

Marriage and Motherhood

Cec and I went out together for about six years before we got married because he was out of work for three years and we didn't have enough money. I can remember a friend of Cec's who had to get married. He was out of work too, and living with the girl's parents and he didn't know where he was going to get the money to buy nappies, so he stole some from somewhere. He thought the police were after him and he got scared and hid them somewhere in Leichhardt Cemetery (which is a park now) and went back later to get them. He wasn't used to stealing things and he was frightened. He was telling Cec about it: "Gee, I had the wind up," he said. Cec said to me later: "I don't want that to happen to us. We couldn't live with my mother. She wouldn't be able to keep us. And both your brothers are out of work and your father's only on short time - they couldn't keep us either." Not only that, though - it wouldn't have been a good start to a marriage. But as it turned out Cec wasn't working when we got married anyway.

In his long period out of work he did get one job that lasted for a while. Because he had a motor bike and sidecar, he got a job repossessing radios and zithers. He started off around the city, and ended up right out in the country - down round the Riverina and that on his bike and sidecar. He hated it, because the people he had to chase up were out of work and couldn't pay. They'd paid some of it off and here was the heartless firm coming to repossess it. He knew what it was like to be out of work and have no money and he hated the job. But it was the only job he could get and he had to do it whether he liked it or not. He used to send the money to Mrs Bottomley and she'd bank it, and that's how we got enough money to get married. After a trip down to the Riverina area on his bike repossessing, Cec came back to the firm in Sydney to find that the manager had decided to give Cec's job to his nephew, so Cec was sacked. This was just before our wedding. But Cec had been sending most of his wages home to his mother to put in the bank for our marriage, and we had a little bit there, so we decided to risk it and get married anyway,

because by that time all the arrangements had been made, and the dresses and everything.

There was a little lass I worked with who was a bit older than me, Kitty White - she made my wedding dress. We used to go out to her place and she cut it out and made it for me. And I made friends with another girl at work who was on the finishing, and her name was Rose Annikin. I chose her to be my bridesmaid. I would have had Nida but she got married twelve months before me and she was pregnant - really well on the way, so I couldn't ask her.

My mother gave us the wedding in 27 Cameron Street. She cleaned out the bedroom - she had an enormous big balcony room upstairs at the front of the house and she cleaned that out and hired trestle tables that went right around the room. Her and Auntie Hilda catered for seventy people. It was a salad. I had a friend, Mary Behan - she was a Catholic, and she inveigled the nuns in some way to lend me a veil. It was called a Honiton lace veil, and all the tulle in my wedding dress was mounted on this Honiton lace veil that came right down and spread over the train. I really had a beautiful wedding as far as dressing up goes.

But it was a busy time because I had to make Mum's dress and Auntie Hilda's dress and Mrs Bottomley's dress - as well as the dress for the bridesmaid. But it was busy for Mum, too. I'll never forget it. I was asleep in that big balcony room that morning and Mum came in and woke me with: "Mary, come on! Get up! You must come and see the sun rise on your wedding day." I didn't realise till much later that this was just a ploy on Mum's part so that she could get me up and out of the way so she could get the furniture out of the room so she could put the trestle tables up. Dad would help with that sort of thing, but all the cooking and that fell to Mum - though it was only a salad there was still lots to prepare. They bought a big ham and cut that up.

Mum used to work in Sargents in town in King Street scrubbing floors to earn a bit more money to help get the place at Narrabeen built, and there was a place near there called Morrisons that was like Sargents, but a bit more classy. You could go there and buy really special sweets, and Mum got the sweets for the wedding breakfast from there. I don't think Mum thought about hiring knives and forks. Cec had won a canteen of cutlery as a prize for his pushbike racing, and that went in to boost the cutlery, and Grandma always seemed to have plenty of cutlery. Anyway, we got by.

I got a nice lot of wedding presents, and when the breakfast was over we went downstairs into the lounge and took over the bottom part of the house. They washed up in the bathroom which was off a landing half way up the stairs. The guests all got in and helped with it. They had a keg, I remember, for booze. We didn't have a band or anything like that - only a ukulele and a piano.

Before the wedding, when my wedding dress was finished, it was ironed and put on a hanger and taken with the bridesmaid's dress and the veil and everything was taken to grandma's place in a big clothes basket, folded up very softly. There it was all hung up on the curtain rod. Grandma wasn't coming to the wedding - I don't know why - whether she was stinko about something or what I don't know. As I've said earlier, I don't think Grandma ever really liked me. Do you know what she gave me for a wedding present? A tin baking dish! I couldn't get over it, and Mum couldn't either.

For a going away dress I'd made myself a lovely navy and white dress with a lovely little hat with a little half-veil to go away in. When I look back I have to laugh because I was all dressed up like this to go away in the sidecar of Cec's motor bike! Today you'd have a pair of slacks and a cap and all sporty stuff on, you know.

About half past nine, Cec and I snuck out of the wedding. They were all going for their lives still in the lounge room - singing and going on. We'd already said goodbye to Mum and Dad, so they knew we were going. We went off to our little flat down in Louisa Road - the Best Man, Charlie Innes, carried our suitcases for us. We walked down there from Cameron Street with Charlie. We fronted up to Mum's for breakfast the next morning, after our wedding night, and they're all sitting down to breakfast and we got a great welcome. They told us that the night before, after we'd left, Mum was going round asking where we were. No Mary and Cec. "Oh, they've gone!" she said, "And do you know, she's gone and forgotten her nightie!" She was terrible like that, Mum was.

So we stayed there for breakfast with all the rest of them - Auntie Hilda was still there and Uncle Jim and Jimmy, and... anyway, after that we left to go on our honeymoon. Our honeymoon was at Woy Woy in a weekender there that Mum's cousin Bill Systrom owned and had lent us. We used to go up there quite a bit - we'd rent it off him then, but he gave it to us this time as a wedding present. This sort of thing was done a lot - instead of giving couples a typical present you'd do something for them that saved them money.

I can't say that I enjoyed my honeymoon very much. We were both a bit bored stiff. I think what it was, we wanted to get our little nest fixed up, you know. We had the flat at Louisa Road but it wasn't quite up to dick - the cupboards and things weren't fixed up properly and all that. So we didn't stop the week - we came back before the week was up. We came back to our little flat, then went straight up to Mum's to let her know that we were home, and to Cec's mother, and got our little flat fixed up the way we wanted it. Of course it was only the bare necessities, but we were able to put our knives and forks in the drawer and that sort of thing. We didn't have a dining room suite or anything - Jack was yet to make that. But it was a nice little flat. It was an old-fashioned house - a big, big place right on the waterfront, which had been made into two flats - one floor each. It had the biggest lounge room you ever saw - Cec used to swing a golf club in it. He used to practice his swing. (Of course there was no furniture in there at that stage.) But I don't like bare windows and I wasn't happy until I got some cottage weave and made some curtains. They were big, fancy curtains, but being a sewer you go to a lot of trouble and you make real good stuff that people who didn't sew probably couldn't have.

Our bed was high, even for those days, and we had green lino and we bought a black goatskin rug to match the black border that was on the lino. I think I got the little flat looking nice. Cec was only out of work for another three weeks when he got a job with Multiplo Incubators at Rozelle, so for a while there we were both working. We'd go to Mum's for tea one night and to his mother's another night. I could bake a dinner and cook a few things, but there were some things I hadn't done, because Mum used to do all the cooking, and it was only the Sunday dinner I think that I used to help with. So I had to learn to cook a bit when I went to Louisa Road. I can remember cooking corned beef: I put the corned beef in the water, then after a while I put carrots and potato and pumpkin in, and it was all cooked in the corned beef water. Cec saw

this and said: "What? You cooked it all in the same water?" "Yes," I said. "Oh, gee," says Cec, "I've got a good housewife here. She even saves money on gas cooking the corned beef."

(Laughs)

Both Jack and Bob were out of work, and they had a couple of mates that they used to work with at J.B.Sharp's. They got together and started up a factory of their own down in Mullens Street, Balmain - Herwig and Thomas - and they employed a few men. I think they started off just with private orders - bedroom suites for people getting married and things like that. They weren't getting enough work, so they were making for a furniture retailer who had a store in the city. "Bennie Bear" they called him, and it was real sweatwork, making for him. But that's about all I can remember about Jack's furniture making - anything else would be only conjecture on my part. However, Jack made our bedroom suite for us and Jack took me in to Palings the piano people to pick out the particular veneer I wanted to have. The people who did the veneering were a subsidiary of Palings I think. He was a good tradesman, Jack - he did beautiful work. We also ordered a dining room suite, but we didn't have the money for that, so we changed it to a kitchen suite, which Jack also made - it was white and had one of those leadlighted cabinets. We paid for it all with the money that Cec had saved from his job repossessing. Jack was only working on a shoestring and couldn't afford to have us pay it off. (We ended up getting the dining room suite towards the middle of our time in Louisa Rd, but not long after we moved to Drummoyne we had to sell it so we could buy food. What happened was this: After Cec left his job at Bill Henry's incubator factory at Rozelle he was manpowered into the Australian Optical Company. He'd done a crash training programme that had been brought in because of the war, and he worked a big vertical mill at the AOC making telescopic rifle sights. (Ironically, the mill was made in Japan.) He had an accident with the mill and took the top off his right index finger. The cut went through the bone and the nail, and his fingertip was hanging by a thread, so the insurance doctor stitched it back on. It never took properly - his finger was numb after that. So he was off on compo for about six weeks. The trouble was, compo was about a third of his usual wage, and after we'd paid the rent we only had 7/6d left to live on, and we couldn't manage on that. So we had to sell the dining room suite.

Cec was really turned off the idea of paying anything off after his experience repossessing things. Even much later in life, he waited until he could pay cash for our first car rather than get it on hire purchase, which meant it was a long time before we had a car. Thinking back, if we had've got a cash order for our furniture and paid it off we would have had enough money to put down on a house. We did it the wrong way round, I feel, but Cec was so adamant about not having things on time payment... he didn't even like lay-byes, or anything that smacked of regular repayments.

Another example of this was when we were living in South Street, Drummoyne. I wanted a carpet runner for the hall and a carpet square for underneath the dining room table. They didn't put carpet wall-to-wall then - you had to have a square, and you'd have either lino round the edges or else you stained the boards. We had a hundred quid in the bank, and rather than go and buy the carpet on time payment - this was Cec's idea, of course - we took the money out of the bank and paid cash for the carpet square and the runner for the hall. Religiously I had to go up to the bank every Monday morning and pay into the bank what I would have had to pay if I was

paying the carpet off on time payment. Of course we paid it off pretty quickly like that, and as soon as we'd replaced the hundred pounds Cec said to me: "There you are. We've bought the carpet and it hasn't cost us a bean for interest." This way he showed me that it was cheaper to go without until you could afford to buy it.

Mum could never seem to do things that way, though. She had to get cash orders to buy my wedding frock and the sheets and blankets she gave us as a wedding present. All the stuff for my wedding was bought at the last minute before I got married. (*Laughs*). Memories, eh? But they were good times even though they were hard.

Cec was always a very handy man - he loved working with his hands. Down Louisa Road there were a lot of shipyards, and during the Depression most of them were closed down. We used to go for walks along there and get in through a hole in the fence and poke around. On one of these walks Cec came across a big piece of timber in the overgrown grass in one place. He didn't say anything to me but the next weekend, on a wet, windy Saturday morning before dawn he got out of bed, put on his big old overcoat that he used in wet weather on the motor bike, and went down to pinch this big lump of wood. It was a piece of teak about eight feet long and eleven inches by five inches through, and it turned out to be part of a ship's deck. He got a rope around it and manhandled it down into the water, and walked along the waterfront manoeuvring it around or under jetties and house fences and that till he'd floated and towed it around to the steps in the sandstone wall that bordered Birchgrove Park. At one stage he had to get it around a jetty, and the lower steps were slimy with weed and he slipped and nearly fell in. He thought he was a goner, because he never learned to swim. He left it tied up to the steps and came home and had a shower and got back into bed and he was a cold as anything, 'cos it was winter. What you can do when you set your mind to it. Anyway, after he'd had his breakfast he went up to Mum's and got my young brother Bob to help him - Jack wouldn't be in anything like that - and how they trundled it up to Cec's mother's place in North Street I don't know, but they got it there. Cec's Uncle Dan was still living with his mother then, and he told Cec how to set it up and make a bench top out of it. He learned quite a bit like that from Uncle Dan. The bench stayed at North Street till we moved to Drummoyne, and that's where it went into the second bedroom and became the bane of my life for years.

When Cec was still working at the Australian Optical Company during the war making telescopic rifle sights, he brought some flour bags home. I soaked them, but couldn't get the Sydney Flour brand and other writing out of them. They were a good calico material and I made him some of those boxer shorts-type underpants from them. (Cec liked the loose legs - he always said that he liked to swing free!) When I used to hang the washing out, everything could be seen by the girls working in the tie factory next door and they used to laugh and say: "There's Mary got Cec's flags flying again." He didn't care, and reckoned that nobody knew they were like that when he went out. He wasn't flash.

Before I had Bill I used to go up to Mum's - living in the same suburb as we did. I'd get my work done early and I'd get a bit bored so I'd go up and sit and talk to Mum. To walk there took less than half an hour. One of Dad's nephews lived in Grove Street, which was on the way up. His name was Bill Reuter. I forgot to mention him when I was talking about the Reuters. He

married an Irish girl named Winnie, and she had a lot of children. When he married her she already had one, Kathleen. Then to Bill she had Bubba, Winnie, Elizabeth, then two boys, then Roma - seven children. But she was a young-looking woman. I used to call in there sometimes on my way up to Mum's and talk to Winnie for a while. I liked her - she was a young mother and although she had a tribe of kids she was still young in herself, and full of fun. Bill was a bit serious though. Winnie had her last baby, Roma, when I was 17. She had it at home with a midwife, and my mother went and helped the midwife. Winnie said it was all right if I wanted to go down too, to see the baby born, and I wouldn't go. I said: "No thanks. If I saw a baby born I mightn't want to have one - I'd be too scared." I often wish I had gone... Still, it was just as well, I suppose.

When one of the Reuters had a new baby the whole family would descend upon them to see it. Gosh! They used to seem to come from everywhere. Winnie used to play the mandolin and sing. Roma would have been three days old, if that, and Winnie was sitting on the couch with all her friends around playing the mandolin and singing! One time Mum and I were out in the kitchen making tea for the visitors. We found out who took milk and who didn't, and we didn't have enough milk. Mum went in and whispered this to Winnie, who said she'd get us some. With that she came out into the kitchen, expressed her own breast milk into a little jug, and put that on the table. Nobody noticed they had mother's milk. (*Laughs*) I can remember I was really, really shocked by this at 17 - I suppose you got shocked at a lot when you were 17 in those days.

Cec's younger brother Gordon was a policeman, and he used to get issued with two suits a year - a winter weight and a summer weight, and he'd never wear them out. He used to pass this beautiful serge material on to me, and I made clothes out of it. All Bill's school pants were made from it. And Cec's older brother Eric was in the Air Force, and he gave us a lovely big overcoat. Little boys wore overcoats in those days, not the nice light windcheater things like you have today, and I unpicked Eric's overcoat and made Bill a beautiful little overcoat from it with a velvet collar and a pleat in the back. The kids were always well dressed because I was a sewer. I don't know how people existed on one wage in those days if they couldn't save money like that. I used to make all the kids' clothes, and all my own clothes, and Cec's shirts and haversacks. Years later, when he was at Ryde Council, Cec used to bring home the shiny light blue plasticised sheets that they used to draw the engineering plans on. When you soaked the blue surface finish out of it you were left with a fine lawn material - it was light and soft and strong. It made excellent underpants. We recycled a lot, but we did it out of necessity rather than any environmental understanding. What is it they say? "Necessity is the mother of invention".

While we were in the South Street place Cec always grew vegetables - cabbages, beans, silver beet, and a vegetable you don't see today much called kohlrabi.

In those early years of our marriage we used to have friends in for tea occasionally. Cec was best man for Walter MacFarlane - Walter was Nida's brother, and he married Bessie Dalley. They used to come to our place for tea. I'd always put a nice baked dinner on whenever we had guests and we'd eat it out on the verandah on a collapsible table that Cec had made. Cec and Walter were real good mates, and Bessie was good fun too. Nida seemed to fall into the background after that - mainly because she lived in another suburb, and though we corresponded with one another (nobody had the phone on) Bessie seemed to come to be more my friend than

Nida. We had lots of good times with those two. When Bill was a baby we'd put him in his beautiful wicker pram. It was well-sprung and all lined with blue. My mother and two brothers were working then and they'd all put together to buy us the pram for Bill. We'd take Bill in the pram and walk all the way from Louisa Road through Balmain and up to Darling Street - through Rozelle and right out to Leichhardt and visit Bessie and Wal. We'd have a beaut night there together. The boys'd have a few drinks and we'd have some real fun nights there with just the four of us. Then about eleven o'clock we'd walk all the way home again.

Bessie and Walter had a little girl, Rosemary. She was born soon after Bill, and I've got a snap somewhere of the four of us and our two kids all together. They had another daughter later and they both turned out to be beautiful looking girls. But Bessie used to call the second one The Ugly Duckling when she was little. That's a terrible thing to call a little girl, isn't it? They married well, both of them.

Bill was born in Louisa Road - not in the hospital. No 100 I think it was. We lived in the upstairs flat. Bill was born one hot, hot night. Oh it was hot! Bushfires everywhere. They called it Black Friday - they reckon it was as hot at twelve o'clock that night as it was at twelve o'clock during the day. The sun was like a copper ball - it was awful.

Bill was a big baby - ten and a half pound. Nida's mother came down to see him when he was three days old and Bill was lying down on the bottom of the double bed. She came in and talked for a while, but said nothing about Bill. After a while she said: "Well, when am I going to see this baby of yours'?" When I pointed her to Bill she couldn't believe it. "I thought he was three months old," she said, "I thought he must have belonged to one of your other visitors!" When I was pregnant with Bill my stomach was so big that they reckoned that three minutes before I turned a corner you could see me coming. Gee, I was enormous! One woman said to Mum: "I knew your daughter was going to have a big baby, because every time she passed here she was eating an apple." As if that would make you big! (*Laughs*).

The night of Bill's birth (I was having him at home) my water broke about three o'clock in the morning. Cec went to work that morning, and on his way he called in at the midwife's and told Nurse Ibbotson that "the waterworks had burst" and then he went on up to Mum's and told her and she came down. My Dad wouldn't go to work and he came down and sat on the verandah all day while I was in light labour. The nurse stayed with me all day. I had to be shaved and that. She was a bit of a wag, this nurse, and she painted a flower on the cheek of my bottom with mercurochrome as a bit of fun. Bill arrived just before ten that night. Cec was pacing the back verandah, and it was a pretty hard birth because he was a big baby. I think I moaned a little bit and they had to shut the windows in case the teenage girls next door heard. The doctor finally came, and I suppose the pain must have been fairly heavy because he put a cone over my face and gave me some chloroform, and I just seemed to drift on to a beautiful cloud. There was no pain there and it was lovely. I was hanging on to Mum's hand. Normally, in the olden days you had a bedpost that you'd put a sheet around and you'd hang onto that and bear down. Having no bedpost, Mum used her hands for me to hang onto, and my fingernails cut right into the palms of her hands. She never said anything at the time, but by the time Bill was born she had blood on her hands.

Bill was born with a big lusty cry. It was a lovely moment, even though I was exhausted from all

that effort on such a hot night. But I don't know, there's just something special about when they put that baby in your arms.

I was laying there later that night, pretty comfortable by now, and Bill was asleep beside me in his little bassinette that Cec had made him and that I'd dressed up with all fancy furbelows and bows and goodness knows what. It was so hot that we had the front door open, and the open front door used to look straight into our bedroom. Our milkman was a young lad who was mates with both my brother and me as we grew up. In those days the milk came in bulk and you used to leave your billy can out and they'd pour it into there. When Kevin came up the stairs to deliver the milk I invited him in to see my new baby, and Cec took him outside and made him a bit of toast to take on his rounds with him.

The nurse was really lovely. She was just like a mate. Cec went off to work the next day, of course, then Mum came down, and Auntie Hilda and it was quite a big thing because Bill was the first grandchild in the family, and the first great grandchild.

When Bill was born Jack's then girlfriend Nell came and looked after me, because you had to stay in bed in those day for ten days after the birth. She cooked Cec's dinner and sat with me and washed my nighties and did all those sort of things - generally like a live-in maid sort of thing. We didn't have any money to pay her for what she did, but Nell didn't go to work - which is why she was able to come down and help out. But because I couldn't pay her I bought a piece of material and made her a frock, and she was quite happy with that. Nell was a beaut person. She was always full of fun and always had a joke and smile on her face. She was great to have around you.

I never had any real trouble with Bill as a baby, except that he got colic because I had so much milk that he'd gulp it down and take a lot of wind down with it. He was crying at night and we weren't getting any sleep with him, so I took him up to the Clinic. I was trying to be a very modern mum. They said he was getting too much milk, and I had to cut him down. I had to buy a breast pump and pump off the milk that came fast, and give him the last of it so he had to work for it, which kept my breasts stimulated so that I kept my milk. Before I started this he was gaining twice as much weight every week as he should have been, but when I cut him down he began to lose weight, but things soon settled down.

I gave him a dummy, and he was good-oh while he had the dummy. No trouble with him going to sleep. But the Clinics were dead against dummies. So, trying to do what I thought was the right thing, and following the Clinic's advice, I decided to cut him out of his dummy. Well! He cried and I was upset and I was crying, and I'd shut his door and... this is what the Clinic told me to do, and when I look back I think I was awful to do this - doing what other people told you to do. But I was young, and I was trying to be "modern". In the end, it upset me so much that Cec sent me out for a walk at Bill's bedtime, and within about three days he was going to sleep without his dummy. But he always fought his sleep - right from a little tiny kid, until he got to the stage where he wanted to go to sleep himself. You'd go to town with him, and on the way home he'd be nodding off because the motion of the tram would make him drowsy. I'd say to him: "Just lean against Mummy, love." and he'd protest: "I'm not sleepy. I'm just resting my eyes. "

We were still in Louisa Road when Bobby was born. He was born three years and nine months after Bill. I wanted only two years in between, but I couldn't fall pregnant. I didn't fall pregnant easily, really. Cec was working at Multiplo Incubators at Rozelle then (*laughs*) - nothing to do with me not getting pregnant! - and he worked on the metal parts where they made the little holes for the eggs to go into. But the rest of the incubator was made with Californian redwood because it didn't shrink and stood up to the heat well. Where they sanded the redwood parts was right alongside where Cec worked, and he ended up getting asthma from the dust and had to leave that job later. But that was his first job after being out of work, and there he was working with his hands instead of with his tongue as a salesman. He liked working there, and worked there for quite a few years, until the asthma caught up with him. Bill Henry, the boss, used to follow the bike riders - he was a patron of the club. Cec was scratch man with the club - the Balmain Bicycle Club. Cec and Bill Henry had a fight when Cec left, over wages, and whether Cec was being paid the right money for overtime. But while Cec was working there we were very friendly with the Henrys. We used to go away with them on holidays, and they thought a lot of me too. In the end Cec and Bill Henry made their squabble up, and even after he'd left, occasionally Cec would go there and work on weekends to do a bit of overtime and help Bill out when he was busy. I used to love Mr and Mrs Henry. I thought they were lovely people. They had about five children.

One night before Bill was born, we were in bed in the flat at Louisa Road when Cec woke up quite distressed - he couldn't get his breath. It was terrible to see - I thought he was dying. I ran across to the road and telephoned to get the doctor down who came straightaway and diagnosed asthma. Later, tests with a specialist in Macquarie Street showed that he was allergic to the redwood dust that they used to make the frames of the incubators. They made a serum from this redwood dust and they wanted to inject Cec with it regularly - they were pretty sure that they could fix him. Cec was a bit doubtful about this, but the doctor in Rozelle who was treating him - Dr Burnett - bet him his bill that it would work. Cec had injections weekly during his lunch hour for the rest of the time that he worked there, but Burnett never ever sent him a bill for any of the visits. The idea was to bring up a rash on his arm, but they couldn't get the rash to come out. That meant that Cec had asthma all the time he worked at Henry's. But he didn't have much choice because jobs were hard to come by and he had to make a living. He worked there for quite a few years. He lost three and a half stone when he contracted asthma, but he just stuck it out. Sometimes at night it used to sound like the wind coming around the corner when he was fighting to get his breath. He was in a pretty bad way. When he finally left Henry's he didn't get the asthma any more, but it left him with chronic bronchitis.

Bobby was only born a few weeks when we got the semi-detached cottage at Drummoyne. It had a nice little backyard with a strip of lawn, and it was two and sixpence cheaper than the flat, so we moved and went to 4 South Street to live. It was great. I loved being in the little cottage all to ourselves, and I had a little garden - (I even had a little garden in the flat). But being in Drummoyne it was really nice to put the baby out in the sun, and have somewhere for Bill to play - because there was no yard in the flat. We had a drain outside the kitchen door with a tap over it, and I taught my boys to pee by encouraging them to go in this drain, rather than go to the trouble of the pot and everything.

I was very happy when we went to Drummoyne to live. It was a little semi-detached house, two bedrooms, with a little hallway running past the two bedrooms, then an open lounge room, then a little tiny hallway across the house with the bathroom on one side and a walk-in pantry on the other. That went into quite a big breakfast room, and you walked out of the breakfast room into the laundry on one side. That had an old fuel copper in it, a couple of tubs, the sink, and the stove. Then you walked out of the back door into the backyard. All down the side of the house was a pathway, with a garden down next to the house three or four feet wide. Then there was a strip of lawn running down the other side of the path. I loved that bit of lawn. I used to put the kids out there and give them a cup of milk and some biscuits to eat under the old crepe myrtle tree. And I was happy in that little home. We didn't have any lino on the floor of the breakfast room when we first moved in, or where the copper was - that was just cement floor. And we only had lino right throughout the rest of the house. We had a dining room suite, a bedroom suite in our front bedroom, and Cec's big bench in the second bedroom, as well as the normal beds and wardrobes and things. Gee I hated that bench! I reckon Cec should have built a little shed for himself to give me a bit more room in the house. I had a cane bed settee underneath the window in the breakfast room. Once the kids were out of their cots, one of them slept on that - no, that was when Dad came to live with me, and Christine used to sleep on it then and Bill would sleep on the front verandah. We were so terribly cramped.

Bill had his mates down the street from us, but Christine didn't seem to have any mates around her at all, because there were no little girls around those parts at all. There were a couple of palings off the fence between us and the neighbours up the back. They'd won a television set in something, and Chris used to duck through the fence every afternoon after school to go in and watch the Mouseketeers on television. It had only just come out then. We finally saved enough money to get a bit of lino for the floor, and a curtain or two up at the windows, and finally we got the place looking nice and cottagey - nothing flash though. I had Bobby at Lumeah Hospital in Piper Street, Leichhardt. He was nine and a quarter pounds. It was my wedding anniversary on the fifth of October and I was trying like mad to have him on my wedding anniversary. I was always glad afterwards that I didn't, given subsequent happenings. He was born about three o'clock in the morning on the fourth of October. I was waiting for the doctor to come, and I was in a fair bit of pain. I had two nurses there and Dr Fenner was supposed to come to do the last bit. I'm lying there grizzling because he was late, but he eventually came and the baby was born OK.

At this hospital the baby didn't sleep alongside you. They kept them in a nursery and brought them to you at feeding time. They'd weigh it before they brought it to you and weigh it again afterwards, and if your baby didn't get enough they'd bring it back to you until it did. This was so it would go the full four hours till the next feed. And of course it was definitely not the right thing to do to try to feed your baby more often than that! Bobby was a very sleepy baby (I still think it had something to do with the ether they gave me when I was in labour) and I had trouble getting him to take enough milk - he kept going to sleep. You used to have to rub their cheeks to stimulate them to feed, but in the end he'd give up. But he'd wake before the four hours was up, and they used to leave him there crying till it was time to feed him again. The result was, by the time they brought him to me to feed him he was even more tired through all that crying as well, and he wouldn't get enough again before falling asleep again. I was all right once I got home. I

soon gave up on waiting the full four hours between feeds, too. (I “demand fed” Christine when I had her some years later, and I found that to be much better). We gave Bobby a dummy, and this time I stuck to the dummy with him and found it excellent. I didn’t give him a dummy in between meals during the day - only to go to sleep with. They say these days that Dr Spock wasn’t all he was cracked up to be, but Spock said that a baby needed sucking time, and since you couldn’t give them milk all the time, giving them a dummy gave them the comfort of sucking. And Bobby was the easiest baby to get to go to sleep, and I did the same thing with Christine and she was no trouble at all to get to go down to sleep either. (I didn’t have Ronnie long enough to give him one).

I used to bath Bobby on the tubs out in the laundry, and I had a brightly coloured jug sitting on the end of these tubs. I’d have a big towel spread out, and I’d bath him and put him on this towel and dress him there. One day when he was on the towel Bill was out on the toilet and he wasn’t old enough to wipe himself properly then, and he was calling out that he was finished. I told him to bring his bit of paper in to where I was drying Bobby, who was sitting up. I had one hand on Bobby, and as I bent down to attend to Bill, Bobby leaned over to try to reach this brightly-coloured jug, and as he did he toppled over and fell down onto the cement floor. He hit his head right on the forehead. When I picked him up he was as white as anything and my heart was thumping. I sang out to the lady next door to ring the doctor and get him down straight away. I took Bobby outside - he was whimpering a little bit, but he didn’t cry. The doctor came down fairly quickly and said that he was all right and should be OK if I kept him quiet for a bit, but that I should be prepared for him to have a big bruise because he’d hit his forehead on a vein that runs from the middle of the eyebrow up. By the time Cec came home that night, Bobby’s face was bruised from the middle of his cheekbone right up to his hairline and his eye was closed. Cec wasn’t bad-tempered or anything much in those days, but when he saw the baby and he knew that I’d let him fall, he rounded on me, and said: “What ever were you doing?” Of course I started to cry. He got over it after a while, you know, but he was just upset, I suppose.

Bill was a happy little kid. I never had any trouble finding things for him to play with - easy things like making a train out of upturned chairs, or playing with the pots and pans. Right up until he went to school, Bill used to have a midday sleep. When I put my babies down to sleep I always gave them a sponge down and put them into their nightie to go to sleep. I never put them down in the clothing that I let them run about in, and I reckon that kept the bed sweet and made them associate pyjamas with sleep time.

When Bill was about three we went down to Narrabeen to stay for a while on holidays. Nell and Jack were there too but Jack wasn’t a bit well. He had an ulcer, and he was really crook with it. Mum’s house hadn’t been built yet, and we were staying in a sort of a little fernhouse lined with canvas like a tent with three beds in it and a table in the middle with a hurricane lamp. We were all sitting around talking just after dusk one evening, when all of a sudden Mum sat up and started to jabber away. “I want to talk to Jaycee, I want to talk to Jaycee.” Jack and I knew straight away that Mum had gone into a trance. Then Mum said: “Put a rug around Medie. Medie’s cold.” That meant that Mum was the medium for whatever spirit was coming through. Someone lit a candle and Mum held Jack’s hands and talked to him in this mixed up way. She

was trying to tell him to go to a certain doctor who could cure his ulcer. She kept saying he was big - a big doctor, but she was speaking in a sort of broken English and it was hard to work out exactly what she was saying. Then she said: "Medie's tired now." and started to sing *Abide With Me*. We all joined in, because Jack and I had learnt what to do at times like this from Grandma. There was Mum with the rug around her, sounding strange and looking like an old witch by the light of the guttering candle in the middle of what was then the bush, and Nell's eyes were wide as saucers. She was petrified and had never seen anything like it! She couldn't make out what was going on!

Anyway, later Jack went and looked up the phone book and found a Dr Bigge listed, and it turned out that he'd just come back from England where he'd been studying the treatment of ulcers. He put Jack into the Royal North Shore hospital where they put a drip on him - up his nose and right down his throat - that somehow formed a sort of scab over the ulcer so that the top wouldn't keep being scraped off every time he ate anything. Jack was in there for ten days, and after that he just seemed to go on in leaps and bounds, though he always watched his diet, and gradually his ulcer healed. (My version of that could well be a bit different to Jack's, but that's the way I remember it.)

Cec made the cot for Bobby and the bed for Bill. He always did a good job, Cec. When Bill was little and needed a high chair Cec made it, too. It was solid, with good splayed legs so Bill couldn't tip it up. It was good-oh.

When we moved over to Drummoyne we didn't have enough money to even put lino on the floor in the kitchen and the laundry. The laundry had tubs and a fuel copper, and we had to have the stove out in the laundry, and the sink. The kitchen was quite a big room and we had the table in the middle of the floor and there was a little fuel stove in the corner and a window, and a kitchen cabinet against the wall that separated it from the laundry. After we'd been there for a while we got enough money to buy the lino for the kitchen, and we had enough left over for Cec to put lino on the top of the kitchen table. It stopped you getting grease on the table and making a lot of work for me - it was so easy to wipe the lino down. When Bobby was a year and nine months I'd had him in town during the day and when I came home he went to bed. He didn't want anything to eat because I'd bought a nice fresh cake in town and he'd half eaten that. I'd put him into his cot because he was tired. He slept rather longer than usual, and when I went to get him up around five o'clock I found he was burning hot with a fever, and he seemed to be having a bit of difficulty in breathing. This was in early July - it was a Friday night and I was waiting for Cec to come home from work. On Friday night he always went and had a beer - that was his pocket money for then. He'd go and have a beer with the boys from work and come home a little bit late. I always gave the children their meal early - I wouldn't keep the tea back for the kids. They'd be in their pyjamas by the time their daddy got home, about half past six.

Bobby wasn't a bit well. I'd given Bill his tea. Bobby didn't want any. I didn't want any either - I was too worried over Bobby. I put him in his stroller and was wheeling him about. He was very quiet, and coughing a hard little croupy cough. I rang the doctor. Cec came home from work and was upset to see Bobby not looking well. The doctor came and said: "It sounds like diphtheria. He'll have to go into hospital, but he should be all right." I said: "I don't feel

worried about him because he's had his needles." So he was put into hospital that night.

It was a bit hard to get cabs and things in those days because the war was on. The man down the street had a little girl that Bill used to play with - they were great mates. Anyway, he had enough petrol to get into the hospital so Cec took Bobby into the hospital with this man down the street. I had to stop home because I had Bill to look after. Looking back now I suppose we could have all gone, but we didn't think about that. We got in touch with my Mum and told her about Bobby, and she got in touch with Cec's mother and told her. They came over the next day.

Bill was just going to school at the time - he must have been five, and because the doctor said that he thought it was diphtheria that Bobby had, we had to be careful of any contact between them. It was a cold, cold night, and Mum and Mrs Bottomley came over to stop with us. I don't know now where they slept - all that is a bit hazy now.

Then on the Saturday night, when Mum and Mrs Bottomley were there, we got a phone call quite late to go to the hospital. It was a cold windy night, as clear as a bell. Well, you couldn't get a cab. Cec rang all the cab companies and they couldn't come out to us. I've thought since that we probably could have got the police to come and take us, but we didn't realise this. Talk about babes in the wood! So we started to walk - from Drummoyne to the Children's' Hospital at Camperdown. When we got to White Bay there was a cruising cab, so we hailed him and took the cab the rest of the way to the hospital. When we got there we were told that Bobby had died. From when he first showed signs of being sick till when he died was less than 48 hours. He died on July 6th.

Apparently he'd gone blue or something on the cot, and they'd had him in a steam tent sort of thing because of the croupy type of cough he had, and they gave you steam to moisten everything so that you could breathe. I suppose it was like asthma. The nurses told me later that he was down in isolation because they thought he had diphtheria, and all the medical staff were up in the doctors' quarters. Whoever was on duty, if there was a tracheotomy on any child there that had diphtheria, it was considered an honour to be the first one there - to perform this operation. The nurses told me that the doctors would stream down there once they heard the emergency bell - some of them would still have shaving cream on their face - and the first one there was supposed to perform the operation. Anyway, they told me that Bobby had gone quite blue in his cot and they cut his neck like they do with diphtheria and they put this tube down - but they just couldn't get air into his lungs. He died then while they were attending to him.

That was on the Saturday night, and they asked us for permission to hold a post mortem on him on the Monday to see what it was that he had died of. It wasn't diphtheria at all - it was what they called the Golden Staph. At the entrance to both lungs there was this golden phlegm - like chewing gum, the doctor said. It was a golden colour - this is the way it was explained to us - and the tube they put down, they even put suction pipes on it and everything but they couldn't suck out the phlegm to give him air.

When we got there he was laid out in the little cot, with a mosquito net over him, with a little bunch of plastic flowers in his hand. When we walked in they said: "We've got some very sad news for you..." and both of us knew ...(*breaks off to recover composure*). And so we walked all the way home.

It's a terrible thing to lose a child... A little boy... Nearly two... A dear little boy ...I'd had him out in town on the Friday, and here it was the Saturday night..*(breaks off again)*. Anyhow, we had him cremated. We didn't do anything with his ashes. We just got them and scattered them to the four winds, as they say.

It was a pretty crook time, and relatives, thinking they were doing something good for us to help us over this grief sent Bill and me away up to the Blue Mountains to Cec's aunty's place. We went to her place and stopped a week there and it was the very worst thing they could have done to us, because Cec and I needed each other. It wasn't right to part us, we should have been together - but you do what people tell you... when you're grief-stricken like that you don't think - especially when it was something as shocking as what was happening. Anyhow, we just had to get over that.

I think Bill missed his little brother and he didn't know what it was all about. He'd go down to his mate's place to play in the afternoon, and when he came back he'd put the kitchen chairs down under the table to make a little train. He'd always be the driver, Bill would, and Bobby'd get in behind. But after Bobby was gone, Bill would go down to his little mate's, and when he came home he didn't have anyone to play with. While I don't think he realised it, I think it made a bit of an impression on Bill's little mind, because he always seemed to be a little bit afraid... if I went to town and I wasn't home when he got home from school (and I used to hurry like mad to get back there on time) - he'd be going into the neighbour's place to see did they know where his Mum was. He wouldn't stop there and play - he'd go home and wait for me there. I honestly feel that losing Bobby had an effect on him.

Eight months after that I had Ronnie. He was born about five weeks too soon, and he was the smallest baby I had. He was seven pound when he was born. He was five weeks preemie. In those days the old wives' tale used to be that if you had a baby at seven months he'd live, but if you had him at eight months he'd die. You hear these silly things, and I was a bit apprehensive, but my doctor said : "That's not true. Your baby's finished at eight months and from eight to nine months all he gets is fat." When Ronnie was born he was complete - the only thing that wasn't complete was the sides of his little fingernails - they didn't seem to be quite formed.

I took him home to Mum's. Mum had been looking after Bill and Cec while I was in hospital with the baby. Cec would always take his holidays when I came out from the hospital so that he could look after me and help me get over the birth. He was good like that. So I went to Mum's place, and she had this great big balcony room where I had had my wedding breakfast, and I went up there. Bill had a nasty cold, and because Ronnie was still just that bit preemie when I came out of hospital, we thought it would be a good idea if Bill didn't go near him with his cold. I stopped with Mum for a week, so little Ronnie was three weeks old when I went home to Drummoyne on the next Friday night. The baby was put into my bedroom in his little cosy-by-right beside my bed, and Bill was in his bedroom. The next morning I bathed the baby, and Bill came and watched me bathing him. Then that Saturday night I had to get up to Bill in the middle of the night because he was whooping. I'd never had any experience of whooping cough, but as soon as I heard him whoop I knew what it was. I rang Mum up and told her that I thought Bill had got whooping cough. (I had to ring the little shop near where she lived, and they'd go over the road and get her). When I first got married and went to live in Louisa Road there was a lady

there who lost a little baby to whooping cough, and I knew it was dangcrous if a baby caught whooping cough, so I was a little bit apprehensive. Mum came over on the Monday so we could go and see the doctor, and as soon as he examined Bill and confirmed that he had whooping cough he said: "If your baby gets it, it'll die." Well, you can imagine how that made me feel, after just losing Bobby! We went home and that night Mum took Bill home with her. Bill used to love being with Mum, and I wasn't worried on that account, but he must have been a bit out of his element, and feeling like he should have been with his Mum and Dad, you know, and his little baby brother. The doctor had given me a prescription to get the whooping cough serum to inject the baby with. I ran all over the place trying to get it. It never occurred to me to go to a telephone box and ring up the different chemists, or anything like that. Cec had to go to work to earn the money, and I went all over Drummoyne trying to get this serum and none of the chemists had it. In the end I went up to the public phone (which was three blocks away) and rang the doctor. The sister answered and she said: "Oh, Mrs Bottomley, Mackie and Proust just down from us - they've got whooping cough serum." I thought the bloomin' doctor could have mentioned it. They didn't think much about you - but I don't know, they were overworked - it was wartime ...So I took the baby over to the doctor's in the tram, and he injected the baby with the serum.

When Cec and I went to bed that night, the Monday night, the baby couldn't get his breath - he was turning blue. We didn't know what to do with him, so Cec went up and rang the doctor. He said: "Put him in a warm mustard bath and put cold compresses on his head," (because he seemed as if he was taking a convulsion). It was wartime, and you couldn't buy mustard, and Cec said to the doctor: "Where the bloody hell am I going to get mustard in wartime?" The doctor didn't know, and said that Ronnie probably had whooping cough, and that we'd better get him into hospital, but to get him out of these convulsion things first by putting him in a warm bath with cold compresses on his head. Cec came home and told me all this, and we did it. By this we were so tired, the pair of us, that we had to take it in turns to watch the baby. When he seemed to be unable to get his breath and was going blue we'd sort of push him up in the air and quickly bring him down again, and that little shock would give him back his breath.

By six o'clock in the morning Cec and I had had it, because we'd been doing this all night long. The man next door had a car, and we asked him if he would take us into the hospital. He would have, but he didn't have any petrol. You couldn't get petrol because of the war - it was all rationed, and he'd used all his up. So we went down to the fellow down the street who was a taxi driver and he came good again and took us in to the hospital. By the time we got in there it was about half past six I suppose, and we had to get one of the doctors out of bed to admit the baby. Because they thought it was whooping cough that he had, he had to go down into isolation again where just a few months back we'd had Bobby die. It was a lady doctor, and she was cranky because she'd had to get out of bed (Dr Thom her name was - funny how you remember details about things that affect you like that). We had to take him right down the back into the isolation ward - it was like a big long road. When we took him in there we met a Matron Scandrett, and she was lovely.

Cec had to go home, and I had to stop there to feed Ronnie with mother's milk. I had a bed made up in a little waiting room they had down in Isolation, and because he was premmie he

was being fed every three hours. They got a doctor to him that day - a Dr Vickery, a child specialist. He thought that the convulsions were caused by the serum, and that a baby that young should never have been given this serum.

Ronnie was in Isolation for three weeks, and I went to stay in Mothers' Quarters - going down to feed him. He seemed chubby enough and all right, and was breathing nicely. Dr Vickery sent for me, and said: "I don't think that your baby has whooping cough, and I think we could send him home tomorrow." Oh, of course we were pleased about that and were looking forward to taking him home. But the next day he started to convulse again. He'd been put into a ward of whoopers when they thought he did have it, and he must have picked it up from there. He couldn't have got it from Bill, we worked out in the end, because of the incubation period, and he must have caught it while he was in the hospital. There were four little whoopers in the ward he was in.

It was a very stressful time. I lived for three months at the hospital in the Mothers' Quarters. Mothers' Quarters was situated at the back of the main building and down the lift one floor. It was a sort of big living room with a table in it where you had your meals, and we were all in little cubicles around this big room. Each cubicle had a bed, and a little wardrobe, with a bit of a mirror beside it. My cubicle was right at the back, overlooking the morgue, and I used to see the little dead babies being taken down if I happened to be looking, till in the end I wouldn't look out of the window because it used to distress me so much.

It was wartime, and there was this person there that they called the Mother. I suppose she was a person - she didn't seem to be a human being. She was a real martinet. Crikey, if I met her now I don't know what I'd do with her! She used to go off duty, then she used to come back at night-time to see that we were all having our cocoa and all that sort of thing. There must have been about nine mothers with their little babies there in hospital living in Mothers' Quarters, and they were coming and going all the time. There was one mother there from Forbes, and her little baby died the same night that she came in, and she'd come all the way from the country. I can remember the nurses coming down to pack her things up that were left in her cubicle, and while they were there the nurses... it was just a job to them, I suppose, and they were singing this song - *Elmer's Tune*. I never hear that tune that I don't think of that poor little mother.

There was another mother there who was Scots. She came out to Australia on a liner, and she had a baby, Donald, and he was a blue baby. She'd go up to see Donald and she'd come back and say: "He's got a little patch of red on his palm." I'm not sure how it was, but their blood wasn't compatible or something - one was negative and one was positive or something, and for him to live they would have had to change all his blood, and that hadn't come out then - any more than penicillin or anything like that had - they hadn't been brought out. I don't think they came out till during the later part of the war. She lost little Donald. She'd come out to Australia through all those waters with submarines and everything. The poor little thing. There was another mother there who had twins, and she'd had rubella when she first fell pregnant, and both her twins were blind. A sad case.

The nurses were lovely, though. We'd take our morning tea and we'd sit out in the sun, all us mothers together in a group. I used to have to go down and feed Ronnie from Mothers' Quarters

and you could go along the back part past all the different wards - Pathology and all that. You'd go past them to get to Isolation. When I had to go down to feed him in the nighttime, it was wartime of course and all the lights were hooded. There were little blue lights and you could hardly see your way along. I used to have to walk up a flight of stairs, then go along a long corridor, then down this long road, just to feed Ronnie at ten o'clock at night. When Dr Vickery heard about this he went off pop! He said to the staff: "How do you expect this little mother to keep her milk if she's got to get here at ten o'clock and then be down here again at six o'clock in the morning to feed this child?" "Don't you worry," he said to me, "you come down here at six o'clock in the morning, but you go to bed whenever you feel like it and we'll see that your little baby gets milk. He won't be without. We've got plenty of mothers' milk here." He was a lovely doctor. That meant I could go to bed straight after tea if I wanted to.

But to show you what an awful old bitch this woman who was the Mother was: She wouldn't let you smoke, though some of the girls smoked then. Even if you went into your cubicle to smoke she'd come in and say: "Somebody's smoking in here. Put out your cigarettes." There wasn't the health awareness associated with smoking then - she just didn't want anyone to do anything they might enjoy. We were all intimidated by her. One lady there - her husband was overseas, and her little baby was fighting for its life. Her husband got compassionate leave and came home, and do you know, that that man went into the cubicle with that woman - he hadn't seen her for months and they had a little baby dying, and that Mother woman came in and said she smelled cigarettes, and that she thought there was a man in there. We all kept Mum, and said there wasn't any man, and that it was just that so-and-so had been smoking. So she went around and said: "See that you put your cigarette out!" and they all said "All right Mrs Jenner." and the fellow kept quiet and we sneaked him out after Mrs Jenner had gone home. Just imagine! That woman was inhuman. I can't imagine why we were so intimidated by her. Still, you learn. Most of us were young mothers.

I mentioned before that most of us used to take our morning tea out in the sun, and while we were there the nurses used to wheel the kids out in their cots from some of the wards. Some of them were getting better, and some of the little kids were awful! One little kid used to mess himself, and he'd pick it up and throw it at the nurses. (*Laughs*) And all through the hospital there were signs up: "On no occasion must any nurse reprimand a sick child." And they just used to bear with this one and they'd clean him up and say something like: "Oh Johnny! You *are* a one!", but they never ever roused on him. We used to laugh. You found things to laugh about - even there. We were all mothers, all in the same boat.

Anyway, they didn't give us much hope for Ronnic, and I wanted him christened. I rang up the minister in Balmain that had married us and who had christened Bill, but there was a big conference on and he couldn't come. So I rang up another Church of England minister in Drummoyne, but he couldn't come either - he was going to the same conference. But he rang up the Church of England church in Annandale which is not far from where the hospital was, and there was a young minister there who wasn't going to this conference, and he came down to the hospital and christened Ronnie for me there.

The nurses were so lovely. They had a lovely shell that had a light on it and made a soft glow in the ward, and they put a pretty blue cover on his little cot, and they had the holy water there,

and the nurses came in and they stood around ...(*chokes up here for a bit*). _ I got comfort from the church then. And he gave me comfort, too, this young fellow.

Ronnie was three months old when he got to the stage where he couldn't take the breast, and I used to have to express the milk and put it into a covered mug thing with a top on it and take it to the Diet Kitchen. Then they'd send it down to his ward where they'd feed him by bottle. Then he got even weaker and couldn't even take the bottle, so they had to feed him by tube. See, today they put drips in your arm and that, but in those days they had to feed him with a tube. I never saw them do it - I didn't want to see. I was too distressed as it was. Ronnie would convulse, and they used to put him in a tub of water like the doctor had told us to do. He took these convulsions because he couldn't get his breath because of the phlegm that comes with whooping cough, and he was very weak.

Cec was working night shift, and he used to call in on his way to work to see me and the baby. We used to walk down together to look at him. There were no other visitors there and we used to just walk up to the ward at any time we liked. Then the next morning he'd call in on his way back from work. (He was staying with Mum, with Bill.)

Anyway, eventually little Ronnic got right over the whooping cough, but he got that way that he used to cry when I took him because he'd got so used to the nurses holding him and having a cap on their head. He even put on a couple of ounces. All the nurses knew him - even up in the Diet Kitchen they all knew little Ron. The nursing staff - oh gee they were fantastic! Matron Scandrett was an absolute saint. Dr Vickery said: "I think you could take your baby home next week. And I think you could go home yourself now, and you could send the milk in." And that's what happened.

I went home on the Friday and left little Ron in hospital. Bill was over his whooping cough by then, and Cec and I went home with him to our own place at Drummoyne. This was at the beginning of June. We used to ring the hospital about Ronnie every day, and they said he was progressing well. They were feeding him by the bottle. Cec used to drop the milk off to them every morning on his way to work - on his pushbike - and he'd call in on his way home in the night to see him, and the reports on his progress stayed good. I was tired out by this, and I didn't go to see him that week, because I was sort of recuperating from all the stress I'd been under. I was that thin!

On the Friday though, I went over to see him, and when I went I was shocked to see how he looked. He was like a little wax flower. I saw the sister and she said to me: "Oh Mrs Bottomley, come here. I want to talk to you about Ronnie. I'm taking him up to General Ward today. We think he's got pneumonia."

They had a big single blanket wrapped around him and a little tube up his nose, laying on the cot. He had a little bonnet on him, and he looked so pale and waxen. I nursed him, and took him up with the nurse to he X-rayed, and I could feel the heat from his little body coming through this great big blanket. He must have been running such a high temperature. When we came back I was pretty upset and I was crying. They talked me into going home again and I went home.

As I said, that was on the Friday night. Bobby had died on Saturday night the sixth of July, and

this Saturday was the sixth of June the next year.

We had the little stove going in the kitchen I can remember, and the lady next door used to leave us the key so we could ring up the hospital from there instead of going all the way up to the public phone. She said to us: "If there's any emergencies, come in at any time of the day or night. And if we go out, we'll leave you the key." Anyway, this night they went out, and they forgot to leave us the key. We could hear their phone ringing and ringing, and I said to Cec: "I feel real funny about Ronnie. And the phone's ringing next door all the time. How about you go up to the public phone and ring the hospital?" So he did, and they said: "Oh, Mr Bottomley, we've been trying to ring you all night at the number you gave us and couldn't get an answer. I've got terrible bad news for you. Your baby died." (*Breaks down, sobbing*). We didn't go out to the hospital because he would have been put into the morgue, but Mum and Mrs Bottomley - they went out to the morgue and saw him (*through more sobs*). Anyhow, Cec made arrangements, and we added Ronnie to little Bobby. He had a little white coffin. We lost the two of them in eleven months. (*Long pause*).

It took us a little while to get over that, but we weren't parted that time - we stuck together. I wanted another baby to take their place. My arms were empty. (*Pause*). But I couldn't fall pregnant. There was no way I could fall pregnant. I suppose I was in a pretty low state. I was terribly thin. Anyhow, as time went on I did fall pregnant, and I had Christine.

The hospital was part of the Presbyterian Church. It was in Leichhardt. Booth Street, I think. It was off Booth Street, anyway. A lovely little hospital. There you had your babies beside your bed.... I'm getting all mixed up here - that's where I had Ronnie. I had Chris at a different hospital. I can't remember where it was, but it wasn't as nice as where Ronnie was born. I had to go to this hospital because I was having another doctor confine me - a doctor from Drummoyne. He was named Dr Sillar, and he lived in Five Dock. I had to go to this hospital - it must have been in Five Dock - and Cec came home from work and got in touch with Mum and she came over and stopped at our place and minded Bill while Cec took me out to the hospital. I went in about seven in the morning, and I went all day in labour. The waters broke in the morning, just like they always did with the others. She was horn somewhere round about six at night. The doctor didn't arrive there in time - he got there after she was horn. They came in to me and said: "You've got a little girl." I said: "Not truly?" And they said: "Yes, you have." And I couldn't believe it! I couldn't believe I had the pattern for a little girl after the three boys. I was thrilled to bits! It was a nice feeling to have something real good happen.

Mum was stopping over at my place with Cec minding Bill, because he was going to school. When word came through that I had a little daughter - she was nine pound - Mum went around telling all the neighbours and everybody. Mum was so thrilled, and so were all the neighbours. When Cec came home he wanted to tell everybody he knew about it, but everybody already knew because Mum had already told them! When I asked him if he was upset about that he said: "No. How could I take that away from your mother?" It didn't worry Cec. So anyhow, Chris thrived, and I took her home. Cec came and got me.

At that time it was still wartime, and Cec had a cousin Leila that came from Young. She was living in Newcastle, married to a fellow called Barney Holmes. He was stationed somewhere up

north in the army, and he had access to the mess, and he used to pinch a tin of salmon for me when I was pregnant. Leila was staying with me at the end of my pregnancy - she was pregnant too, with her first. It was great having her there - someone my own age and that. It was really great. She was a great old knitter - dear she was a beautiful knitter. She knitted me some lovely things for Chris. Because Leila was staying there, she was able to look after Cec and Bill when I went into the hospital to have Chris, and get Bill off to school and everything. Then, as usual, Cec took time off work - his holidays - so that when I came out of hospital he'd be there. When I came home to the house Leila had flowers all about and I just sat down to a tea. Dear she was a great kid. We got on very well, and Barney and Cec were great old mates.

Cec used to make home brew, and every time he had to test out a new brew that he'd made Barney used to test it with him, and we used to call Barney our OT - our Official Taster. We used to have some fun with them, and it was good to be able to smile and laugh again, and have a little new baby in the house. She was a dear little baby with a lovely mop of black curly hair. She was a good little baby. But I couldn't keep my milk with Chris. I don't know whether it was all the worry I'd been through or what happened, but I just couldn't keep it. I did everything I could to keep it - I put hot and cold fomentations on my breasts and everything to try to bring the milk back, but I couldn't. I had to end up giving her a supplement, which was a pain in the neck, but in the end she had to go right onto the bottle. But she thrived.

She was a good baby - she never cried. The lady next door had a tie factory in the back of her place, and there were girls in there on machines and pressing these ties and everything. They used to overlook my backyard, and she used to say: "Only that you've got nappies on the line I'd never know you had a baby in the house. We never hear her - she's so good."

But Christine started to get fat. She just put weight on and on. I had her weighed, and I had test feeds, and she was only just getting enough milk. Her bowels wouldn't work, and I used to give her prune juice, and in the end I used to have to give her little enemas to make her bowels work. I took her to the doctor about it, and he said not to worry about it. I also couldn't understand why she wasn't walking. She should have been walking by then. My other kids walked at fifteen months, and they were big babies like she was, and I thought that by fifteen months she should have been walking. But she didn't only not walk - she didn't have a tooth in her head either.

We had a new G.P. start up at the end of our street. He was just back from the war, and he was pretty brilliant. I went up to him and took Chris to see him. She had a bit of a cold, and I just went with that excuse. He examined her and he said: "That little snuffle's nothing, but your little daughter is lacking in thyroid." My heart dropped down to my boots. I thought: "Oh, no! Not again!" And he put his arms around me and said: "That doesn't mean anything. It just means that what her thyroid gland's not making we can give her by tablet." And that's what he did. Well! She'd only been getting the thyroid tablets for a couple of weeks and she had two teeth! She still wasn't walking though. I'd tidy up before Cec came home from work and Bill and I used to take her for a little walk down the street and she'd sort of toddle along in between us, holding both our hands. She could use her little legs that way, but she didn't seem to be able to walk on her own.

I was a bit worried about her, but by the time she was about eighteen months she was getting very strong on these walks and we were going for longer and longer. About this time we were

down at Mum's at Narrabeen with other members of the family, and we were sitting out on the lawn on a rug when Christine picked up a light cushion and took a couple of steps. I'll never forget how pleased everybody was. There was great rejoicing! And she never looked back from then on, though she's always had to take the thyroid tablets.

When she was about four Doctor Turnbull (who'd found out she lacked thyroid) said he'd like to see me take her to a paediatrician. He was in Macquarie Street by this, and I'd taken her in to Macquarie Street to see him to see how she was progressing. I thought a lot of this doctor. So he referred me to Dr Kathleen Winning. She was a great doctor, too. I suppose doctors who look after kids must have some lovely feeling in them. She undressed Christine completely and she went over her from her toes to the top of her head. Then she said to me: "You know, only that Doctor Turnbull told me that Christine had this problem... if I sat opposite Christine in a bus or a tram or anywhere I'd never know that she had that problem. Usually you can tell. I'd like to have her go through some tests. I wouldn't ask you to put this little girl through tests if I didn't think she could cope with it. It's a breathing test, and it will measure her thyroid output."

We had to go out to the Rachel Forster Hospital to have these tests done. Before she had the breathing test they had to take blood for a blood test from her. They took it from the inside of the elbow, and she was so fat they couldn't find a vein. They had her little arm on a pillow, and this needle was going in and out, then they'd put it in another spot, and Christine broke out into a cold sweat, but she never murmured. Then they tried the other elbow, and finally they found a vein and got the blood from her. She had to have a bit of a rest, and then they gave her this test. She had to have a peg on her nose and breathe through her mouth, and there was a paper on a cylinder with a graph on it, and a needle going up and down - you know, like a graph is. And it seemed to be in water, and there were bubbles coming up out of this water. Whatever the bubbles did, they caused the needle to make marks on this graph paper. From this they found that Christine's thyroid was working, but that it wasn't working to capacity, and from this test they could work out what strength thyroid tablets she had to have.

I went back to Kathleen Winning, and she was very pleased, but she said to me: "You can't keep coming here to Macquarie Street to me. It's much too expensive for you. I have an Outpatients' Department at the Children's' Hospital in Quay Street." That was a sort of subsidiary of the Children's' Hospital at Camperdown. So I used to go in to Quay Street with Christine to see Kathleen Winning every month, and she'd look her over and talk to her and all that. There were a few little problems along the way. At one stage she wouldn't eat. All she would eat was bread and honey, and Dr Winning said: "Give her bread and honey for breakfast, dinner and tea - but don't make a fuss about it" So I did this, and Dr Winning was right - she ate bread and honey till she got tired of it and she started to eat different food then.

When Chris was five, I sent her to school - to kindergarten. I don't think she really should have gone to school then, looking back. Although she was five, she wasn't really five because of the setbacks she had at the beginning of her life. Dr Turnbull suggested this to me years later. He thought she shouldn't have started school till she was six. Anyway, she caught up in the end, so I don't suppose it matters now. But she needed more mothering I think before she went to kindergarten. Bill was eight and a bit when Christine was born. If he'd been young enough to still be in Infants he could have seen his little sister, but he was in the Boys' school in another

part of the school, and couldn't go and see her. The segregation was tightly enforced in those days.

The first times I took her to school she cried. I had trouble with getting her to go to school. She used to keep coming after me as I was leaving and saying: "Come back and give me one more little cuddle, Mummy." I can still hear her little voice. She couldn't even speak properly! And she was so tiny that when she left the little stools of kindergarten and went into the Transition class the schoolteacher sent a note home and asked Cec to make her a little stool so that when she sat on the desk seat her feet would touch something rather than hang in the air. Cec made her a little stool of course.

I kept going to Quay Street with her then every six months. Every time I took her there they used to measure her height, and she was put under a Doctor Dowd at the Children's Hospital in a clinic there for thyroid children which was run by Professor Lorimer Dodds. He used to measure her from fingertip to fingertip crossways. He told me that if you measure yourself that way, that it was the same as your height, so they always measured her height that way. Also she used to have to have an X-ray of her wrists and ankles to determine her bone age. Apparently, to be the normal bone age for your height you had to have so many rings or something, whatever it was, in your ankles and your wrists, and your height was spread over six or seven inches - I've forgotten now. If you were above that seven inches you were above average, if you were in between you were average, and if you were below it you were below average. Christine used to always just get into the seven inches range and was termed "average", which was good.

They were always very pleased with her at the hospital. Once she turned fourteen - at fourteen you weren't a child any longer and couldn't attend the Children's Hospital, but the Children's Hospital had a place called Wade House, and it was a private part of the hospital with a part attached to it where Dr Dowd ran his clinic. His clinic was attached to the university, and handled cases that they were still experimenting on, I'm told. So until she was married, Christine attended Wade House. At one stage, when Christine had been at school for a couple of years, she was taken down to a room where all the students used to sit up, like in rows, and they put Christine on the rostrum. She was fairly young, but she can remember going in and seeing all these faces around her. The students had to look at Chris and say what they thought was wrong with her, and not one of them could. They couldn't see that she was sub-thyroid. So that was another feather in Chris' cap.

When she was in the Infants' school they wanted to give her an encephalograph and also an intelligence test. The encephalograph was OK, and when they gave her the intelligence test at Sydney University, the man who was testing her - he was a psychiatrist - he put her through different little tests - little puzzles, and drawings she had to do, and various questions they asked her. They said that she was a very normal child, and that there wasn't a thing wrong with her mentally or physically, and all that I had to do was see that we kept the thyroid tablets up to her. I used to get the tablets from the hospital - it used to cost me two and six for a great big jar of them. She's still taking thyroid tablets and it costs her fourteen dollars!

It was a big relief to know that she was normal. It had been a big worry to me. After losing the two little boys I was frightened to let the wind blow on her, really, in case something happened

to her and she was taken away too. It seems to leave a big scar there that stops you being confident about things.

Anyway she went from strength to strength, and ended up at Riverside High School. She went as far as her Intermediate, and left and got herself a job at Hermann Haege in Harris Street Ultimo. It was some sort of paper merchants, and she was in the typing pool. No, that's not right - when she first left school she got herself a job in at Edel's music store. I don't know exactly what she did in there but she loved being amongst all the music. I think they used to send her on messages, and she used to carry some pretty heavy loads, I think. One day she came home pretty sick - shivering like anything and running a terribly high temperature. I got the doctor down to her and he told me he thought she had glandular fever. She had to have a blood test to find if it really was glandular fever, and it turned out that it was. She was pretty sick there for a while.

When she got over the glandular fever, the doctor said not to let her walk too far, and let her do what she wanted to do - lay about and that. He said that her thyroid production had dropped, and that she had to build that up again. She did in the end. But instead of sending her back to Edels, we sent her up to the local Williams Business College where she learnt typing and shorthand. She was pretty good at the shorthand, but she's forgotten it all now. It was after she finished there that she started at Hermann Haege, and she worked there till she left to get married. She was only twenty when she got married - she was married on her twentieth birthday.

Chris had a problem with one eye when she was at school, and I used to have to take her in to Quay Street to have exercises for it and for her to learn how to control it, because it used to turn in. She used to be in there for about half an hour and I generally sat and waited for her. Nearby there was a factory that manufactured women's clothing that used a lot of outworkers, and one day while I was waiting for Chris I went in there and picked up a bunch of dresses to make at home and bring back the next week. When I took the dresses back the next week they were very particular - they even measured the waist to a quarter of an inch, and that was being a bit pedantic. They were foreigners of some sort, and they seemed to be in a pretty big way. The machines were all going flat out and everyone had their heads down. After they'd checked out the dresses I'd brought back the woman asked me where the belts were, but they hadn't given me any belts when I took the dresses home. They were easy enough to make, so they put me on a machine there to make these belts up before they'd pay me. I'd made about half of them I suppose, seething with anger because it was their fault I hadn't made the belts in the first place, when I suddenly thought: "I'm an Australian and you're not, and you're exploiting me with this", and I went up to the woman and explained about having to go and get Chris from the hospital and everything, and she said, "Well, if you don't make those belts you don't get paid." So I said: "OK. You keep the money. I'm going to pick up my daughter," and walked out. But about a week later a cheque for the money came through the mail. I never mentioned all this to Cec at the time because he didn't like to think that I had to make extra money because it made him look like a bad provider, but I did end up telling him about it years afterwards, and he said: "I wish you'd have told me. I'd have enjoyed going in to rip a strip off them."
