

Appendix:

by Mary's brother Jack Herwig

After Mary's elder brother Jack read through her recollections he provided the following written comments to add a bit more background to some of the memories that they both shared.

Grandma's spiritualism: (Ch 1) Grandma could go into a trance and had two guides, an English-speaking guide called Medie and also a Chinese doctor and herbalist, before he passed over. He would talk through Medie. When he would be delivering his message Grandma would jabber away in Chinese for about a minute. In real life she never knew a word of Chinese.

Grandma was noted for her healing qualities as a masseur. There were three doctors in Balmain who used to send people to her, and if they were too sick to visit Grandma, she would go to their homes.

Some of the cases were more or less hopeless. To illustrate just one case: An 11 year old boy in my class called Fatty Molloy dived into the harbour from the wharf in Snail's Bay, Balmain. Being low tide he hit the bottom and broke his back. His mates dragged him back onto the wharf. He was in the Balmain hospital for months, and was finally sent home, bedridden, never to walk again. Grandma used to massage him two or three times a week, and after two years she had him sitting up in bed. The doctors said it was a miracle, having seen his X-rays. But one night he fell out of bed and died. (I surmise he must have totally severed the spinal chord).

At no time can I ever remember her receiving any payment. I know she used to mix her own liniment - it was a white colour, but I never knew the mixture.

I can swear by her healing qualities. I was playing cricket, and while batting I was hit on the kneecap with the (hard) cricket ball. It was nine months before I fully recovered. Grandma lived about three or four hundred yards from our place, and to get to her place I had to hang on to people's front fences three times per week. It was much easier after I got crutches. At first it was three massages a week, then two, then one. After a massage I would carry my crutches home.

It was always the Chinese doctor guide that did the massaging which would last a half hour or so. He would work on the knee till he had a balloon of water hanging from the back of the knee. He then would wipe his hand across the balloon and flick the water onto the garden. To finish he would grip my groin with one hand and my big toe with the other and for another three minutes he would recharge the leg with a vibratory feeling. It would start off with a mild vibratory feeling, work up to a crescendo, then taper off. You could really feel the leg getting strong, which would gradually diminish over the days till the next massage. Having witnessed this personally I am firmly convinced she possessed a rare gift.

Dad's work: (Ch 1) Dad worked at Wunderlich's as a storeman and packer, from when he came

to Sydney in 1908. He worked there till circa 1915 or 1416 - then at the grain store in Sussex Street. Then from there to Coopers Engineering Company as a Storeman and Packer. The firm's headquarters were in Chicago USA and they manufactured sheep shearing machinery and water pumps. At the time Dad started there it only had a total staff of eight persons.

I remember he had a big drop in pay. He was the only one in the union - he was all his life in the union. In those days you got the sack if they found out, but Dad was always open about it. Why he wasn't fired was because he was such a good worker. When he retired from Sunbeam after thirty five years they had to put on four men to replace him for a while. After thirty five years he knew his job.

Cooper Engineering Co moved from Sussex Street to Zetland, where they started manufacturing in Australia. A few years later they moved to a much bigger factory in Coward Street Mascot and changed their name to Sunbeam Corporation which is a big firm today.

Rowntree Street: (Ch 2) We lived in Rowntree Street Balmain. Grandma lived opposite, and next door to her lived the Andrews family. There was the mother and her husband (his name I have forgotten), Bert, about 45 yrs, Jack, about 17, and Sid, a schoolboy who was my mate - we were both in the same class - and their sister Noel. Bert was dying of cancer, and still working at Mort's Dock. This particular Friday night Bert (the eldest) asked his stepfather for the loan of his open blade razor. He was going shopping as he had run out of Gillette blades (shops were open in those days of a Friday night). He then kissed his mother, which on reflection later was unusual, then went upstairs to his bedroom.

Later on, Jack - the second brother who shared the front room with Bert - went upstairs. On approaching the bedroom door he nearly slipped over, the lino was so slippery. They only had candles and kerosene lamps upstairs for lighting, and on striking a match he found the floor covered in blood. On trying to open the door he found an obstruction on the other side. He could not get a grip on the floor because his feet kept sliding in the blood. He called his stepfather and between the two of them they got in, and found Bert had cut his throat from ear to ear.

When Grandma arrived and went up stairs she found Jack trying to revive the old grey-haired man (my mother said he was over 70 and was well-known at Wood CoiTills, the only funeral directors in Balmain then, as far as my memory goes). When the old man came to, Grandma sent him home. He had fainted when he saw the corpse.

Grandma straightened Bert's head, put a pillowslip over it and tied it around his shoulders. They then pulled his body to the other side of the room and laid him out on the floor.

The family told Grandma later that the reason they never sent for her in the first place was that the sight was so horrendous. They wanted to save her the awful sight and trauma of having to lay him out. Of course the police were notified and the family had to go through the whole rigmarole of a suicide investigation.

The Box Factory accident: (Ch 2) Ivy's brother - I think his name was Alan - was 17 or 18 yrs and learning to be a dogman at the National Box Factory. A dogman rides up with the timber that the big crane is lifting from one part of the yard to another. When lifting a flitch of timber

you put the wire rope in the centre of the flitch. The dogman rides on the flitch to keep it horizontal, so as it won't slip out. The verdict was that the steel wire rope could not have been centralised, and there was too much overhang for Alan to control, and his leg slipped under the rope as the load slipped. Cut his leg off near his crotch and mutilated his genitals. On analysing the accident later it was just as well he died, because he would not be any good because of the terrible injuries. I felt very sorry for his mother. She was a very gentle person. Mrs Hunkin also lost her eldest daughter (approx 22 years) a couple of years before. She had picked a pimple on her face or neck and had died of blood poisoning.

J.B. Sharpe's: (Ch 2) Jack (myself) served his full apprenticeship at J.B. Sharpe. Bob was apprenticed as a cooper at a small firm in Rozelle. He lost his job when the firm went broke in the Depression. A cooper is a person that makes wooden beer barrels (today they are made of stainless steel).

Something funny: When Bob first went to work there the boss sent him up to Rozelle Post Office for some stamps, on his bike. When he arrived at the Post Office there was a great queue which stretched out of the Post Office and down the street for about ten feet. So Bob gets on to the end of the queue. About four persons from the counter the old bloke behind Bob said to him: "What are you doing in this queue, son? This is for the old age pensioners." When Bob got back to the factory his boss said: "Where the hell have you been? I could have walked to the GPO and back in the time you've been away."

The next time he sent Bob on a message some mongrel stole his bike. When he returned to the factory and told his boss, the boss said: "Gee. that's bad luck, son." and walked away. I think Dad fronted the boss, but never received satisfaction.

How Mum came to buy the piano: (Ch 2) Mum hired it from Mr Fountain's Music Shop in Darling Street Balmain,, the only music shop in Balmain and Rozelle at the time. It was hired and transported to Grandma's place at 62 Rowntree Street for Mary's 17th birthday. Jimmy Windeyer was playing the ukelele in an Hawaiian steel guitar band, so the music was good.

After the party Mr Fountain never came to pick it up for weeks, and Mum used to drop into his shop and ask him when he was going to come and pick it up. He kept putting it off. One day he asked her if she'd like to buy it for sixty pounds. She said: "Where am I going to get sixty quid?" He said: "Could you afford 2/6d per week no interest`."

He told me years after, when I was in business, that on account of the Depression he had to repossess that many pianos that the cost of storage was sending him broke. So at 2/6 per week it was money coming in. not going out.

Buying at Narrabeen: (Ch 2) When Uncle Jim heard we were buying a block of land at Narrabeen he said to Aunt Hilda: "Tell Jackie to buy us a block next door." I said I wouldn't be in that because he might not like it when he saw it. Unk's reply was: "If Jackie thinks it's OK it will be OK by me." So I approached the estate agent (Beach Estates) and asked what discount I'd receive if I bought two blocks. He said: "I'll knock ten quid off each block." which made it seventy five pounds per block. I brought Aunt Hilda down and showed it to her. A month later Unk and Aunt came down with a picnic lunch to view his vast estate he'd acquired. He was

standing on his block, and said: "Righto, which is our block?" and she said: "You're standing on it." Now previous to all this the lake had been dredged and the sand dumped on the land, and there wasn't even a weed on it. Uncle never said anything till he slowly turned a complete circle and exclaimed: "What the hell has he bought? A bloody desert?". He was that keen to live in a desert, he moved into a fibro cottage in eight weeks.

After we bought the land I was tipped off by the butcher opposite Herwig & Thomas' factory (he was a Balmain councillor) that the council was selling an old derelict house a couple of hundred yards up the street from the factory. It had been vandalised for years. I put in a written quote to council of seven pounds ten shillings. We won the day.

Now at that time *Herwig & Thomas The Betta Furniture Manufacturers* were employing six men. They offered to pull it down providing I supplied the beer. We started one Saturday at 7am and had it down by 5pm. The boys went home tired but happy - due, no doubt, to the brew of good cheer.

The next fly in the ointment was to get it to Narrabeen. War had broken out and petrol was rationed. Nobody would touch the job. My mother met an old school mate of mine - his name was Alan Derriman - who had his own business selling wood, coal, and coke during winter and ice delivery during summer. He asked Mum how I was going and she told him I had a problem of getting a house to Narrabeen. He said: "I'll drop into the factory and have a word." Alan had just bought a big truck. It was huge for those times - the top of the radiator was the same height as my head - 5 foot seven and a half inches. He took the whole lot in one load. We stored the timber on the property.

Why Alan bought the truck: He was branching out to take on some heavy hauling, but sorry to say his timing was out. War broke out and the army acquired his new truck, so he never got off the ground.

Now previous to this, when Uncle Jim built his house, we had his builder put up a 3 foot cyclone fence across the front, a 5 foot paling fence down the side and we only had chicken wire across the back of the property. Thank God for that chicken wire!. because the lake flooded due to heavy rain and the flood came up over our land up to the top of the 3 foot fence. The deepest flood we've ever had. All the timber floated to the chicken wire, otherwise we would have lost the lot out to sea. Normally the council would have opened the Mouth as it was called then (it is now called the Entrance). Because of the war the army had control of the lake and red tape travels slowly, as we were being flooded.

Page 28: The house was built by Pop and I. Bob gave us a hand to lay the bearers and floor joists and from then on we never seen hide nor hair of him. Cec Bottomley gave us a hand to lay the cement floor in the laundry and bathroom floors and he did some plumbing to put the water on. At the time Cec was working as a plumber's assistant for Charlie Innes, a fully licensed plumber of Harbord, formerly of Balmain.

The place took 12 years to build. During that time I was building my own home at 125 Buffalo Road Ryde. We used to lug our tools to Narrabeen by public transport which was chaotic during the war years. Another thing that made it hard during the war and for some time after, you had

to have a priority from the government to get building materials, stoves etc.

At the same time I was treasurer of the Buffalo Creek Progress Association and another chap - Bill Edwards, a ganger on the Ryde Council - and I and Nell used to run a housie game on Saturday nights in the Young Citizens' Hall at top Ryde. Nell and I and another four people also ran a monthly dance at the Masonic Hall at top Ryde on behalf of the Progress Association Younger Set. We also put on three cabarets per year for the Progress Association in the Ryde Town Hall. You were allowed to bring grog to the cabaret.

Later on we helped to start the Ryde Hunters Hill Flora & Fauna Society and became Trustees with the Ryde Council of the Field of Mars Reserve. That was after defeating Ryde Council, who wanted to make a tip out of it. When Nell and I finally moved to Narrabeen the RHHF&FS made us life members for the work we put into the society over the years. Today it is one of the leading Flora and Fauna groups in Sydney, It has two classrooms on it run by the Education Department with two full time teachers. I really don't know how I had time to go to work.
