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## DEDICATION

**These stories and memoirs from my life I dedicate to my precious wife and family—to my Ruthie and my five children—Caroline, Wendy, Jennelle, Richard and Sharon. Also now to my new wife Naomi, and Family.**

**I hope you'll enjoy these memoirs and appreciate your own heritage for many years to come. I look forward to having you all with me in the Kingdom of God, to live eternally with Jesus in an earth made new where “nothing shall hurt or destroy in all My Holy Mountain,”—where there'll be no more pain, tears or death, and where we will enjoy Life Everlasting in a world where Righteousness, Peace and Joy will fill every heart.**

## **CHAPTER ONE--THE BEGINNING IN TOWNSVILLE**

The best place to start I guess, is the beginning, and the beginning for me, according to my Dad's first-hand account, was rather different to most. It was a beautiful morning according to Dad's story, as he and my mother were travelling from Townsville to Home Hill to visit the family there. On reaching the Barattas, three similar creeks about midway in the journey, Mum turned to Dad, and said, "Gilly, stop, and let's make a baby!" and that's where I began early in 1935. In due course, Mum brought me into the "great outdoors" on the 9<sup>th</sup> November that same year, in the local Townsville Hospital.



**My Mum and Dad on their Wedding Day.**



Dad had a Firewood Business after they were married. Most people used wood stoves at that time, and Dad procured a small truck and tools—saws, axes and wedges etc, and sold firewood all over Townsville. He also drove Taxis there for some time while I was very young. Dad even worked as a cane-cutter on farms near Halifax and Ingham. I still remember an incident near Ingham where Dad was cutting cane. We were camped in a tent near his workplace in a cattle paddock. Mum was terrified of one huge bull with long horns, and whenever it came anywhere near the tent, Mum would hurriedly bundle me under the bed, and then stand at the tent door with her broom to protect me. She even attacked the huge animal one day and sent him on his way.

When Dad was driving taxis, he told me of an incident that I will never forget. While off-duty, he was travelling to Ingham and picked up a hitch-hiker, who gave him some money towards the fuel. Dad accepted it and they went on their way, but unfortunately Dad had an accident enroute. The hitch-hiker was only slightly hurt, but he later sued Dad, and because Dad had accepted money from him, the hitch-hiker won the case, and was awarded quite a huge sum of money, which I remember Dad

having to pay off for years. The Lesson: Never accept money from anyone for giving them a ride in your vehicle, at least, not until you have arrived safely at your destination, no matter who they are!

My parents eventually bought a house at 56 Philp Street, Hermit Park. It was a Queenslander on high blocks, and I remember on two occasions the flood waters lapping the stump caps, before the Dams and Levy Banks were built. It was really frightening to me as a very young boy to see the swirling brown flood water rising higher and higher up the stairs, as though it was coming to swallow us all up. Fortunately, it never came high enough to enter the house itself, but it was very close. Houses on low stumps around us were severely inundated, and the poor people were cleaning out stinking mud and ruined furniture, drapes and carpets, for weeks after the flood subsided.

It was while we were living there that the war began to escalate, with the Japanese already in Papua New Guinea, and intent on invading Australia. They had their Carriers and other Warships stationed in the Coral Sea, and were regularly making bombing raids over Townsville.

Photo # 80-G-17025 Attack on Japanese carrier Shoho, 7 May 1942



The Japanese had definite plans to invade Australia and attacked Townsville while we were there. I was just five years old when it all started.

Concrete Air Raid Shelters had been built at convenient intervals along the streets in people's back yards, and all glass windows and doors had to be blacked out with black paper. When the Air Raid Sirens sounded, everyone had to quickly vacate their homes and run to the nearest shelter, scampering inside like rabbits into a burrow in the dark, well, not completely dark, because the searchlights were already raking the skies to pick up the enemy planes. It was a very scary time for everyone, especially when the bombs exploded nearby making the ground shake and the plates in the kitchens rattle loudly. I remember peeking out sometimes to watch as the searchlights fastened on to a target, and the ack-ack guns would let loose, with the artillery shells exploding above us. Only when the "All Clear" was sounded were we allowed by the

Wardens to re-enter our homes. Fortunately, most of the battle was fought well out over the Coral Sea and Townsville was spared serious damage.

As things worsened, Dad was drafted into service, and was trained as a Battalion Cook. He was posted to Goondiwindi, then Redbank, and then to Chermside. Food and fuel became very scarce and Ration Tickets were introduced. I remember riding in Grandad Nielsen's car which had what was called a Dickie Seat at the back which folded out. On the back of the car Grandad had built a platform, on which he mounted a Charcoal Burner which he fired with wood to make a combustible gas that he piped through to the carburettor. This allowed him to travel much further than he would have been able to just on Ration Tickets. Recently someone actually drove right round Australia using this same system. It is a little inconvenient having to keep stoking the fire at the rear, but it worked very successfully, and Grandad took us on many trips that we'd have missed out on otherwise.

To off-set the Mortgage on 56 Philp Street, and to help with other expenses, Mum and I moved in with Grandad and Grandma Nielsen at 86 Lindsay Street, nearer to Ross River, and we rented out our home at Hermit Park. It was while we were living with Grandad and Grandma Nielsen, that we experienced another horrific flood. The murky brown flood waters came swirling higher and higher, and we were all on the front verandah watching the water rising, when an incredible thing happened. A few hundred yards away was a gully and as we watched a large home came floating down with the fast moving water, with the people still inside it. What an eerie feeling to see this happening before our eyes, and we felt so sorry for the poor people who were waving as they went by. Two other smaller homes followed, but the strangest thing was yet to come. A young man had purchased a block of ground on a rise overlooking the Golf Links. He had the stumps in place, but had not started building. That large floating house actually foundered on his property not square with the stumps but close. He was able to liase with the owners, who were so glad to sell it to him. He had it positioned squarely with the foundations and had a ready-made home for his bride to be. What an incredible coincidence which finished with all parties happy.

While on his own in Brisbane, Dad found some comfort and Christian friendship with the Sault family at Greenslopes. Gwen was a war widow, with two daughters and a son Allan. After my mother died, in 1969, Dad actually married Gwen in 1970, even though she was considerably older than he was. I think he felt sorry for her and wanted to take care of her in her sunset years, and as a Thank You for the care and love the family had shown Dad while he was alone in Brisbane.

For the eighteen months or so that Dad was alone in Brisbane, he would spend most of his leave searching for a place to rent so that we could be closer and he would be able to spend his leave periods with us. He finally found and secured a house at Banyo, and we travelled down to join him. It was so good to be together again. It

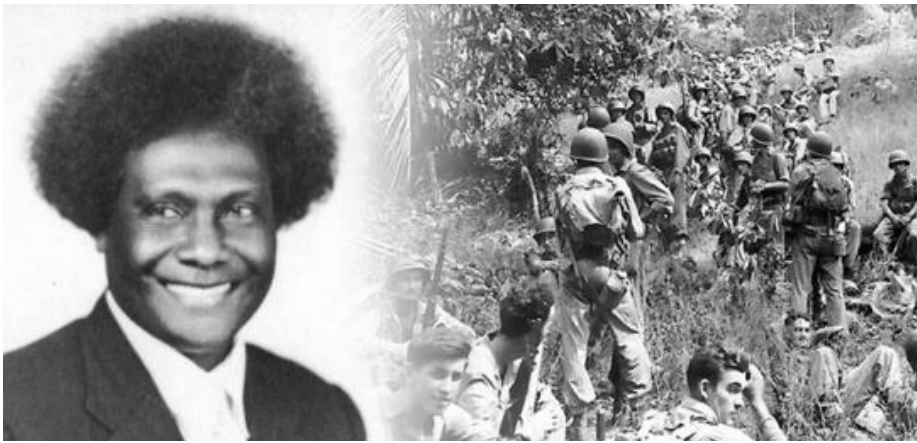
wasn't long before my brother Terry arrived.

I only had two weeks of school at Mundingburra Townsville, before all the schools were closed because of the nearness of the Japanese, so when my parents enrolled me at Banyo, I was seven years old. While in Townsville living with Grandad and Grandma Nielsen, our elderly neighbour Mrs Beale, took me under her wing, and taught me some of the basics of the three Rs. This stood me in good stead at Banyo. They placed me in Prep Two, (second half of first year), and that was just too easy. So they upgraded me to Prep 4. (second half of second year). I found that too easy as well so they put me into Grade 1, (third year of school), and that slowed me down somewhat, but I still managed to keep up and did quite well.

After the war, we moved back north to Townsville, the place of my birth, and took over our home again at 56 Philp Street. I was enrolled at Hermit Park School, to continue my education. My brother Terry had arrived on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1941, but because of the age gap we never really got to be real mates.

It was while we were living in TVL that we began attending worship on Sabbaths with a little group in a hall on Sturt Street, and later in our own church also on Sturt Street. I have fond memories of Margaret Wright, Pastor Engelbrecht's daughter teaching us Sabbath School, and the Galletlys, the Overends, the Smythes and JMV's, now called Pathfinders.

One Sabbath, we had a visit, when we were still at the hall, from the crew of the brand new forty-five foot Mission ship. It had just been built, and was being ferried back to the Solomons to enter service in the Mission field. One of the crew was a tall coal-black Solomon Islander, dressed in a long black skirt thing called a Lap Lap with a belt, and clean white shirt matching the whites of his eyes, and sandals on his feet. His hair was tightly curled and also black. His name was Kata Rangoso, (not pronounced with the "ng", but more like Ragoso). He told of his experiences as a Missionary worker, especially during the Japanese occupation of the Solomons, and I was spellbound listening to his stories. I think that it was then that I determined I would be a Missionary for God too, one day.



After Dad's discharge from Military Service after the war was over, he secured a really great job as Head Green-keeper at the Townsville Golf Club, and I really enjoyed going with him, and riding with him as he mowed the fairways, and cared for the greens, whenever I could get the chance. The smell of the newly cut grass on the fairways and the greens was very pleasant to the senses. It was also not far from Grandad and Grandma Nielsen's place on Lindsay Street, so we were often able to visit with them too. My cousins Barry and Ken Nielsen lived there for some time, and as Barry was my age, we were good mates. They were Uncle Roy's two boys.

Sometimes Uncle Danny and his wife Julie, and two girls, Noelene and Barbara, would visit. Dan was the eldest son and had a managerial job with Hollis Hopkins.

Occasionally, Uncle Robbie, Auntie Rita and son Allan would visit too. Sadly, Allan was tragically killed on his way home one evening from Tech College, when he didn't see a cane train crossing the road and slammed into the cane trucks on his motor-bike. He was Uncle Robbie's and Auntie Rita's only son, and they never really got over the loss.

Auntie Alma, Mum's younger sister, used to live with the parents as she worked a job in town. She was always up to tricks, and full of fun. On one occasion, an American soldier was visiting her. She was a very attractive girl and very popular with the US soldiers stationed at Townsville.



**Auntie Alma**



**Uncle "Chips" and Auntie Alma.**

These young men would bring her boxes of chocolates regularly. Naughty Auntie decided she would offer one particular soldier some of *her* chocolates. The poor fellow ate a whole container of Laxettes, and was running to the toilet constantly for at least twenty-four hours. She finally married “Chips”, Uncle Jack Smallwood. I guess he got the nickname from the “small wood”.

Dad really enjoyed working on the land so when his parents invited him to return to Home Hill to work as a labourer on the home farm, he was delighted. He found a house in town to rent and we moved yet again. So ended our years in Townsville.

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## CHAPTER TWO--GROWING UP IN HOME HILL

Home Hill was a quaint little sugar town, twin town actually, with Ayr on the northern side of the mighty Burdekin River. The river water spreads itself for miles and miles south and north of the actual river bed, and the abundance of underground water was a “goldmine” for all the cane farmers. Every home and farm in Home Hill and Ayr had its own Windmill in those days, and it was possible to sink a well practically anywhere, and strike water at from ten to sixty feet.



I was enrolled at Home Hill Rural School to complete my Year Seven, and sit for my Scholarship Examination with all the other Year Seven students. My teacher was Miss Anderson. She was so strict, but she surely got good results from most of us. A good friend of mine Harold Weeks, was in the same class with me. He was born on the same day and same year as I was. We used to vie for first place in nearly everything, inside and outside the classroom. The School offered special prizes and awards each year, for those who excelled in Maths, English, Geography and History. My name is still there on the Honour Board for the Highest Pass in English for that year—1949. Harold excelled more in Maths. Miss Anderson always seemed to know when we were misbehaving, even when she was writing on the blackboard. Years later, when we had a school re-union she told us she could see all that was happening in the classroom by simply glancing at the large picture hanging on the wall above the blackboard!

About four miles upriver from Home Hill, Grandad Menkens had bought a parcel of land, many years ago, to start a farm. He had five strong young sons, and four daughters. Together they cleared the land and planted sugar cane. Over the years the farm grew more and more productive, and by the time the war was over, it needed more man-power to help with the work. Uncle Henry had a Chemist shop in Home Hill. Herman, (Uncle Bob), was a School Teacher, and taught for some time at Osborne State School, before being posted elsewhere. George had married and bought a farm in the Mackay area. Dad had been away in the war effort, and had taken a job on the Townsville Golf Links as Head Greenkeeper. Only Uncle Arthur, the youngest boy was left to care for the farm.

They also had set up a Dairy, and sold milk in town every day. The Holden Ute carried the large milk cans with a tap fitted to them, and we dispensed milk in a pint or quart measure from house to house. “W.Menkens and Son” was painted on the



cover of the ute. Arthur was a very good Manager, and used the cane tops in season, put through a “Chop Chop” machine to feed the cattle, with Molasses from the mill spread over the feed, and the cattle loved it.

Dad was invited to move to Home Hill, and was very pleased to help Arthur work the farm. First we rented a house in town, but soon moved out to the farm to live in the big old farm house with Grandad and Grandma Menkens. I used to enjoy loading the old tabletop Chev truck with fresh cane tops in season, and then taking the load to the dairy to put through the “Chop-Chop” machine. We used a long belt fitted over one of the back wheels which we jacked off the ground, to drive the machine and it worked just fine.

Grandma Menkens was a character, and loved playing tricks on us children. She had different things hanging on the dining room walls, like Lift This Flap in Case of Fire! And when we lifted the flap, it said “NOT NOW STUPID! IN CASE OF FIRE!” She had a sign saying the “Great Australian Bight” with a set of old false teeth hanging below the sign. There were lots of other special tricks she played on us as well. We all loved her home-made bread which she baked regularly using her own brewed yeast. Sometimes the bottles which she tightly corked and tied with string would pop during the night and in the morning the ceiling and all around would be covered in her special home-brewed yeast.

One day all the men were away and a large flock of white Cockatoos found the lovely crop of corn growing in her garden. She was very angry when she saw them, and grabbed the double-barrelled twelve gauge shotgun. She loaded both barrels and let those pesky birds have it with both barrels at once. The gun knocked her over, but they had lots of Cockatoo stew for some time afterwards.

When we had plenty of cabbages, Grandma loved to make Sauerkraut. She had a wooden cask which held about thirty gallons, and it was my job to wash my feet carefully, and stamp the finely- shredded cabbage layers of cabbage and salt, cabbage and salt till the cask was full. Then she put weights on top and covered the cask. In about two or three weeks the Sauerkraut would be ready to serve, and was delicious.

It was Grandma Menkens, (Emile), who apparently saw some musical talent in me, and bought me a piano so that I could learn to play it. I started lessons at the Home Hill convent, but the ladies in their strange black dresses frightened me, and I was never at ease with them, so Mum found another lady who taught me the basics. I had about one year of formal lessons, and have been ever grateful to Grandma for making this available for me. I grew to love music, and while training as a teacher in Brisbane later on in life, I would spend many happy hours playing the Central Church organ, whenever I felt lonely or depressed. I was Sabbath School Organist for some time while in Brisbane, and had a key to the Church. Mrs Dever was the Church Organist. She inspired me to play some of the beautiful music of Bach and

Beethoven, and others, on the big electrically driven reed organ with two manuals and foot pedals.

Then there was the “Wecka”. It was a small device fitted with a spring and a small handle to pull back the set of needles on the other end. If anyone had any pains or problems of any sort, she would have us bare the area, and would use the “Wecka” to puncture the skin slightly with numerous little round patches, and then she would paint on the special knat oil from Germany, and have us sit or lie in the sun for ten to fifteen minutes. It usually worked like magic and healed the problems very quickly.

Grandma unfortunately suffered from severe Asthma, which she couldn't fix with the “Wecka”. Eventually the Asthma took her life fairly early on while Grandad lived to almost one hundred and one.

Grandad retired happily and lived with Auntie Elsa on Queen's Beach in Bowen in a beautiful spot with just the Golf Links between their house and the ocean. Auntie Clare and her family lived next door, and we loved to visit them all in such a lovely location.



**Grandad Menkens 100 years old. Natalie, his Great Great Grand-daughter aged 1year.**

We were present at his hundredth birthday celebration in Bowen, with many of his family. Natalie, Caroline's first baby was just one year old, so we had two cakes made with one candle for Natalie, and one hundred candles for Grandad. At his party, Grandad read his telegram from the Queen, without his glasses, and made a little speech, the substance of which has never been lost on me. He lived his life by the Golden Rule in Seven Words-- "DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE BY", and admonished us all to do likewise.

Eventually Dad and I built a new home right on the corner of Menkens Road and another road which ran along the front of the property. It was a really great experience for me as a young boy. I would have been about twelve at the time. I was able to help with setting out the foundations, and cutting out the mortised and tenoned studs and plates. Houses are not built that way today. We used the heavy gauge fibro roofing, and when finished it looked really great. Dad and Mum, Terry and I lived there until Arthur decided he wanted to build his own new home, where ours was, as it was the prestigious corner, so we had to shift our house further down the road into the orchard, which we accomplished without too much damage. After Grandad died, Arthur owned the farm and Dad continued working as the labourer.

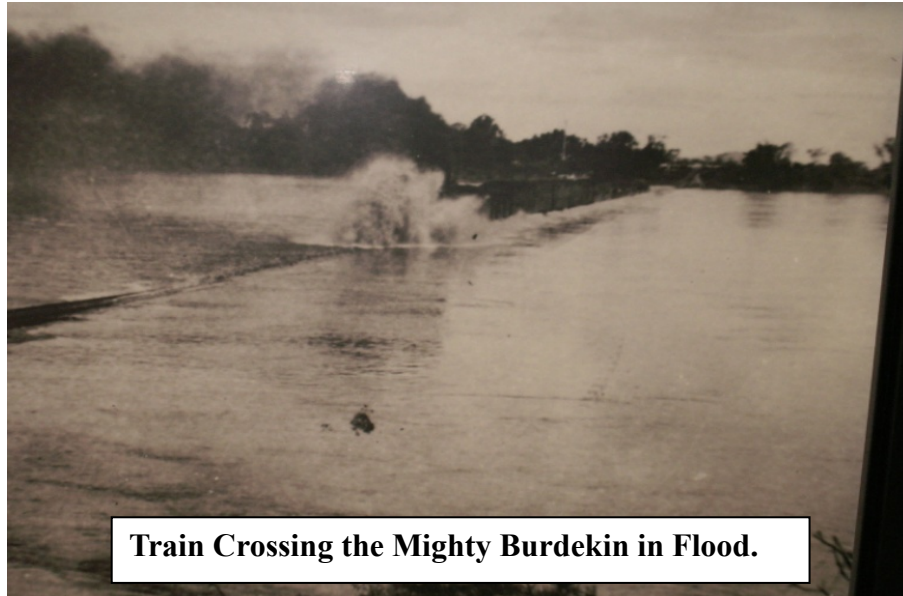
Arthur bought another property adjoining the farm and set up a Dairy there. He employed another man to care for the Dairy. To house this chap and his wife and children, the old farm house which Grandad built was moved round to the new Dairy property. All this House Removal activity was very interesting to me. We had a bit of a disaster part way round to the new property, when the back end broke off the old home from the bumpy road, but we were able to eventually put everything back in place in the new location. It was a terrible feeling to see the old house break apart.

Later on our home in the orchard, was moved again to a block on Fourteenth Avenue, in town. Dad bought the block from Charlie Hanson . The house is still there today, but the windmill is gone.



Baby brother Errol came along while we were still living out on the farm, but I was off to Avondale Missionary College in 1953, and then Teacher Training College in Brisbane, so I never really got to know Errol.

The road across the sandy bed of the river, was easily inundated whenever any appreciable amount of rain fell in the catchment area upstream. If the river began to flood, even the old railway bridge would be covered, and the mighty river actually rose so quickly as one train was crossing, that a floating log disconnected the cattle wagons when the train was climbing the far bank.



The wagons rolled back into the raging waters, while the engine and a couple of wagons climbed the far bank to safety. The conductor climbed along the wagons and opened as many doors as he could before the swiftly rising waters washed the wagons and cattle into the brown angry waters.

I was so glad it wasn't a school day. The conductor survived by hanging on to the tail of one of the cattle, and reached safety a few miles downstream. Those wagons were sticking out of the sandy river bed for years afterward to remind everyone of the power of that mighty river in flood.

Eventually a new high level bridge was built, but even so, the flood waters come close at times to blocking the new bridge. One year, the flood was so severe that I was able to paddle all the four miles to town on my surf ski. Looking back, it was a very silly thing to do, but being young and “invincible”, teenagers take some unusual risks without thinking carefully about what could have happened. Paddling through the fast moving waters, with lots of wildlife including snakes swimming for their lives; over fences and sugar cane, was a thrilling adventure. I made it safely to town and paddled up the Main Street of Home Hill taking in the awful damage and devastation caused by the flood.

There was no secondary school in Home Hill when I finished Primary School, so I had to travel eleven miles to and from Ayr High School every week day. I would ride my bicycle to Home Hill from the farm, about four miles, and then catch a bus to Ayr. If the river was flooding I would have to take the train with all the other youngsters from Home Hill. It was very scary at times especially when the flood waters were close to the rails. The old bridge descended a long way down and then across the river bed and up the other side. If the water rose over the bridge while we were at school, then we had to cross the mighty Burdekin in a special boat with an outboard motor attached. The boat would be facing nearly upstream, dodging logs and other debris, as it inched its way across the raging flood.

Quite often when the river was normal, I would ride my bike all the way, about eleven miles each way to and from school, trying to race the bus, which took a longer route and had to make frequent stops. I found it quite a daily challenge to arrive at school ahead of all my classmates, but I enjoy a good challenge.

By the time High School had ended, I had had enough of school and decided to work for a year on Aubrey Beck's farm to save enough money to attend Avondale College. I was just fifteen when I started. It was my job to take care of much of the tractor work, ploughing, cultivating and watering the cane. During the Crushing Season it was also my lot to help the Cane Cutters load the cane and cart it to the siding with the Farmall tractor and Wagon. Each day I had to remove the four big wheels on the wagon and grease the axles before putting the wheels back on. Then the tractor needed fueling up and greasing also ready for the day.

I still shiver when I remember the winter mornings, looking at those black, sticky, cold, cane stalks, and then nerving myself to stoop down and pick up that first bundle to place on the wagon. Each wagon held about five tons of cane. We would place tram tracks along the drills and off load the trucks from the wagon, two at a time, and when they were full and each one tightened down with the wire rope and ratchet, I would winch them back up onto the wagon and take off for the Siding where I offloaded the full trucks and picked up two more empties. It was a boring repetitive job, but I amused myself by learning to change gears without using the clutch after first gear. Only a year before that on our farm we were actually using draught horses to take the wagons to the sidings, so using the big Farmall Tractor was a real advance. (Nowadays of course, we have fully mechanical harvesters, with one man sitting in air-conditioned comfort driving a huge monster which not only cuts the cane but delivers it to a big truck moving alongside the harvester, with the driver there also enjoying the comfort of an air-conditioned cab and probably listening to his favourite music as he "works"!)

There was paper work to be done as well at the Siding. Each truck had a Mill Number and each farmer was allotted so many trucks per day. It was hard work, but I enjoyed outdoor work in the fresh air. I was glad to get to the end of the year though, and

prepare for the exciting journey by train to Cooranbong in New South Wales to attend Avondale Missionary College to study Building Construction, in preparation for Mission Service.

I really enjoyed growing up on the farm. Wallabies and kangaroos were a problem in that they would eat the young cane. Dad taught me how to use a rifle and shotgun, and I often went hunting to shoot these pests. Skinning the carcass was quite an experience, and taught me a lot about anatomy. Sometimes there would be a number of skins I had nailed to the shed walls drying in the sunshine. The skins made great mats for our floors. Sometimes I was able to bag dingoes, for which the local pest inspector paid a good price for their ears.

Horses were also part of the farm family, and I had one big fellow I loved to ride, often bareback. His name was Samson. It was often my lot to ride out and bring in the dairy cattle for milking. On one occasion I was cantering down the laneway, and had forgotten that we had closed the lane with a single barbed wire. Samson hit the wire with his chest and we took quite a fall. We patched Samson up and we both survived without too much damage.

Sometimes a friend and I would spend time on an upriver station for days at a time, herding cattle, riding calves, or just plain riding the ranges. Samson was at least sixteen hands and could gallop for a long time without tiring. He was a good jumper as well. On one occasion, it was a terribly hot day, as is often the case in North Queensland and we had been riding all morning. All our water was gone and we were very thirsty when we came upon an isolated windmill with large open tanks filled to the brim with sparkling water. We hurriedly dismounted and started to drink the water, but there was no way we could swallow it. It looked beautifully clean and was sparkling in the sunshine, but it was loaded with some kind of mineral which made it impossible to drink it. It was apparently good enough for the cattle but not suitable for man. So, we stripped off and dived in and no doubt took in some water through the pores of our skin. The cool water was very refreshing, and we were soon able to continue on our way home.

One other thing I really enjoyed was week-ends with Herbie Clay, one of our Cane Cutters. He had a thirty foot launch called June Two, and he often invited me to go with him, out to the reef, fishing. We would leave Groper Creek, a tributary of the mighty Burdekin, on a Friday afternoon, and travel down to the mouth and across Upstart Bay to the Cape of the same name. At about 4am we would set course for the reef and would arrive at dawn out on the briny, waves crashing over the outer side of the reef and not a shred of land in sight anywhere. It was too deep to anchor, so we would just drift along the reef line fishing with two or three hooks on our lines. Coral Trout, Red Emperor, and other reef fish were plentiful. Sometimes we would not get the third fish in, before a shark would snatch half of it. I really enjoyed taking control

of the launch, keeping the ship on course with the compass and the stars. I would check the compass course, and then lie back with my foot on the wheel through the steering hatch, using a particular star as my guide. I had to periodically change stars of course to keep on track.

At times we would end up close to Holman Island near Bowen. On another occasion we were about thirty yards out from the rocks on the ocean side of the cape, and travelling along quietly towards home, when there was a very loud whishing noise and splashing. A mother Humpback with her calf had surfaced between us and the shore. We felt so small and insignificant in our little boat, next to such a mighty and magnificent creature. The calf was about the size of our vessel. Sometimes we would have dolphins swimming the bow wave as we travelled, and one day, I had my first glimpse of the huge Manta Rays near Holman island.



Frank Bapty was a keen “boatie” also. He built his own launch and we often enjoyed many outings with Frank and his family at the Cape. Yes, I did get seasick on occasions, but never when we were moving along. Rocking from side to side, line fishing was the worst, but I still enjoyed these outings very much. Late one afternoon, Frank and I had anchored at one of the bays on the inland side of the Cape for the night, and had dropped anchor. At about 2am Frank woke to find us drifting towards the rocks. A strong wind had come up, and our anchor was dragging. It would have been only minutes till we were wrecked on the rocks, but we were able to start the motor, and move along to a safer bay sheltered from the wind, for the rest of the night. We didn't get much sleep from then on after such a close call.

Fishing was a great past-time for me. One Sunday, I rode my bike the fifteen miles or so to Groper Creek, to spend the day fishing. I had a great day and a good catch. After the evening meal I was pretty tired, and went off to bed fairly early. At about 1 or 2am, I woke up with excruciating pains in my lower right abdomen. Nothing I did would ease the pain, and I ended up on the floor in a foetal position, groaning uncontrollably. Dad soon rushed in to see what was wrong. He bundled me into our Hillman Minx, and sped off to town. He woke up old Dr Golding, who soon diagnosed my problem as Appendicitis. He gave me some pain killer, for which I was grateful, and told Dad to take me up to the Hospital. In the morning, the pain had subsided considerably, and I had a sign at the head of my bed, which said,

“NIL BY MOUTH—WATER ONLY”.

I had some knowledge of what Appendicitis was, and knew that it usually meant the doctor cut open your stomach, cut out the Appendix, and then sewed you up again. This frightened me, and I lay all day expecting the nurses to come by with the “wheelie bed” to cart me off to the operating room.

For three days I waited with only water to drink. On the third day, Dr Golding visited and told me I was a very fortunate young man. He gave me quite a lecture about keeping my bowel emptied, and advised me to make a habit of sitting on the white throne as he called it, each morning, until I did a motion. I was still in “teenage mode”, and wondered if he really knew what he was talking about, but the incident had scared me sufficiently to do some research of my own, and every book I read on the subject said the same thing as the cause---Constipation--Constipation-Constipation! So, I took his advice and have never had another attack, and still have my Appendix which the Lord put there for a purpose, even if that purpose is rather obscure to the medical fraternity.

I was able to obtain my licence to drive as soon as I turned seventeen, and loved to borrow Dad's Hillman for outings with my mates and girl friends. I even attended the local dances in the School of Arts, and sometimes took a girl to the pictures, but not very often.

Mum and Dad eventually were baptized, and as a family we began attending the Sabbath worship services in the CWA hall each Saturday. The Mission stories and experiences with other church young people re-ignited my desire to be a Missionary in foreign lands, and started me on the road to accepting Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. At the beginning of 1953 I set out on my long train journey to Cooranbong and Avondale Missionary College, and so began a very eventful year, when I would also find the love of my life.

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## CHAPTER THREE--AVONDALE

Finally, after a year of work and saving, I was off to College. I thought I wanted to be a Builder and go to the Mission Fields to help build churches and schools etc. I started out with four subjects, and to augment my input for the fees, I obtained a job for the afternoons at the College Dairy. They had a really top-notch Friesian herd, and I enjoyed working there. When not milking I worked on the orchards, farm, gardens and poultry projects.



I was determined to concentrate on my studies, and not become involved with any of the lovely girls. That plan didn't last too long. I was being doubled out to the Cooranbong church for JMV's with a friend on his bike, when I could not help myself as I watched a lovely girl with her friend walking ahead of us. She was very shapely and quite pretty. As we passed by I said, "Hurry up slow coach!" What romantic words, but they were my downfall! I couldn't stop thinking of her, and found out she was a country girl off a farm near Monto.

My goal and interests in my studies now had a new twist. I tried to shut her out of my mind, but it soon became obvious that I had to know more about her. I would try to study but images of this pretty country girl kept flooding across the screen. Eventually, on a games evening night, I approached her and invited her to join in with me. From there on I spent as much time with her as possible. There were strict rules at College in those days, and boys and girls were not allowed to mix except on special occasions like Privilege Nights, when with the permission of the Preceptress, the boys could choose a girl to invite to a Concert or other Special Performance in the Chapel.

I bought beautiful orchids for her, made her a lovely little Treasure Box, velvet lined it, and carefully inlaid the top with the College Badge, in assorted colours of timber. On one occasion I bought two old, lady's bikes and made one good one out of the two as a special present for her, so she wouldn't have to be a "slow coach."

As a country girl I knew she loved growing things, so I even made a special flower box for her dorm window, and with special permission, they allowed me to fit it

under the sill of her window. She enjoyed growing lots of beautiful flowers in that window box.



Ruth loved music too, and was taking Piano lessons with Romney King as part of her studies. That common interest has also been a wonderful bond. Needless to say we both fell in love, and that love has continued in spite of lots of ups and downs over the years. Eventually, I travelled to her home to meet her mother and sisters and asked permission for her hand in marriage, and it was granted. Wow! I was on cloud nine for some time to come. On 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1956, we were married, in the old South Brisbane church, by Pastor Earnest Reye, after four years of courtship. In 2006 we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, with a Renewal of Vows ceremony in Brisbane, in a lovely park, with Pastor Kevin Dixon in charge of the event. It was a beautiful ceremony, and we had a Reception afterwards as well. Ruth had one of her original bridesmaids present, Win Hughes, and her Flower Girl—Janice Bapty. I had Will Kraa present who was my Best Man, and we had a very blessed time together, with lots of family, relatives and friends present.



As the year progressed, I found that my funds were dwindling fast and the Accountant told me I would have to do more if I wanted to continue, so I took a shift at the factory, and dropped Business Studies. I would get up at 1.30am and hurry to

the SHF factory to work on the “make” taking Weetbix trays off the long chain belt, and stacking them in wheeled trolleys to go to the ovens. Ted Rowe worked beside me doing the same thing, but he was earning seven and six an hour, while I was earning only two and six, because I was only seventeen.

This arrangement did not seem very fair to me, so I approached the Accountant to plead for some more money for doing the same task, but they would not help. It was the Government Award schedule they were following and would not deviate to help a young student. Eventually, all my savings were gone, and I had downgraded to only one subject, Building Construction, trying to work over forty hours a week and study as well. At the end of the year, my account was just covered. It was a very tight schedule for the latter part of the year. Rise at 1.30am and front up at the factory at 2am till 6am. As I was also doing Gold Medallion Lifesaving, I would knock off at 6am, and swim from the point to the swing bridge. Then it was a quick clean up, worship and classes till noon. After lunch it was all afternoon at the Dairy and Farm. Then Evening Worship, and study for a while till I fell asleep ready for the next 1.30am alarm. I obviously could not keep this pace up for long, and when the Accountant said “See you next year!” I was very sure that I was not going back to that situation.

In spite of the pressure I was under, I did enjoy my year at Avondale. I also spent some work hours in the Joinery factory, and learnt how to handle glass and glaze windows etc. I learned a lot about life, and the Scriptures, and was baptized into Christ round mid-year. I have loved my Lord and have tried to follow Him closely ever since, and I was determined to find some way to qualify to work for Him. I had found the ideal companion, who also loved the Lord dearly, and that has been a wonderful bond all our lives. It was worth all the toil and effort to find my beautiful girl and companion for life.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR--POST AVONDALE**

After realizing that I was not able to continue at Avondale, it was a little while till I worked out what to do next. As the New Year dawned I decided I would try Colporteuring, so got in touch with the South Queensland Seventh Day Adventist Headquarters, to ask if they could allow me to try my hand at selling our books. I found an old lady, Mrs Heise, who took me in for a few pounds a week. I had my bicycle and Pr Starr took me out to an area of Brisbane to get started. I had Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories, and the Medical Books on my carrier, and with very little instruction, he left me to get started.

It was January and a very wet season that year. Every time I tried to work it would rain, and of course, rain and books are not a good mix. I did make some sales, but kept falling behind with my rent. The next door neighbour was a good kind fellow. He had a woodwork shop next door, and when it was too wet to Colporteur I would work in his workshop making a lovely Glory Box as a present for my Ruthie. I was gradually becoming further and further behind financially, and becoming very frustrated.

Ruth was working in Brisbane at the SHF factory, to be close by. One day we were visiting her relative Arnold Robe who was a school teacher. After listening to my story of woe, he suggested I should try teaching. That was the very last thing on my list, but as time went on, and I was still going backwards, in desperation I decided to go in to see the Director of Education in the old Treasury Building. I took my school records, which showed I excelled in English, was reasonable with Maths and Social Studies, and Science, and very good at Woodwork, Metalwork, Trade Drawing and Geometrical Drawing and Perspective. He told me he would have preferred I had done more Academic Subjects, but as there was a teacher shortage at the time, he would allow me to train as a Teacher at the Kelvin Grove Teachers' College, to do the two year course.

By now it was early March, and the College had been under way for some weeks, but he wrote a letter to the Principal which I took to the College to get started as a Teacher. I was placed with a class of about thirty young men, and fitted in quite well on the whole. The first Friday came along, and our Class teacher came in with a bundle of envelopes. The Government gave trainees an allowance of four pounds ten shillings the first year, and five pounds five shillings the second year per fortnight I believe it was. I was looking forward to getting an envelope the next fortnight, but the teacher already had an envelope for me as well. What a surprise! The wheels of Administration had worked very quickly.

When I opened the envelope, I nearly died of shock! There was over a hundred pounds enclosed for me. I took it all to the teacher, as I believed there must be some mistake. I had only been enrolled for about four days! The teacher assured me it was correct, as the Government paid the Allowances as from January 1. Can you imagine my joy? I was able to pay all my owed Rent, and buy some very necessary clothes and personal items I needed urgently.



**Wow! What a blessing!**



***Teachers' College Trainees --Class of 1954***

It was 1955, and I was in my second year of Teacher Training at Kelvin Grove in Brisbane. As part of our training we had to spend a day at a special One Teacher Demonstration School located at, and on the same campus, as the Ascot State School, in another part of Brisbane. The gazetted day arrived and I started my old motor-cycle, (a Velocette if I remember correctly), and headed off allowing sufficient time to arrive well before the school was due to start, but the motor cycle had other ideas,

and part way along it stopped and I could not get it to go again no matter what I tried. Eventually it did start for me and I made it to the school, but now I was about ten minutes late.

Upon nearing the special building, I noticed that all my fellow trainees were seated at the back of the classroom, and Mr Bill Gordon was standing at the other end teaching the group of children ranging from Grade One through to Seven. There was a spare seat at the back and I tried to slip in very quickly and quietly, to join my group, but....as I sat down there came a very commanding voice from the front of the room, ordering me to come to him at the front. There I stood, very embarrassed, in front of my class mates and the children, and for at least ten minutes Mr Gordon roundly lectured me on Punctuality, especially in Teachers, and how disgusted he was with me for coming in late! I felt as small as a pin head, and wished the floor would open up and swallow me.

After quite a while, he calmed slightly, and said, “Anyhow. What's your name?”

I replied, “Don Menkens, sir.”

“What? From Home Hill?”

“That's correct, sir,” I replied very politely.

He came over and grabbed my hand and shook it vigorously for some time, while I stood bewildered wondering what was coming next.

A complete transformation in his attitude occurred instantaneously. All lessons were suspended, while Mr Gordon told of his experiences teaching my uncles and aunts, at Osborn State School upriver from Home Hill. He told how he had trained the girls' Netball Teams and the other Teams of boys in various sports, and how my Uncle Bob, (Herman), taught with him. He had taught my father as well, and this lesson in history for the children, and the trainee teachers, went on for a full hour or more.

I wonder if you can imagine how I felt now? From being terribly ashamed and embarrassed, I now felt like royalty must feel. I could not quell the feeling of elation after receiving such accolades, and it was all because of a name! That name meant so much to this teacher, and it completely reversed his attitude toward me. That name stood for integrity, honesty and decency in all areas of life.

My grandfather, Bill Menkens, at his hundredth birthday party, made a very simple statement which has always stuck firmly in my mind. He lived by this simple seven-word rule himself, and taught his children and grandchildren to do likewise. The simple rule?

**“DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE BY”.**



**Grandad Menkens Retired and Living at Queens Beach Bowen.**

It was while I was there training as a teacher, that I met a very decent student, Will Kraa. He was a tall Dutch lad who had recently emigrated to Australia. We became really close friends. We were often referred to as “the long and the short of it.” He was an avid speed reader, and I kept feeding him with Christian literature, which he found very interesting and told his parents he wanted to be a Christian. That was when his father became very angry, and eventually drove him away from home. Will later was baptised, taught for a little while and then went to Avondale to train as a Minister. He served for many years in various locations, but eventually left the church over their treatment of him because he did not see eye to eye with the leaders, and was questioning a number of the church's doctrines, which I also have since realized did not line up with the Scriptures. He set up a very successful Plant Nursery in Brisbane, was best man at our wedding in 1956, and in 2006, he took part in our 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding anniversary celebrations, as I have already shared with you in Chapter Two.

After Graduating as a Teacher, at the end of 1955, I was posted to Home Hill Rural School, and taught Grade Seven next to Mr Harris. I was only there for about a year, when I was posted to a One Teacher School at Iyah about ten miles south of Home Hill as Principal. Well, that sounded great, but what else can one be in a One-Teacher situation. That was a real challenge, teaching multiple classes from the babies to the leavers. I spent about seven years in all working for the Government. With a little help from the parents, each year we had a Sugar Cane Project Plot of about a quarter acre. The children helped with the planting, care and harvesting, and we made some funds for the school each year, for special activities. My brother Errol joined Iyah School as one of my pupils, and would ride to school with me in my little VW as I finished shaving with a special inverter and electric shaver. Now the school is gone and buses gather all the children and transport them to Home Hill Rural.

At the beginning of 1956, I had to do the special obligatory National Service Training for three months full time at Wacol. A full six months training was required, and the remaining three months after Wacol were carried out at special bivouacs in various locations. I had special leave from teaching to do this Government requirement. On one bivouac we spent some weeks at the site of the Tinaroo Dam near Atherton, and I was posted to serve as a Medical Orderly in the RAP. (Regimental Aid Post). As was so often the case, many of the young men would have booze parties on Saturday nights. On Sunday morning they would arrive at the RAP tent, faking a bad cough, to get a dose of Mis Tussi, an alcoholic Cough Mixture. I was so disgusted with one fellow, that I grabbed a bottle thinking it was the Cough Mixture, and gave him a big spoonful, before I realized that it was not Mis Tussi but Acriflavine, an Antiseptic for wounds. He drank it down, and never came back for more, for the rest of the camp. It probably didn't hurt him, so I didn't bother making the mistake known. It did teach me to be extremely careful in dispensing medicines however.

As a Christian I chose to do Non Combatant duties, and had to front up to a Court in Brisbane to explain my beliefs. I was placed in the Medical Company which also included the Battalion Band Platoon, and played the Tenor Horn. As preparation for this military training required of most young men at the time, I had done several courses in First Aid and Home Nursing. Those few months in the Army Barracks with the other young men taught me many things and opened my eyes to the completely different goals we shared. The Sergeant who was our Musical Director was a really sad person. I have never seen a more ill-tempered foul-mouthed person in all my life. He was addicted to alcohol, and each night after his meal at the Sergeant's Mess, he would drink till he was blind drunk, stagger home to his lodgings and spew all over the place. Some poor lads were detailed to hose it all out nearly every morning. This probably explains his sour demeanour and attitudes towards us as we trained in the band and in the medical skills they taught us. Fortunately, I was never detailed to this filthy task.

I was amazed at how unfit some of the young men were, and some had never seen a rifle or used one before. One day as we took the buckets of coffee out to the lads at the rifle range, they were doing Bren Gun Training. The Officer in charge knew I was a Non Combatant, and meaning to show the boys how incapable I would be with a weapon, he invited me to show them how to hit the target. Some lads were missing the target completely. I thought, "Why not?" It was only a fifty yard range, so I agreed to have a go! I put three bullets within an inch circle right in the bullseye! He was so surprised he said, "OK Menkens. Get out of here. You don't need any training!"

Even at that young age, many of the boys were already addicted to alcohol, and their main interest seemed to be abusing their bodies, with social drugs and sex orgies. It was so disgusting to me as I have never touched alcoholic drinks in all my life, have



never smoked either, and I have always been faithful to my beloved. On special leave weekends, I was allowed out to visit my Ruthie, to spend some happy hours together.



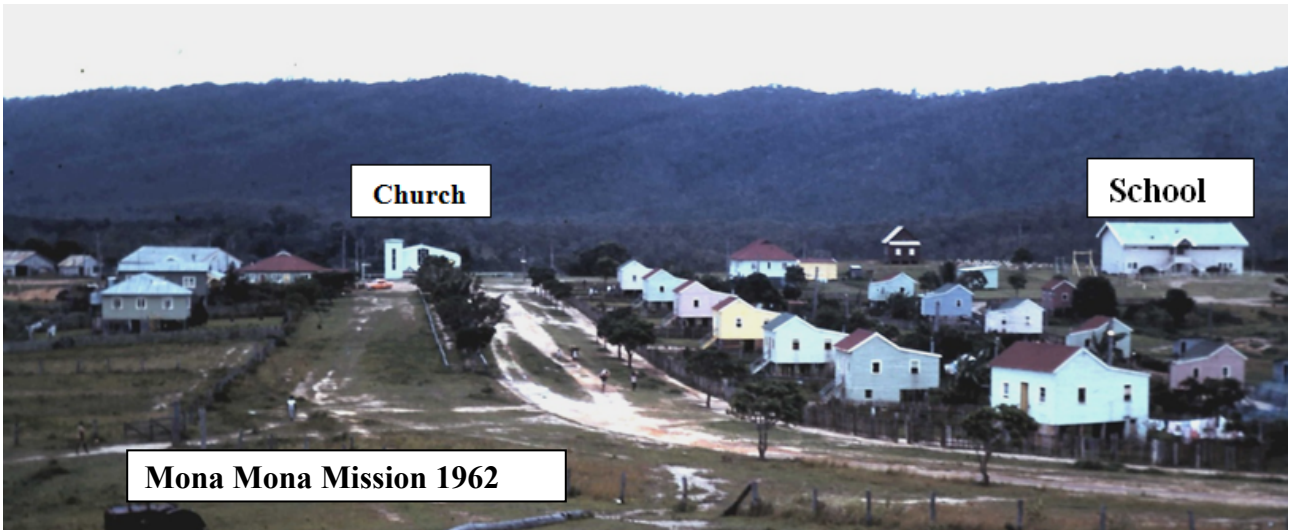
**My little Morris Ute when I was doing National Service.**



**Ready to leave on our Honeymoon to Melbourne Youth Congress in our A40.**

Since giving myself to the Lord, I have tried to care for my body as the Temple of God, and glorify Him in all I do, not because I feel I have to, but because I love Him so much. “This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing thru. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.” That little chorus says it all.

It was at the end of the last year at Iyah, that I was invited to take charge of the School at Mona Mona Mission for Aborigines, on the edge of the Atherton Tablelands. It was a three-teacher school with about one hundred children, and we spent two years there, before the Government closed it down to make way, as they said, for a new Dam, which I understand to this day has never been built. Ann Elliott taught the Infants, and a Graduate lad from Avondale taught middle school, while I tried to enthuse the upper classes to study and sit for the Scholarship Examinations. I remember the previous Headmaster, Ted Rowe, (yes, the same Ted Rowe I worked beside at the SHF factory), telling me that if I could enthuse the older students to sit for the Scholarship Examinations, I would be a better teacher than he was. The only interests of the students were horse riding, painting and singing. We often had bus loads of tourists arrive to listen to the children sing and to see the Art Work they did which was quite outstanding.



It was a challenging job at Mona Mona, but we made some great friends and enjoyed the experience for the two years before the Mission Station was closed down and we were called to go further afield to Papua New Guinea, to take charge of one of our large boarding schools in the Gulf of Papua.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE--OVERSEAS SERVICE**

Our third baby girl, Jennelle, arrived while we were at Mona Mona, and now we were a family of five. We were excited at the prospects of taking up a teaching post in the Papuan Gulf, but a little apprehensive with three children, Caroline, Wendy and Jennelle just a tiny baby, but we believed the Lord was calling us to work there and so we went ahead in faith, and accepted the call.

We had visions of beautiful, clear, blue waters with coral reefs, lovely white beaches and swaying coconut palms. Port Moresby fitted the picture nicely, and we enjoyed swimming at beautiful Ella Beach, in front of the Missionary Transit House, while we waited for the weekly Catalina Flight to Kerema, enroute to Vailala River, and then on to our school at Belepa.

Well, the day finally arrived and we were ferried to the floating aircraft and prepared for take-off, which was all very exciting, especially for the children. The plane raced across the harbour and finally launched itself into the air, and headed west.

The Catalina had those two large observation bubbles and we were able to watch as the coast slipped along not very far below us. We had only been flying for a short time when I noticed that the water was changing colour and becoming murky looking. I also noticed the white sandy beaches were changing colour also. As we progressed, the water became very muddy and the beach sand turned to black. Yes, there were still abundant coconut palms, but oh what a shock to see the black sands and muddy water! My whole imagined picture had to be re-painted on a totally different canvas.

The crew explained that the Papuan Gulf has such a high rainfall that the rivers are in flood almost all year round, and the ocean water is quite muddy for sometimes miles out to sea. The average yearly rainfall for the Gulf is about 360 inches, or round 10 metres, and when it is not actually raining the water is dripping from the trees. The temperature is high as well, so the climate is very oppressive, with very little relief from the heat and humidity.



The plane finally came in to land on the muddy water at Kerema. Because the floodwater has lots of debris floating along, it is really quite dangerous landing as any sizable stick or small log, can easily rip a hole in the hull. The crew told us that there were at least two planes resting on the bottom already, but it is impossible to build an airstrip in the area, so the seaplane is the next best method of transport. Otherwise it is a long uncomfortable trip by coastal boat. After landing safely at Kerema, a barge took us and our goods to shore to wait for our mission launch “Diari ” which would take us on the next leg of our journey to Karo Karo on the Vailala River, a trip of about four hours. “Diari” was a vessel of about nine metres in length, and we were all very glad when we safely crossed the bar at the mouth of the Vailala, and sailed up to Karo Karo in the calmer waters of the mighty river.



As we neared the makeshift wharf at Karo Karo, we were surprised to find quite a group of people waiting to welcome us. They had decorated the wharf with lots of palms, vines and flowers, and it was so good to feel so welcomed. John and Dorothy Richardson and their children were there and after spending a little time visiting with them, John loaded us into a big dug-out canoe, and took us round the waters to the Mission Sawmill. The school tractor and trailer were there waiting and we were soon off through the swamps over a very bumpy road which had logs and saplings placed crosswise to stop the tractor sinking out of sight. You might be able to imagine how uncomfortable it was to travel over such a bumpy road for about five kilometres. What a relief to finally emerge from the swamp road to the school clearing, where we were afforded another welcome by the teachers and students.



**The Belepa "Taxi" from Sawmill to School through the swamps.**

The Principal's home was quite a comfortable building on top of a small hill overlooking the school campus, the school gardens and lots and lots of coconut palms. John introduced us to the Headmaster and Staff, and then made his way back home to Karo Karo, as by now the day was fast drawing to a close. Apusae, our headmaster with his wife and family were from the Solomon Islands. He was a very lovable Christian and a very capable teacher. We had six teachers if I remember correctly and about two hundred students, with most of them boarders, from villages right across the Gulf from Daru in the west on the Fly River to the eastern regions.

The school buildings were made of some sawn timber from our mill, with thatched roofs of the Biri Palm, and plaited half walls made from the outside parts of the sago palm leaves. Most of the rooms had desks for the students, and teachers had blackboards and chalk as in most school rooms. The half walls allowed any breezes to waft through the classrooms affording some relief from the constant heat and humidity. We spent four and a half years, at Belepa, and we really enjoyed our work and time there in spite of the oppressive climate.

Our school day began early in the morning with worship in the school chapel. The young people loved to sing, and we really loved to hear the singing and harmony that just comes naturally to these people. During our time at Belepa, and later at our new school at Kikori, I was able to train junior and senior choirs to take part in the local choir festivals, and they always took the honours ahead of all the other schools in the area.

After worship the students had breakfast, which was cared for by selected student groups in turn. The menu included mostly sweet potato from our own gardens, plus the staple Sago. Coconuts also formed much of the diet, plus taro, tapioca, taitu and lots of greens from the surrounding jungle. I introduced peanuts, and soy beans, and of course there were also lots of pineapples, paw paws, bananas and lots of other tropical fruits.

School began at 7am and continued through to mid-day. Then it was lunch and at 1pm "work parade". All our schools in PNG were conducted on the work/study system, where the students paid some money in cash for each term, but the rest of

their fees were covered by what they did as work in the school gardens, and other departments till 5pm each day. It was a full day every Sunday, which was also the day we processed a Sago palm from the swamp. A group of twenty boys and twenty girls, older students, with a couple of teachers, would select a Sago Palm and set up a “factory” to bring home enough Sago to last the week. Of course every Sabbath was a special day for worship and sharing and rest.



**Student Boys Preparing Sago Pith for the Girls to Process.**



**Sago Making “Factory” in Progress.**

After work each day, it was time for baths and the evening meal, followed by study period till lights out at 9pm. We had an old diesel-powered generator to light the campus, which ran for a couple of hours every evening when it wasn't having problems, or we had run out of fuel. Our engine boy had a habit of waiting till the fuel was all gone before alerting us, and then we had to wait a week or so till we could arrange for some more to come out by coastal boat from Moresby.

We had a really constant freshwater spring on the campus, where the students could wash themselves and their cooking utensils, but the water was often fouled by the constant usage, so I decided to put in a small dam with a pipe starting under the water, going upwards through the dam wall and rising upwards on the down side of the wall. All the teachers and the students assured me that the water would not flow up the pipe, and some were quite annoyed that I would persist with my plan against their advice. However, when the water rose sufficiently behind the wall, and the water began to flow out of the 50mm pipe with a full flow, they were amazed, and my reputation soared.

One of the major problems we had at Belepa, was the constant pressure to provide enough food for all the students and teachers, for the school year. There was also a nasty concentration of nutgrass in most of our gardens, which was very difficult to control. It stunted the growth of our food plants, and so the Mission searched for another site to build another school for the upper grades, thus reducing the number of mouths to feed at Belepa. They found a site at Kikori, on the mighty Kikori River. It was three hundred acres of virgin jungle. They employed a builder from Australia to build a home for the principal, two smaller homes for the Headmaster, and the girls, and a Classroom. The boys had to make do with an old shed.

In due course we carted desks and school gear and equipment down to Maira Plantation, on the Vailala River, loaded the URAHANI, our 15 metre Mission Launch, and sailed through to the new location at Kikori. We even took our tractor and trailer, and farming equipment through on the Mission Ship. It was a very interesting exercise indeed, but we had it all done successfully, and with about fifty upper school students and two teachers with us, we began clearing the jungle and planting food crops. Because of the constant wet conditions, it was impossible to burn the cleared bush, so we just had to cut it down, stack it in rows and plant our food plants between the rows. It was a real challenge, but in just three months we had sufficient food to be wholly self-sufficient, with the ever-present Sago staple.

Looking back on what we did really amazes me even now. The teachers and students really worked very hard with me to achieve our goals to be self-sufficient as well as continuing with our daily school lessons programme.



**Loading URAHENI at Maira Plantation with School Stuff for the New School. I don't remember how we loaded and unloaded the tractor and machinery, but we did, and arrived safely at our new school. Having the tractor was a real blessing for clearing the jungle, carting materials and running our small sawmill.**

My family was now five, as Richard and Sharon had arrived while we were at Belepa. Ruth found it very hard to cope with the new situation, as there were no neighbours to visit and she was bearing the burden of Home Schooling our children, as well as trying to cope with roughing it for some time till our home was finished. The nearest white women were at Kikori Station about three kilometres downriver, and she had no way to travel there, except by canoe or river truck, both of which were only used in urgent or necessary tasks, to save on fuel costs. There were no roads in such a wet area. To ease her burden somewhat, I took Caroline with me, and helped her with her Correspondence Lessons, while I taught the indigenous students.

Not far up river, was an old APC Oil Camp. The Oil Company had finished there, but there were still many iron-clad huts and a small saw mill there. John contacted the company who graciously told him we could use whatever we wanted for our school. I was able to rescue some tramlines, a saw-bench and tram wheels, and other odds and ends which proved very valuable for us at the school. With our tractor, I was able to set up a suitable sawmill site, near the river, and after lots of ingenuity and wisdom from Above, we soon had a small, but operational sawmill of our own, powered by the flywheel drive and a long flat belt off the side of the tractor. Now all we needed was some logs to mill. We would tie long lengths of cane from the jungle to a log we had harvested and with all the students pulling and shouting in unison, we soon had the logs at the site for processing.

When John heard what we were doing, he approached Peter Maynard, the Administration Officer, at Kikori Station, and asked if we could have some of the trees from the banks of the river upstream in the Government lands. He readily agreed and so I would take some older boys with me in the big canoe, with axes and our new chainsaw John bought for us, and we'd select trees from along the riverbank upstream. After trimming off the tops and unwanted branches, we would slide them into the river, and form rafts of five or six logs. Then with the big canoe and outboard



we would motor downstream and manoeuvre the raft into the little creek near our sawmill. This was a very risky business because if we missed the opening there was no way we could bring the rafts back against the current, but we managed to get all our rafts safely into the creek. We had salvaged an old winch and wire rope, which we used to pull the logs up to the supply area where I would use the chainsaw to split the logs and slide them across to the trolleys area ready for the saw bench. It was a real work of art trying to get that first flat side to start the milling process. We actually were able to cut enough timber ourselves to complete the school building, the boys' dormitory, and girls' dormitory.

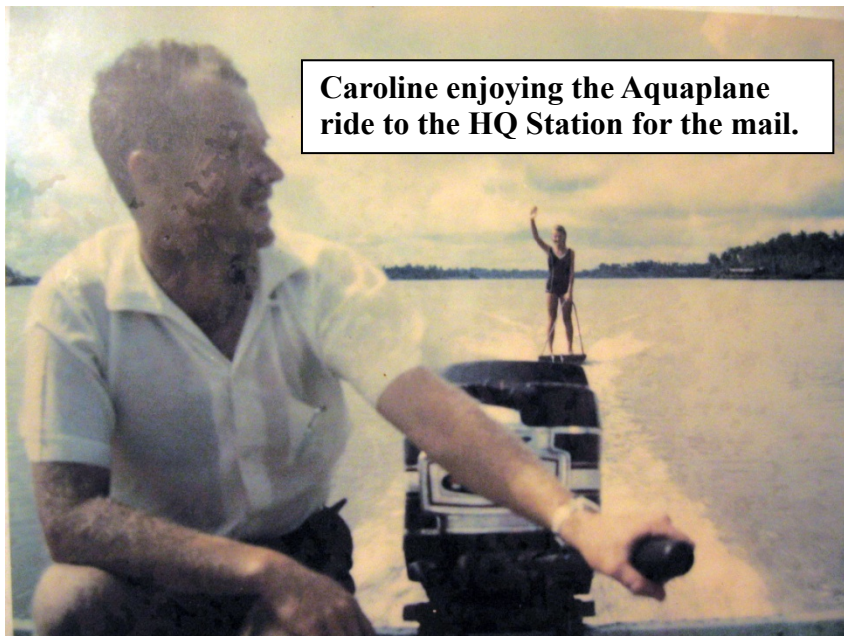
Also just upriver, there were some white limestone cliffs. Again on John's suggestion, we were able to get permission to extract the limestone to make cement blocks for our buildings. I would detail a few boys with a senior lad Patrick, to go upriver in the big canoe or the river truck, to put holes into the rockface about 600 mm deep, using specially shaped 25mm galvanized pipes and hammers. The next day I would load the holes with gelignite, and "ka-boom"--- down would come the rock to the river bank, where we would load it into the big canoe till we only had a few inches of freeboard, and then motor downstream to our school jetty. The boys loved this operation and were fascinated at the power of some small sticks of explosive. I had made a derrick of old pipes and with a large pulley and wire rope, we used this to lift the heavy rock out of the canoe to the site of the crusher, ready for processing.

John had bought the small rock crusher from somewhere in Sydney, and a two-cylinder Lister diesel engine, which we used to crush the limestone rock to powder and small aggregate to make the blocks in our block-making machine. The blocks turned out really great, and because of the limestone, they ended up almost a dazzling white in colour. It was really interesting watching the students working the crusher, sieving the rock into three bins, and then the block-making crew producing lots of blocks each afternoon. I am still amazed at how well the students worked and especially when I look back at the pictures of these ten to fifteen-year olds, doing the work that normally much older people would be doing. I would probably be held accused of child slavery or something, in today's world, but the students were really glad to see the progress we were making, providing decent accommodation for them, and good classrooms, and of course they were so grateful to be able to come to school to get an education.

Being so far out in the jungle, made it very difficult to get things we needed for repairs and general supplies. We had no radio or phone communications. If we needed help we had to go down river by canoe or river truck to the Gulf Headquarters Station where the Richardson's were now located, or the Government Station in the same area.

The Post Office and Store run by John Senior and old Harry, was also located near the Government Station, and we would make the trip about two or three times a week to collect and send mail. My older children, Caroline and Wendy, loved to come with me.

I made an aquaplane and they loved to ride on it behind the river truck as a treat. If they fell off I had to make a very quick turn-around to pick them up as there were quite a few crocodiles in these Gulf Rivers. I made sure they learnt to swim well at an early age and they loved the water.



**Caroline enjoying the Aquaplane ride to the HQ Station for the mail.**

We spent about two and a half years at Kikori, pioneering the new school which we named Kitomave, which to me means “challenge”.

It was a real challenge to start off a new school, with a budget of just \$300 and three hundred acres of tropical jungle. School and work went on daily regardless of the constant rain. If we wanted to cool off we could just jump into the river, cool down and then continue with our tasks. What about the crocodiles? Yes, we had crocodiles aplenty in all the rivers, but, praise the Lord, we never had any tragedies. In just three or four months we had enough land cleared to allow us to plant enough food to be self-sufficient.



**Clearing the jungle giants for gardens.**



**Some Taro Kong Kong just planted.**



**Taro, Sweet Potato, and Corn in just Three 3 Months.**

We had so many interesting experiences. I have prepared another book of these experiences, which are unique to our time in Papua New Guinea. Our Headmaster Anga, became an expert with our little chainsaw, felling giant rain forest trees, many of which we were able to mill for our timber and building needs. Anga was also very skilled as a plumber, and made several rain water tanks on site. His wife Riva was a lovely person and also a great cook. She also acted as Preceptress for our student girls. Every Friday afternoon was free time to prepare for the Sabbath. The students and teachers would prepare Mumus, food cooked in Earth Ovens, and Riva would send us some of the food on Sabbath mornings. It was so delicious to have sweet potato, or taro layered with jungle greens, and fresh coconut milk. It was all wrapped carefully in banana leaves to lock in the exquisite flavours. We loved this special weekly treat, and have often tried to emulate the dish for the family, using the modern stove oven but it doesn't really match the quality and flavours produced by the Earth Ovens.

There is a very interesting phenomenon which happened every Sabbath which I must mention. Not having refrigerators to keep their food in, it would not keep overnight because of the very high humidity and high temperature, but the food prepared each Friday would keep without any sign of spoiling right through to Sunday morning. It reminded us each week of the blessings the Lord showered on His people while they sojourned for forty years in the wilderness. They collected twice as much Manna on Friday and though it spoiled overnight at any other time of the week, it would keep perfectly right through the Sabbath to Sunday morning. God doesn't change. He is the same Wonderful God today, Who cared for His people so long ago. And He still honours those who obey His laws and especially revere His holy day, the seventh-day Sabbath.

After completing seven years in the hot steamy jungles of the Papuan Gulf we were invited to take a position at Kabiufa College about ten kilometres out of Goroka in the Highlands. What a difference to the Gulf. Kabiufa is about five and a half thousand feet, (about one thousand eight hundred metres) above sea level. It is situated in the beautiful Goroka Valley. The elevation makes for a much lower temperature, with much less humidity, and with constant day length, the climate resembles perpetual spring. We were so thrilled to be able to live and work at Kabiufa after coming out of the oppressive climate in the Gulf.



My teaching load involved teaching High School English, Agriculture, and some Bible. I was also asked to take charge of the College Farm---one hundred and seventy acres of beautiful fertile alluvial valley soil. We had a “barret” or water channel running through the property, but we did not need to irrigate as it rained lightly nearly every afternoon, We grew sweet potato mainly, rotated with corn, and this worked very well supplying food for our three hundred students, teachers and farm workers. I also introduced other food crops for some diversity. We had two tractors, and good machinery. It was my responsibility to keep the food supply happening on a continuous basis. I introduced organic sustainable management of the farm and we had some incredible results, which amazed the local people, teachers and students alike.



**Young Organically-Grown Sweet Potatoes.**

The school classes were so organized that we had a constant supply of labour all day, to do planting, cultivating and harvesting as necessary. Kabiufa also had an intensive Garden Industry sporting the largest Market Gardens in the Southern Hemisphere. Nearly every day, we would send plane loads of fresh fruit and veges to Port Moresby and other centres.

Ruth was asked to supervise the College Kitchen and Dining Hall, and she did a terrific job. She introduced fresh garden greens to the menu, and at first the students would not eat the fresh food, but with a little coaxing they got used to eating green salad veges and by the end of the year, the students were doing much better at their studies. Occasionally I would take our car and trailer to Lae on the north coast, and bring home a load of coconuts, which really pleased the students from coastal areas. Coconuts do not grow in the highlands areas of PNG. On one particular trip we reached Kainantu, and because the road was quite rough, I checked the trailer hitch to make sure it hadn't come loose, before we attempted to descend from the highlands via the Daulau Pass to the Morobe Valley and the flat paved road to Lae. We negotiated the pass uneventfully, but it was exceptionally rough and pot-holed badly. Near the bottom of that terrible descent, there is a straight stretch of road which has been bitumened, and after the long winding rough downhill run, it was a welcome sight, but a Still Small Voice whispered into my ear and It said..."Check the trailer hitch! Check the trailer hitch!" I argued with the thought and asserted that we had checked the hitch at the top of the Pass, and so I just let the car roll faster and faster down the lovely smooth straight.

About half way down, Patrick, a student I had with me yelled, "Please sir, the trailer's gone!" I immediately looked in the rear vision mirror and sure enough, the trailer was coming down the hill behind us end over end and finally came to rest beside the road right side up. It could easily have tumbled over the side and ended up way below in

one of the many deep valleys on either side of the road. Isn't God amazingly merciful even when we don't listen to Him.

Unfortunately, the tumbling had smashed the front ball joint, so we had to improvise with some fencing wire we found nearby, and limped the rest of the way in to Lae where we found someone to do the repairs. It was a costly exercise, and made me realize anew not to ignore the promptings of that Still, Small Voice.

After three years managing the farm, I was asked to take over the Maintenance Department, so that the Garden Manager could start growing vegetables on the farm soils. Because the garden land was being heavily fertilized quite a lot of the soil was so depleted it would not grow anything but Pigweed. It saddened me greatly to see the farm soils being subjected to inorganic farming methods, which of course, in time, would deplete those soils as well, but then I did not have the final say so there was no way I could change the course the management chose to take.

That was our last year at Kabiufa, and because our older girls were approaching teenage, we decided to ask for permanent return to Australia, and returned to our homeland at the end of 1973, after eleven years of service. They were years of great challenge and adventure, and we enjoyed the experience immensely. I greatly enjoyed working with the students in the classrooms and in the field. Perhaps our greatest joy came as many of our children and young people dedicated their lives to God and His service. To see them baptized, and take up appointments to still heathen areas was very rewarding. Many others took up important positions of leadership in their areas and even in government posts. Many of the students kept in touch with us for many years, and we still have contact with some. God is using his faithful people mightily, to spread the Gospel throughout Papua and New Guinea. We were so privileged and thankful to have had a small part in the Lord's work in the mission fields.



**Graduating Class of about 1972.**

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## **CHAPTER SIX---BACK HOME**

We had become accustomed to, and really loved some New Guinea Foods, and so when we were coming home on permanent return, I wrote to the Customs people in Australia, asking permission to bring some special Sweet Potato, Taro and Tapioca material for planting. After three weeks or so, I had no reply, so I decided to bring the plant material with me anyway in my luggage.

Before landing at Cairns I had completed the Declaration Forms and told the officials I had plant materials with me. Well....when we landed in Cairns, there was quite a “hullabaloo” and the loud speakers were summoning me to the Customs Office immediately. They were ready to “eat me alive”, but I explained that I had written to them with no response so had brought the material with me and had declared it in accordance with the requirements.

They calmed down when they realized that I had not done anything wrong, and told me that they would have to destroy the material. I objected strongly, and they told me the only way I could have the plants was to have them grow them in their nursery in Cairns, and if there was no disease in them they would send me the plants later in the year. But, it would cost me \$26!

I agreed and paid the fee, and in about six months, when we were living at 44 New City Road, Mullumbimby, the plants arrived in the post, in the dead of winter. I planted them all out, but the frosts destroyed them soon after. So, I contacted them again, and asked if they could send me a second batch of cuttings etc, in Spring, which they did, and we still are growing these special high protein sweet potatoes called Okinawa, which we had imported to PNG and Kabiufa many years before. We also have Taro KongKong and the red-ribbed leaf Tapioca growing at various locations round the country.



**Tapioca(Cassava) growing in our garden. Leaf similar to Marijuana.  
Behind it is the special Okinawa High Protein Sweet Potato.**

Our first posting on return was to Murwillumbah, but the church people there did not want a returned Missionary as their Principal, so they sent me to Mullumbimby. It was a small group of children and the school was the upstairs room of the church hall, with the carpark as the playground! I did not like the set-up at all as it did not meet the basic requirements for a school, so I campaigned parents and conference to find a better location with proper facilities and grounds for the children to play and have gardens and so on.

Finally, a good-sized block was secured on the Main Arm Road, and I drew up plans for the new school building which were accepted by Byron Bay Council, and work began with great gusto at first, but then the workers dwindled down to a few faithful parents and myself to complete the task.



**Seventh Day Adventist Primary.**



**Opening Day for our New School.**



**MULLUMBIMBY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SCHOOL – 1975**

FRONT ROW: (left to right) B. Lang, C. Lang, R. Richardson, G. Taylor.  
 SECOND ROW: S. Menkens, C. Taylor, S. Rayner, K. Youngberry, K. Taylor, D. Rayner.  
 THIRD ROW: M. Williams, S. Lang, G. Weir, D. Parmenter, N. Wilson, M. Bray, C. Bray.  
 FOURTH ROW: Mr. D. Menkens (Principal), T. Hankinson, P. Mitchell, R. Menkens,  
 D. Thompson, R. Bray, Mrs. R. Menkens (Infants Assistant).



We spent six years at Mullumbimby, and enjoyed the mild, pleasant climate and the people.

In square ten millimetre steel bar, I made a large insignia for the front wall of the school, depicting the Three Angels of Revelation 14 flying across the world. I had it chromed and it looked great, but last time I drove by it had been removed, in line with the trends throughout Seventh Day Adventist Education, where “Seventh Day Adventist” is expunged and “Christian” used to replace it.

This makes me sad to see the denomination I served for nearly thirty years, pulling down the banner which we should be holding higher and higher before the world. Now it's just “Toowoomba Christian School” , or “Mullumbimby Christian School” and so on. Even “Avondale Missionary College of Seventh Day Adventists” is now just “Avondale College”.

After a year or so living in the town, we sold at New City Road, and bought a twenty acre farm on Coopers Lane, about four miles upriver. It was a beautiful property and could grow anything, especially all the tropical fruits and foods that we enjoyed using. We had horses, a tractor and machinery, and set up an irrigated Paw Paw and Banana Plantation. We sent off many consignments to the Markets which helped to swell the finances to cover school fees and general expenses involved with raising five children.



**“DARENELLAR” - A BEAUTIFUL 20 ACRES ON COOPERS LANE.  
We had Bananas, Pawpaws and small crops plus Orchard Fruits of many kinds.**

The back part of the property was a hill with lots of good timber trees. One day as I was walking through the bush to choose some trees to cut for some building needs, I noticed lots of plants growing between the trees. It had a five-fingered leaf and it was indeed Marijuana. The local hippies from further up the valley, were using the secluded backside of our hill to grow their dope.

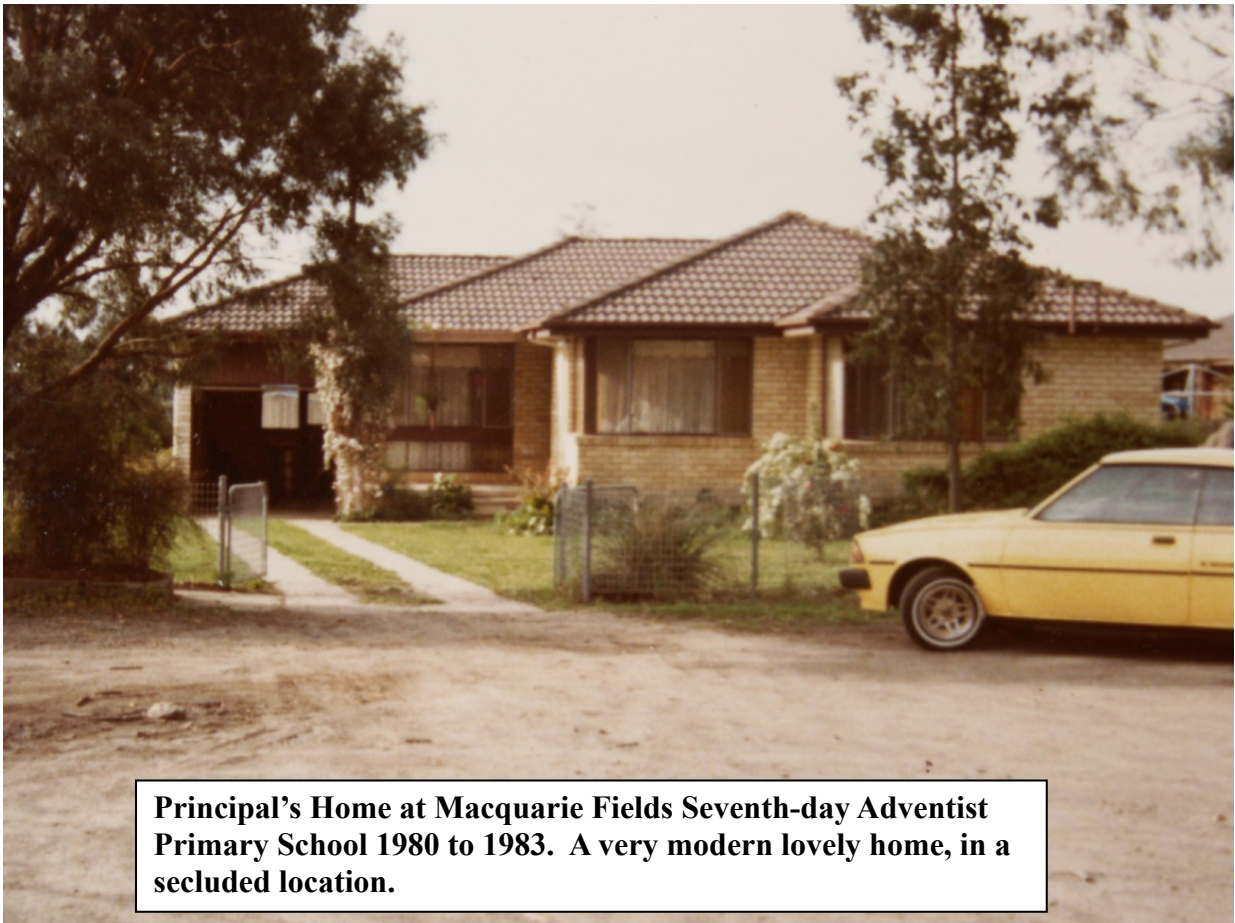


I removed all the plants I could find, but when I came back next week to check, there were more planted there. Eventually, with signs and word of mouth, and repeatedly removing the plants, I managed to stop them.

I also found a group of pot-plants under the Lantana when I was clearing some land behind the house, and took them into the Police Station. The officer seemed very glad to get them and said he would use them as a display. I'm not sure what sort of a display he intended, but I didn't see them in his office next time I visited!

Mullumbimby had quite a large church family, and a beautiful church building. We had many good friends during the time we spent there. I enjoyed helping out as Sabbath School Organist and taking sermons for them on occasions.

Because our children had need of Upper High School Education, which was not available then at Murwillumbah, we accepted a post to Macquarie Fields in Sydney West. When we arrived there was a large Fruit Orchard on one side of the school property, a Poultry Farm at the rear, and across the road the CSIRO experimental farm. The School and Principal's home were set back off the front road, and it almost seemed like country living at first.



**Principal's Home at Macquarie Fields Seventh-day Adventist Primary School 1980 to 1983. A very modern lovely home, in a secluded location.**

Within twelve months, the orchard was gone, curb and gutters put in place, and concentrated housing development built, with a high fence next to us, and houses all over the “orchard”!

The Poultry Farm has since been sold for more housing development, and now I believe the experimental farm has also been closed and buildings all over it too.



**Clothing & supplies ready for the Mission Fields. The children enjoyed helping with these projects .**

We enrolled our high school children at Strathfield Seventh Day Adventist High School, but our children lasted only a short time there. They just could not handle the rush and bustle of catching crowded buses and trains, and opted out after only a couple of months.

Richard left to study and live with a “friend”, and we arranged for Sharon to be enrolled at a Baptist “Ace” School at Campbelltown. She liked the school and did very well for a while, till the school started putting extreme pressures on the students to excel above other similar schools. She asked me if she could leave if she found a job, and I agreed. She had a job in a day or so, in a store, and so ended schooling for our children. Jennelle gave up Avondale to work for Nick Pisciuneri, a wealthy business-man, Wendy had married Hans Breiholdt while we were still in Mullumbimby. Caroline had trained as a Nurse at Sydney Adventist Hospital, and married Graham Baird, a student teacher from Avondale.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN—UP TO DATE

We spent four years in Sydney. Looking back it was an unwise decision, because we virtually lost our children. It would have been better for us to have stayed on our farm at Mullumbimby, but we believed, at the time, that we should provide schooling within the church school system, for our children. The shock of changing from country living to the fast pace of the city was just too much for our children to cope with. There were also too many distractions to draw them away from us, and away from the Lord. Oh, that we could turn the clock back, but unfortunately that is not possible, so we must accept the results of our decisions, and do our best to redeem the time.

After four years, we were called to re-locate to Townsville to take charge of our Seventh Day Adventist School at Aitkenvale. My brother Terry, also a teacher, taught there years before, and had been instrumental in building the lovely school facility.



**Our Seventh Day Adventist School pupils and teachers in 1984.**



**My brother Terry addressing Parents and Guests at the Opening of the new Townsville SDA School.**

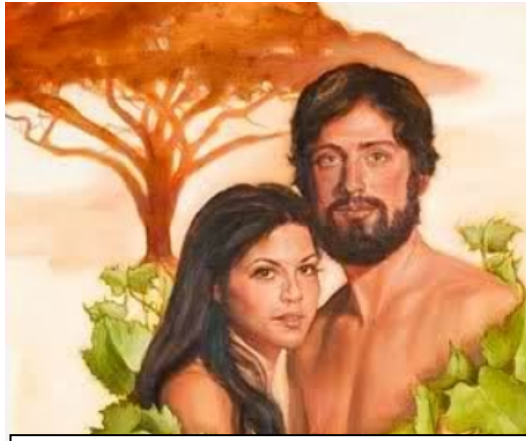
We spent only one year there, as we had serious problems with the church administration in Townsville. They did not approve of my preaching the three angels' messages. I tried many times to speak with the leaders but it was all in vain. Even dear old Pastor Burnside was not allowed to preach in the town church. Without going into all the sordid details, by the end of the year, I felt I needed a break from teaching, so I asked for leave to allow myself to do some other type of work, and to try to clear my own thinking. The President, Reg King, told me that policy did not allow me to take leave, unless I was going to do further studies, or if I was sick.

Well, after nearly thirty years of continuous teaching, I wanted a break from bells, books, parents, children, programmes, and inspectors. I certainly did not want to go to Avondale to do further studies. I was not sick physically, so could not use that excuse. I just wanted a break, so Reg suggested I resign, but he assured me that as soon as I felt refreshed, I would be on the top of the list for re-employment, so I resigned. Soon after this assurance, Reg visited Darwin, and word filtered back to me that Reg had told the people there that Menkens had re-signed and that there was no way he would be re-employed!

Hmmm! I found this incredulous, and chose not to believe the story. It was about twelve months later that I did feel refreshed, and I noticed that the Record had an advertisement for experienced teachers. I duly offered my services in writing to the Division Education Department at Wahroonga, and also asked for verification of my teaching service over the time I worked for the church. They replied in due course, and gave me the list of where I had taught over the period, but there was not one word in regard to my offer to teach for them again. Now, the story from Darwin, became quite credible!

After resigning from teaching full time for the church, we did many interesting things. I offered my services relief teaching in state and denominational schools in the areas where we lived, and had many very enlightening experiences working with children right from Pre-School to Year Twelve in High School. One day at Kingaroy High School, I was asked to care for a Year Twelve class. I was given a video to show the students, and then we were to discuss it as a class.

The video depicted the lifestyles of three different couples –an elderly man and woman, two men living together, and then two women. Homosexuality was being portrayed as normal lifestyles! What a shock! I could not refrain from sharing my position on the situation, and the students listened without comment as I shared my belief in the Creator and his original plan for His creatures, which was Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve!



**Adam and Eve-not Adam & Steve!**

Because the Theory of Evolution, which is all it is—a theory—is being taught as Truth in all government schools, and some denominational schools also, the young people are not being given the answers to the most fundamental questions they all eventually have to answer. These are:

1. Who am I?
2. Where did I come from?
3. Why am I here?
4. Where am I going?

Evolution teaches them that they just evolved as accidental amalgamations of coincidental molecules, or in simpler language—from some slime in an ancient swamp! Their purpose here then is also accidental, with no particular destination! In other words they have no identity or purpose or reason for their existence, and they have no idea where they are to end their existence. No wonder they are committing suicide in ever greater numbers! No wonder they feel they can do as they please and have no regard for any laws. It is alright to do whatever seems right to them. They are answerable to no one! Survival of the fittest is the only rule they embrace, and we are seeing this demonstrated more and more as time passes.

How different the young person's outlook on life when they realize they were created by God in His image, to glorify and honour Him, to embrace and follow His moral and physical laws and if they accept His unspeakable gift, they can live throughout eternity with Him, ever learning of His Omnipotence, His Omniscience and His Omnipresence. What a contrast!

We have also enjoyed travelling to the Murray River area to do some seasons of grape picking near Mildura, and Robinvale. We have met lots of new friends, and learnt lots of new things about different areas of Australia.



Ruth and I also did training in Natural Therapies, and have run a number of fourteen-week Courses as Instructors, at Kingaroy TAFE, and also a six-month course for international students in New Zealand. We have had several attempts to set up Health Retreats in different locations in Australia and New Zealand. We both helped to pioneer Cedarvale Health Centre at Kangaroo Valley near Nowra, and it is still running and helping many people to regain and maintain their health. All the Hydrotherapy equipment originally used at the Sydney Sanitarium while Ellen White was here in Australia, is now being used effectively at Cedarvale.



**Students Learning Healthy Meal Preparation in NZ.**





**Some of the Pioneers of Cedarvale Health Retreat at Kangaroo Valley near Nowra.**

We also spent ten years running a Worm Farm at Ellesmere, and had people employed in the business. It brought in good income, and was becoming very popular for recycling household green wastes. We would market our products at Sunday markets sometimes as far away as Maryborough, Brisbane and Toowoomba. We combined the Gospel Book Work with the business and had some wonderful witnessing experiences wherever we went.

Each week-end we would load the van on Saturday evening and get a little “shut-eye” before leaving at 2 or 3 am for the Sunday markets, in Toowoomba, Cabarlah, Mt Gravatt, Fernvale, Carindale, Eumundi and wherever else we could sell our recycling units. We sold the Worm Units for \$100, with some pulped paper for bedding in, 2000 Earthworms packaged in wet pulped paper in buckets, with a bag of Earthworm Castings, and a 2 litre bottle of Liquid Cast. Our highest sales for one morning came to \$1200. People liked the idea of recycling their kitchen wastes and then using the Liquid and Solid Castings in their gardens and pot plants. There is nothing so effective to stimulate plant growth, and completely natural.



As we were travelling early one Sunday morning, to the Eumundi markets, we were listening to “Maca in the morning”, on the radio. I decided to phone in to speak to Maca. When we were eventually connected, I said, “G'day Maca! We're travelling down the Bruce Highway to Eumundi market with two hundred thousand stock on board. They're all quietly munching away on their food in their compartments behind us.” All went very quiet for a few seconds!

Then I let the “cat out of the bag”, and explained about our cargo of earthworms. When we finally arrived at the market to set up it seemed nearly every person there had heard our call, and we sold lots of earthworms and re-cycling units that morning.



**Setting Up our Stall at a Sunday Market.**

We also worked at Living Valley Springs for quite some time, as Therapists and Lecturing the guests on Health and Lifestyle Education. We had many very interesting experiences there and learnt a lot about how to help people with all sorts of health issues. Gary Martin asked me to run a training school for them, like we had done in New Zealand, but the Sanitarium had first priority on our students, and we found it impossible to do any organized classes.

For four years we were Caretakers of a large Cattle property on the shores of Somerset Dam, and after that we moved to North Aramara, fifty kilometres west of Maryborough to care for a friend's large property also for four years. We set up orchards and gardens, and spent a good part of our time in general maintenance, repairing water tanks, guttering, buildings, fences, gates, and caring for the Stud Braford Cattle. Greg Irvine, the owner, helped us build a brand new home, from his Kit Homes Business, and we enjoyed the peace and quiet of the whole situation. He found himself in quite a lot of debt and decided to sell the property, and so we had to move away at the end of October, 2011.



**Building our new Kit Home at Fairview.**



**Roofing in Progress.**

We decided to retire from full time employment when we left “Fairview”, and have taken up House Caring which has been very interesting and enjoyable. We purchased a Shipping Container and have stored our furniture and personal effects in it. I have built a large shed over the container which is situated at the back of my daughter's place at Ellesmere, as she has acreage and lots of room. The big shed keeps the container cool, and has space for our caravan when we aren't using it, and also our trailer and tools and so on, and space for our vehicle. The shed also provides good rain water for a small tank, and that has been a real blessing.



**The Big Shed over Container with Space for our Caravan on the Left, and Car Space on the Right at Wendy's Place.**

The House Caring Club costs \$55 a year . We just state when we are available, how long we would like to stay, and the areas we'd like to visit, and they keep sending us offers daily of people who want someone to care for their properties. It is possible to see the whole world through the Club. We have cared for some lovely homes in mainly rural areas, in Sarina, Atherton, Yandina, Kingaroy, Stanthorpe, Canungra, Dayboro and Nanango, Camden, Bunbury in West Australia, Kalamunda and

Wanerie, ninety minutes north of Perth. It has given us opportunity to write and I have completed one book, and have two others in the “pipeline”. If you’d like a copy of my Book of Mission Stories, just ask and I’ll send you a downloadable copy on Google Drive or a hard copy if you wish.

**MISSION STORIES FROM HOME AND ABROAD**



**© 2011 and Ruth Mearns**

The House Caring has allowed us to meet lots of new people and we have made some wonderful new friends. We have also been able to share the Health and Lifestyle Education programme and the Gospel with lots of new people. Though both Ruth and I are now more than seventy-nine years “young”, we still are enjoying relatively good health and we wish to continue sharing the “Good News” for as long as the Lord provides us with strength of mind, body and spirit. Following God's Eight Laws of Health has brought us both wonderful blessings which we have been able to share with others, wherever we go.



**Our Family. Richard, Caroline, Wendy, Ruth, Don, Jennelle and Sharon.**

If you'd like to know more about us and how to use God's Eight Natural Laws to get well and stay well, please visit our website at:

**[MISSION STORIES FROM HOME AND ABROAD \(2\).zip](#)**

**(Copy and Paste into your Browser if link fails.)**

Ruth and I wish you God's richest blessings, and we hope to meet you all one day when He returns to gather His children. With love for all and malice toward none.

**Don and Ruth Menkens.**

**Mobile : 0428 100 527**

**Email: [ruthandon@gmail.com](mailto:ruthandon@gmail.com)**

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## **CHAPTER EIGHT--LOSING RUTH**

It was 2013 and Ruth and I were caring for a home in Nanango for some friends. One morning, Ruth had a strange turn and couldn't get herself up from the bed. I called my daughter Wendy and we both tried all we knew but she was obviously very unwell, so we called the Ambulance and she was taken to Kingaroy Hospital.

After many tests, the doctors decided to send her to Brisbane that night by plane. We travelled down by car the next morning, and were told that Ruth had suffered a serious heart attack and that there was nothing they could do to help her. She was taken to the Palliative Care Ward with no hope of recovery we were told. It was a terrible shock to myself and all the children. The staff at Princess Alexandra Hospital advised us to seek out a hospital to care for her till she passed away, but while we were there we had some Godly friends come and they conducted an anointing service for us.

We checked the available hospitals, but none made us, as a family, willing or at peace to place Ruth in any one of them. Caroline and Graham offered to take her into their home in Brisbane near Wynnum, and Caroline would treat Ruth herself, but only if she could have help from her sisters, Wendy, Jennelle and Sharon. They all agreed to help and amazingly, in a little while, Ruth began to feel better, and eventually she was completely well.

For the next three years we continued our House Caring, enjoying our stays in different parts of our wonderful country. I was so thankful to God and the love of our children who gave their time and help to Caroline, who treated her Mum with natural treatments, which with God's blessing, saved her mother's life.

It was September 2016, and we were minding a lovely home for a doctor and his wife who were travelling overseas, just south of Gympie. It was a Sunday I believe, and I was mowing with the Ride-On Mower when Ruth appeared at the front verandah of the home and beckoned me to come in, which I did. She said,

“Darling, I have a pain starting in my chest and moving up to my neck and arms.”

I immediately thought heart trouble and asked if she wanted me to take her to the doctor.

“No way!” she said, so I called Caroline who was able to stop the pain and we had a lovely day and early evening together. At about 9 pm, she said that the pain seemed to be coming back, so she decided to sit up in a chair in the bedroom with a blanket over her lap and pillows behind her, and as she seemed to fall asleep, yours truly went to sleep too. I awoke at about 3am and noticed she wasn't in the chair.

She had a habit of often getting up early and going to the Lounge Room to read her Bible and pray, so she wouldn't disturb me. Sure enough there she was, and as usual I tried to sneak up on her and say,

“Good morning darling!”

She would usually be aware of my presence and say,

“I know you're there!”

But that morning there was no response and when I took her hand it was cold. I kissed her forehead, and it was still warm, so it must have just happened. The Lord put her to sleep so peacefully, but very unexpectedly for me. As you might imagine, I was shocked and shaken to my core. I called all the children, and eventually got through. They came as soon as possible, and then it was a blur of activity as we notified the authorities, and all the people who deal with deaths and funeral arrangements and so on. It all happened just before her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday, after we had spent 63 years together.

The funeral service was at Kingaroy, on 16<sup>th</sup> September, and many, many, friends and family attended. After it was all over, I was so lonely and did not know what to do with myself. My children cared for me for a while, but I felt so lonely like a lost sheep! I tried all sorts of things to occupy my mind, wondering what the Lord had in store for me. I spent most of my time living with and helping my Wendy at Ellesmere, while seeking the Lord earnestly for His directions.

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## **CHAPTER NINE – WHAT A SURPRISE GOD HAD IN STORE FOR ME!**

In December, some good friends in Camden near Sydney, called and asked if I would come and mind their home for them while they travelled to Tasmania to visit their children. They told how they knew I had lost Ruth, but reminded me that my daughter Jennelle lived just a few streets away, and it would be great to have her nearby.

So, I agreed to do it for them, but after a week or two, I was feeling so down and forlorn having to care for all the home, gardens, and chooks, and doing all the household chores of washing, cleaning, preparing meals and only seeing Jennelle now and then. I got to wondering if perhaps there may be some woman on the net who might be a suitable Godly companion. Ruth told me a number of times, that if she passed before me, that I should seek for another Godly companion.

I found a site called Christian Connection, and spent several hours looking for anyone who might have similar beliefs and lifestyle to myself, but no one even came close! Just before closing down and giving the idea away, I noticed a woman whose name was Naomi. If you know the story in Scripture in the Book of Ruth, you'll realize why I decided to check out her profile. Ruth and Naomi were inseparable!

When I checked her profile, I was amazed to find that Naomi, had over twenty matching beliefs and lifestyle ways similar to my own. I will give a description of these and what followed, and you'll see why I believe that only my wonderful Heavenly Father could have brought us together.

When I started to read her profile that she had placed there, a very definite feeling of peace and yet excitement came over me. I continued reading and was so amazed at the similarities that we both shared. In the Bible story of Gideon, God gave him two definite signs. There were over twenty signs He gave me about Naomi and the list just kept growing daily as we communicated with each other. I'll list below the first twenty which were really amazing.

1. Love for God and His Truth is supreme for us both.
2. Naomi and Ruth. In the Bible story Ruth says, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn from following after you; where you go I will go; where you lodge I will lodge.." Two wonderful ladies who really loved God and put Him first in everything. When Ruth and I were married we became united as one couple in the Lord. It is as if she is speaking to Naomi again on my behalf. My Ruthie told me a number of times that if perhaps she passed away before me, that she wanted me to find another companion to

share my life and service for the Lord.

3. We both have had five wonderful children, who are still alive and love us.

4. Naomi had been a widow for nineteen years and I was a widower for just months. Neither of us have been tangled up in divorce, nor have we been intimately involved with any other person.

5. Music. We both play piano and other instruments and love music and praising the Lord in song. Naomi also loves Messianic Dancing, and has taught me one already with more to come. The dances express the Gospel message very beautifully.

6. We are both Sabbath-keepers, and revere His special Day, and the rest of the commandments as well of course.

7. Neither of us are members of any church organization, but we both love the Lord Jesus with all our hearts and minds. We both enjoy the freedom to follow the Holy Spirit's leading as we consider Present Truth from His Word, as our Chart and Compass. We both believe God has His faithful remnant in all the churches and He excludes no one. It's an open invitation for "Whosoever will, may come."

8. We both recognize that God used Ellen White to counsel His people, and that she was given special messages for those who live at the end of time.

9. Our understanding of Life After Death is based solely on the Word of God. There is no eternally burning hell, and we simply rest as if fast asleep till the Redeemer calls forth His saints at His second coming. We both are looking forward to the Resurrection Day, to seeing my Princess raised from sleep, and Naomi's Tom be restored to life with new glorious bodies. What a day that will be!

10. We both have a keen interest in God's way of keeping healthy in body, mind and spirit.

11. We were both christened as babies in the Anglican Church. I still have my certificate!

12. We both had a desire to work for God at a very young age.

13. Naomi doesn't have "dingles and dangles", expensive jewellery or tattoos. Her character and love for God is her beauty. The Lord tells us specifically not to cut our bodies for decoration or make marks in our flesh. Leviticus 19:28. Perhaps a plain wedding ring would be OK, especially today in modern countries where it shows all around that we are married. Ruth used to wear one.

14. We both are heavily waiting on the Lord for His leading, and we believe He definitely is leading.

15. We both are carefully considering the implications of having intimate relations with another companion, and feeling a little "timid" about it, if that is the right word.

16. We both have majored in English, and love reading and writing, and have written our life stories in little booklets as Autobiographies. There'll have to be new chapters written soon I believe.

17. We both understand the correct view on Baptism into Christ, rather than into some church group.

18. Fruit for breakfast seems to suit us both. It certainly does fit in with the body's Circadian Rhythms.

19. Even our vehicles have travelled similar mileage! Amazing!

20. We both are outgoing and love meeting and working with people. And the list grows exponentially as time passes..... more than TEN times what God gave Gideon!

Naomi asked if she could call me on the phone, while I was house caring at Camden, and it was awesome to speak to each other realizing that we were both leading very similar lives with the Lord as our Anchor and Counsellor. So, I asked if we could meet, and we had a lovely day together at her place at Glenbrook sharing our goals and understandings of truth.

At that time, Naomi told me she was interested in another lovely Christian gentleman who had never been married, so I wished her well and left it all with the Lord. About a week later after meeting with the one she thought she could be with, the Lord showed her plainly she said, that he was not the one and that she was meant to be with me.

Wow! When she told me, I was thrilled and since then we have been emailing, and exchanging messages and calls, getting to know as much as possible about each other. I personally have been amazed over and over again, at how the Lord is leading us both, so I told Naomi I'd like to drive down from Ellesmere near Kingaroy, my home base on my daughter's property, to spend a few weeks near her to find out more if our coming together would be possible.

It's about sixteen hours driving, but I arrived safely, and she told me she'd like me to stay at her apartment as she had a separate space for me to have privacy, and that was so lovely of her.

It was Thursday evening when I arrived, and we chatted till late into the night, and then retired. On Sabbath we met the folks at the Seventh-Day Baptist venue near Parramatta, and met some of those dear people. On Sunday the family were to have a "get together" at Katoomba for Heiko's birthday, and it would be a great time to meet the family members who live in the Sydney area.

I was still amazed that the Lord has found another Godly woman who could be a companion for me so quickly after Ruth's passing, for whatever time I have left to live for Him. Linking up with another lady was a really huge undertaking for me, and I wanted to be absolutely sure that the Lord wanted to see me ask Naomi to marry me. So I spent a great deal of time with the Lord in prayer on the Saturday evening. It had been raining almost continuously since I had arrived, and so I made a pact with the Lord. If He dispersed the clouds and stopped the rain, and allowed the sun to shine fully on the Three Sisters near Katoomba, I would take that as a special sign to go ahead.

Well, at 2pm it was still clouded over and raining, and I was wondering if after all the other signs and similarities, that He was going to say "No!" But the rain did ease off enough for us to go for a walk with the family, and the clouds were clearing, so we said our "Goodbyes" and drove off to see the Three Sisters.

***By the time we arrived, the sun had emerged and was shining in full strength on those three rock formations as in the picture below:***

*Oh what a feeling to have my Father's personal endorsement of our union!*



My heart was so full and overflowing with gratitude to my Lord. As we gazed upon the beautiful sight, I told Naomi that these rock formations were misnamed. The tall One on the left was really Yahweh; the middle one was Don and the smaller one was Naomi.

**Then I took Naomi's hand and asked her to be my wife and .....she said, "YES"!**

I told Naomi of the pact I had made with the Lord. We hugged and kissed and were both overcome with the excitement of another amazing and direct answer to prayer. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "A three-fold cord is not quickly broken." We felt so grateful to our Heavenly Father Who is indeed the strong unbreakable strand in our cord. I had brought my camera with me, and wondered how I could get some pictures of this very special occasion, when I noticed two ladies walking towards us. As I approached, and before I had a chance to speak, one lady said, "Would you like me to take some pictures for you?"

I told them what had just happened and they were nearly as excited as we were. They took some lovely pictures of us both, and I'll include some below, as a memorial of this wonderful occasion. I wonder sometimes if they were angels!  
What a wonderful Father we serve!



**Beautiful Full Strength Sunshine!**



**And she said ..... "YES"!**



**Thank you to our dear Father in Heaven.**



**A moment of extreme joy and love!**

## **CHAPTER TEN – WHERE WE ARE NOW--2020**

Well, that's how it all began, and then, after a lovely but short engagement we were married at Springwood in the Blue Mountains, on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2017. We've had a few adjusting moments, but we love each other dearly, and are often thanking our wonderful Father for bringing us together. We find such joy and love on a daily basis growing stronger and stronger as we enjoy life and meet its challenges together.

Solomon's advice that,

“Two are better than one—and a threefold cord is not easily broken”

are very precious reminders from God's Holy Word. What a wonderful Father to have as our Third Strand! What a joy to have a Godly companion to share life with, and to deal with life's twists and bumps along the way.

At the present time, we are settling into our new home at Landsborough on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland. We love the area and have met so many lovely people, many of whom share our love for God and His people. We have had so many opportunities already to share God's love and His Salvation story.

We both enjoy reasonably good health—PTL!. We both consider ourselves very young people really when we put our few years on this earth next to eternity. We both are aware that we are indeed living in probably the most exciting time of earth's history. With what is happening in our world, it surely can't be long now.

Here's some very good advice that I treasure from God's Word:---

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding, In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3: 5,6.

“At the right time, I, the Lord, will make it happen.” Isaiah 60:22 last part.

May the Lord bless each and everyone who is able to read our story.

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Sally, Kerry, **Naomi**, Jennifer, Lori, Helen.



Don and Naomi 2020.