is that right?

Val: Yeah, right.

Amy: Amazing.

Val: It is amazing. I can't believe it. I said to Ross, was here doing some jobs for me and I said, Oh, my kids are coming for lunch today. And then I had to laugh and I said, of course, they're both in their 70s. It's amazing but they're always your kids. You love them.

Amy: Do you have favourite places to take people when they visit here?

Val: I suppose around the breakwater. Nice to sit and have a fish and chip lunch if it's a nice day. There's so many lovely spots. If they've got time, you'd like to go up to the waterfalls a bit, up round Triplet Falls. Stephenson's Falls has opened again now, I think. So many lovely spots.

Amy: It's a special place.

Val: It is. It's it grows on you, doesn't it?

Amy: Oh, yeah, I don't want to leave. And paradise is out this way?

Val: Out the Barham River Road. Yeah, there's the Oval, so Barham River there. If you continue out Barham River, and then you'll come to a fork, and one's Killala Road, to the left, but you keep to the bottom road, and keep going, and you'll come to a sign that says, I don't know whether it still says Paradise. They've changed all that as well. But there's a nice big car park and there's a toilet area, picnic area there on your left and a nice big tree. So you'll know where you are. But it's a lovely drive so, and right to the end, it's lovely but a bit narrow at places. And if you want to go right to the end where the walk track

was, you can still do a turn. They've got a roundabout there, and it's a lovely drive up.

Amy: Did I see that you were involved in a walking group back in the days?

Val: Back in the early years, yes. There was a few groups. I was always keen to take part. The museum, I was there for a long time.

Amy: What did you do at the museum?

Val: Well, mainly I, in the early years, we were settling it up. Sort of quite a lot of work involved. This is right back to when, before we were lucky enough to get that due to Joan Martin's work, we had rooms at the Butter Factory, the old Butter Factory room. When the Butter Factory closed, that's where we started off with our first exhibitions. And then it went up to the Catholic School. Did you know about that one? Up in Noel Street. And we could hire rooms because that got closed down as a school. And we hired rooms there. And we were there for quite a few years. And then, because of the hard work of Joan, and our cable station closed down and they were just going to sell it off. You know, they don't think forward, do they, a lot of our government people. And she saw the head people of the The Postal Department, PMG, and the government authority that was in charge of selling it off and eventually our local council put money in, and the museum put money in. Oh, I shouldn't say museum, but historical society. And the PMG took all the equipment, but left that one bit there. Which was lovely that they left that bit. But I suppose you couldn't leave that much because it would have filled it up. We could set it up. It was lovely. Amazing.

Amy: What did you love about history?

Val: Oh, I don't know, it's just something that you're either interested in or you're not I think, and then later I ended up sort of collating the modern day to day stuff to put it in because eventually it'll be history, you know, families that were in the football club, golf club, all the things out there, Apollo Bay itself, Great Ocean Road events that happened. There's all the little folders there, have you noticed?

Amy: I am yet to spend a few days there and just delve into everything, so I'm excited. Alright, yeah. And thank you for all your, your work in the past. It's so valuable.

Val: It's something I enjoyed and was never a burden.

Amy: Were there any favourite sort of stories or characters that you came across?

Val: I suppose about my grandfather and his shipping. Jack Loney, who was a teacher up here, he's written a lot of books on the boats. I think my grandfather worked on about six schooners and things like that.

Amy: What was his name?

Val: Henry Jeffery. J E F F E R Y. I think that's the English way of spelling it.

Amy: And what did you find out about him?

Val: [00:40:00] Oh, how he was a brilliant seaman, the things he used to do. He was a bit of a villain, too, in his time.

Amy: Why?

Val: Well, he was a hard man. Hard on his family, hard on my grandmother. That, you know, shouldn't have happened but that was personal stuff. But in his captaincy, I believe he was very... What's the word? Experienced.

Amy: And what about your grandmother?

Val: Well, she was a good working woman. And not trained for anything in those days. I think she struggled to get to school. Because legally, you only had to go so many days a week. And her father only allowed her to go those days that were required by law. But she said to me how she loved learning, and she learnt all her life, and continued learning. And once my grandfather died, she had 15 years of freedom, and, and she would go on bus tours and interstate, and she loved it.

Amy: Oh, that's good, she got her freedom. And so were they sort of a pioneer people in the area?

Val: Oh yeah, they were. Very much so. Because she walked with her father and young brother from Beach Forest. There was a train from Colac to Beach Forest and through to oh, I can't think of the station now. There at Lavers Hill. There's a plaque. In that little area in memory of it all there and they walked from there, through the bush with just hardly a coach track and down the back way. That'll be that Killala road I think down there when it was only a track and I don't know how they managed it because they would've had to slept in the

bush. And when they got here they'd have nowhere much. Probably slept on the beach. You know, it's, it's hard to imagine but we never had a chance to talk to her about it. Because she didn't seem to talk much about all those days. No.

Amy: So we're looking at some photos of Christina and

Val: Henry was Captain Henry Jeffrey.

Amy: And how did they meet?

Val: Oh, they met down here. I think Grandma's father, Frederick Lang, was friendly with Henry and they'd meet at the hotel for drinks and probably took Henry home and that's where my grandmother was, and I think, we don't know positively really, but Meryl and I, Meryl, my daughter Meryl's keen on history, and we've just sort of talked amongst ourselves, and we say well probably Frederick took Henry home and that's where they met. And she was a lovely woman. But very naive, you know, in those years. No mother. So she'd walked here with her father. Yes, and that was her brother Charlie, as he grew older.

Amy: And can you tell me about this photo?

Val: Well, it was taken at Wild Dog, where they had the farm. It's very different now. And then later, we've got some other old photos of the farm, but this one was when they moved into the land, just on the corner here. You know what's called Captains of the Bay? It's a motel. And the old house was pulled down because Grandad made those bricks himself out of cement when he was home from a sea trip, he made his bricks and everything. This is another photo of the grandchildren. That's me up there. And Keith Cawood, Nancy, my brother Ronald, and cousin Eric Cawood. It's a long story really, Amy, you know, because two sisters married two brothers. The point I'm trying to make is that my grandmother walked here as a girl of seven and her brother was five, you know In those days, [00:45:00] there wouldn't have been many other people here. I think the Cawoods were here Telfords and Frederick Lang helped build the main street because he was a builder. And some outings here. Yes, this is down at what they call Pirate's Cove. And the children, it's my brother, and their cousins, me and cousin Bruce.

Amy: Do you remember what it was like down there?

Val: I don't think that tree's still there, but do you know where Pirate's Cove is? Around from the Wild Dog Creek, that little cove. You can pull in there and walk down. I'm not sure where this picnic was, but everybody had family

picnics and would meet up together, type of thing. And that's granddad and my grandmother and aunts. That's me there. Mm hmm. And Uncle Vic.

Amy: What kind of things would you eat at the picnics?

Val: Well, they'd make sandwiches and cakes. The women were always good on cooking.

Amy: And did you love swimming?

Val: Oh, I loved swimming. Yes. Did a lot of swimming. That's my grandmother. That was the storm water that went out from the town just in front of the garage.

Amy: Because you could see the sea from the street, couldn't you?

Val: All the way up the street. You'd walk all the way up. And you can see the sea. And this is my grandmother's 70th birthday. Out at my aunt's place up Mariners Lookout Road. It's hers as an older woman. She was always fresh faced. She died at 78 and I thought she was old. But she wasn't really that old when I think I'm 20 years longer. Here's her birthdate, 7th of February, 1874.

Now Jack Loney's written a lot of books and he mentions my grandfather often. I myself have been a bit remiss in not following up his career much because when I was there as a child, he didn't acknowledge us much. He was still a bit within himself somehow or other. He didn't seem to show any kindness much. And perhaps Ken and I were a bit of a nuisance because Grandma shouldn't have had to look after us.

We always felt a bit of a nuisance, so we kept out of his way, as far as we could keep out of his way. But he was very unapproachable type of thing. So I never had much warmth coming from him. Which doesn't generate warmth from you, does it? But he was amazing in his own way, what he did do, with his shipping because he took supplies to the lighthouse when there was no road and would go into Blanket Bay with his ship, and I know there was a few, a couple of shipwrecks in his lifetime.

Amy: Right at that height of that being the main transport?

Val: Yeah, those years when there was no roads much in this area anyway.

Their graves are out in the cemetery. And these two little graves like this, you'll see if you get out there, graves of William Jeffrey, who died when he was seven. And stillborn child. And grandma made those, as far as I know. Uncle Vic might have helped her get the big pieces out of the cemetery but she would walk and carry some of it all out from that corner house. You know, as you go out toward Laver's Hill. It's on the left, as you pass through Marengo, and go up that hill.

Amy: And she would walk?

Val: Yes, from the bay, out to there. She'd probably cut across the aerodrome and take a shortcut.

Amy: Where was the aerodrome?

Val: Well, that's you know, if you go up Telford Street, the first street you come to on the right. [00:50:00] The aerodrome is just in that area. Oh, and this is her death notice. She was a person not a lot of people could have got to know personally. Because she was always busy in her garden. She didn't seem to have time much. Although she was a member of the country women's and did a lot of work for their stalls and everything. She made these lovely sausage rolls. She was a great cook. I can see her bustling now. The wooden stove, and the wood she'd save, good wood, if she had to make scones, to put the good wood in. All that sort of thing.

Amy: I haven't thought of that, like, what is best for cooking.

Val: Because some wood you'd put in your wood stove and it'd just die. Whereas other wood, I know I've still got an open fireplace, makes beautiful coal. And she'd learned what wood would make good coal. And if she had to make batches of scones, she'd have this good wood saved up where she knew she'd put it, and get that wood and use that.

Amy: Amazing. And I'm just remembering you did the kindling and your brother did the shovelling.

Val: Yes, that was my job to get the firebox going in the mornings. Yep. We had to do it the night before.