

# **MANY LIVES, MANY VOICES**

## **STORIES FROM ST. ALBANS**



**BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING BY  
STUDENTS OF  
ST ALBANS SECONDARY COLLEGE**

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The cover photograph

by Michelle Schreyer and Urime Miftari

is of a sculpture

by Resmije Demiri, Hussein Hussein,

Ksana Kwankjo and Warren O'Brien

created to symbolise this time and place.

Illustrations are also by our students.

1956



1996

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This book was produced in the fortieth year of

### **ST. ALBANS SECONDARY COLLEGE**

And it helps celebrate the richness and diversity of the many cultures of our community.

Biographical writing has been a popular form at all class levels, and here is a selection of stories submitted by students in 1996.

While some examples were withheld for reasons of privacy, the contributions received demonstrate careful research, writing skill and understanding.

Here are stories of great courage, endurance, commitment and love.

They reflect well the variety of people and experiences which make up St Albans.

**ENJOY THEM.**

## BIOGRAPHY OF MY MUM

Kelvin Phan

---

To me my mother is the most important person I have ever known, she has played the major role in my life.

My mother is the most sensitive person I've known, but when someone touches her son, "look out"! She cares for me in all sort of ways, she has tried to keep me on the right path since the day I first saw the world. She has raised me with tender loving care and she has taught me the difference between right and wrong. She also wants me to go to school and get a good education so I can be a respectable person like she is. She tells me, she didn't have a future when she was young, so she doesn't want me to be like she was. I remember she once told me that when I grow up and have a good job and a family, that's when her responsibility will be over (but that doesn't mean she stops caring about me as well).

My mum was born in 1956 in a town called Bentre, Vietnam. Her parents, which are my grandparents, were fairly wealthy, so my mum had a good education. When she was young she used to go out to my grandparents' shop and help them run the business. My grandparents were very strict, so when she was young she neither had a boyfriend nor did they let her go out. In Vietnamese tradition a girl should always stay home and do housework or help out with her parents.

At night my mum's family used to sit around the television (not many houses had them) to watch the Vietnamese dance and operas. Some nights all the neighbours came and joined them.

Of course there were good times and bad times. I remember my mum once told me that once her house was invaded by bandits, who tried to rob my grandparents. They were armed with guns and demanding money, but my aunty managed to get to the police station by slipping out right under their noses. She called the police and saved them all.

My mum studied up to year 12, but she didn't have a chance to go to university because our country was at war. Mum wanted to be a teacher (she also speaks French and a little bit of English).

During the raging war my mum met my dad (a highly ranked officer). They were married and soon after I came to see the world.

In the 1980s my mum and dad left Vietnam as refugees. They and many others fled by boat which was the only means of transport. After a week they landed on an island in a part of Indonesia and were taken to a refugee camp. From there they were allowed to enter Australia as migrants.

My mum knew that to be liked by other people she would have to work hard and build a bright future for her kids, and she did!! I am proud of you mum!! Thanks for everything!!!

Evica Surcik was born on a cold winter's day in Croatia, on the 19th day of December 1959, to proud parents Josip and Kata Surcik. She was a new sister to Josip Junior, who was then only 12.

Evica grew up in a small village, Drenje, until she was seven years old, when she and her family moved to Australia. They thought that moving to Australia would be good because they could start a new life there and leave behind all the hardship that they were facing in their homeland.

After 289 days on the Achille Lauro, in February 1967, Evica, her brother and parents arrived in Melbourne. They moved to St Albans where she attended St Albans East Primary School from grade one to three. They lived there long enough to see her brother Josip get married, before the entire family decided to move back to Europe because they were homesick. The trip to Croatia on Angelina Lauro took 46 days because the Suez Canal was closed off.

Evica and her family moved to Frankfurt in 1970 where she finished her schooling and grew up along side her best friend Nada. They were very close. A lot of people would mistake them for sisters, as they were always together.

In 1977 Evica and Nada found that they had to say goodbye to each other. Evica and her family were moving back to Australia for the second time. This decision came about as Evica's parents couldn't bear to be without their son Josip, who had moved back to Australia. Josip had been afraid that he would have to go back to Croatia since there wasn't a lot of work to be found in Germany, and Australia gave him hope of work.

In April 1977 the family arrived on a Qantas flight in Melbourne. They ended up living in St Albans again. Evica was then 17. She went to a hairdressing academy and received her diploma. She also worked in a boutique at the time, which was called "Rons" and situated in Alfrieda Street.

During that time she met Ante Grasic. Evica didn't really like him at first, and would always hide somewhere whenever she saw him. She would ask her mother to tell Ante that she wasn't home when he came around to visit. As time passed, she fell in love with him, and in 1979, on the 8th of September, they got married.

They had their first child, who was named Anita, on the 30th of October 1980. They lived in Biggs Street St Albans until they earned enough money to build a house in Kealba. The house was finished after 6 months of hard work, as Ante had built it himself. They finally moved into their new house in June 1985. A few years later, Evica gave birth to her second child, Marina.

In 1994 Evica took her family on a holiday back to her homeland Croatia, where they stayed for three months. When asked whether she would go back there, she says "Maybe, if the standard of living was the same as here I might go back. I have gotten used to living here now since I have lived in Australia for most of my life, so it would be very difficult if I was to go back there again and leave my family behind."

My mother was the third child out of a family of four children. She was born on October the tenth, 1956. She lived a simple life, just like most families in Vietnam. My mother's family wasn't rich or average, they were poor. It was very hard for my grandfather to take care of a family of six, including my grandmother and himself. My mother says that what my grandfather made from working was barely enough to live on. He usually had to travel a long distance to work. This meant that my mother hardly got to see him. Of course she missed him, because she felt that she didn't have the feeling of security.

As a young child, my mother went to school, just as every other child her age did. School in Vietnam is very different from school in Australia. The teachers are more strict on the pupils. My mother also said that in your class you were placed in order, from the front of the class to the back of the class, depending on the standard of your work and your test results. My mother was an average student, so she was placed in the middle of the class. My mother enjoyed school very much, she said it was the best part of the day. Even at her age, she would play tricks on the teacher. She said that her schooling years were years to remember.

But unfortunately my mother did not stay in school for a long time. After completing grade six, she had to leave school and go and work to help her family. So at the age of thirteen, my mother started working. She sold seafood during the early hours of the morning, and food during the rest of the day and into the late hours of the night. At her age, she was working too hard, but it could not be helped. Her family depended on her.

She worked very hard for the next nine to ten years. At the age of sixteen she met a man who became what is known to us as her boyfriend. After a seven year relationship, he asked her to marry him, but because my mother was from a poor family, and he from a rich family, his mother disapproved of their marriage. So it ended there for the both of them.

Shortly after she met my father. She said that he was the ugliest man that she had ever met. She didn't really like my father, but my father fell in love with my mother. Even today when I ask them to tell me the story about how they met and who fell in love with who first, my father says one thing and my mother says another thing. It's really funny.

During this time, my mother's family was going through some troubled times. My mother hated the situation, so when my father asked her to marry him, she jumped at it, although both sides disapproved of their marriage.

My mother had a really hard time living with my father's parents. In those days the mother of the husband, my grandmother was a very hard person to get along with. What made it even harder for my mother was the fact that she was unsuccessful with her two first births. My grandfather really hated my mother at that time, because he had no grandchildren. But fortunately for my mother, on the 12th of January 1979, my sister was born. Everyone was very happy, especially my mother, because if this birth had been unsuccessful, then my grandmother had advised my father to find a new wife.

Only two years after my sister's birth, my mother was pregnant again, this time with me. While this was happening the war was settling down. My father had a very harsh time. This is because we had to decide whether to leave Vietnam and search for a new homeland, or stay. At the end we decided to leave. My mother was very upset, because of the fact that she had to leave her birth land and her family. Only my father's family migrated to Australia with us.

In 1981 my family left Vietnam. This was the beginning of our journey to Australia. During this time my mother gave birth to me. We settled in Australia and in 1983 my mother gave birth to my oldest brother, and again in 1990 to my youngest brother. Even today my mother still feels the pain of leaving her family, and she says that she would like to visit "home" one day. She also says that the only thing that kept her going was her four children, her husband and her family.



## **BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE ANDREADAKIS**

**by Irene Andreadakis**

---

George Andreadakis was born on the 15th on August 1952. He was born in a small village in Crete, Greece. His parents are Michael and Maria Andreadakis. George has an older sister, Irene Andreadakis, born in 1947 and an older brother, Steve Andreadakis, born in 1950.

George started school at the age of six. He went to the local school in the village which wasn't a very good one as only about 15 children attended it. Only the parents who could afford to sent their children to the school down in the city. When George finished primary school the family moved to Athens to find better work. In 1968 George's brother Steve left Greece and came to Australia. George went to school in Athens until Year 11 and then he dropped out to assist with the family's living expenses.

Having heard all the good comments his brother Steve had said about Australia, George worked for a year and when he had saved up enough money he too migrated to Australia in 1970. George and Steve lived together for a while in a rented flat.

George went to University High school part-time for a year to finish high school and also to learn English. He wasn't very good at the language, but then when he got a job at Toyota working with Australians his English greatly improved. One of George's workmates, Angelo Styli, was also Greek so George was good friends with him. One day Angelo invited George over to his house to have lunch with him, his wife and his wife's sister Aristoulla Aristodimou. When George and Aris met it was like love at first sight. The two of them went out for a while and then on the 30th of December 1973 the couple were engaged to be married. On the 20th of April George and Aris got married.

When the two of them were first married they lived in a small flat in Brunswick for a year. There they had their first child Marilena Andreadakis, born on the 8th of June 1975.

George stopped working for Toyota after six years and then he got a job at CSR (sugar company), he worked there for three years. The family then moved to Yarraville in 1980. They lived there for about two years, then they moved to St. Albans until present.

On the 12th of March in 1982 they had their second child Irene Andreadakis. George at the time was working at Commonwealth Bank doing Shift work (security) for 12 years until 1993. The building where George was working at was being changed to OPTUS so everyone including George got retrenched. George then got a job at Rhone Poulenc Rorer making medicine for animals. After about four months of working there the factory was closing down and moving to Sydney and so again George was out of a job. Then after about a month or two he got another job working for Adia and he is still working there now.

### **OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT GEORGE.**

**STARSIGN:** Leo

**BIRTHSTONE:** Sardonyx

**HAIR COLOUR:** Black

**EYE COLOUR:** Brown

**FAVOURITE FOOD:** Roast

**FAVOURITE COLOUR:** Blue

**FAVOURITE PLACE:** Says "his home"

Hung grew up in the village of Nha Trang far away from the city. He was the eldest in a family of three children, himself and two younger sisters. His family was extremely poor, but he managed to still enjoy life. At the age of six he started attending a local school, where he joined with many friends from the same valley. As a child, Hung spent half of the day going to school, while the other half idling time with his mates. At that age, he was too young to help his parents, but sometimes he joined his grandmother in collecting shells on the beach. His father's occupation was a carpenter, who created furniture and bedposts to sell to consumers. His mother sold fish in the market far away from home, and whenever she had sold a great deal of fish, Hung's mum generally bought lollies or fruit home to surprise Hung and his sisters. While Hung's parents were absent, Hung had the responsibility of taking care of his sisters.

The happiest time of his childhood was when he passed primary school. He was very stimulated about advancing to high school, but further education was too expensive, particularly if you were indigent and could not pay school fees and afford books. Hung's best subjects, the ones in which he was most capable, were Maths and Art, but unfortunately he had to drop out of school due to financial problems. Hung then helped his dad out with cutting wood and sometimes helped his mother with selling the fish in the market.

Hung had to join the army when he reached the age of eighteen. He was sorrowful because he had to leave his family and girlfriend behind, feeling miserable and downhearted. In the army you didn't know if you would survive until the war was over. What if you were shot in the middle of the night? Fortunately for Hung the war was over within a few months of joining the army, therefore he returned home to a huge welcome from family and friends. Hung was contented that he could reunite with his girlfriend, whom he loved and missed dearly while he was away in the army.

Months after the war had ended and the communists had taken over the southern part of Vietnam, Hung eventually married Lan (his beloved girlfriend). His first job after the marriage was as a carpenter just like his father. He worked with his friend in a small factory and he depended on that particular job to support himself and his wife. A year after the wedding, his wife gave birth to a baby girl. His wages were low and the income was insufficient to maintain his wife and new born baby. Unfortunately for Hung, his first baby passed away one night when she was rushed to hospital for medication. The doctor confirmed that she had some kind of disease that was too advanced to be able to cure. Hung and his wife were mentally hurt over the death of their first child. His wife cried day and night, for she couldn't forget her dear beloved baby girl. Hung saw that there was more beyond life, and there was more time for he and his wife to have another kid. Two years later his wife gave birth to another girl, although he had wished for a boy. She was named Phuong. He said Phuong was very hard to support because she cried non stop at night and the neighbours kept on complaining.

When Phuong was two, Hung left the country on his own on a small boat with many other people, in search of freedom, since there was no future ahead if he still lived in Vietnam. The communists had taken control of the country's economy, and therefore finding a job was more difficult than reaching the sky. The escape was not what you imagine he said it was. After several days they were short of supplies. There he was on a boat with other people, crying, desperately in need of food. Luckily from a far distance they saw a big ship heading their way, and soon after it rescued him and his buddies. Hung was brought back to the Philippines to a small island, and there he lived for four lonely years, without his family.

In 1985 Hung was sponsored by his uncle who lived in Australia. When he first set his foot in Australia he knew that there would be a bright future ahead of him, because Australia is an advanced country and it offers better living conditions. Initially he lived in Fitzroy, in a flat he shared with his uncle. His first job was farming far away in the countryside.

Loneliness was a common feeling in those days. He had to adjust to this country that was strange and new. However his wife and kid kept his dreams alive, and he was determined to work harder to earn money so that one day he could reunite with them.

They eventually did in 1990, after nine hard years of loneliness!!!

## **BIOGRAPHY OF HUYNH TRONG DUOC**

**by Nhut Huynh**

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My father Huynh Trong Duoc was born in a small village of Phu Yen in Vietnam in 1953. When he turned seven, he went to a primary school at Xuan Canh, an hour's walk from Phu Yen.

From 1962 to 1963 the war between the Nationalists and Communists came to his village. That changed the way of living dramatically. During the night, the Communists would come and preach their religion to the people. If anyone didn't obey or believe in their religion they would create trouble and make life harder. Because of this, he left Phu Yen with his family and settled in Cam Ranh.

He continued going to school at Cong Dong primary school in Cam Ranh. During that time, schools were very difficult, teachers were very strict and punishments were very harsh. If you did something wrong, like talking while the teacher was talking, or made silly noises during class time, you would get punished straight away. Some of the common punishments were getting hit with a metre ruler, kneeling on the concrete for half an hour and facing the wall without talking to anyone for an hour during class time. If the student got into trouble too many times, the teacher would call up the parents and expel them.

After school, during his spare time, Duoc would walk around to sell food to support the family. Some of the foods he sold were home made icecream, hot bread, sugar cane, candy, fresh fish and mussels. In the school holidays, he was busier than any other days. In the morning, he went to the market to sell fish. In the afternoon he polished people's shoes for money. At night Duoc went fishing with his father. They would stay in the small vessel for the night and come home at three o'clock in the morning. Fishing was very hard and tiring, especially for a young boy like Duoc. One night of fishing could buy two kilograms of rice.

During those years, the fishing industry was going down because there were so many fishermen and not enough fish. Duoc and his father didn't earn enough money to feed the family so Duoc had to quit school and look for a job. He worked in a small sewing factory with a school friend. Her name was Troung Thi Anh. The conditions during that time were not so bad, still he had to go fishing at night to help his father to earn extra money.

At the age of 19 he got married to Anh and opened a small sewing store with the profit he earned during those years. Duoc had his first child on the following year, he named his child Huynh Troung Phi. Duoc thought Phi brought luck to the family because his business was rising and the family was living very peacefully. Everything went by very smoothly until 1975, the year Duoc's wife got pregnant, and the year communists overtook the South permanently. During this year, the taxes rose very high, and the same thing happened to Duoc once again.

Duoc thought of the future for his children and his childrens' children, so he gathered his friends and put all their life savings to organise an escape to freedom. The first attempt was unsuccessful, as the Communists found Duoc's hideout, but luckily didn't capture anyone. Duoc lost all of his life savings and hopes, there was nothing left for him to do besides take another risk. This time, he borrowed money from close friends and relatives, promising he'd pay them back in the future. Duoc was in charge of the new organisation. But once again Duoc failed. He left the family and ran into the forest so that the communists couldn't find him. He lived in the forest for a year. During that time he planned an escape for the third time. This time he had nothing left, but he thought that if he built the ship, the others could provide the food. He spent most of his time building the ship. When he finished, he contacted the family and the others. Luckily the third attempt was successful. Duoc was glad and very happy because all his dreams and hopes had come true. The ship was ten metres long and three metres wide, with ninety people on board. The food was meant to last for nine days, but on the fourth day, the food had run out. Conditions on the ship were very poor, people had to suck lemons to survive for five days. Those who were lucky survived, but most had died form starvation. Duoc and his family were the lucky ones. On the ninth day, the Philippines noticed Duoc's ship and took him to shore. The Philippines gave rice to Duoc and all of the refugees. Duoc and his family lived in harmony for two years and eight months. In that time he studied English for a while but gave up because it was too complicated. He spent the rest of the time sewing with his wife.

When Duoc heard the news about his brother in Australia sponsoring him, he was very happy and hopeful. He knew that there would be a brighter future for his children living in Australia.

Duoc arrived in Melbourne, Australia in 1988. He lived in Collingwood for two years then moved to Port Melbourne. After four years of hard working, Duoc finally bought a house in St Albans. The following year Duoc took a big step and opened a sewing factory. Fifteen years of sewing experience made Duoc successful.

**THIS IS THE BIOGRAPHY OF MY GRANDMOTHER:**

Belkija Cedic was born in Bosnia in the city of Foca on the 6.5.1927. She was the oldest child in her family of three brothers and one sister. Her life wasn't easy. They were poor and nobody was working, because it was hard to find a job. Her childhood was spent in poverty. She didn't have much time to play around with other kids because she had to look after her youngest brother. However she didn't go to school because her father needed her to look after the younger children.

She was thirteen years old when the second world war broke out. They started to run away from their home on the 25.12.1941 because of the war. They were running over the mountains and rivers because the enemy were after them. There was snow up to their hips. They slept over in a small mountain house for a few days because they needed to have rest. Then they headed south to Herzegovina. In Herzegovina they had cousins and they stayed at their house for a week. From there they escaped to Mostar, where they spent twenty days. From there they escaped back to their own city, Foca.

From Mostar to Foca they were walking all the way and it was about seventy five kilometres. All that long way she had to carry her youngest brother on her back because her father was sick and her mother was weak. When they came to Foca they intended to stay in their own house but they couldn't because it was burned so they found another house to stay in. They were getting food from German soldiers to survive. They had been back in Foca for two weeks.

In the third week, the opposition forces attacked Foca so they had to run away again from their own land. They were lucky to survive because the attack came from the other side of the city. The people who couldn't run away were killed by Serbs. When they escaped the attack they went to Sarajevo. There they spent one month again in a small house but they were not alone. A lot of other Muslim people were together with them. From Sarajevo they escaped to Tuzla by train. When they arrived in Tuzla they found their cousins and they helped them to find a place where they stayed. It was already 1943.

She felt destroyed by these times because their house was burnt down, she had to leave her home and she was going through hard times.

When she was fifteen Belkija got her first job. It was picking corn. They were selling it because they needed the money to buy other food. They stayed in Tuzla until 1946. After five years of running away from their own home, finally they returned to their own home. When they did return home, her father decided to move to the city of Bosanska Gradiska and in 1947 her family started to build a home.

She didn't go on any particular dates. She met her husband at her friend's house. His name was Omer. My grandmother told me that he was a handsome and polite person. She said that she fell in love with him at the first sight. In 1948 she got married. She was twenty one years old and he was twenty three. They lived in an old German house. They were very poor, but after a while her husband found a job. She said it was much easier for them to live.

In 1949 she gave birth to her first baby daughter. They were very happy. Their second child was born in 1953. It was a girl again. In 1955 she had a baby boy and finally in 1958 she had another baby boy. My grandmother also told me it was very hard for her to raise all four kids because she had to work and to look after them. However she went through the trouble. They went to school and grew up as healthy kids.

In 1970 they started to build a new home because the old German house was too small for them. By the end of 1971 the house was finished. In 1972 her first daughter got married. In 1975 her second daughter got married and she went to Australia. My grandmother was very sad because she went so far to live. In 1980 her first son got married and finally in 1990 her second son got married.

Then in 1991 the war in Bosnia started. In 1992 her third child was killed with his wife. They had two kids, a boy and a girl. From Bosnia she escaped to Croatia and she lived there for five months. She came to Australia in 1993. Now she is living here in St Albans with her youngest son and daughter in law. She is very happy to be here because she survived two wars. My grandmother said she doesn't have any hopes for the future because she is too old to have any. Now she is 69 years old.

Mirza Crnojevic was born 1/9/80 in a town called Bosanska Gradiska. This town is in the northern part of Bosnia on the border of Bosnia and Croatia. The first thing that Mirza remembers about his childhood is his friends and how he used to go with them to the forest to play. Mirza also told me : "My good friends and I, whom I will never forget, used to go stealing other people's properties such as : vegetables and fruit." Mirza also told me that his family wasn't poor like some other families.

There were four people in his family : Mirza, his younger sister Sejla, and his parents. "I didn't have any problems with my family. We used to have a very good relationship. Well, there were some times when we had problems like all other families I guess, but we used to sort it out between each other. We used to go out a lot on holidays, camping , fishing. I used to drive a car and that was my favourite thing. I will never forget that."

Mirza started school when he was seven years old. He told me : "I met most of my friends in school and I quite enjoyed it . My first days weren't boring and the teacher was very nice to the students. She didn't hit us but after when we got used to the school we started making trouble so she wasn't as nice as before and she started punishing us. From that day I didn't really like school." Then I asked Mirza if the system of teaching was the same as in Australia. He told me that it was quite different. It was harder and teachers used to hit students if they didn't listen. He also told me that he likes Australian schools more because he finds it easier. If you compare Bosnian schools to Australian then grade 5 there is the same as year 8 here. Mirza also said : "In Bosnia we have eight years of primary and four years of secondary school. I only finished five years of primary."

In 1992, in December, Mirza left his City. Because he was very close to Croatia so his family escaped there. He told me : "I didn't go through that much trouble because Croatia was very close to my city and I had a chance to escape but still I saw people being killed and taken to prison where they would be hit to death. Once when I was in a house I heard a bomb in this place where young and old people used to go for a cup of coffee or a drink. I ran out and I saw a person lying dead on the street. His head and his clothes were covered with blood. I was so frightened of the Serb soldiers. I was thinking that they might kill me or take me away, but luckily they didn't." This was all Mirza was prepared to say about his experience of the war. I asked Mirza how he escaped to Croatia, and he told me that the army brought a bus and told them that they would be taken to Croatia. When Mirza heard this he was sad and happy: sad because he had to leave his house and happy because he would be at least safe in Croatia. Mirza stayed for about a month in Croatia then he moved to Austria where he had some family. He stayed there for about two months until he got his entry visa to Australia. During this month Mirza felt very sad because he left his house and his friends and everything else that meant something to him. Plus he was just moving from one spot to another.

Mirza said : "When I first set foot in Australia I couldn't believe that I was this far from my country. At this moment I forgot all about my city because my family in Australia prepared me a nice welcome. But later I remembered my city and my friends and then everything was boring for me here."

Mirza now lives in St. Albans. He is living with his uncle, aunty, sister, grandmother and cousin. His parents are still living in Bosnia, but not in his city. He says that he now likes living here and that he's got a much better chance of becoming something here. His future plans are to finish school here and become a doctor, then go back to Bosnia to meet all his family again, get married and live the rest of his life there.

This is the biography of my very good friend, Bach Nguyen. She was born 26-12-1977, the day after Christmas in a town called My Long in Vietnam. Her mother did not go to hospital because her parents could not afford it. So Bach was born at her own home.

Bach's first memory was when she was about four years old. During one night, she went to find her mother at work. On the way there, she fell into the river near her home. Actually it was at the back of her house, and that's all she can remember.

When she was small, she lived with her mother and father. Their life was very poor. They did not have enough food to eat. Her father worked as a fisherman, which is not a well paid job. Her mother stayed at home to look after her and did the house work.

When she was about four years old, her mother gave birth to another child, her brother Minh. Everyday Bach had to take care of her brother while her parents went to work. About another two years later, Bach's mother bore another child, a boy. His name is Hoang.

She went to school when she was six years old, but she never got a chance to finish grade 1 and 2. She only did half of each, because her family could not afford to pay the school levies.

Her father left Vietnam to find a new life for the family, when Bach was about seven years old. He didn't tell anyone that he was leaving. When her mother found out she cried a lot and Bach cried too because she thought that she would never see him again.

Her mother had to work to feed the three children and herself. It was really difficult for her mother because she had to go to work and also look after the children. Bach had to help her mother do the house work and look after her two little brothers.

Between 1986 and 1988, Bach got sick about four times. Her mother took her to the doctors. The doctors said that she had had a heart attack and they sent her to the hospital in Saigon. When she was in the hospital, she could remember her mum looked after her, and her two little brothers stayed with their grandma. She nearly died, but luckily she survived. Each day she had to drink medicine and have injections. She stayed there for about one month, then she slowly got better.

Finally those days were over when Bach, her mother and two little brothers came to Australia in 1989 by aeroplane. Her father sponsored them.

Bach liked Australia because she could go to school, have enough food to eat, and clothes to wear. Bach's family was living in Flemington. Her father worked for the Toyota company. Her mother stayed at home to do the house work. In Australia there was so much new technology, she didn't have to pay money when she went to the doctor, also she received support money from the government.

Here, she started school at the end of grade 5. In year 7 she studied at Footscray Girls, but they sent her to the Language Centre because her English was weak.

In 1992 she had an operation. The doctor changed some part in her heart. After the operation she was very weak, She now has to have a blood test every month and take a pill everyday for the rest of her life. Most of the time she did not go to school but she stayed home to rest. She missed school a lot. She went to school one week and stayed home one or two weeks.



A year later she was in year 7 again, but at a different school. She changed to St Albans Secondary College. That's when we met and became good friends. I often went to her house because it was not too far away. It's just about five minutes walk.

She always said, "I hate my life. I hate my family. I do not want to live anymore," because she was not like other kids who had a loving family and had their parents to care for them.

Bach's parents did love her, but they did not spend time with her. When the Casino opened her father went there all the time. Sometimes he won but most of the time he lost. Bach's mother went to the Casino with her father, too. She liked to go to a friend's house to play cards. They left Bach and her two little brothers at home. That's not all: her parents did not get along with each other. It made her feel bad inside. She wants her family to be happy with each other, but it's just a dream for her.

She does not do very well in her studies at school because she has her problems at home to worry about. Bach cannot do heavy work for example carry heavy things, or sit for long hours to do homework because of her sickness.

As a friend of hers, I always encourage her to feel good about herself, to try to concentrate on her work at school because later in her life she will have a brighter future, and be more self confident, too. I also help her with the school work and give her advice when she has any problems. I try to help her in anyway I can.

Her family moved to Braybrook in 1995. She also changed schools to Braybrook. Since then we rarely see each other because it is a bit far away, but we still keep in touch with each other on the telephone. In the holidays we go to each other's house and to the beach together.

We only see each other in Vietnamese school. During the school day, we talk on the telephone for many hours. She tells me about her work and friends in the school. She asks me to help her with her homework over the telephone.

In the future she would like to become a business person, and live in a big comfortable house near St Kilda beach with her family.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF ANTOINETTE VELLA**      **by Ruth Farrugia**

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Antoinette Vella was born on the 23rd of May 1953, in Kevcem, a small village in Gozo, Malta. She lived at home with her parents, and Carmena Vella, and her 5 brothers and 4 sisters.

They lived in a small house which was made of big stone bricks, and her father had many animals, including ducks, goats, donkeys, cows and rabbits. He also had many different types of fruit and vegetable trees, but the one that Antoinette seemed to like the most were the grape vines.

As a child, Antoinette was required to assist her mother around the house doing the everyday household chores. Being her daughter, whenever she tells me to sweep the kitchen floor and I say no, she always reminds me of how she had to clean the whole house in Malta. (ie dust, sweep, mop the floor, etc.)

At the age of five, Antoinette began her primary education. She attended a government school in Kevcem, but because secondary education was not compulsory, then she didn't go. As Antoinette recalls, her fondest childhood memory was that of when she and her brothers and sisters were playing outside knowing that their mum was making a popular Maltese food Pastizzi. Then, as soon as the Pastizzi came out of the oven, she and her brothers and sisters raced

inside, got some, and then returned to play. She also recalls that they had a small brown and white dog whom they called Robin. "All of us kids loved him," says Antoinette.

When asked about the things that she liked most about her country, Antoinette's first answer was the beaches. She doesn't really have a favourite beach because in Malta, all the beaches are so clean and the water is so clear, but she said that if she were to choose one, she would choose Xlnde because it was close to home, safe, clean and beautiful.

She also went on to tell me about Dwejva, a beach where her sister and her sister's daughters used to dive off big cliffs and land in the water.

Another thing that Antoinette liked about Malta was the countryside because of its friendly atmosphere, clean fresh air, and beautiful sights.

Antoinette lived in Malta up until the age of 16 years and then, in the month of October, 1969, she came alone to Australia to live for good, because most of her brothers and sisters moved here earlier and she missed them. She arrived on a Qantas aeroplane which she says gave her a fantastic flight. In those days Tullamarine Airport was yet to be built, and Antoinette says, "I couldn't believe it when I arrived at Essendon Airport. It looked so nice, but then when Tullamarine Airport was built, it was even bigger and better than the Essendon one."

In Australia, Antoinette lived in a big house in Brunswick. She first worked in a factory called Bellandy Boxes in Brunswick, and her job required her to make boxes for shirts, medicines and occasionally toys.

Then, after that job, she worked in Soltra, also in Brunswick. This job required her to make different types of electrical goods including things such as transformers.

A few years later Antoinette met Louis Farrugia (my father) and after going out for some time, they decided to get married. They were married in a very beautiful church in West Melbourne called St Marys, Star of the Sea. The reception was held at the Mediterranean Reception Hall in Yarraville and they had approximately 150 guests.

Up until this day Antoinette, her husband and children attend mass weekly at St Marys because it's a wonderful place.

A few months after the wedding, Antoinette Farrugia and her husband went overseas to Malta so that Louis could meet Antoinette's parents. They stayed in Malta for 3 months and lived with Antoinette's parents. In the time that they stayed there they visited many new and exciting places that neither of them had ever been to.

When they got back they lived in their new home in St Albans which is where they are still living to this very day, and there they began their family.

Antoinette first gave birth to Bernard (who is now 20, going on 21). A few years after that Antoinette got her driver's licence, but didn't actually begin driving until a few years after her second child Ruth was born. Ruth is turning 15 in June and Antoinette clearly recalls a time when Ruth and herself went shopping in St Albans by train. They were doing their shopping at Safeway and then walked to St Albans Station to get the train home, but on the way back Antoinette says that Ruth stopped in front of the chemist to have a ride on the donkey and they missed the train. Taking into consideration that Ruth was only a child then, Antoinette goes on to say that she'll never see Ruth do that again.

A few years later, Antoinette had two more kids. This time twins. They were born on the 26th of March 1985 and will be celebrating their 11th birthdays soon.

Now she has a 24 hour job of running a constantly busy household and looking after her husband and kids, but says that she wouldn't trade her happiness with them for anything.

Kim Chi is now 48. She lives with her husband Tim, and her four children Quyen, Dao, Phuong and Binh. Kim is an understanding wife and a wonderful mother whom everyone would ask for. She is a special person because she is cooperative and enjoys sharing her life with her family.

Kim was born on May 28th 1948 in the former capital city of Vietnam. She lived with her parents and a younger sister Cuc, and two brothers Tien and An. So Kim is the oldest sister of three children. Kim's family wasn't rich. They lived in a small house. "But our life was very happy, fun and we had lots of freedom," Kim added.

Kim started school when she was six years old, in grade one. Before this she went to kindergarten for two years. Kim was very smart. She did half of her primary school in Vietnam and half in Australia, passed high school and finished university. At university Kim studied Computer Programming and Mathematics. Kim was the top student in year 7 to 10. In fact, she won every competition that she entered.

Kim always kept out of trouble. "But I know that if a student got into trouble they got bad punishment. For example for swearing at the teachers they got hit with a small steel ruler or a bamboo stick, and if a student didn't do their homework they got hit with a thick long ruler," she said.

In 1956 Kim's family came to Australia when she was just eight years old. Her whole family travelled by boat with other families and Kim's relatives. Kim's family came to Australia because of the communists and because there was no freedom.

"I can remember coming here and it was cold but it was beautiful, clean and a huge place, Saigon is always hot, some places are nice, but it was not clean or a huge place at all," Kim recalled her first impressions of Australia.

In 1958 Kim's grandma died of a sickness called heart attack. On that night Kim locked herself in her room and cried. "When I was still in Vietnam my grandma was very healthy and strong I couldn't believe it, I was in shock. I was close to her, she loved me very much and I loved her too." It is Kim's saddest memory. "I'll never forget this."

As a teenager Kim was very active. She played elastics, listened to music and she loved to play mothers and fathers when she was eight years old. Kim was the mother and Kim's cousin was the father. "I can't believe that I was playing mothers and fathers, I mean I must have been very childish to play that," Kim said.

When Kim was fourteen she was interested in badminton, tennis, basketball, hockey and swimming. Her father bought her a badminton and tennis racket for her fifteenth birthday. But Kim didn't like rugby, football, cricket, horse racing etc. She thinks that they were boring and was not interested in those sports.

"This marriage was actually a love marriage," Kim said. Right on Valentine's Day, February 14th 1969, Tim popped the big question. It was a proposal to Kim. "I couldn't sleep that night. I was shocked but I said Yes, yes all that night, just shocked and kept saying yes," Kim said.

Kim and Tim got married on April 6th 1970. "My dream was to get married to him and begin a family," Kim added. That was Kim's happiest memory.

Kim's first job was working at Studio Girl selling clothes, in Little Collins Street. Her job was to help customers buy clothes. Every morning Kim woke up at 7.30am and went to work at 8.30am. She didn't get home until 6.30pm, but even though she worked hard, she didn't get well paid.

She earned about \$350 per week and the job was so tiring. Kim's boss always bossed the workers around. "I couldn't stand it. It was a terrible job," Kim said. She worked there for one year and she quit.

Kim's life is very happy. She now lives with her husband and four children in a warm family sized house in North Sunshine. Kim's father is now 61 years old and her mother is 60 years old. They live with Cuc in a house in North Sunshine too, and they are now retired. Kim now works at Telstra. She is well paid and her work mates are really nice. Kim's older child Dao is getting married next year. She is very happy for Dao. "I want to travel around the world to visit my relatives. My plan is for my family to stick together until our children get married," she said. "I don't know what will happen in the future so that's all for now," Kim added.

She doesn't want to make any changes to her life. Kim's life has been very interesting. She works for what she wants and she's a hard worker too.



## **BIOGRAPHY OF BEVERLEY GODFREY**

**by Tina Kuzmanovska**

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Through the years, Beverley Lorraine Godfrey has experienced a number of occupations. From a housewife to a dancing teacher, she has certainly been one very busy woman. Beverley has accomplished a lot through her life, but the thing she is most proud of is her family of three children.

Beverley Lorraine Godfrey was born on September 21, 1944 in Sunshine, a suburb in the western suburbs of Victoria. She is the eldest and only female of Stanley Lodge and Lorna Lodge. Beverley also has a younger brother Kenneth.

Her father came from England and arrived in Australia in 1927. He was an electroplater and her mother was born and raised in Australia. She was a theatrical dancer and a housewife. At the age of 23 she had had her first child Beverley, then her son Kenneth. She then gave up theatrical dancing to become a full time mother.

In 1955 Beverley attended primary school at St Albans Primary School. After graduating she attended Sunshine Tech Girls school in 1959. There, Beverley became a form captain and a prefect for two consecutive years. Beverley, along with the other students had to wear a school uniform. They had to wear a navy blue tunic, white shirt, navy and red striped tie. For winter a navy beret, whereas for summer a straw hat. The thing Beverley remembers most is having fun. School was a place to socialise and have a lot of enjoyment with friends. But getting caught smoking on the oval was something she'd never forget. She only went to school for four years, then decided to finish. Later, she studied Elocution and Dramatic Art through the "London College of Music". Beverley became a second generation theatrical dancer.

On the 21st March 1964 Beverley married Graham Morley. They had two sons and a daughter, Brett 29, Tracie 28 and Troy 22. After many years of marriage Beverley and Graham divorced. Although Beverley was upset over her divorce, her life went on. She again found happiness with Noel Godfrey. They married on 17th August 1985 and are still married to this day.

In the past Beverley has had many different and exciting jobs. Her first job as a private secretary was for Burton and Cooke, and lasted three years. She earned 7 pounds, (fifteen dollars) a week. She was also an accounts typist for St Albans Secondary College and a butcher shop owner in St Albans. Currently she is working as a canteen assistant at St. Albans Secondary College. She has been in this position for approximately 3 years. She has also been a fully qualified theatrical dance teacher for 30 years. She teaches tap, classical, ballet and jazz.

The future seems to be already planned. Beverley and husband Noel hope to run a bed and breakfast accommodation in the country, in about 5 years time. Beverley hopes to continue being a canteen lady and a theatrical dance teacher as long as possible.

Beverley Lorraine Godfrey has been through a lot during her life. The birth of her three children brought a lot of contentment, her marriage breakup brought sadness and regrets, but through everything she's still managed to get on with life and maintained a positive outlook on life.

Mark Mondia, my dad, was born on the 25th of October 1955. He has ten brothers and sisters in his family. He is third in the family. Four of them are girls and the rest are boys. Unfortunately, one of his brothers died in a car accident.

Well, now I want to tell you a little bit about my dad. My dad grew up in a small town in Papua New Guinea [PNG] called Chimbu. During school days, my dad would get up early in the morning and walk some kilometres before getting to the school. After school, on their way home, my dad and his brothers would collect firewood to cook for the afternoon dinner. When the school day ended my dad and his brothers would climb their favourite mountain and hunt birds, and when they killed some, they would take them home, cook them and eat them.

When my dad grew and became a teenage boy, he was a very naughty boy and led a small gang in his street to fight the kids in the next street who were sons and daughters of policemen. Their battle ground was near a pond. They used bows and blunt arrows to fight with. It was a fair fight until my dad's second older brother shot the kid in the other gang right between the eyes. At that point my dad's gang ran away and never played or fought again.

When my dad went to school every morning he always had a dream. His dream was that he wanted to be a musician and a singer. When it was time for music, he would sit still and listen to the teacher. He would come back home from school and practice his music and singing with his older brother's instruments. To make it clear, my dad's brothers were also musicians. Anyway, after he finished his year twelve, he was very good in music and also in singing.

By then my dad was a young man. He and his brothers would often go around the mainland of PNG and play rock music that entertained lots of Papua New Guineans. It was on one of these journeys that he lost his brother.

The 15th of September 1977 was the most heart breaking day of my dad's life. It was a cold afternoon, and my dad and his brothers left the town that they performed in the night before, and started off to the next town. Half way to the next town was a small part of the road that the road workers had left uncompleted. The section had large holes and loose gravel. The driver of the truck turned the truck to the side of the road in order to pass the loose gravel. Unfortunately he went too far and the truck went straight down a ten metre cliff. Luckily my dad escaped safely with small scratches on his legs and hand. My dad went to the truck to see if everyone was okay. Everyone was fine except my dad's younger brother, who was lying in the truck with blood coming out of his head. They took him up to the road and tried to hitch hike to the nearest town. After a while they got picked up. When my dad and his brothers got to the town they rushed him off to the nearest hospital. They spent the night at the hospital. The next morning they went to check if he was okay. They went into the room where he was. He was lying on the bed with a mask over his face. They asked the doctor what was wrong with him. The doctor said that he had internal bleeding in his brain. At that point, my dad and his brothers were all in tears. The doctor explained to them that he had little time to live, and so they rang their parents up and took him back to his own town. The day after that day he died. After he was buried, my dad gave up playing for the band.

My dad went back to school and studied to become a teacher. That's how my dad met my mum, while studying at the University. My mum was also studying at the university to become a teacher. They both studied for three years.

After they got married, they both taught in the same school. After teaching for three years, my dad left the Teachers' Association, and looked for a new job. First he worked as a deputy manager of a big supermarket. After that, he worked with the Timber Company. All of these occurred in PNG. Then he found an advertisement for accounting at a Water Board Company.

My dad got sick of working with the companies, and went to see if there was any job in our Provincial Government.

In 1987 he started working with the PNG Government. In 1992 he wrote to the Government asking them if he could come down to Australia for study. They replied back and said that they were going to sponsor him.

My mum thought that it was a good idea, and also applied. My mum's letter came back saying that she was also to be sponsored by the Government. We came down to Australia early in 1993 and have been here ever since.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF JOVAN NIKOLOVSKI**      **by Mirijana Nikolovska**

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Jovan Nikolovski is forty-four years old. He was born in Macedonia in the city of Bitola on the 13th of October 1952. Jovan Nikolovski lives with his wife Gorica and two daughters Natasha and Mirijana. Jovan is a very good and caring father. He is the best father because he listens to me and he understands me.

Jovan had an average childhood. His family worked on a farm that they had. They milked the cows, they had horses, sheep and more animals. His family wasn't rich and wasn't poor. His relationship with his brothers, sisters and parents was very good because with his parents he listened to them and did the things that they told him to do. He got on well with his brothers and sisters, but sometimes they had their ups and downs.

When Jovan was a child he lived in the village called Metimer, close to his relatives. They were in the same village and they treated him nicely. He was a normal kid, good and bad. He loved his bike that his father bought for him. Jovan started school at six years old, like most kids. He liked school because he was smart. He did everything the teachers told him to do, so he was like a little goodie goodie. But one day was very embarrassing for him, because he fell off his bike and all the children started laughing at him.

When he was a teenager he did everything a normal teenager would do, went to the movies and rode his bike. My mum, Gorica wasn't his first love. His first love was Vera whom he said was beautiful. He was allowed to go out, especially with his friends. Jovan first met my mum, Gorica, at a party and they were soon married, on the 19th of December 1977. Age was nothing. She was thirteen years old and he was twenty-three years old. They had a big wedding. They invited about 250 people.

The first job that Jovan Nikolovski got and did was building houses in Macedonia.

Coming to Australia was tough because he didn't know anything about this country. He arrived on the 26th of November 1990. He was only 39 yrs old. They have lived here for five, nearly six years and are loving it. They decided to come here because his sister was here and she wanted him to come here. He arrived with his wife Gorica and two lovely girls, Natasha and Mirijana.

"I think Australia is a better place than Macedonia because Australia has better things like places to go, the people are more friendly and it's a rich country. Macedonia is a poor country, it hasn't got that many places to go to, but it's still a good country," Jovan said.

Life now for him is better. He is 44 years old. He says that in the future life will be better for the kids because they will have more things, better things and new things to do and places to go to. "Because my wife and I will get a bit old to do those things. If I could change anything it would be to be very rich and to be a teenager again." He wants also to travel to other countries. "I wish one day we could all travel the world together and maybe live life to the fullest because then we could share memories when we get older."

I love my father, Jovan Nikolovski, from your daughter Mirijana Nikolovska.





My uncle Sony Hyunh was born in 1945 in Vietnam. Sony had two brothers and a sister. Unfortunately Sony's older brother died in south Vietnam because of liver disease. This left Sony with one brother and one sister, who is my mother.

Sony's greatest achievement was when he finished year 12. Sony got married in the summer holidays. He met his wife in school. Sony then went to university in Saigon. After five years of studying Pharmacy he graduated in 1969. From 1970-1975 Sony owned a Pharmacy in Danang. Sony would work at the hospital in the day time and in the afternoon he would go and check on his pharmacy. The pharmacy was a success for Sony, until the communists invaded Southern Vietnam. As a result of the takeover, Sony was once again in Saigon. Friends and family of Sony were slipping away into the night and finding a new life.

Sony then decided to flee the country he loved so much. Sony's first attempt at escape resulted in an enormous amount of money being lost. The second attempt was disastrous, as it landed him in prison for 30 days. The prison was so small and was made to hold 5-10 people, but the communists managed to fit 30-40 people in it. Most of the time you ended up sleeping on each other. The soldiers would bring a small bucket of water so they could wash their face and hands. For food the soldiers would bring the prisoners a small bowl of rice and some salt twice a day. Luckily his wife bribed one of the soldiers into letting him out.

The third attempt was similar to the first attempt with a large amount of money being lost.

In December 1980 the fourth attempt was successful. Sony was able to bribe a communist officer into letting him take a bus to a large boat. Sony, his wife and all the other freedom seekers were transferred onto a boat. Before the boat reached safe waters the refugee boat was spotted by a large communist boat. Luckily Sony and all the other refugees were able to bribe the communists into letting them continue with their journey by giving the communists all their valuables. The journey to a new country was disastrous, a total of 45 people died at sea. A U.S. Naval ship spotted the refugee boat and helped Sony and the refugees. Two days later the United States Ambassador to Thailand finished the paper work for the refugees to travel to the United States. When their residency had been approved, Sony then went to Indonesia for 3 months where he learnt to speak English. Sony's wife escaped to France, but was later reunited with Sony in Georgia. While Sony was in Atlanta he took English classes in Georgia State University. Sony saw a paper ad for a pharmacist in Waco Texas. He then moved to Waco by himself, where he lived close to his brother. Life in Waco was pretty boring without his family, so he kept himself entertained by watching and going to football games with his workmates. When the holidays came around for only two or three weeks a year, Sony comes to visit his sister in Melbourne, Australia.

Thanh was born on the 20th of October 1965 in Saigon, Vietnam. He lived with his grandparents and his parents. When he turned ten years old his parents thought that it would be a good idea to live near school, for convenience. They also wanted a nice and spacious house. Although his family wasn't so rich and wealthy, still they all lived in a very happy home.

"It was just an average family with an average lifestyle, average clothing, and an everyday average meal. It wasn't so bad. I enjoyed it," he said with an expression that showed great pride. "Although my family wasn't so wealthy, at least we had a nice home and a warm roof over our heads," he added.

Back in those days there weren't any games around like we have today. Thanh had a best friend named Nhut. They often went swimming at beaches and pools, played soccer with their other friends in the park, went to his friends' house or every now and then he visited his grandparents too. Thanh and Nhut sometimes went into people's front yards, or climbed into people's backyards to pick their fruits. Sometimes they would get caught and would receive complaints from the neighbours.

"It was such a happy moment when we used to go picking fruit. It was so funny, how we used to get chased by house owners and told off at the same time," said Thanh smiling.

He and Nhut were big trouble makers before they started school. Nearly everyday his parents got complaints from the neighbours. They did lots of naughty things like changing the neighbour's laundry around, which caused huge arguments, taking sweets off little kids and lots of other things.

Thanh went to school back in Vietnam, from grade 1 to 6. He went to one kindergarten, two different primary schools and four different high schools. He stated that when he was in high school he used to be one heck of a trouble maker. He often got punished by his teacher for not completing his homework, or paid no attention to his teacher. For bad behaviour in class he would get strapped on the hand with either a bamboo stick or with an awfully thick ruler.

He said "It didn't matter how many times the teacher punished me, I just kept on causing trouble as part of my revenge with the teacher. Even though the teacher often spoke to my parents about my behaviour in class, still I never got into trouble, I was just too spoilt to."

The reason why he was so spoilt was he was the only child living with his parents in Vietnam. He had an older brother who went to Australia first before his family did. His brother, Tuan, went to Australia with his uncle and aunt. After two or three years living in Australia his brother made arrangements to sponsor his family to come to Australia. At that time Thanh was eighteen years old. After he came home from school one day, his parents told him the big news. "A million thoughts ran through my mind at that moment. I didn't know whether to feel happy or sad," said Thanh. He was this way because he really wanted to reunite with his brother, but he couldn't bear to leave his grandparents or his friends behind. He ended up having to go to Australia with his parents anyway, because there was no other choice, so he had a little going away party with his friends. "I tried to hold back my tears, but they just came rolling down slowly on my face," he mentioned.

Two days after the party his family was on their way to Australia. As he made his way to the door he waved goodbye to everyone. He recalled the feeling of excitement, for this was his first time on a plane. After twelve hours of travelling, they finally reached Australia. As he made his way out of the plane, he was thrilled to see his older brother, uncle and aunt again. Thanh described Australia as a whole new world and everything was so much cleaner compared to where he

came from. All the buildings and houses looked completely different. "Just like everything was new to me," said Thanh.

When they arrived at his relative's home, where his family was going to stay for quite a while because they weren't able to afford a place of their own yet, he took a good look around the house. He found things a little complicated to understand, for he wasn't able to understand the language spoken on television, not able to read the newspaper, or know how to find his way around or communicate with others in English. He soon began to attend a language centre where he learned to read and write in English. It took him almost two years to understand English completely.

He said that being a teenager living in Australia is much better than living in Vietnam, because in Vietnam at his age you'd probably have to quit school and start work to earn and save enough money to get married. On the other hand, living in Australia you receive money from the government which is called Austudy, when you're a teenager rather than having to quit school so soon.

On his 20th birthday he and a few of his friends went out to celebrate. They all decided to go to the movies. As he was standing in line to buy the tickets a young lady accidentally spilt her drink over him. She was cleaning and apologising at the same time, he then looked at her and smiled, telling her that it was no big deal. "One look at her sweet and charming face and I was in love," he commented. He then decided to buy her another drink, after that they began a conversation. In the end, when the movie was over, he asked her for her phone number. She happily gave him her phone number then he left with her friends in a taxi. He thought to himself that he had forgotten something, but wasn't sure of what. A few seconds later the thought finally struck him that he had forgotten to ask for her name! That night when he came home he rang her up and started the conversation by asking her name. Things began to pick up from there. "Meeting her was the greatest gift I had ever received!" he said.

After he found out that her name was Oanh and a few details about her, they soon began dating. One time she asked him what his occupation was. He told her the truth that he wasn't working at the moment. She then thought of a friend who owned a restaurant, and thought that her friend might offer him a job as a chef. After all, he was quite a good cook and the fact that his girlfriend knew the owner of the restaurant, and therefore it was a good chance for him to get that job.

At home, every now and then, when he talked to his parents Oanh would be the only name that he talked about. After hearing the great things about his girlfriend, his parents told him to bring her home for dinner and introduce her to the family. The next day when they went out for lunch, he asked her to come and have dinner at his house. That night she met his whole family and they all adored her as though she was already part of their family. When Oanh went home he again talked about her. His mother suddenly asked what religion she was. He told her that she wasn't religious. Straight away his mother objected to his relationship with her because, for his mother, culture was a very important issue. Apart from the fact that they aren't the same religion, his mother wouldn't have had any objection to their relationship. His father had no problem with her and was very fond of his girlfriend. "I don't care about what others think, as long as I know that the two of us love each other truly," Thanh remembered saying.

Thanh always had time for his girlfriend, usually after 4.00pm after work, he would pick Oanh up and they'd spend the whole evening together. One night, he had a long father and son talk. He told his father that he wanted Oanh to be his bride and really wanted to marry her. He asked his father to convince his mother to agree with the marriage. His father went and had a long talk with his mother, then came out with the good news. His mother told him that she would give them her full support. She told him to wait till they can find a place of their own, then things would be more convenient and not so fussy. Happily he agreed with the idea.

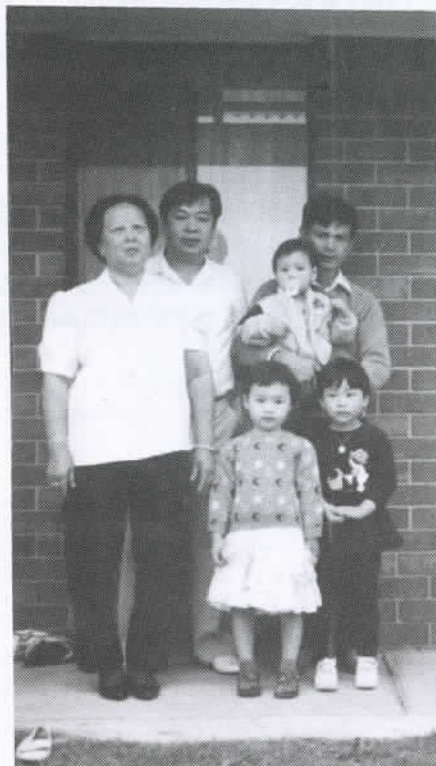
Later on, during the same week he talked to Oanh about his plans for their future, but never did the thought that he was going to ask her to marry him cross her mind. She suggested that he should meet her parents, so that they would have the opportunity to get to know one another. A few days later, after arriving home from work, he quickly changed and right away drove to her house. When he got to the front door and rang the door bell, a sweet lady's face appeared at the window behind the thin curtains and softly smiled, then reached out to open the door. She welcomed him and asked him to come in. Nervously he stepped inside and saw Oanh. She walked up to him to introduce him to her mother, the lady who he saw at the door, then turned around and introduced him to her father sitting on the sofa in the living room. He stepped over to the living room and shook each other's hand. Then they both sat down and talked. "It was so funny how the both of us loved soccer, and soccer was one of the main subjects that we were talking about," he laughed.

A couple of months later his family moved to their own house and settled down a little. He then had another talk about his plans of a few months ago to his parents. This time his parents said nothing besides agreeing with the idea. He then went to gather all his savings to buy the ring for the one that he really loved.

Christmas was on its way and his friend was celebrating with a Christmas party. He then thought that this would be the perfect opportunity to pop the question. "Will you marry me?" he asked her. "Yes!" she answered right away gladly. The following year 1986, on the 14th of February, Valentine's Day, they got married. "It was the happiest day of my life because I finally married the one I love," said Thanh.

Not very long after that happy day on the 16th of April in that same year he was called up from work to hear that his wife had given birth to a baby girl named My. "I felt excited and proud to have such a beautiful baby girl," he said.

Two years later in 1988 on the 10th of July, they had their second child a boy named Fei.



In 1989 the following year he heard the most shocking news from Vietnam. It was that his grandfather had caught a horrible disease and there was a very big chance that he may die from it, so he decided to go back to Vietnam to see his grandfather for the last time. He made arrangements for his whole family to go back to Vietnam. On March the 7th he, along with his family, were on their way back to Vietnam. When he reached Vietnam he stepped out of the plane and noticed the difference between now and years ago. There was such a dramatic change. "Vietnam was so different that I almost forgot my way around. We drove past the part where I used to play soccer with my friends. What a shame that they destroyed the park to build buildings on it, it was kind of sad to see the sight, but still I'm glad now that I have had a chance to visit my country again," said Thanh.

When he got to his grandfather's home he saw his grandfather lying weak on his bed. He walked up closer to his grandfather and started crying. He said "When I saw my grandfather lying weak on his bed, I burst out crying. I guess I was the one who killed my grandfather with my presence at that moment. As soon as he saw me he tried to sit up to welcome me back I guess, but suddenly fell down, then died with a smile on his face. Everyone started crying. There were only sounds of lots of people everywhere I turned," he added. "I hated god for not even allowing me to say one last word to my grandfather, also for not letting his see his great grandchildren and their mother for the very first and last time. They just had to take him away at that exact moment!"

The whole trip was tragic, but still he went around town to visit his old friends and relatives. On March 23rd his family were on their way back to Australia. He was really sad about his grandfather's death and wasn't doing very much back at home besides crying to himself. His wife was very supportive and patient with him while he was trying to get over his grandfather's death.

Now he is working hard to give his children a bigger, better and brighter future. He also wants to bring his children up in a warm and living family. He is hoping that he would be able to afford a small restaurant that he could own in the near future. His wife is now working in a large sewing factory.

I think that he is a very caring father to his two children and loves his dear wife dearly. I really have admiration for Thanh and would like to thank him for letting me interview him and write this biography on his personal life. I would also like to wish him all the best of luck in the future and hope that he will accomplish his dream of owning his own restaurant - god bless you!

Mai was born on the 2nd of February 1953 in Vietnam, Saigon. Her family consisted of 2 older brothers and 3 younger sisters.

School in Vietnam, for Mai, was very difficult. The teachers were very strict and gave out very harsh punishments. Students weren't even allowed to write left handed.

When the war started, Mai was still in school. While she was still in school, her father would go and dig holes in the ground so that if there was an attack, she could run into the hole and cover herself. When the war ended Mai lost one of her family members, her little sister.

In 1975 Mai got married, but the wedding was very small because they didn't have much money. In 1976 Mai had her first child. She named her baby boy Thanh. During her stay in Vietnam she had four more boys and the last one was a girl. Now life was harder for Mai, she had to stay home and take care of five children while her husband went fishing for food.

In 1982 Mai and her husband decided to move to Australia because Mai wanted her children to have a better life and future, and because of the harsh communist rules. The escape plan took about three months and Mai's husband had to build a canoe.

One night Mai and her family went into the canoe and rowed into a big boat with all of her family on it. The ship stopped in Malaysia and Mai's family decided to stay there for a while. In Malaysia Mai had another child, a boy. In 1984 Mai saved enough money and flew to Australia, she lived in Western Australia. Mai met her sisters and shared a small house. There were three families living there. Altogether there were about thirty people living in one house.

When Mai saved up some more money she moved out and went to a suburb called Langford. She bought a house with 4 rooms in it that cost \$40,000 (houses were really cheap!). About 8 months later she was pregnant again and had another boy.

Australia was very different from Vietnam. For Mai there was more construction and roads, there were many cars and more vegetation, not like Vietnam. In Vietnam the houses would be made of leaves and the floor would be solid dirt. The streets wouldn't have any trees because the ground would be so hard. In the summer it would get really humid, with dust blowing everywhere, and in the winter the ground would get really muddy.

Mai and her family lived in Perth for 8 years, then moved to Melbourne. She lived with a family friend until she found a suitable house and moved in. She's currently living in St Albans. She said that Melbourne is different to Perth. Perth has newer buildings and is cleaner. It is quieter and has less people. But still, she enjoys living in Melbourne.

Robert Kolarich, my grandfather, was born on the 31st of October 1910 in Belgrade, Serbia (former Yugoslavia). Robert was abandoned by his family when he was just 13 years old. He was forced to leave school and get a job in a sewing factory. As he got older he became closer to the owner of the factory, Slobedan. Slobedan treated him like a son.

When Robert was 18 he opened his own shop. It was a repair shop, for sewing things. He started off without any sewing machines until Slobedan bought him one.

When Robert was 21 his father came back to him asking for forgiveness for abandoning him at such an early age. Robert, being soft-hearted, forgave him. One year later Robert's father died. The funeral reunited Robert with his sister, but after a week she left again.

Robert was all alone again, and started looking for someone to start a family with. Soon after he met Priscilla Milosevic and one year later they got married. After 3 years of marriage they had their first daughter Nadine Kolarich, my mother. Ten years later they had another child Julie Kolarich, Jovanca Kolarich, my aunty.

Eight years later Priscilla said she wanted to come to Australia. Robert agreed, only to bring Priscilla happiness. He sold his house and business for about 50 thousand. When he came to Australia he was fifty years old. He bought a house in St Albans and had to get a job to support the family, for he had spent all his money on the plane tickets, house, car, etc. He worked for a shoe repair man, and soon after bought himself a sewing machine and started doing extra jobs at home, such as sewing clothes, shoes, blankets, or anything that was ripped and had to be repaired.

Five years later he retired as a shoe repair man, and went on a pension, but still he did some sewing for people, usually for free unless he needed the money.

After 25 years of marriage Priscilla and Robert got a divorce. Robert kept the house and Robert also got the two daughters, and Priscilla moved out and did not keep in contact.

When Robert was 83 he got diabetes and had to go to the hospital for he was forgetting to eat and became very sick. After 2 months out of the hospital I began visiting him quite often and I started to get very close to him. I liked him a lot because he was very kind to me and we could always joke around like friends. But the best thing was the stories he used to tell me about his childhood.

In 1995, before my 14th birthday, Robert said he would give me something special for my birthday, for making it in the Victorian Soccer team for the first time. A week later on my birthday, he gave me the present. It was his chessboard that his father had given him before he had died. It was very special to me because I know how much it meant to him. As my birthday got closer and closer I got very excited, but two days before my birthday on the 20th May 1995, Robert passed away from natural causes.

1995 was the best year in my life for making it in the Victorian Soccer Team, but it was also the worst year of my life.

The person I interviewed was my mother. I interviewed her because I find her life is very interesting, and she is the person whom I will always admire. I admire her because she took good care of me all by herself, and she still has a good relationship with my dad, even though she spent time in Vietnam while he was in Australia.

She was born in Ha Noi in Vietnam on 19/2/1952. Her parents had grown up in Ha Noi but her family moved to Saigon when she was one and a half years old. Her family moved to Saigon because her parents couldn't find jobs in Ha Noi, which they needed to buy food to feed their four kids and themselves. After her family moved to Saigon her dad found a decent job and bought a double storey house. The width of the house was about five metres, and the length of the house was about fifteen metres. Her mother couldn't find a job so she stayed home and did the household work.

Not much later her mother had another sixth kid, which meant that she had five brothers and four sisters. Hoa was the second oldest in the family and because she was a girl, she had to do a lot of work to help her parents, for example, look after her little brothers and sisters, clean the house, cook etc. Sometimes she got smacked from her mother if she lay down and rested or talked too much with her friends. Most of the time she got into trouble from her mother, but her dad was always on her side and allowed her to go out with her friends.

The house was very squashy with six kids in the family plus all the furniture and cabinets. Although the house was small and squashy, she had a lot of fun with her brothers and sisters. "Every night my sisters and I, we always had pillow fights with our brothers, which we always lost, but when we lost we started yelling and screaming so they could get into trouble from our parents, and they actually got into trouble every time we did that," said Hoa (my mother).

She didn't have much entertainment in her early childhood because she quit school when she was in grade six. "Primary school was so boring for me because I had to go home straight away after school or else I got into trouble from my mother." She quit school because she enjoyed sewing so decided to work and have her own money, and that way she could buy anything she wanted. But most of the money she made, she gave half of it to her father, and with the left over she bought things such as clothing, toys for her brothers and sisters and for herself.

She started dating a guy named Minh, my father, when she was 23 years old, and she met him at her friend's wedding. They didn't go out much because both of their parents were very strict, but eventually their relationship got better and better, and they got married on 21/10/78. After one year of marriage she was pregnant and they named this baby boy Hung, who is me. When Hung was a couple of months old, his father had to leave Vietnam to go to Australia. Her husband has to leave Vietnam, he was forced to by his mother. Hoa disagreed with this idea and her husband didn't know what to do, but listened to his mother.

All those days without her husband were extremely hard for her because she had to look after Hung all by herself, but she was very lucky that she had her parents to look after Hung when she was at work, or when she was busy, and also she had to go through all the bad things that people said about her. "If I went out too much or was talking to a boyfriend, people said I am a bad wife, and they even told my mother in law."

Eight years later her husband arranged for her and Hung to go to Australia. When she got to Australia her life began to get better. She had a lot of freedom, and no-one could say bad things about her.



She worked extremely hard with her husband trying to buy a larger house, and this has happened. She moved into the new house and two years later she had a baby boy and she named him Huy (Richard). When Huy was three years old she had another one, and this was a boy as well. With three boys growing up it was a bit hard for her to continue working as hard as before, but she was willing to try her best.

Since she came to Australia her life has been much better than before in Vietnam. Although it was better, she had to stay in the house sewing clothing everyday, as this was her job. She disliked this job because she had to stay in the house all the time, but what else could she do? She couldn't speak English, so no-one hired her. The only day she got out of the house was on Sunday because that was the only day that her husband didn't go to work.

She had a very wonderful family, with a wonderful husband and three sons. Now all she wishes for is to see her parents, brothers and sisters again one day. To do this she needs to wait for her two sons to be a bit older. The reason she waits for the two sons to be a bit older is because she wants to take them to Vietnam with her as well, so her parents can see their grandsons.

From all of the things she told me in the interview, I think she is a very patient, caring and loving person. Between her and me we are mother and son. I really love her because she did an excellent job of taking care of me back in Vietnam while my father was in Australia. I also really admire her and I see her as my idol as well as my mother.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF MY DAD**

**by Vesna Sarvanovska**

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### **CHILDHOOD:**

My dad is 39 years old, he was born on the 26th of January 1956. He was born on his parents' farm in Macedonia. He told me that growing up as a kid in Macedonia, especially living on a farm, was very hard and very gruelling for a young boy.

His parents had three boys and two girls, plus my dad, making six children altogether. So you can imagine that they did not have quite an easy life. My dad's parents were struggling to keep the farm together because they had two daughters first, that weren't much help for their father. He needed sons to take care of the 200 sheep, 10 cows, 5 donkeys and plenty of chickens to go around. So they tried for boys and they were successful. My dad was the third oldest boy, and he was the naughtiest of the bunch, so he says. His young years were spent helping out in the farm with his dad. He wanted to go to school and finish off his high school, but his dad refused him, saying that he needed help on the farm and that his sisters had already gone to school. He finished school in year nine.

My dad's childhood wasn't all that good, I don't think my dad ever had a proper childhood. He was burdened with responsibilities at an early age.

### **ADOLESCENCE:**

When he was only 16 years old, my father was sent off to war. It wasn't a real war, it was just training. It was in Serbia where the real war is now. No-one was pleased about that, least of all his dad, but at that time it was compulsory for all young men between the ages of 16-35, and he had to go to serve in the army. He was in the army for two years, his rank was Sergeant. When my father was training there he said that it was so beautiful and so peaceful, now it is all in ruins because of the real war.

When he came back from the army at the age of 18 years old, he met and fell in love with a beautiful woman. But because she was too young, he had to wait for her to become of age. He told us that the army camp was very difficult, and that he had to wake up very early in the

morning and do very physical activities, and they had to train very hard as well. He was in charge of a large group of men, and he told us if the men didn't make their beds properly he would make them do it again and again until it was done properly.

In the meantime my father went back to helping out his dad and his brothers on the farm. At that stage his two older brothers were off and married, so it was just my father and his younger brother that were there to help out. For three years my father wouldn't forget about the lady of his life, and he was determined to marry her it was the last thing he was going to do. But he knew that he had to wait at least until she turned 17 years old.

#### **HAPPY TIMES/ SAD TIMES:**

His happy times were when he could go out with his mates and just have a good time and laugh and just muck about. He loved those times because he could forget about the farm and his responsibilities. He also enjoyed spending time with his girlfriend. They would go for long walks together. His happiest time was when he discovered that he could go and live in Australia and make a better life for himself there.

My father decided to migrate to Australia and make a better life for his daughters and to build up a future for his family. His wife's dad made up all of the paper work for them to come into Australia because he already was an Australian citizen. The differences between Macedonia and Australia was that Macedonia didn't provide them many opportunities, and it was a poor country to live in, and they had a chance to come into a country where it would give them the opportunities that Macedonia didn't have.

One of his sad times was when he saw his best friend die. He says that he can never forget that. He was right beside his friend when he was mucking around with a grenade. My dad thought that his friend knew what he was doing, so he left him for a second, and in that split second that my dad moved away, the grenade exploded accidentally and his best friend died in front of his eyes.

Another sad time for my father was when he had to leave all of his family in Macedonia and he knew that he wasn't going to see his mother and father for a very long time.

#### **GETTING MARRIED:**

My dad was only 18 when he met my mum, but he knew that she was the one for him. They went out for five years before they got married. They didn't have a big wedding because neither of them could afford anything that was too big. They just called in a minister and signed some papers and that was their wedding. My mum didn't even wear a white wedding dress, although it was her dream to wear one.

After a year of having been happily married, they had a baby girl in 1977, and they were so happy with her that they decided to have another child, and in 1980 they had another baby girl and that girl was me.

My dad got a job driving buses and he is still in the same line of work.

Over the next 15 years my dad and my mum bought a house of their own and paid it off, and they bought another house (the house in which we are living), and they also have paid it off. They bought a unit in Kings Park which they are slowly repaying, and recently they bought a block of land on which they will build two units. Five years ago the whole family went overseas, and my father got to see his family whom he hadn't seen for nine years. That was a big event for my dad.

My dad's life up to now is good, he is still working at the buses, and still slowly repaying the unit in Kings Park. He is contemplating another trip overseas. He has decided to build two more units on the new block of land he has bought.

**STORY ABOUT MY FATHER:**

My father's name is Van Hiep Nguyen. He was born on 25.3.1956 in Nha Trang City in Vietnam. "My mother threw me into a rubbish bin when I was about three months old, because I was crying all day. I wouldn't eat anything my mother fed me! After that a young woman brought me home. She fed me for three days, then returned me to my mother. My mother told me that!" Sadly he thinks his mother still does not love him.

When he was young, his life was so happy. There were nine people in his family: the parents, four sons and three daughters. His family was very rich. He was the oldest son in the family, but not the oldest child. His family had a big farm. On holidays his cousins and he went to his farm to hunt birds, rabbits and pick fruits.

He often waggled school to go and practise swimming at the beach or at some rivers. Though Hiep's parents did not let him go, he was not scared because he wanted to know how to swim! "I remember, I made friends with some boys near home and went to another street to fight with other groups. I was always nude and I stayed outside when there was rain", he said with a happy face.

He liked to keep fish in his house, so he sometimes waggled school to go and catch fish at the river as well. When he was young, he never ate meat. He only ate vegetables because he was a Buddhist.

He went to school when he was five years old. He said "It was so difficult. The teachers were so cruel, and always used punishment and detentions to scare students." About twenty-five years ago, schools in Vietnam were larger than schools in Australia, but also there was a large number of students in each class. "To the students, their teachers seemed like their parents. Also teachers were so strict. I 'd been punished so many times till I couldn't remember how many! I remember one reason was because I went to school so early. I played with my shoes by throwing them up and down. One of them got stuck in a tree. And I came to class with only one shoe on. Another time when I was in Secondary school, I had to stand outside in the sun for three hours, because I teased a female teacher about a male teacher," he said slowly. He liked to play with fire for example cooking food with his cousins, lighting the candles. "I remembered one day, the house caught fire, because I hid a lit cigarette in the carpet when my parents came home. The neighbours helped by bringing water to stop the fire. Lucky that it didn't burn the whole house" he said he was still sorry for that.

Van Hiep went to work when he turned seventeen. His job was as a mechanic and he worked at CAM RANH Island far away from home. He felt unhappy because there were only boys working in that area. Because it was the first time he had to work and stay away from home, he cried all the time.

Many girls loved him, but he did not know. The girls told him that they loved him on the day he got married to my mother. So my mother was his first lover. Two times he was asked to have an arranged marriage by his father, but he said no because he did not like those two girls. He first met my mother at a factory when he was twenty-two years old. When he was twenty-four years old, his parents agreed to let him marry my mother. They had a happy wedding. After they were married, they stayed in my grandparents' house. His life became so happy, because he went to work at the same place with my mother, so they were never separated for any hours!

One day he left us to go to the Philippines, because he wanted to make sure we had a good future. On 30th of November 1989, he came to Australia by plane from the Philippines because he did not like COMMUNISM in Vietnam. For the first four years in Australia he lived with his cousin's family. He likes living in Australia because it has more freedom, it is a quiet country, and

everyone treats each other well. "Australia is a beautiful country. It has less pollution than other countries. Vietnam has so much pollution, people have no respect, schools have not got enough facilities," he compares.

He misses his parents, brothers and sisters. Now he is working for the FORD COMPANY. He is a solderer. Our family 's so happy. "Life is so wonderful now!" he smiles. "And we like to live here because we have a lot of friends."

In the future he would like to buy two houses, one for our family, another for our business. This would be a Milk Bar perhaps! Now he wishes he can be a mechanic again, and hopes that everyone in the family has a wonderful future.

"If I could change anything in my life that I want I would always be young so I can go to school because it's the happiest moment in everyone's life" he thinks.



On October the 19th 1979, Jodi Galea was delivered by her doctor at the Footscray Hospital and given to her new parents, Fred and Mary Galea, to join her older sister Tracey. Her childhood was what you would call a "normal" one; ie, a happy home with parents, a sister, a family dog called Holly, and Sunday lunch at the table.

Since she was a little bundle of joy, up until now in 1996, where Jodi is a 16 year old girl, she has looked up to her parents. They still continue to play a major role in her life. They have taught her all about the real world. Particularly her dad, whom she envies simply because he works hard and yet has the time to enjoy life.

The most important issue that Jodi has learnt about is the security of having an education. She believes that it is essential in life and highly expected now-a-days to reach a career. Therefore, her hopes as a teenager are to complete her VCE at St. Albans Secondary College, then go to a university and study "health", which could probably lead her into a profession such as physiotherapy.

It's obvious that Jodi is into health and fitness as she enjoys all types of sport. She particularly likes watching the events of the Olympic Games, and is an obsessive spectator of football (she barracks for North Melbourne).

To earn extra money Jodi has a casual job at K-Mart Keilor Downs, where she enjoys communicating with other employees. Jodi demonstrates great dedication at K-Mart as well as at school. However, she would not want to pursue this job as a career. If worse came to worse, she could find employment there, but would rather find a job that she would always enjoy everyday.

Like every female, Jodi has dreams and plans about her future other than education and having a career. Those are based about her love life. Her ideal man is likely to be tall, with blue eyes, a tanned complexion, muscular and rich. However above all, he will have a nice personality. She would love to get married and have children.

Jodi does live with fear though, that is possibly common to everyone, and that is dying young and having all her hopes and dreams washed away.

Jodi will always remember a happy event that occurred recently on her 16th birthday. In order to celebrate it her parents took her to Cairns and Port Douglas, where she happily gained a great tan that matched her short brown hair.

The saddest memory that Jodi has is of her grandfather passing away in 1985, when she was about six years old.

Being a friendly, honest person, Jodi easily makes friends. She feels that friends are very important in life, because nobody deserves to be alone. Jodi finds it important to confide in friends, to whom she "spills all", such as me, Vanessa. She enjoys going out with friends to movies (her favourite film is "Cocktail" with Tom Cruise), and basically anywhere that has a great atmosphere and spectacular scenery.

The environment is very important to Jodi. Her views are that people live in this world, and therefore it should be kept clean and tidy.

So, if you meet a tall girl with glasses and short brown hair, who is full of life, friendly and trustworthy, it's probably Jodi Galea!

I am about to tell you a story about the life of an extraordinary person. Her life contains harsh and unpleasant events, that an ordinary person would find difficult to face. By using her faith effectively, and being encouraged by those she knows, she by-passed all the difficult ordeals.

My grandma was born in 1928, her birth name is Nguyen Thi Tram, but I simply know her as grandma. There were seven siblings in her family, four brothers and three sisters, she is the fourth child. They lived in the countryside of south Vietnam, in a town called Long An.

Grandma was one of my great grandmother's favourites. From her early ages she was indulged by great grandmother. When she reached school age she was sent to a local prep boarding school. It was believed that boarding schools are of great benefit to kids, but my great grandmother was not keen on leaving my grandmother even for just a while.

My great grandmother is a master of bakery and the business had taken place right at home. It was at primary school that grandma had to abandon her academic future due to the crisis of the family's financial problems. She began working at home as an apprentice of my great grandmother (I doubt that it was voluntarily!) Anyway, after a while she obtained the skill of bakery, mastering many recipes in the career which followed.

My grandma was married at the age of eighteen. Her bakery career was put on hold. After two years of marriage, her husband joined the U.S. army in the call for patriotism. He disappeared soon after, presumably dead. A few months later she gave birth to my mother. My mum was her only child because she waited for her husband's return for forty-seven years and did not get married again.

My great grandmother died in 1958 due to old age. Because she's the only person in the family who had obtained baking skills, so she had to support the whole family by continuing the family business. She was helped by most of her family members. Her seventh youngest brother was the only one who was capable of continuing his academic career.

Life was not easy when you have a child to feed and a family to support, especially when a war was raging outside your door. She tried field work, but it was hard work and dangerous; some fields had mines. So eventually she resumed her career as a baker. The business went well, in fact the family finances were going so well that she decided to adopt a few other kids whose parents had abandoned them. During her perilous career, there were times when her career was jeopardised by financial problems, but then she was supported by her brother (seventh in order) who had immigrated to the U.S. in recent years. She calculated that her bakery career lasted for nearly forty years, she only gave it up because of her immigration to Australia.

Sponsored by my mum, granny immigrated to Australia in 1992. She received her Australian Citizenship Certificate in 1994, and is currently living with my family in Victoria. She has been living with us since her arrival.

Grandma likes to tell me stories about her past, particularly when she was young. She said she was the most beautiful girl in town, and many men wanted her hand in marriage, but she refused them all. She married my grandfather because he was docile, understanding, and loved her truly, not because he was the most wealthy or the most handsome.

Grandma loves children, she has taken care of my aunt's kids for more than two years now. Just like when she took care of us ten years ago. Though she doesn't mind how much she is receiving each month, the aspect of taking care of the kids makes her happy.

Knitting is my grandma's hobby. She used to sit knitting all day at our old flat in the winter. She knitted for the whole family, but mostly for us.

I love my grandma very much. I enjoy living with her because she always has lots of stories to tell, and her cooking is as excellent as her baking. Also she is really nice, she always insists on helping us with the housework when she is not busy. She is always there when I have any problems at school. She is my favourite.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF DRAGICA PAVLICIC**

**by Ana Pavlicic**

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Dragica Pavlicic was born on the 23rd February 1952 in Belisce, Croatia. She started school when she was seven years old in 1959. She hated school. Dragica said she was just wasting time there and she loved to play with her friends because she was free. She didn't like being locked up although she didn't mind the subjects. One day during math class a boy stabbed her in the back with a compass, so she took her wooden pencil case and smashed him in the face with it.

Dragica and her brother sold soft drinks to tourists at the beach, and with the money would go to the disco, dinner and the cinema until 12 o'clock at night. Everything has changed now, and Dragica wishes she were a child again.

Dragica went to school for sixteen and a half years. She knew that she had to finish school so she studied hard to get it over and done with. Dragica finished school as an Agricultural Engineer. She wanted to be a doctor, but her parents didn't have enough money to pay for that university.

After she waited three years for a job, she worked as a casual secretary in a doctor's office for a month. Then she changed to typing bills for telephones. After six months she got a job in the library working as a Science Tutor - that was her first REAL job. The job was okay except for people who were sick in the head, who came in and stole books, but other than that she loved to find books for students and teach them subjects for exams.

Dragica got married on the 16th November 1974 to Karlo Pavlicic. She lost her first child, but her second, Damir, was born on 6th January 1980, and she had her third Ana on the 16th November on her 8th anniversary.

Dragica and her children arrived one month after her husband in Australia on the 18th September 1988, it took them two days to get to Australia. She had a six week job in Australian Airlines when she came, and now she works in Qantas.

Dragica and her husband didn't have a lot of money or a car to see Australia, so they didn't know much. When they bought a car they drove around and saw that Australia is a beautiful place. She likes Australia so much that she doesn't want to go back to Croatia, only when on holiday or visiting family.

Dragica has been living in Australia for seven years and has gone for holidays to Croatia twice, and once to her father's funeral. Her parents were both professors, and her father died because of the war. He was a medical wonder, because he had many heart attacks before he passed away.

Her father-in-law died the same year, and as well as that, she had two operations. When she travelled to Croatia she took her children with her. Dragica's husband went to Croatia once to visit his dying father and went to his funeral.

Dragica has no relatives in Australia, but her husband has a cousin and his family. They have been in Australia for one year and they live in a unit two houses away from them. They all have lots of family barbecues and outings. When Dragica retires it will depend on how much money she will have. If she saves enough she will build a new house, let her children finish school and spoil her grandchildren (she hopes). She might travel around the world with her daughter. They have so much in common.

## BIOGRAPHY OF MR. STEWART HOMER by Ngan Ngo

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### MY PRINCIPAL:

At school the person everyone respects the most is our Principal, Mr. Homer. He always appears and gives us a great speech at the beginning of every assembly. When he speaks everyone listens, because we all know that what he says will affect us all. But does anyone think of the kind of experience he has been through to become Principal?

Mr Stewart Homer was born in Brisbane, Queensland Australia in 1943. He has one sister. As a boy he was very spoiled because he was the only boy in the family. His family moved to Victoria when he was only one year old. When he was young Mr Homer hated to eat vegetables, but was forced to eat them by his parents, because vegetables are good and healthy. By eating a lot of vegetables he has grown to like them.

When World War 2 began, his father joined the Navy for six and a half long years. At that time (Mr Homer was very young), he and his sister were raised single handedly by their mother. They didn't know anything about their father, and missed out on the fatherly relationship and love until the war was over, and his father safely came back home.

The first school Mr Homer attended was Pascoe Vale Primary School. After graduating from grade six at Pascoe Vale Primary School, he went to Glenroy High School. Besides studying at school, Mr. Homer had a few part time jobs. He worked at the Post Office, in the role of a mail sorter. He had another job, delivering newspapers every morning. The last part time job Mr. Homer had before he entered University was working in a textiles factory. It was his most unpopular job because he had to do hard work, such as pushing carts and sweeping the floor.

At University he chose the teaching course because he liked to work with people and wanted to help them, but he didn't know by choosing this course, that he was destined to meet his future wife. After graduating from University with a teaching degree, he became a teacher at Foster High School in Southern Victoria. The subjects which Mr Homer taught were French, Geography and History. He also coached sports at school. Some years later, and in another school, he met and fell in love with a Canadian lady who had come to Australia as an exchange Teacher. They were married in Canada in 1975.

Like everyone else Mr Homer has experienced most common emotions of sadness and happiness. His saddest moment was when his father died; the man who gave him life, taught him everything about life and made him become the person he is now, was leaving him forever. His happiest moment was the birth of his two children, who brought joy back to his life.

After being married Mr Homer's life changed. He accepted the changes willingly because, like everyone with family, it is important to put family before anything else, including freedom. Mr Homer travelled to and from Canada many times after his marriage because he wanted to visit his wife's family as much as possible. Through the years he has continued with his teaching career.

Mr. Homer has taught at a lot of places both in the countryside and in the city. He once lived on a dairy farm. Through his description it was a very pretty place near the sea, and with lots of mountains. During his time in the country he joined different clubs and organisations, such as sports clubs and the Apex Club. Mr. Homer also experienced the difficult classes. He met lots of interesting students, some of them were hard workers, and others not, but he never thought about quitting teaching.



After eighteen years as a Teacher, he became Vice Principal and in 1986 he applied for the Principal position. He was interviewed, then was selected from other people who applied for the same position, to become at Principal at St. Albans Secondary College.

When I asked Mr Homer "What do you think about this generation, compared to yours?", his answer was "The current generation is more confident and more knowledgeable, thanks to the development of technology, such as the communication systems."

The last question I asked him was "What do you want to achieve now?", and he answered "To make this school (St. Albans Secondary College) into one of the best in the state, to give students the best opportunity to follow their chosen career, have a successful family relationship, be a good citizen and enjoy good health."

I think Mr. Homer has almost achieved his first goal, as the results at the VCE level are very high and most students can get into some of the best Universities in Victoria.

When I first had the idea to interview Mr Homer I was scared, I was afraid he might say no, but I was wrong, Mr Homer was very pleased when he accepted my request. Throughout the interview I was quite nervous because I have never interviewed the headmaster, but Mr Homer gave me confidence; he talked in a friendly way like he was talking to his friend. He even joked with my friend, saying that I was in trouble and was sent to him, when she poked her head into his office.

By doing this interview I learnt a little more about Mr Homer and I'm glad that he is the Principal of the school I'm attending.



Sally Debono was born on the 17th of July 1946. She was born at home in a town of Malta called Birkirkara. She lived there with her loving, caring parents Carmen and Sam Debono, along with her three brothers and three sisters. Pauline is now 51 years old, Joe is now 49 years old, Tessie is now 46 years old, Angie is now 43 years old, Charlie is now 41 years old and of course her youngest brother Francis is now 37 years of age.

Sally lived on a farm with lots of fruit trees and vegetable crops, as well as animals. They mostly had rabbits for meat on Sundays, a mule to plough the land, a few goats to have their own milk and cheese, a few chooks (chickens) to give eggs, and one mountain sheep to provide the family with wool to make jumpers, socks and blankets for winter. They also had a guard dog to warn them if anyone came or was on the property.

When Sally's friends came over they would play with beads. The aim of that game was to try and get the beads in the hole. This was one of her favourite games. At home in her spare time the family would sing songs and play the mouth organ which Sally enjoyed.

Sally loved it there in Malta especially when she could speak Maltese to her relations, and she saw them nearly every day! But things began to change. They began to have a lack in food so the parents had decided that they had to move to Australia. Sally was very sad when she had to go because she would miss everybody. This was in 1954 when Sally was eight and a half years old.

They went to Australia by ship and they didn't have to pay anything because the British government paid for them. It would have cost them 28 (pounds) or approximately \$56 (Dollars) now, for the family.

When Sally arrived in Ingham in North Queensland her first thought was there is so much bush and trees and empty land patches. Where did it all come from?

Later on Sally was planning on being a lawyer considering she was very good at school. But because women were discriminated against in that type of area she couldn't become a lawyer. So for her first job she was shop assistant. She was paid 5 (pounds) a week which then was very little.

By this time she had met the love of her life, her first boyfriend. Then three years after, at the age of nineteen, Sally got married to Michael who was twenty-four years old. They got married at Ingham in an Italian Catholic Church on 18th of December 1965.

Not long after that she was a secretary. One year after Sally was married she had a child. It was a girl. They named her Emily. She is now 30 years old. Then three years after that they had another child. It was a baby boy. They named him Tom. He is now 27 years old. By this time they were living in Sydney because of a job that was lined up.

But then they moved down to Melbourne, because Michael and Sally had other job offers. Sally was now working at Footscray Hospital in Melbourne, Victoria as a nursing assistant.

Thirteen years had gone past and unexpectedly they had another child. Sally was 35 1/2 years old when she had her 3rd child Kristina. Kristina is now 15 years old.

Sally has a happy life and now is not working so she gets to relax a bit at home. She is now 50 years old. Sally is a loving caring parent and friend and I feel that whoever knows her properly should be very grateful.

Thomas Henry Slater in his 56 years has lived a very exciting and fulfilling life. He was born in the scrub in a little "humpy" (hut) in Kooroni, in New South Wales. Tom wasn't brought up in a tribe, there wasn't much aboriginality that existed in Kooroni, there wasn't even much culture, not much of anything really.

For Tom growing up as an aborigine wasn't very hard because there was no such thing as "black" or "white". Where he was born there hasn't been since 1788. He was very fortunate for that, because that meant that he never had racism thrown at him. The people around when he grew up were very open minded. Therefore he doesn't really know what it feels like to have racist comments directed towards him. He grew up the same as a "white man".

Tom went to a school in a mission which consisted of 190 blacks and 2 whites, who were the headmaster's children. There was one teacher who taught 1-3 classes in the morning and 4-6 in the afternoon.

He left school at the age of 10 and started high school which was 20 miles away. He left high school at the age of 12, which was when he got his certificate, and attended college at Tinkerton in New South Wales until he was 16. At that time he was also doing his National Service for 2 years.

While Tom was in university, life was very stressful for him. He would come home at 5pm and then study for 2 hours, then at 7.30pm he would have to go to rugby training for 2 hours, and then come home and study until around 3-4am in the morning and get about 4-5 hours sleep every night.

Tom took 6 months off from university in 1960 to go to America, because he won an overseas studying award. The idea was to send 10 blacks to gain knowledge and bring it back to their communities.

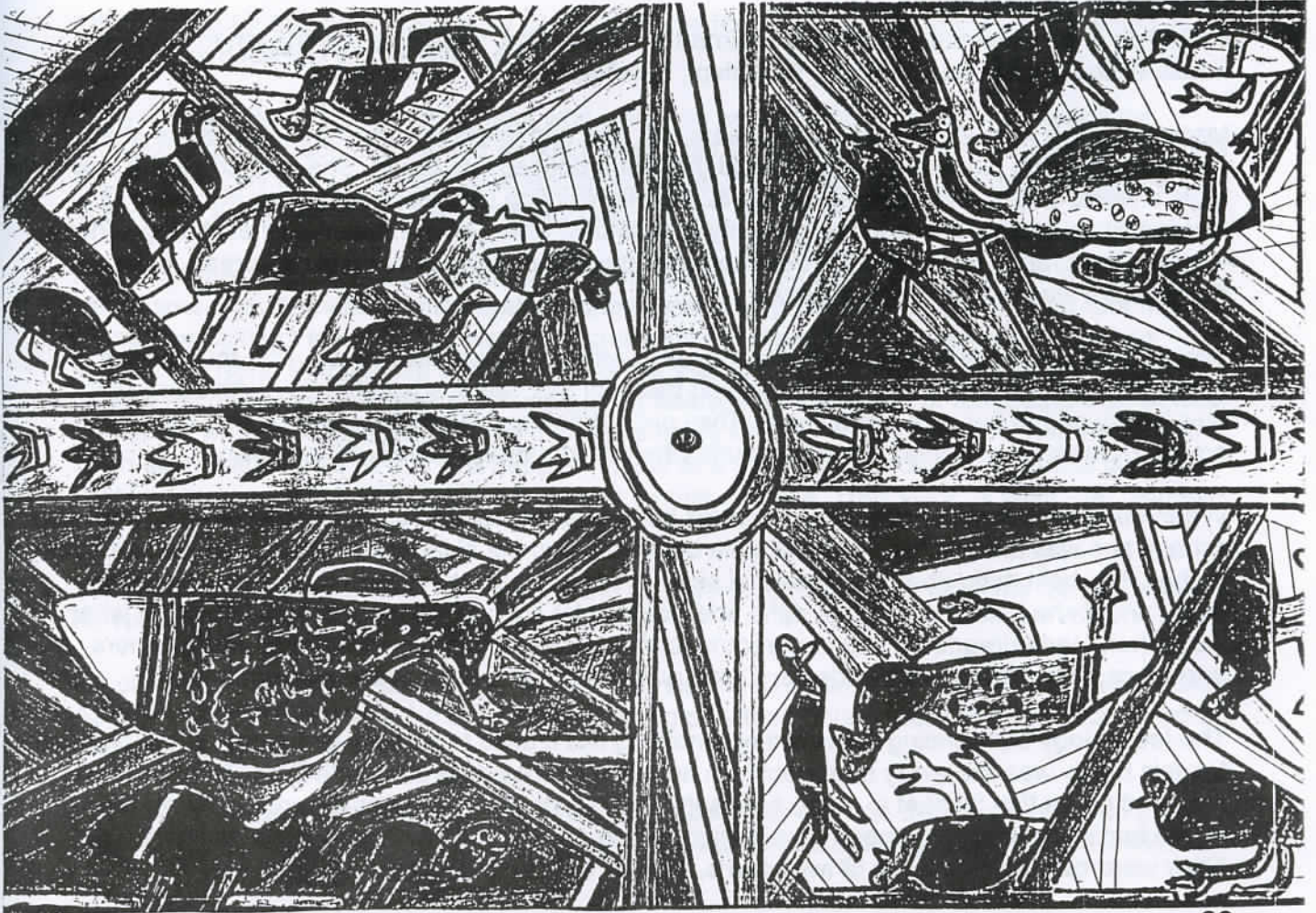
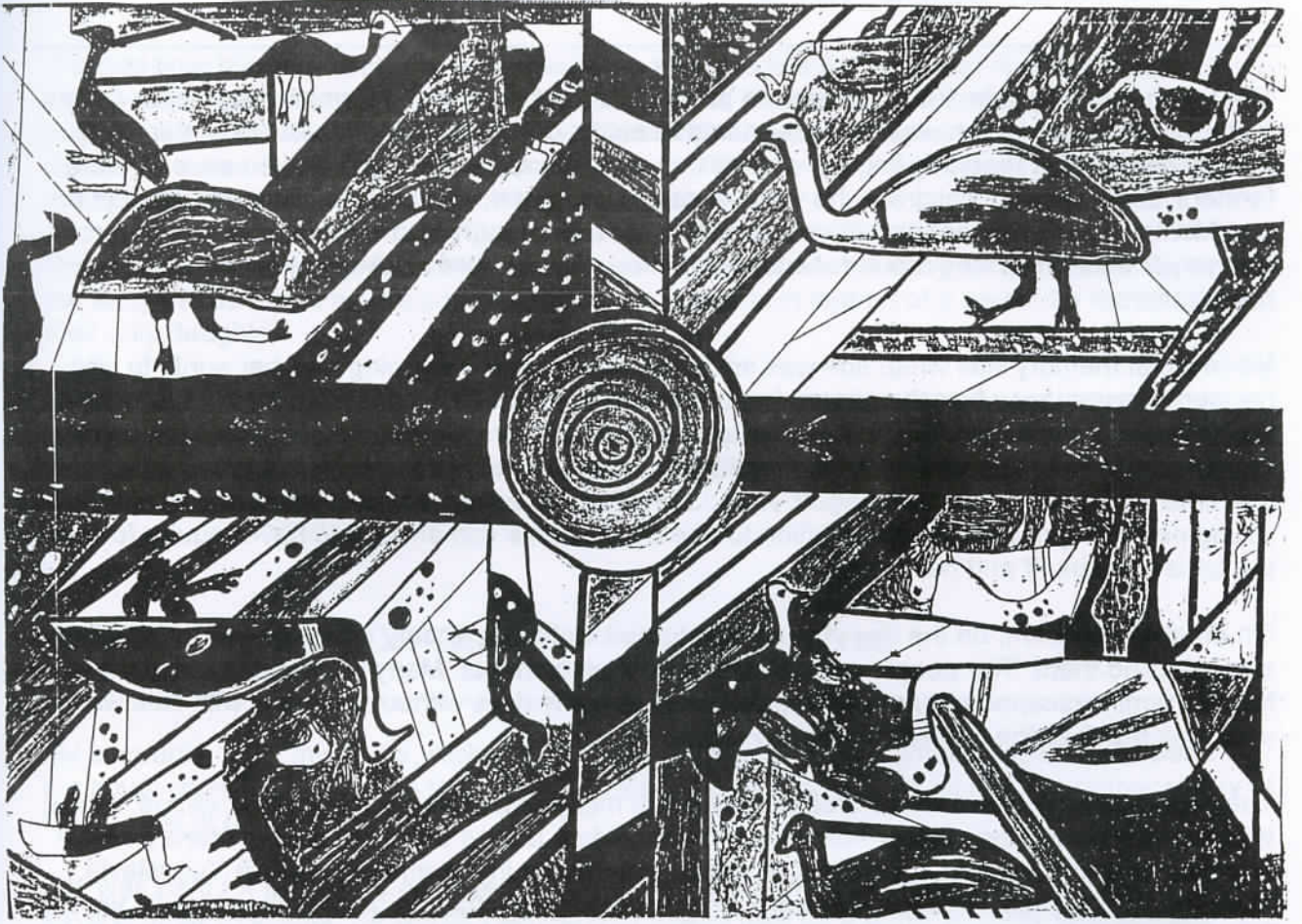
Tom married Dawn when he was 21 years old, they were married for 6 months when Dawn fell pregnant with Denise, who was born in 1961. Sharon was born in 1963 and then Narelle who was born in 1965. In 1980 he adopted a 6 months old baby boy known to us today as Willy.

The happiest day of Tom's life was when he represented Australia in Rugby League and they won. The saddest day in Tom's life was when he lost his wife Dawn in March 1987, which was very hard for him to accept, because she was always his backbone.

Tom now works for Aboriginal Affairs and tells children about aboriginal culture at schools all around Australia. He also teaches them how to cook the aboriginal way.

Tom now has quite a few degrees in Business (Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs, Business, Commonwealth and Federal, Social Welfare and Accountancy). When Tom tells people how many degrees he has, they don't believe him, most of the time he keeps it to himself.

Thomas H. Slater is very proud to have accomplished so much in his 56 years. I think that Tom has a lot to be proud of, and I am very happy for him to have come so far in his life.



Maria Topic was born in 1937, just before World War 2. Maria lived in a small village near Odzak in northern Bosnia, which was very green and beautiful during the summer, but in winter the nearby river Bosna regularly flooded and destroyed their crops. The parents who were illiterate farmers, and their nine children who were - Bosa, Jovo, Peter, Maria, Vida, Svetozar, Radojka and Marko, were very poor and more often than not went hungry and without clothes as there was never enough money around. As a result, three children died in early childhood of malnutrition.

Maria's first memory was when she was seven years old. She was going with her aunty to visit her aunt's sister, but when they got to her place they watched in horror as the enemy executed their relatives before their eyes. Maria remembers hiding in the garden, behind a bush, watching these cruel men who were once their neighbours, chopping off the family's heads one by one. At that time the World War 2 had begun. An added misery to an already harsh start to life of a young peasant girl who had an ambition to one day become rich enough to have regular food on the table for herself and her family.

On another occasion, on the day when Maria turned eight, the enemy came again to their village and attacked them. The people ran in panic whilst being shot at. Many were killed, but luckily Maria's family escaped unharmed. They walked for many days without food and with little water until they reached the safety of the army camp.

They stayed in the forest for six weeks, along with many other refugees from their village, where they received food and shelter which the army provided. During those six weeks, Maria's family was reunited with their father. He was a soldier who fought in the army to liberate Yugoslavia. They hadn't seen him for over two years, and had all thought that he died as they had no word from him since he left home. Maria was overjoyed to see her father, and she cried of happiness in his arms, feeling safe and secure once again.

However, after six weeks, when they returned to their village, there was nothing left in their house except for the hay on which they slept, huddled together for warmth.

Maria's first job was when she was ten years old. She had to gather wheat in fields where she put the wheat into bundles, where it would then be produced into bread. She worked all day, six days a week, where she was payed only \$2.00. Her working conditions were very poor and filthy. Her family could only afford to eat a variety of potatoes, green beans, and bread each day. Once a month their father would bring a treat home for them, by buying a loaf of white bread, and for them then it was a delicacy, like a cake.

When Maria was sixteen years old, she moved in with her oldest sister Bosa. She found a low paying job cutting up corn, and after working there for two years, she fell in love with Luke, who was introduced to her by a close friend. They got married and lived with Luke's family for a couple of months, and then bought a house where they started a family of their own.

When Maria and Luke's daughter Zorica was born, she was forever sickly. When she started school, she was always getting into trouble by bashing up the older and younger kids who picked on her. The best thing about her was that she never let anyone bully her no matter how old they were, and if she believed she was right, she wouldn't let anyone tell her different no matter what it cost her. Maria dreaded going to parent/teacher interviews, because every time the teachers announced the misbehaved students, Zorica was always at the top of the list.

The technology surrounding Maria today is nothing like it used to be back when she was a child. Maria's family was like every other family in her village. They all lived simple lives. They slept on hay, and had a thin blanket to share between them. During the evenings for entertainment, the whole family would sit together by the firelight telling stories to one another while they knitted. Their wardrobe was made up of two gowns, one for winter and the other for summer.

The first time Maria ever saw a radio was when she was twenty years old! And five years later she saw a television for the very first time! The air that Maria breathed when she was a child was pollution free. The water in the beaches was so clear and blue that you could see all the small fish in the water. Back then, the years after the war, life was simple and there was enthusiasm in the people to rebuild, and an air of hope for the future.

Unfortunately, that enthusiasm did not last, as life did not become easy for Maria's family, and in the early 1970s her family decided to migrate to Australia in search of a better life for them and their only daughter.

Today Maria Topic lives in the St Albans suburb of Melbourne. She lives a very happy life with her husband, daughter and three grandchildren. Maria often speaks of the hardship of her early childhood, and tells her grandchildren how lucky they are to lead such an easy life, thinking back to her own.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF KICH TRAN - by Joe Tran**

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My biography is on my father, Kich Tran. He was born in 1955 in a small village on an island in the south of Vietnam. He was the oldest of 9 kids and as a young kid he had the responsibility of taking care of his siblings.

Life was hard for him in the early years; he would leave home very early in the morning to walk several miles to school. He would then return home to take care of his younger brothers and sisters while his parents worked on their farm.

Although life for this boy wasn't easy he did find time for some fun. He would go swimming very often or eat coconuts with friends.

He was never really the type of person who would do well at school, so at an early age he dropped out of school, and started working to help his struggling family. He went fishing with his father every day to try and catch something for dinner that night, and if they were to catch a lot of fish they would sell it so they could buy rice.

As a teenager he met a young girl, whose name was Vo Thi Lien. It was love at first sight. They would spend all their spare time together, and it wasn't long before they got married. But the joys of marriage did not last for Kich. He was recruited to the Police Force to defend his people against the North Vietnamese communists as the Vietnam War worsened. Although he wasn't directly in combat against the communists, Kich was always in the line of fire. Being shot at was part of his work. He witnessed innocent civilians being killed or crying because their home had been destroyed. While all this was happening, his wife had their first child, a beautiful girl, he named Phu, and in a space of 6 years he had 3 more children. They were all boys - he named them Van, Vi, and Tan.

As the Vietnam Communists got stronger and stronger, Kich realised it was time for him to take his new family and try to flee his wartorn country.

He planned this trip with his younger brother and sisters. They would leave as soon as possible. As soon as the night came, he and his wife, taking only their bare necessities, left secretly from their beloved island homeland.

The boat they travelled on was very crowded because other civilians also wanted to leave this hell on earth. The trip too was like hell itself. There was no real destination, any place would do.

The boat was a small wooden one, not really suitable for long journeys. There wasn't much food at all on board, and no food was eaten unless you were sick. Many people got very sick. Some were close to dying. Kich comforted his family during this trip, and whenever possible he would steal some food for his children.

Finally the boat reached land, four days and four nights later. It was the Philippines. We were let into the country by soldiers who let us stay at a detention centre. The place was full of Vietnamese refugees in the same situation.

Kich and his family stayed there for a couple of months. Then finally we were told we were able to leave and go to Australia.

Kich's wife was a couple of months pregnant with me, and if the authorities had known about this they would not have allowed us to leave, so Kich did the best he could to hide me. Well, the authorities did not find out about me and they let my family leave for Australia.

We were flown to this place called Melbourne. The family stayed at a government owned building. We were to stay there until Kich could find a job. It was very hard for him to find a job because he knew no English at all.

But with determination and persistence he did finally find a job at a pie factory. Working there was very hard for him as well. He received a lot of racist remarks made towards him, and he was discriminated against by co-workers. Although working wasn't easy, he really did try hard because his wife had just had another baby. It was me.

He worked at the pie factory until he could afford to buy a house for his family. He then quit that job to go and look for some other work where he was treated like anyone else.

He found a job not long after at a cable factory, and he is still working there today. He's much happier with this job. Today he owns a new home and 3 cars. It just goes to show what you can do with determination and hard work. I guess I just don't know how lucky I am to have a safe home, and to even be on this earth.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF QUAN THI DO**

**by Phi Tran**

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Quan Do spent her childhood and her teenage years in Vietnam on an island called Phu Quy, situated in the southern part of Vietnam. Life for Quan was not easy but it wasn't all that difficult. Her family lived beside the sea in a small house made of bricks and cement. Everyone had the same kind of houses so Quan's was no different. At the age of 7 Quan began school. Quan enjoyed school a lot. However one day, when her teacher smacked her on the hand because she didn't do her work, Quan was too scared to go back to school. After that incident Quan decided to quit school. Back in those days school was not important so her parents agreed. Quan spent most of her life supporting the family.

The weather in Vietnam was hot in summer and warm in winter, and Quan remembers nothing better than waking up every morning with the sun shining in her eyes and the sound of the waves just beside her soul. When Quan was about 8 years old her brothers and cousins used to steal money from her mother's purse and wouldn't come home until all the evidence was destroyed. Quan also loved taking care of children. Every time when her mother and father went to work Quan always volunteered to babysit her younger brothers and sisters. Quan would take the children to buy sweets or just play in the front of the house. The children were very fond of Quan and Quan was very fond of them.

Quan had some pretty humorous memories, however she also had to go through a tough time in her teenage years. An event that shattered Quan's life was her brother, Hai's death. While working at sea her brother drowned in the water. That night when Quan's father came home to tell the horrifying news, the family started to fall into pieces. The death of Hai affected the family tremendously. For a long time Quan felt neglected by her mother. She felt like her mother didn't love her anymore, and that the rest of the family didn't care for her. No-one in the family talked to one another for quite a while. It was like the whole family died with Hai.

Like many of the other families, Phu Quy Quan's family were poor. The men in the family worked at sea and the women would just sell fruit and vegetables. But that wasn't enough to feed the family. The only option the family had was to send Quan to work for the rich people. At the age of 15 Quan's mother sent Quan to a city miles away from home. She worked as a housekeeper. Quan was separated from her family and friends for almost 5 months. Quan was treated unfairly and wanted nothing better than to return home. Quan worked from day to night without any breaks. If she were found sitting down for a rest she would be called lazy and the owners would give her more work to do. Quan was forbidden to associate with anyone. If she were to talk to anyone, especially males the people would punish her, by not letting her out during the day. Those 4 months of Quan's life was hell and being home with her family in her village again felt better than heaven.

Even though Quan suffered during those 4 months of her life, something good came out of it. One day while she was at the market buying fish and vegetables she met a young man who caught her eye. His name was Phong Tran. They talked for a while and found each other interesting. They started to meet each other every day at the market, because that was the only time Quan was allowed out. After, when Quan returned home to her village, Phong came with her. Phong met Quan's family and they got on really well. After 4 months of knowing each other, Quan and Phong got married. It was a lovely day for everyone. Quan looked beautiful as ever. Quan recalls her marriage as the most precious memory of her life.

When South Vietnam was taken over by the Communists, many families felt that they had no freedom, and felt very insecure. This included Quan and her family. In 1978 Quan and her family escaped from the island of Phu Quy by boat. They travelled by sea for many days, suffering severely with starvation. But in a few days they reached the Philippines, where the people took good care of her and her family. Two years after settling in the Philippines, Quan's brother-in-law Kien, who was an Australian citizen, sponsored Quan and her family. In 1980 Quan came to Australia. At first Quan felt really sad and afraid inside because she was going to a country she knew nothing about, but she also felt happy and excited that she had this opportunity to start a new and better life.

Life at first was very difficult for Quan, considering that she had just come to a new country. She did not know the language or the different customs or laws, and technology that she had to get used to. Quan got a lot of help from social workers, and they were able to find Quan and her husband a job at Four'n' Twenty pie factory. The job was not hard and the wages were not bad. Quan lived in a flat in Kensington with the rest of her family and were coping really well.

Quan now has five children, four girls and one boy. She lives in a lovely home in St Albans. Quan finds herself very lucky to have come to Australia and desires nothing more than her family to stay together and for her children to have a happy future in Australia.



## BIOGRAPHY OF DRAGUTIN ILIC - by Milos Ilic

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My dad's name is Dragutin Ilic and he was born on the 16th of November 1946 in Yugoslavia (now Serbia) in a small village called Granica.

He has three other brothers and he is the third oldest. My dad's parents, brothers, grandfather and grandmother lived together in the same house. It was very crowded because 8 people inhabited 3 rooms. My dad's family were pretty stable in those conditions, however, because my grandfather had a small market which gave him some profit every month. My dad and his brothers didn't have everything they wanted but I was told by all four of them that they had a fun-filled and action packed childhood.

In Serbia my dad started Primary School at the age of 7 because that's the age they start in Serbia. For the first four years of Primary School my dad went to a very small school in his village. The next four years of my dad's education involved him and his brothers walking to another village everyday fourteen kilometres there and back. It seems a lot but for my dad and his brothers it was absolutely nothing. They talked on the way, they played soccer, they had fights and the time just flew by every day.

On the weekends my dad had to help his parents a lot on the farm with all the chickens, horses, cows and pigs, and with all the agriculture. One time all of his friends and brothers were playing soccer barefoot and my dad smashed his little toe on his right foot on a rock and the toe was just hanging on a small piece of skin. They quickly had to take him to the nearest ambulance so that a couple of weeks later he was fine, playing soccer again.

When my dad was fifteen years old his grandfather died of natural causes. He was seventy-six years old. It was a very sad time for everyone at the time. The whole family loved him and they spent a lot of time with him. He was missed a lot.

My dad was sixteen years old when he finished his education. Now he had to decide on what he wanted to become. He was a tall person and he enjoyed basketball. He would have liked to have become a basketballer, but his father couldn't afford to send him to a sports school. Maybe he would have been a great basketball player. My dad's uncle lived in the city of Belgrade and he was a mechanic. It was strange for my father to live in a city at that time, because he was used to the life in the village. He was in the city for three years and he went to visit his family every couple of months.

When my dad got his diploma for a mechanic he was eighteen years old and he had to go into the army. In Yugoslavia it's compulsory for all the males to go to the army, if they don't they go to the army court for breaking the law. He was in the army for eighteen months.

After the army my dad went to another city where he got a job as a mechanic in the Fiat car company. He enjoyed the work there for four years.

When my dad was twenty-five he came to Australia. He worked in Toyota and Massey Ferguson at Footscray, and lived in Sunshine. One of his brothers was also in Australia.

A couple of years later he met my mother. They went out together for two years before they got married and then they bought a flat in Yarraville.

My dad worked in Toyota and my mum worked in Don Smallgoods in the early years of their marriage. In 1981 another big thing happened in their lives, I came along. One day at work my dad injured his back and he couldn't work anymore. Since 1984 he has received a disability pension because he cannot work anymore. Just a couple of months ago my dad had a big operation. He had to have his left kidney taken out because it had cancer on it. If it wasn't taken out in time he would have died. I'm grateful he is alive so I have a father and a really good friend.

Tina is a forty year old woman who lives with her husband Steve and her fifteen year old daughter Maggie. They live in a small house of three rooms and travel to work by car six days a week. Tina is a good wife and a lovely mother. She's tall with very short black hair.

Tina was born on the 12th of December 1957 in Ba Via South Vietnam, and grew up there. She lived in a small house with her parents, one older sister Suong, four brothers Thao, Thuan, Cong, Vong and two younger sisters, Bich and Tinh. They lived in a small street in the Ba Via town. Tina started going to school at the age of five, but because of her poor family and the war, she only went to school for three years. Her father worked as a three wheeled taxi driver. He started work around 8am and finished at 6pm. But he didn't come home right away, he sometimes visited his friends and had some drinks with them. Her mother sold fish at the outside market. She started work at 6am and finished at 5pm. Their payment was enough to feed their children and for their living.

"Apart from learning, I got punished more for spending my lunchtime with my friends, because at that time, apart from doing my homework, I was supposed to be clean as well. But I wasn't because everyday after school I had to look after my brothers and sisters, and do the housework" she said. On weekends after Tina put all her brothers and sisters to bed, she usually went to her neighbour's house to play baby games like co co, hide and seek, and chopsticks with a ball.

A very horrible thing happened in her early childhood. She will never forget it. When she had just turned eight her father died. "I was very sad but very scared, because everyday my family could only live by the money that my father brought home. So then my mother had to work and I had to stay home day after day looking after my brothers and sisters without my mother giving me a helping hand," she said in a low voice and with a sad face.

Her relationship with her family was good, even though they didn't see each other that much, but she did have a happy family. She spent most of her time with her brothers and sisters rather than with her mother.

When Tina turned eleven years old, her mother remarried to this guy who lived nearby. Tina's relationship with her stepfather wasn't very good, because he was always drunk. She said "I never liked my stepfather because every time he called me over to talk to him, I couldn't stand the horrible smell on him." A few years later Tina's stepfather died of lung cancer.

Tina's first job was when she was about fifteen years old. She had to sometimes carry water from a well to people's houses for very little money. She only spent money sometimes on junk food for her brothers and sisters. When she reached the age of eighteen she had to go with her mother every morning early to sell fish at the market.

There weren't any holidays for Tina or Tina's family at that time. "At that time, money was time. So you couldn't waste any at all. Every day, through the years I just worked and worked," she said.

Her first love was when she reached nineteen years old. Tina lived on the same street as him, and they knew each other when they were small. They couldn't go out at all, but sometimes he came to her house for dinner with the family only.

Steve was poor too. He only went to school for about two years. He was the oldest in his family, and he had lots of brothers and sisters too. Everyday after work he had to look after his brothers and sisters because his mother had to go to work. Her mother wasn't very happy because when Tina's lover grew up he moved house and his family then lived far from them. At first Tina's

mother didn't let them go on, but Tina had decided who she loved, so Tina's mother had to accept it.

Tina and Steve got engaged in April 1978, and her first kiss was on that day too. From then on they were allowed to go on dates. "On my first date I wore normal clothes, like the other days, because that was all I had anyway," she answered with a smiling face. Usually they only went on dates like to the movies, special festivals and out for dinner. They got married in December that year. Her wedding was big, because after the war (1975) her family got richer. "At first I was sad because my father wasn't there to see me in my lovely white wedding dress, but then the wedding was lovely and fun because all my friends and his friends came to our wedding," she said.

After they got married Tina went to live with her husband's family which was far from home. From then she had to go to work everyday, seven days a week. Her jobs were to cut grass for rich farmers, and she had to plant sweet potatoes for them. Everyday her payment was around ten to twenty thousand Vietnamese dollars (\$2.00), with which she could buy only a kilo of rice.

Tina had her first baby at the age of twenty-three. The baby was a baby girl, and they named her Maggie. When Maggie reached three years old Steve got put in jail because he didn't want to fight the war. From then Tina brought up her daughter Maggie by herself until her husband Steve got out of jail. Steve got out when Maggie reached six years old.

"The happiest days of my life were the day I gave birth to my daughter Maggie, on my wedding day, and when I first set foot in Australia," she said.

Tina and her family came to Australia by flying on a USA airplane. and she got to Australia on the 21st of April 1988. "A memory that I could never ever forget was when I first stepped in Australia. There were no jobs, money, friends and nothing at all," she said very emotionally. Tina came to Australia because she thought Australia may have a better future for her and her family. She said "Australia was a free place where my family and I could have a better living, a happy lifestyle, increased career opportunities and no more war. Now Tina works as a factory worker in the Ford company. She has a family of three, a small house and a car. Her pay each week is around \$360. This is enough to pay bills, food and things in the house. But it's not enough if she has to send some back to Vietnam. Tina's family is like others, her daughter goes to school, every day six days a week her husband and she go to work. "Our living is fine, compared to others, but it is just a bit sad that we can't see all the members of the family every day," she said.

Tina hopes to have a house, two cars, a good and better education for her daughter and a great career for her daughter in the future. She said "My wishes are that my family and I will have a chance to visit Vietnam, always be together and that my daughter will grow up to be kind and beautiful, and always listen to me." She smiles then, and says "All my hope is on my daughter Maggie."



It was in the middle of the night on June 27th 1960 at Quang Ning, South Vietnam, where Lien was born. Her two other sisters welcomed her to her new family. One was 3 years old, the other one was 2. Years later Lien was to have a younger sister and 3 younger brothers, making her the third oldest in the family of 8 children.

Everyday, Lien would walk to school. It starts at 10am in the morning till 2pm in the afternoon. Once she came home from school, Lien and all her other brothers and sisters would either have to cook dinner, clean up the house or help out at the vegetable garden by picking some vegies and taking them to the market to sell for money to buy meat, fish and rice for dinner. Lien and her older sisters hardly had time to do their homework, but still you would call it a happy family.

Immediately Lien's youngest brother was born, her mother passed away because she had lost so much blood. Students at school had blood tests, including the doctor himself, but only a couple of people with the same blood group could donate blood, and this was too few, so they couldn't save her, leaving Lien and her brothers and sisters alone with her father.

Her father would always go out either to work or just walk around, leaving his children home along with Lien's grandpa, who was really old and was about to pass away too. There was no electricity then, so it was very dark at night, but he still left his kids alone and they hated him, he was irresponsible, he didn't care about them at all.

They would all take turns looking after their baby brother during the night. Once one went to sleep, the other would take over. It was not long however, before Lien's father married another woman. Lien's step-mother looked after all the children and her own little boy.

At the age of 16, Lien tried out to do Business Studies at a Uni and got in months later. Her father didn't approve of her moving into Uni, but Lien was determined to have a good future and went anyway.

Lien had a part-time job at a bank and enjoyed her life at Uni, she then married a man named Cuong, at the age of 20. It wasn't long before the Chinese and Vietnamese War started. The government was forcing the people out of the country. If they didn't move, the government would kill them, so Lien and her husband had to leave. The couple sailed to Macau and lived there for a year where they had a baby girl named Hong.

They worked at a florist to earn some money so they could buy food and clothes for their baby, and to keep the family together. Lien met a new friend named Lan and they now are best friends. Lan had stuck up for her when she needed help and also helped babysit Hong when Lien went to work for a couple of hours a week. Lien would do the same, she would babysit Lyn when Lan went to work.

Three years later, in 1984, Lien and her family flew to Australia carrying another little baby with them, who was only 3 months old.

Life in Australia was tough for them at first. They didn't know English, didn't know where to stay and worst of all, they didn't find a job.

With a little help from an old friend they knew from Macau, they found a place to stay, and found a job for Cuong to work. Lien hadn't heard from her family in Vietnam for years. She had lost contact with them, although Lien didn't give up. She did all the best she could to look for someone that knew her family. She didn't do too well, and finally gave up. But then Lien received a letter from her sister overseas. Her sister found out where Lien lived by asking friends and relatives. She was so happy to find her family again, she had not seen them once since she had

gone to Uni. Her sister wrote that they couldn't run away from Vietnam, but managed to run to China and now lived on the border of Vietnam and China.

Lien rang overseas and talked to them whenever she liked, her father, however would send letters instead, because it was too expensive for overseas calling.

If Lien had a choice of deciding where she wants to stay, she would choose Australia. "I wouldn't want to see my kids looking after themselves at the age of 16 like me. I've experienced it before and it was very difficult," she would say. "Australia is a better country, has a better future for my kids, better education and a better hope of succeeding in whatever you do, with always a friendly environment to be in. However, I would still like to visit my family in China, very much," which she did during the Christmas holidays last year.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF HANH TRAN**

**by Mary Hoang**

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Ms Hanh Tran is a 38 year old woman. She has dark brown eyes and black hair. She now lives in Australia with her two children named Mary and Michael. She is a really good mother who always cares for her children and other people before she cares for herself.

She was born on the 18th of February 1958 and lived with her family at Hue in Vietnam. She had three sisters and four brothers named Lan, Luong, Thuy, Tan, Dat, Nhan and Duc. Her family was not rich or poor, just average. She thinks that her family was a happy family, and lived in the warmth of love. Her special times with her sisters and brothers were playing marbles with her brothers, and playing dress-up with her sisters. When she was young she wished she could learn about international trade, and travel around the world when she grew up.

Her saddest memory was when her grandmother died, because she was too old and not really healthy. The relationship between her and her grandmother was very close. Her grandmother loved her the most.

She learnt in a school named Thanh Gia, a catholic school. She thought that all the teachers in that school were very nice because they were very kind and gentle, and the school was a big place to learn in. She got to be a class captain at that school in grade 6 and year 8.

When she was a teenager she like to play badminton for her entertainment. She never had any conflict with her parents. She had two best friends named Tran Thi Dao and Pham Dinh Han. She didn't fall in love with anyone at that time because she thought it was too early for that kind of relationship.

When she was twenty years old she got married to a man called Pham Dinh Han. They met each other at Cau Troung Minh Giang. Her wedding was celebrated on the 25/5/78. She said that her wedding was ridiculous because it was arranged by her parents. She and that man were best friends. She said she couldn't argue with her parents because it was traditional, so her parents had to arrange her marriage.

Her first job was sewing and she didn't enjoy doing that work. She worked for the Binh Minh company at Cau Binh Trieu in Ho Chi Minh city.

When she was thirty-two years old she came to Australia by plane on the 29/9/90. She cried a lot because she had to leave her relatives. She thinks that her life was a lot better when she first came over to Australia, as now she is always sick as her heart is not good. Now she thinks that her life is not better and she is not happy with it. She stays home and does home duties and she thinks that it's not good because she has no money. She thinks that teenagers lives today are a lot better than her life before. She said "I say this because I had to work really hard in my teenage years." She had her children when she was in her middle age. She said "I came to Australia just to start a new life with my children." She thinks that her life at the start was really funny, meeting English people and speaking English.

When she went to Australia the rest of her family stayed in Vietnam, but her sister Thuy went to France. She hasn't planned anything for her future, but she only hopes it will be good, and she wishes she could be healthy and live longer with her children.



## BIOGRAPHY OF ANNE STEYNIS

by Michelle Schreyer

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This biography is on my grandma, her name is Anne Steynis. She was born in Holland in the 4th of October in 1928. So she is 68 now, she was brought up in a country town called Alemelo. The nationality of her family is Dutch. Anne has 6 brothers, their names are - Joop, Henk, Jan, Leo, Hans and Tonie. Anne has also got 2 sisters, and their names are - Rick and Lenie. she had a third sister, but she passed away when she was one and a half years old, her name was Herlena.

Anne has many happy memories is of her childhood. At the age of 6 she played in the snow on their sleds with all of her friends, they did that mostly on Sundays. She also used to play double Dutch most days after school finished.

Anne also has some sad memories of her childhood. At the age of 4 or 5 she can remember seeing bombs coming down from planes. One day a bomb came flying past her house and landed in the backyard of her aunty's house, she lost everything that she owned. Two of her saddest memories were when she saw a plane on fire, it had been shot. The plane came down near the hospital just a few blocks from her house.

Another one of her saddest memories was when some people shot a rocket out into the air, the rocket didn't work, so it came back down, this rocket also came down near where she lived. One person was killed and a lot of people were injured.

Anne also lived through the war years. The war started when she was about 12 and it ended when she was about 16. During the war all of the houses had cellars, when the people heard sirens going off they had to go into them. The sirens were to warn people that planes were coming, in the cellars there was only a few beds, but nothing else, everyone had to stay in them until all of the planes were gone, unless you wanted to get killed. Usually the planes would come at night, so Anne and her brothers and sisters would have to go in the cellars and sleep there.

Their family wasn't affected as badly as other families by the war, because they lived out in the country, but if you were to live in Amsterdam they would have been affected more by the war.

Before my grandma got married she got a job as a seamstress in a factory, she didn't like it very much because she didn't get paid very well at all. All she got was 5 or 6 Guilders in a week, and that was nothing in those days.

When Anne was about 17 she met a guy called Leo at a dance, she got married to Leo when she was 22.

Anne started having children at the age of 23. First she had a girl called Thecla, then she had a boy called Hans, at the age of 27, and then she had another girl at the age of 30, her name was Ellen, that is my mother.

Here are 3 photos - the first one is Thecla, the second of Hans, and the third of my mother Ellen.



When they got married they lived in Holland for a while, they didn't even have a TV, they only had radios, but in 1958 they got a black and white TV, they were rapt about that.

Then a few years later they all came to Australia. It took them about 4 weeks to get here because they came by boat. . They decided to come to Australia because it is a peaceful country and because they wouldn't have fights with any other countries.



Here are two photos of the boat they travelled on to come to Australia.



Now my mum is 37 and Hans is 41 and Thecla is 44. They all have kids now. My grandma preferred to live in Australia because all of her family is here, and now she believes that this is still the best country.

My grandma and I have a very good relationship, I go to her house once or twice a month, because she lives in Bacchus Marsh.

Now that I have done this biography on her I feel sorry for her because I didn't know that they had things that tough, if I was to compare my life with hers I would prefer mine because we are not living through the war. I think we should thank our lucky stars for what we have now.



1956



1996

