

## Memories of an Apsley Kid (number 2)

The issue of electricity was a point of confusion, even to me after I read over my first issue of memories. Perhaps someone can help with the explanation of why we had kero lamps at a time when I'm pretty sure the picture shows were on in the hall. Did the hall have it's own power plant?

I do know that Kevin Gallagher, (the publican) put in a diesel generator in a big shed at the back of the pub and that serviced the entire town , but I reckon that must have been around the mid 50's. Bear in mind these writings are purely the way I recall things and should never be taken as historically relevant from a records perspective.

We had an old kero fridge with the brand name 'Defender' worn proudly on a badge on the door. I always struggled with the fact that we had to have a little flame burning to keep stuff cold, to me that defied logic.

Still, mum managed to keep things fresh and we never wanted for a good feed. I remember that Cyril Makin (the butcher) used to come around with his (I think) Holden ute with the green wooden box kind of arrangement on the back. It took up all the back of the ute and was maybe 3 foot high with a door on the back. He would drop the back door of the tray down and that would serve as a counter/prep area. Then he would hang up his scales on a hook he had fixed there and he'd be ready for business.

Mum would ask for some loin chops or whatever and Cyril would pull out half a carcass and go to work, it was a work of art, the whole set up.

Mum also had to cope with the washing, she would light the fire under the old copper and add a bit of 'Reckitts' blue and some soap flakes (Lux?) , fill it up with laundry then after a while fish it all out with a broom handle..... not quite fully automatic!

Bill Carroll was the Postmaster, father of Greg , Mick and Helen. Bill must have been a pretty firm task master because every evening Greg or Mick had to cut the kindling wood to light the fire the next morning. It was pretty fancy kindling too, spilt bulloke or redgum, about half an inch square and a foot or so long. It didn't matter what we were doing, those boys were disciplined and if it was either ones turn to cut the kindling they would leave the footy kicking or the cricket game and go home and cut the wood, no argument, no excuses.... away they went.

Noel Hardy ran 'Border Farm Supplies' right next door to the our house/store. At that time it catered for a full range of farming needs and a variety of agencies. Fencing materials, tools, shearing gear, animal health ....well, just about all a farmers needs were catered for. Noel was a bit of a 'different cat' in a lot of ways , that's not to say that he didn't fit in but his view of life wasn't that of the everyday bloke.

I remember Noel began a project in the back shed of 'Border Farm Supplies' and it was to build his own ski boat.... Which he did over quite a lengthy period, more than a year I believe. I would go in and watch him slowly tighten the clamps to bend the timber for the bow, then untold numbers of brass screws and glue to hold the marine ply skin on, many coats of varnish and finally the fitting of the engine. It was quite an exercise and I remember the first day he took it to Lake Wallace, fortunately everything worked well.

There was quite a skiing fraternity at Lake Wallace at that time, Noel used to ski with Cec Chambers and his family. I was fortunate to be Noels 'right hand man' and went with him regularly.

It was a big day that started early and finished late. They became so proficient (although not barefooting in my time) that if it was a bit cool in the evening Noel would do a couple of laps on his one ski wearing a buttoned up SPORTS COAT!!! He never got even a little bit wet. (I said he was different).

It was Noel and his Edenhope skiing mates who constructed the first ski jump, it was out there in the lake, a sloping pontoon, for many years.

Noel was a great one for hunting, legally or otherwise. Duck shooting out of season merely presented a small extra challenge. He loved a feed of rabbit, pigeon, a bit of croc, roo or whatever mother-nature could put up.

He did a fair bit of 'outside the square' stuff. Gliding and flying and I had many a ride on the fuel tank of his motorbike. He was always in search of the next great adventure. Noel was 'Indiana Jones' before his time.

Since I wrote my first bunch of recollections a number of other bits and pieces have come back to me. I mentioned Jack Lane, well Jack had a stepson I believe, because I first knew him as Robin Holland, the son of Jacks partner, but then later his named changed to Robin Lane so I am assuming that there was a union there and they became one family under one name.

Then there were the Carlson's, Frank and Len. Frank had the stock transport business that operated from a shed south of the park, and I reckon Danny and Joan were his kids. I went to school with both of them. The main thing I remember about Len Carlson is that, I don't actually know if he was a good cricketer, but I do know that when he went to play he was the most immaculately attired member of the team.

Jimmy and Pat Turner was another couple who I knew and admired. Jimmy was a real good footballer and my outstanding memory of Pat was her doing a Hula dance in one of the concerts.

Another concert regular I overlooked earlier was Bill Richardson, Bill loved two things in life, beer and singing. He had a wonderful heartfelt singing voice and was greatly appreciated by audiences of that time.

My sister Liz and the Schluter girls, Helen and Anne were a tap dancing troupe of some notoriety and performed regularly in Apsley concerts. They were taught dancing by one Zelda Parker who would travel up from Mt. Gambier on a regular basis to conduct ballet and tap classes for many Apsley kids. She would stay with us and along with the mothers would put in many hours sewing outfits for upcoming shows.

Mum and dad were keen to expose us Dungey kids to an opportunity at the arts, so every Saturday morning for a year or so we would choof off to Naracoorte for music lessons with Ray Clarke. I learnt banjo mandolin and Liz and Joan learnt piano. Both are still capable players. Mr. Clarke did a fair job of teaching considering I reckon he was at least 75% blind. It was probably part of what ignited my passion for music, I have been involved in it in one way or another pretty much all my life, although no great heights were achieved it has been a very enjoyable facet of my time.

The Pub, the famous and notorious Border Inn, was the centre of much social action and hilarity back then as no doubt it is to this day. There were shearers, farmers, shopkeepers, teachers, coppers, and all types and descriptions lined up shoulder to shoulder. Gor Munn and Aunty Mim used to head down for their evening sip at 4.30pm like absolute clock work. Gor would line up for a couple of 'ponies' and Aunty Mim would take her seat in the ladies room next door and catch up with all the Apsley goss. There might well be an SP bookie around and every Saturday they always had the ABC racing coverage on the 'wireless' with the footy interspersed ....that how the ABC rolled back then.

6 o'clock closing was the rule back then and that made it difficult for any public socializing that included the pub. However, where there's a will there's a way and the 'Private Room' adjacent to the bar got a decent old workout. I remember plenty of nights in there with my parents, a big log fire and Kevin Gallagher ferrying beers from the bar to maybe a dozen or so locals. Big armchairs and a never ending supply of stories made it a very pleasant way to spend an evening even if it wasn't entirely legal.

'Jacky Whites Waterhole' on the western edge of town was the venue for many happy summer hours, there was a big old burnt log that poked out into the water and all the kids used it as a bit of a diving facility, (diving board would be an overstatement) Throw an old tyre tube into the mix it was a day of total fun. The water was relatively clean and occasionally you could catch a few yabbies there. It was a great little swimming hole.

I did touch on school life previously, but the actual organization of the school was a bit of a work in logistics. When I started school in about 1955 we had the main school rooms of the old primary school and there were also classes conducted in the back room (supper room?) at the hall. Then as the population continued to increase they brought in a couple of school rooms that were on a block up the lane beside Max Taylors Garage. I remember being part of a major tree planting day on that block. Miss (Elaine) Brown (later Mrs. Bob Smith); Gerry Moyland and David Cooper are my best remembered teachers. When we attended school up Taylors Lane (for want of a better name) it was convenient to get fish and chips for lunch from Talleyarnus' café..... and you could get a shillings (10c) worth of FISH and CHIPS. It would come wrapped in newspaper and the idea was to tear a hole in the top of the pack and extricate the fish and chips the best way you could. The best part was that when you thought they were all gone there was invariably 2 or 3 chips tucked away in the bottom for an unexpected little bonus.

There was generally a Christmas tree in the park and one evening leading up to Christmas families would gather there and Santa up on the back of a truck, would call everyone's name one by one to go up and get your present. I always seemed to have to wait until way into the night for my name to be called.... Sometimes I would be close to panic.... They've forgotten me!!!! But fortunately that never happened.

Vida, Helen and Brenda O'Connor's was the drop in place but for the next generation up from me, I know my sisters spent many an hour at 'Vida's'. I can still clearly recall Vida leaning on the front gate with her floral apron on, watching the world go by.

Well, that's enough for this little session, if you are an Apsley ite from way back, why not contribute some yarns here? I for one would very much enjoy reading anyone else's perspective on the history of the town. These days when I am in the city and I see kids with their heads into their mobile phones, or playing electronic games, I feel genuinely sad that they perhaps haven't had the opportunity or perhaps the will to know life at a different level. Perhaps they feel they are not missing anything, I would beg to differ.