



**Don Poole and his wife Cheryl looking at some photos from their time at HJ Heinz.** 40069

**Picture: Donna Oates**

# Heinz reunion

**By Lia Bichel**

A HAMPTON Park resident is hoping friendships and memories made before an iconic business shut down almost 10 years ago will come to life again when former employees reunite next year.

Almost 1300 employees worked at the Dandenong Heinz factory, which opened in the mid 1950's and closed in 2000.

Hampton Park resident and former employee Don Poole said he hoped a reunion in 2010 would give former colleagues the chance to rekindle friendships they made during their time at the plant.

"I worked there from 1970 until 2000 and met several people there, including my wife," Mr Poole said. "When it closed, it was like the end of an error. For those who worked there it was like being

part of a big family. A lot of life-long friendships were forged during their time there."

According to Mr Poole, the HJ Heinz factory was built after the Second World War as part of a large-scale government building project to move people to the eastern suburbs.

He said the factory was one of three large manufacturing plants built around this time- the other two were GMH and International.

Shortly after, many other factories were built as well as smaller businesses which supplied the factories with food and materials; but most of them closed, relocated or sold near the end of the 20th century.

"During the tomato season (the plant) was a hive of activity with trucks of tomatoes lining the high-

way," he said.

"Eventually, the tomatoes would all be processed at a purpose-built facility in Girgarre in northern Victoria. This was seen as the start of the end."

According to Mr Poole, HJ Heinz was the last of the three large plants to close its doors in the Dandenong area, relocating to a much smaller facility in Echuca.

Mr Poole said that depending on the response and venue available, the reunion would be held sometime in March or April in the Dandenong area.

He said there might be a small fee to cover organising costs and finger food.

Anyone wishing to attend can contact Don Poole on poolie2005@msn.com or call him on 0406 624 495.