

A Good Life



Allison Walter

beyond words} celebrating life stories

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The Biography Program ABN 12 153 558 313}

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Allison Walter

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April 2019

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Truly Deeply

A poem written by British poet Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957)

This poem read by King George VI on BBC radio on Christmas Day broadcast in 1939.

The Gate of the Year

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.



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Parents and Grandparents

My name is Allison Walter and I was born on 14 January 1930, at Nyora Private Hospital, the twin daughter of Keith Herbert Hamill and Frances Mary (known as Maisie).

I was named Gertrude Edith Allison but have always been known as Allison. Gertrude was my father's sister and Edith was my mother's sister.

My twin sister is Joan Margaret and I have a brother Graham and a younger sister Coral. At the time of my birth my parents were living at 1 Wakool Avenue, Mentone. My father was born in Geelong and my mother was born in England.

My maternal grandparents lived in Spain Lane (in the county of Lincolnshire) in England and when I visited England later in life, friends I was staying with took me to view their property which was called Smethcote Flower Farm.

My maternal grandfather John Pinches came out to Australia from England just before the First World War and worked on the roads for a while. He settled in the Kerang area where he had a dairy farm and my mother remembered having to bring the cows in before school and again after school. My grandfather then bought a farm at Tumut, NSW. My grandmother Jessie and her three children John, Maisie and Edith stayed in England until after the war.

My grandfather would always recite the poem, '*Jessie Mariah blows the fire, puff, puff puff*' to us as children and so at the time we guessed our grandmother was called Jessie. I can still see our grandmother acting out the 'puff, puff, puff' in front of the fire.

Grandmother went back to England in 1939 and came back after the war ... she died of cancer soon after.

My father Keith was born on 31 August 1909 and my mother Maisie was born 2 September 1910. My father had three older siblings, Hugh, Gertie and Ruth. My parents lived in the Cheltenham area in about 1930 as this is where Joan and I were born. Soon after my mother went back home to Tumut with my sister and me. Father found it difficult to find a job as this was the Depression but I know he had jobs selling rabbits

and fish. He had a motor bike and side car. Later he got a job working as a cleaner in a big bank in the city.

My grandfather had a flower farm located on Box Hill Road South (now called Huntingdale Road) which he called Smethcote, named after their farm in England.

I did not know my paternal grandfather as he died when my father was about sixteen and my paternal grandmother died when I was about six. I can remember staying in the front room of their house at Geelong the night she died.

My mother was a very good singer and would travel to towns in the Kerang area to perform at concerts. She trained as a nurse in Geelong and when she contracted TB she had to spend about twelve months in a sanatorium. Mother then went back to nursing and one of the nurses was Gertie Hamill. She asked my mother home to her house and it is where my mother met my father Keith Hamill.

When we were living at Ivanhoe my father had a car and one day he was cleaning under the car when the car fell on him. I think I was about three or four at the time and we had to go inside and get brooms to help push the car up. He always had a bent finger from that accident.

When my father came home from the Second World War he asked the local minister about becoming a minister in the church. The minister replied, 'You're too old to join the church.'

So father thought, 'Right, I will find a church that will take me.' He joined the Presbyterian Church.

The first nine years of his ministry was spent out in the community and the last three years spent studying. When my father was living in Campbellfield he was studying Greek at the Theological Hall and found it very difficult. He said to my mother, 'I am going to throw this all in. I cannot do it anymore.'

Mother replied, 'If you do that I will leave you.' That got father quickly back on track.

I was thirteen when my father first joined the ministry. His first posting was at Laang, a small town between Garvoc and Warrnambool.

Father would spend time on Monday writing his sermons for the three services he had to give at his churches. When they were living at Campbellfield, one Friday night father and mother went to the pictures at Coburg and ran into a girl who occasionally came to church. She said to my father, 'Why aren't you at home writing your sermons?' My father was not very impressed.

My parents were in charge of many different meetings that were organised through the church. They had three churches to service which meant running

gatherings for three different groups. My parents lived at Carisbrook from 1946 to 1949, Rosedale for nine months, followed by Campbellfield and then Tallangatta.

My mother always had children around her, it did not matter where we were or what she was doing, there was always children and she was always helping someone.

At one stage both my mother and father were in different hospitals in Geelong at the same time. Mother was dying of cancer and I drove down to see her one day. I was so upset and could not go and see my father. I just drove back to Glen Iris.

My father suffered from Alzheimer's for the last ten years of his life. He stayed with us for a while and then I got him respite for a couple of weeks at a place in Canterbury. He came back to us but then went to a Masonic home in South Yarra. My father did not return to us as the doctor said he could not come home.

My mother died in August 1986 and my father died in August 1991.



My parents with Joan and me

Childhood

For some reason my mother returned to Melbourne with me and left Joan with her mother in Tumut. I think this lasted for about eighteen months as I remember living in Ivanhoe and when we were about two years old two older girls pushed the two of us home from church over the cobblestones.

We lived in Cheltenham for a while and Joan and I slept in the basement. One very raining night the basement flooded and rats were swimming around and that was the last night we slept there.

Mother used to run the Sunday school concerts and one year when we were living in Oakleigh we were all dressed up as Dutch girls and Joan and I sang a duet. We used to sing at all the church anniversaries and Sunday school events. Mother had a beautiful voice. I do not enjoy singing *Abide With Me* as it makes me think of her and I feel sad.

Mother had a lolly shop next to a school in South Yarra and there was a lovely park opposite. I must have been five years old at the time as it was before I attended school. I remember there were large white steps that took us up to the living area above the shop.

I think my parents bought the house that we lived in at Redvers Street, Surrey Hills. We would walk to Canterbury State School via the back lane, turning right at Kennealy Street, right into Leura Street and then walked along Highfield Road to the school.

Mum's sister Edith lived at Newmarket right near the station. My father had a Cole Essex car and would drive us out there and drive us back home. One night the car broke down and we had to get the all night bus back home.

About once a year we would go to our grandparents at Hallam for a six-month visit. I would help my grandmother churn the milk into butter. When they moved to Narre Warren we walked to school across the paddocks, along the main road and into a valley where there was a couple of shops and the school. On returning to Surrey Hills we would go back to our school at Canterbury.

During the time at Hallam we went on a Sunday school picnic in a big van that had seats in the back. It was about a mile walk to the gate to meet the bus and the day was spent at Mentone beach. We had to learn all the books from the bible and I was only about five years old.

On arriving back home our grandmother met us at the gate and walking back to the house she suddenly yelled out, 'Get under the bridge.' The bull had got out. We had to stay there until grandfather noticed the bull was out and he came down and took the bull away. The magpies were so bad in those days we had to lie under the barb wire fence to stop them from pecking us.

Joan's best friend at Canterbury State School was Mavis Delbridge and my friend was Dorothy Rossiter. Once I went to Box Hill Technical School Dorothy and I lost contact.

Before I left the Canterbury State School Joan and I started writing to pen pals. There was a list on the board at school and Joan and I chose twins, Joan and Shirley in New Zealand and we have been writing to them ever since. My Joan wrote to Shirley and I wrote to Joan.

Joan and I were great readers and when we lived at Redvers Street I can remember when it was time to come inside mother saying, 'Graham, can you go and get the girls out from the shed?'

Mother would send either Joan or me to the shops and we would walk along the lane to Kennealy Street and down the steep hill to Canterbury Road. There was a grocer on one side of the road and along the street was the haberdashery shop with the greengrocer on the other side of the road.

Other times we used to walk down Redvers Street to Canterbury Road and on the left corner there was a vacant lot, then a milk bar and the doctor's surgery. Years later there was a petrol station and our younger daughter Robyn worked there. One night when she was working the petrol station was robbed. When she rang her manager to tell them the news all the manager was concerned about was how much money was taken.

I would walk down to the Canterbury library which was situated in the Canterbury Gardens which took fifteen minutes. We walked a lot in those days and Mother would have no hesitation in asking us children to get the shopping.

Joan and I would walk for miles to Balwyn to have tennis lessons and I remember one day we walked all the way there and found no one around. We discovered that someone had died and the lessons had been cancelled, so we had to walk all the way home again.

At about eight years of age both Joan and I were each given our first doll and pram and we walked around and around on the square of lawn behind the house pushing our prams.

Joan and I were sent to stay with my Uncle John (my mother's brother) and Aunt Mildred in Bendigo in about 1938. It was probably when my mother was having Coral. They had four children, John, Marjorie, Leslie and Frances. During my time there I landed in hospital for three weeks with scarlet fever. We had long plaits in those days and my aunt cut our hair short and my mother was so cross when we got home.

I remember once when I was about eight or nine, mother took us to the pictures during the school holidays, and I had to go home before the picture had finished to make the gravy for my father's dinner. Ruby Plier, a friend of my grandfather came and lived with us for a few years, I am not sure why.

We attended East Oakleigh Central School when I was in Grade 6. I remember singing Vera Lynn songs in the shelter shed. On Sundays we would attend the Methodist Church which was a four mile walk in the morning to church and back again in the afternoon for Sunday school.

Aunt Ruth was my father's youngest sister and she lived in East Canterbury. She used to come to our house to teach us the piano but would always whack us across the hands with a ruler when we made a mistake. In the end my mother got sick of her doing this, so she stopped the lessons and sent us to a lady down the street. I enjoyed playing the piano.

The Tankeys were neighbours of ours and their niece, Dawn Young, lived at Ballarat. She used to come down for school holidays and I think she may have stayed with us. Later when Joan and I were about eleven we went up to Ballarat for a holiday as Dawn's older sister Wavie was getting married. My mother used to make lovely tablecloths in cross stitch and we took one up with us as a gift and stayed for about a week. It was here that I learnt to ride a bike and fell into the drain and cut my finger. I had the scar of this for many years.

My grandfather had a flower farm in South Oakleigh in his later years. I think we must have stayed with them as I remember Joan and me walking from Redvers Street to Warrigal Road to catch the blue bus to Chadstone. We then turned left and walked two miles to Huntingdale Road and then two miles to grandfather's farm.

When I went to Box Hill Technical School I would walk down to Chatham railway station and catch the train to Box Hill. We would ask the station master how long the next train would be and the answer was, 'Eight carriages and an engine.'

During the war I was at Box Hill Technical School and we had mock air raid drills. I was told to go to a girl's house about twenty minutes away and that if anything did happen to lie flat out in the gutter.

When I went to Guides I was learning Morse code and at school I studied shorthand and typing which I enjoyed and was very interested in both.

At Box Hill Technical School we would have to walk outside to a room located behind the mayoral building next door to do our shorthand. I attended Box Hill Technical for two years and completed Forms 1 and 2 and then the family moved to Laang

My father, with the help of Uncle Gordon (husband of Aunt Edith) and Uncle Will Weber (a friend of my father) built a sleepout on the back of our house at Redvers Street.

Mr Gill was a family friend who worked for Rawleighs as a salesman, He would come and stay with us once a week and sometimes would take Coral out with him on his rounds. One day he had a birthday cake in the car and when he came back after doing a delivery Coral had eaten a part of the icing. Mr Gill was not amused.

The front room of the house at Redvers Street had a piano and every Sunday we would stand around the piano and sing.

About the age of eleven we would go for holidays to Apollo Bay and stay with Auntie Gertie (my father's eldest sister). She was the bush nurse for the area. In about 1942 she and her friend Grace came to live with us as aunt Gertie was not well.

We had scooters when we were living at Redvers Street and it was when Father and Uncle were building the sleepout. One day we were making a lot of noise on the other side of the house and Father came around the corner and told us to stop the noise. One of us must have laughed and he came back with a saw in his hand and whacked me on the back of the legs with the saw. Besides that Father was a lovely man and we had a wonderful family life. Father was a good minister and I could sit and listen to him forever. Mother was constantly busy and always liked to make sure we looked nice. If anyone was in trouble they only had to ask and she would be there to help.

During the war my mother and I would travel by train to Brunswick and we would collect Frances, our cousin and bring her back to our home. Frances would stay with us for the weekend. I think it was to help John and Mildred out as they were both working full time.

When father came home for a visit during the war he took us to a concert at Canterbury. There were girls dressed in army uniforms and they sang *This Is The Army Mr Brown* – something I have always remembered.

During the war there was a shop in Canterbury where you could buy second hand clothes and I remember going there and buying a blazer to wear to school. We had clothing coupons during the war.

The reason for my father enrolling in the air force in World War Two was that he said he did not want to join the navy to go out in a little tub around Darwin (he learnt boating at school) and he did not want to join the army because he did not want to have to wear army boots. However, when he served in New Guinea, he had to wear army boots as he was driving the big trucks. It must have been terrifying for the soldiers as they could hear the Japanese coming through the bush and the bombs being dropped. We were very lucky he came home. My father never spoke about his time in the war but he did watch war movies.

When my father joined the air force he was billeted at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and would come home on the weekends. One weekend on the way home he had a migraine and lay on the train seat because he was feeling so sick. In these days the carriages were like dog boxes and when someone opened the door and saw him lying there they said, 'We cannot go in there, he is drunk.' Nothing could have been further from the truth.

During the war when father was away we had lots of people either coming to stay or joining us for a meal. When Joan and I had our birthday Mother would organise to take the whole class down the beach for the day. She was fantastic. We went to the Methodist Sunday school and one year when father was away they were having the Sunday school picnic. Mother did not have enough money to pay and when she told the church elders this, she was told that we could not go. So she sent us to the Salvation Army Sunday school and mother said we learnt a lot more with them than with the Methodist.

At some stage when we attended the Salvation Army church Joan and I were in a play. Joan was the princess and I played the maid in waiting. The princess supposedly was doing her music practice so she got the maid to do her practice instead, but the maid could not play the piano. My role was to sit there and pretend to make a mess of the playing. The audience did not realise there was two of us.

When we moved up to Laang our family cat was packed in a box with holes for the air and travelled with the furniture van. On arrival the men opened the van and the cat jumped out. We would leave out milk for the cat to entice it home – but it took five days for the cat to come back.

The house in Laang was one of the old railway houses located near the church. The house had three bedrooms, Joan and I shared one bedroom, Graham and Coral shared another and the other bedroom was for our parents. It had a study, kitchen, bathroom and a sitting room. Father used to visit families and write his sermons during

the week. He was responsible for three churches in the area and travelled as far away as Port Campbell. Mother used to run meetings once a month for the women of the area.

My parents went to church in the afternoon on our first day in the house at Laang and left us children home. They got lost on their way back and mother was leaning out the passenger door side with a torch trying to find their way home. They arrived home at 2.00 am in the morning. By this time we were beside ourselves being way out in the bush in a strange house and not knowing anyone. By the time they got home we were all very upset and crying.

We had to learn to ride our bikes six miles to the bus stop at Panmure and then it was twenty miles by bus to Warrnambool Technical School.

It was a very hard life at Laang. All we had to live on was potato and milk. Joan and I would take it in turns to ride our bikes to our local farm for the milk. Mother grew potatoes and had to use a primus to cook and we had candles for light.

A story I found that seems to sum up what my childhood was like:

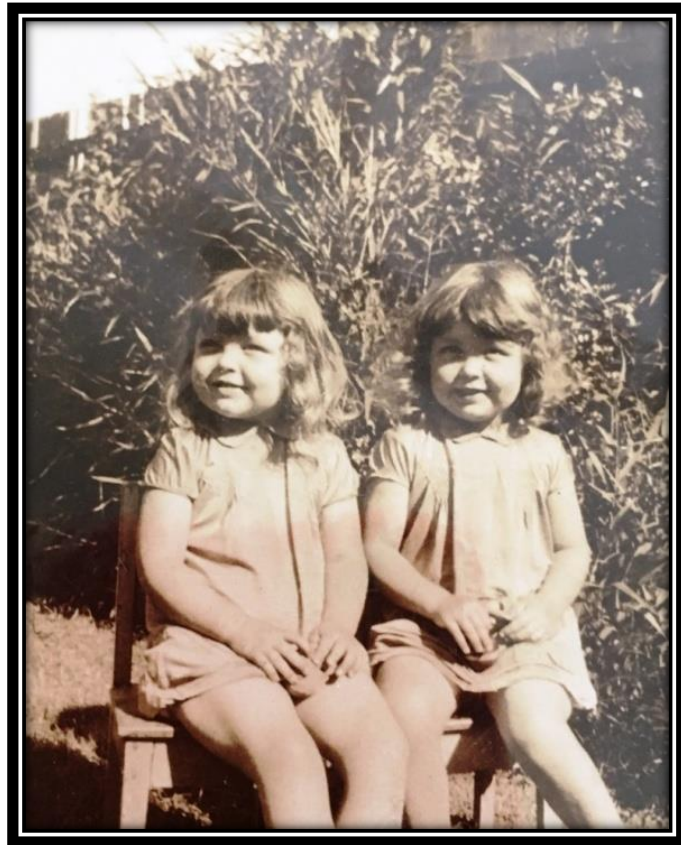
When I was a little girl life was very different. My first memories are of living in a rambling Victorian vicarage that had no electricity laid on. Cooking was done on a black leaded range, there was no central heating and hot water was provided by a coke-fired boiler. Worst of all, there was no electric lights. The house was lit by oil lamps which took a great deal of looking after. They had to be filled regularly, the wicks needed constant adjustment and trimming and they emitted an unpleasant smell. They were not ideal for a child because on winter evenings the house was full of shadows and pockets of darkness, and it was creepy. Even the nightlight that was left burning in the nursery did not melt away the gloom.



Me and Joan – taken at our grandparent's farm



Graham, Joan and me on horse at our grandparent's property



I am on the left and Joan on right at Redvers Street



My parents with Joan, Graham and me

Growing Up

We spent almost two years living at Laang then we moved to Carisbrook near Maryborough in 1945. I turned fifteen in the January and started working at a solicitor's office doing shorthand and typing and stayed there for about a year. The following three years I ran the office at Premier Wire Works in Maryborough doing the pays for the men and working out the cost of the nuts and bolts. Not bad for a sixteen- year old. At this time Joan was working at the knitting mills in Maryborough. Whilst living at Carisbrook I was involved in the Guides at Maryborough and would help at their meetings once a week.

Joan had a friend named Phyllis and her sister Beth was married to Jack. Jack worked at the factory where I worked and they would ask me to babysit their twins. I was sixteen at the time and would stay overnight. This was about 1946 and I was going out with the son of a farmer at the time. He would visit me at their house and we would sit out on the veranda. The twins were asleep inside and we would talk. Nothing else happened which it is probably hard to believe but I was very quiet and shy.

Joan and I both loved dancing and we would ride our bikes into Maryborough. After the dance we would stay with either Phyllis or Kathy, both work friends of Joan, and cycle home the next day.

The bike ride from Carisbrook to Maryborough took about forty-five minutes and it is all uphill. I used to ride my father's bike and one night going home there was ridges across the road after some rain and I fell over the top. I walked home with the bent bike and my father had to fix it.

We put new bikes on lay-by and had to pay them off. I was paid one pound, two and sixpence for my first job at the solicitors in Maryborough. We paid board and mother would give us enough money to buy stamps and other necessities.

I had a boyfriend when I was living in Carisbrook and we would go to the pictures together occasionally. Another boyfriend, Neil, who was really nice, was the ice man so he would bring ice to our house. In Carisbrook the church was behind our house and we had a tennis court and a cow.

When we lived at Carisbrook my parents decided Joan and I should start doing things separately, so Joan went to a camp at the seaside and I went to a PFA camp at

Castlemaine. The minister was a Scotchman and he used to play the bagpipes and I had a lovely time. We stayed at Christian camps and there were a lot of activities.

The next camp both Joan and I went on was to Warrnambool and we had lovely sea walks. This was when I was living in Ormond and had a boyfriend Bruce, who was a bit younger than me. We both went to the camp together and Graeme and David Menzies, the twin grandsons of Sir Robert Menzies attended. At meal times they would start serving meals from one end of the room and we would start singing, 'Why are we waiting?'

My father was moved to Rosedale in eastern Victoria in 1949 and I remember him bringing me to Melbourne to find a place to live. For a while I lived with two elderly spinsters and had to ride a bike from their home to Ormond train station and it was a long way. I then lived with a family of four in Ormond and the father asked me to help with their Sunday school at the Methodist Church. It was here that I met Margaret who was a dear friend from then on until her death a couple of years ago.

I joined the Ormond Presbyterian Church and made many friends. I was in the choir and helped in the Sunday school.

My mother was very good at knitting and I remember when we were about twelve she knitted us pink dresses. Mother had taught us how to knit and one day whilst I was working at Maryborough the boss said they wanted to have a meeting with the boss from the Melbourne office so they sent me outside. I went down to the gardens and with the wool from my pink dress I knitted a jumper. I had undone the knitting and washed the wool, so it was ready to be reinvented.

Mother also did a lot of sewing and I remember on my first night going to Guides she was mending the hem on my green coat (I think it was second hand) when I fell backwards and was sent to bed instead.

My parents were only at Rosedale for about nine months before father was moved to Campbellfield so I moved back home. It was here that we had to walk across the paddocks to catch the milk train to Fawkner. The first morning I said to Father, 'What's that.'

He replied, 'That is the train you should be on.' So the train backed up for us – luckily it only had one carriage.

When my parents were living at Campbellfield my mother would travel to Elsternwick market on Saturday morning and help our grandfather sell the flowers. Whichever one of us, Joan or me got home first we had to light the copper, start the wash and hang out the washing on a rope tied between two trees.

I worked for the Commonwealth Bank at the Bourke Street branch for three years and Joan worked in the Elizabeth Street branch. It was sometimes a bit confusing

for the staff – one day one of the staff from Elizabeth Street saw me at the Bourke Street branch.

He said, 'What are you doing here, Miss Hamill?'

I said, 'Well, I work here.'

He replied, 'No you don't. You work at Elizabeth Street.'

'No, that is my twin sister.'

At the same time I was friendly with a boy from church and one day Joan was walking down a street in Melbourne and he was walking up and he said to her, 'What are you doing here, Allison?'

When they were in Tallangatta I was working in a place in Essendon and one of men from there and his friend were going up to New South Wales. He had a racing car and they offered me a lift, so I sat on the brake all the way up to Albury and Father met me at the station.

When Father was a minister he had his holidays in January and we would go to Point Lonsdale and stay in a house that was owned by the church. A bit later we would stay at a house on the property at Mentone Grammar School. My aunt Edith and her family would stay in one house and we had the other house. Keith came and stayed with us as well as did one of my pen pals and Ernie (Joan's husband) would take us out for drives.

Before my twenty-first I saw a dress in the Renee Rose dress shop in Swanston Street and I said to my mother, 'I have seen the dress I would like to wear.' Joan, who was nursing at the time came home and said to mother that she had seen a dress she would like to wear for her twenty-first. It was similar to the one I liked. We ended up wearing these dresses on the night.

Our twenty-first was held at a function place in North Essendon. The photo was taken at a studio and Joan and I had to pay to get them taken and pay for the party – otherwise it never would have happened.

When I was about twenty-three I was boarding with Isabel and Charlie at North Essendon and stayed there about nine months until I got married.



Me on the tennis court



Joan, Father, Mother, Graham, Coral and me (seated)



Joan on left and me on right on our twenty-first birthday

My Life with Keith

I met Keith at my first Sunday at church when I was twenty. My father used to run PFA (Presbyterian Fellowship of Australia) and one evening for some reason my father was unable to take me home so Keith gave me a lift home on his motor bike. I can remember one time coming home from a ball on his motor bike and when it started to rain Keith lent me his overcoat to cover my dress. There were no helmets in those days. One of the hazards of getting back home at night was there would be lots of frogs hopping across the road.

The first time Keith and I went out together we went to see the film *Spring in Park Lane* starring Anna Neagle. Keith didn't know it but I had already seen the film.

Keith had his twenty-first birthday party at his home and Joan and I went to the party. It was where Joan met Ernie Hillman (her future husband). Keith worked with Ernie and in 1952 Joan and Ernie got married.

We would go dancing at the Moonee Ponds Town Hall but Keith had two left feet. Keith and I also loved square dancing and John, a friend of Keith's, would pick us up in a little truck and take us to Leggett's in Prahran.

Keith and I used to play tennis on a Saturday morning when we lived at Glenroy and I must have had lunch at his place because in the afternoon I played basketball (now known as netball). Keith's friend John talked him into playing cricket and he played cricket for a long time and when he finished playing he became an umpire.

Keith went on his motor bike to visit his aunt and uncle in South Australia. He said that when he got back we would announce our engagement, which we did in June 1951.

We waited to get married as Keith and his father were building our house at Belair Avenue, Glenroy and a friend John was helping as well.

The place I was working at before my wedding gave me a two-tier cake stand as a wedding present. I took it home, I was staying with Charlie and Isabel at the time, and I must have talked about it too much as I heard Charlie say to Isabel, 'We should change what we have got for her.' Thankfully they did not change it and gave me three small saucepans on a tripod.

My husband Keith Wesley Walter was born on 5 January 1930 at Geelong and is the son of Horace Wesley Walter and Margaret Walter. Keith had a sister Joyce and a younger sister Ruth.

We were married at the Presbyterian Church at Glenroy on 22 August 1953 and my father was the minister. My bridesmaids were Coral, my sister and Lynette (a friend from work) and Ruth (my sister-in-law) was the flower girl.

My going away outfit was an outfit that belonged to my mother – it was a lovely maroon velvet suit with my navy straw hat that hugged my head with a little bird attached. We caught the train to Adelaide for our honeymoon and had a few laughs as The Salvation Army band used to practice at night in the building next door.

When Keith and I were first married we did not have a copper or a wringer – I had to wash everything by hand in the trough. We finally got a wringer followed by a gas copper. Before we left for England in 1956 we sold the copper to a friend Dellas who I was matron-of-honour for.

When we were first married and I was working I would come home on Thursday night, do the washing and then go to choir practice.

After my marriage I worked at Melbourne Technical College for a while doing the examination papers, then worked in the office at the flour mills at Glenroy. I stayed there until we went to England.



A guard of honour on our wedding day



My father and me on my wedding day



Keith and me on our wedding day

Our First Adventure

It had always been a desire of Keith's to attend the fiftieth anniversary of the world Scouting Jamboree at Sutton Coldfield in Birmingham. We sold everything we owned and booked to go to England, sailing on 6 December 1956. When I was talking to one of my friends Val she mentioned that she was going to England on the 13 December with another friend Roma. They were going to stay with one of Roma's aunts over there.

On the boat trip over I suffered from seasickness for six days and the doctor kept saying, 'Keep her in bed.'

The steward said, 'Get her up on top in the fresh air. She'll be right.'

The ship going to England was great. It was only half full as it was returning back after bringing visitors to the Melbourne Olympic Games. The boat went via South Africa due to troubles in the Suez Canal. On the ship that Val and Roma went to England on there was some Welsh air force personnel returning from Australia and Val met her future husband Geoff on the voyage. They married in Wales whilst we were in England, so we were able to attend their wedding. They returned to live in Australia.

We headed for Renfrewshire in Scotland on our arrival and stayed with Margaret Bruce. She lived in a one-bedroom house on a housing estate with her husband and two children. Apparently in the days you had to have three children to be entitled to a two-bedroom house. Luckily Margaret had an aunt who owned a flat so she was able to put us up. Margaret was a pen pal and during the war my mother sent her jumpers and skirts.

My mother let me borrow her astrakhan coat to take to England and luckily with the coat and wearing big thick Ugg boots I was able to keep warm.

Whilst Keith was at the jamboree Val, Roma and I worked for six weeks in Edinburgh and then hitchhiked around Ireland. Val and Roma continued on up to the north of Scotland and I went back to England. On returning to England the jamboree was still on so I stayed in the Girl Guides accommodation at the camp for a couple of weeks – then Keith and I found a flat.

We knew a couple of other girls, Joan and Margot who were living in a ladies house in Finchley and somehow Keith and I ended up living there. The owner was happy

for us to move in so Joan moved up into the top room, Margot slept in the lounge room and Keith and I had the main bedroom. The owner had a cat and the first night we were there the cat came in and the lady said, 'Don't touch the cat, she doesn't like strangers.'

Keith said, 'Just wait a minute.' And in half a minute the cat was up on my knee. I believe animals know if you like them. We stayed there until we travelled to Europe.

At Easter time we caught up with Val and Roma. We bought a car between the four of us and had a trip to Lands Ends, to see if we could get on, as our plan was to travel through Europe together.

During the six weeks in Europe we managed to visit some wonderful cities including: Cologne, Venice, Rome, Copenhagen and Paris. Keith had made a tent using a hand sewing machine and we either camped or stayed in youth hostels.

My first day at work Keith took me on the underground but I fainted, so from then on I used to catch the trolley bus and a double decker red bus to work. Keith got work as an architect and I worked for a company that calculated out how much time each segment (eg the news broadcast) on a television channel was allowed each day.

Both Keith and I joined local Scout and Guide companies as well as the Presbyterian Church so we got to meet many local residents as well as people from Australia.

We returned back to Australia in May 1958 when I discovered I was pregnant. Coming home was a lot worse as the ship was full, we were in a small cabin at the bottom of the ship and I was pregnant.



Keith and me in London



In Austria – 1957

Family Life

When we came back from England we lived with Keith's parents for a while then with my parents at the West Footscray Presbyterian Church manse as I was planning to go to Footscray Hospital to have Richard. We then bought a house in Brixton Rise, Glen Iris next to Dorothy Hamilton and stayed there for a couple of years.

Whilst in England we met a family through the Scouting movement who were interested in coming out to Australia. We stayed with Fred and Daisy to see if we could get on and it all went well. On arriving back from England in 1958 we decided to sponsor the family – so Fred and Daisy and their three children Barbara, Felicity and Derek came out in the following March. They stayed with us for the first twelve months while their house was being built in Ashwood.

Luckily, Joyce and Bill, who were living in Glen Iris went to America for six months so Keith and I stayed in their house during this time. Barbara would come home for lunch from school and one of her teachers would say to Barbara, 'I suppose you go home and watch television.'

Barbara said, 'No, we do not have a television.' Our neighbours had a television before us and when Princess Margaret got married in 1960 I was allowed to go and watch it.

Our house was a bit crowded at the time as we had our first baby, Richard, but I think their two younger children slept in the box room and one child shared a room with their parents.

My mother was on the television show *It Could Be You* with Tommy Hanlon and I went next door to watch it. They gave my mother lots of gifts in recognition of all the help she had given to so many people.

In about 1966 we moved to Muswell Hill in Glen Iris, the house belonged to Percy Beames (Percy was a well-known footballer and journalist for The Age newspaper). By then we had four children. We lived in this house for thirty-nine years.

When we lived in Glen Iris we had the bread, ice, fruit and vegetables and groceries delivered to home. I would go to the shops and leave my order and they delivered them.

When my children were little I loved knitting, especially teddy bears with cars or teddy bears in jumpers. However, I got arthritis later in life and swapped to making greeting cards.

Another family we sponsored was Jean and Murray who moved to Adelaide to see if they would like living there but in the end they settled in Rockhampton. When the children were young Keith drove up to Rockhampton with Richard and David and I flew up a week later with Jennifer and Robyn (she was a baby at the time). Keith met me at Brisbane airport and he drove us up to Rockhampton. The baby basket was accidentally sent back to Sydney by the airline so Robyn had to sleep on the floor surrounded by cushions. When we were ready to come home Keith had the flu and was very sick so he lay in the back of our station wagon, the three older children were in the back seat with the baby. I drove from Rockhampton back to Sydney and Keith was feeling a bit better by then. When Keith got out of the car he said to me, 'You have done very well.' I should think so!

I wrote to quite a few girls and had pen pals in New Zealand, England, and Scotland and when my son Richard was two I started writing to another lot of pen pals. This is when I started writing to Doreen Anderson, who now lives in Camperdown and I go and stay with her every March and October for a week.

I have had up to fifty pen pals until last year, but age is catching up with us all. I type letters to most of them now. I also have Amy, a lady who lives in Indiana, America and we email every day.

We have five children Richard, David, Jennifer, Robyn and Andrew. My children all went to Glen Iris Primary School. Richard, David and Andrew went to Malvern Grammar School and then Caulfield Grammar. Jennifer went to PLC (Presbyterian Ladies College). She was only there for twelve months before we had to withdraw her due to lack of funds. Jennifer then went to Canterbury Girls School. Robyn also attended Canterbury Girls School.

Our home in Brixton Rise became a mecca for the Glen Iris Presbyterian Cricket team. This tradition continued at our next home until Keith stopped playing in 1983.

We joined the Uniting Church in Glen Iris and they needed help with the PGA, a girls' group connected to the Uniting Church, so I assisted there for a short time. I was asked if I could assist with the Sunday school kindergarten, as I had been doing that at Glenroy for years. The leader was a teacher and she was sent to the country, so I took over running it for twelve years.

When we moved to Glen Iris I did the kindergarten Sunday school for twelve years so I did not join the choir, as I had other things to do at the same time. After Andrew was born I was able to join the choir and stayed with them for twenty years. I

was also an elder in the church and Keith and I had been elders since when we were about twenty.

I passed my driver's license when I was thirty-five. We only had one car at the time and Keith drove it to work. Jennifer was going to kindergarten and Robyn was a baby. Keith took me for driving lessons and we had the children in the back of the car. I remember one time I drove up Brixton Rise, turned right and then a left into High Street and then turned into Glen Iris Road and we were just getting across the next street and Keith said turn left. So I did, but I was on the wrong side of the road. Luckily there were no cars coming towards me.

I had a few lessons with an instructor and got my license first time. My first car was an Austin Farina, blue with a grey hood, a small car which Keith bought me for Christmas. It came to a sad end when someone ran into me when I was shopping at Ashburton. We then got a station wagon which helped me to take all the equipment on camps.

Joan and Ernie lived in Mt Waverly for a while and friends of theirs who lived up the street said they were looking for a home for their dog Peter as their marriage had broken up. I said to Joan that we would love to have a dog. Peter was a cocker spaniel and had been a show dog but had been hit by a car. We had Peter for a while until the man delivering briquettes kicked Peter and from then on he would not let anyone into the house. He was a lovely dog but we had to get him put down and our next dog was Cindy, who was a rejected dog from the blind centre. We had her for years, but she suffered from eczema and had to be put down. Our next dog was Caesar, another one from the blind centre and he died from a heart attack. We always had a dog as part of the family.

Both my daughters had horses that were on a property out past Doncaster and I would take them there once a week and wait for them to go down and brush and clean the horses.

Richard is married to Geraldine and they have two daughters, Melissa and Jo-Anne. David has two boys, Daryl and Benjamin. Jennifer is married to Martin and they have four boys Liam, Tyson, Jordan and Timothy. Robyn has two girls Hannah and Claire and a boy Max. Andrew is married to Sonya and they have Grace and Eammon. Benjamin has a daughter Emma Louise Allison who is my first great granddaughter.

When my father was the minister at Sealake I would take the children to visit during the school holidays. I used to pack up the children (Robyn was a baby at the time) in the car and drive the four hours. I would stop halfway and feed Robyn but it was always the last ten miles that seemed the longest. My children remember these visits well as mother used to lock the back door and they had to play on their scooters in the back yard.

When I got home from one of my trips to Sea Lake I discovered the house had been broken into. I found the rumpus room door open and when I started looking for the vacuum cleaner it was not in the usual place. When Keith got home from work I said to him that I could not find it and then we discovered a gramophone missing (we had brought this back with us from England). It then dawned on us that we had been robbed.

My son Richard started a club in the Corio area to raise money for the needy and homeless. He would seek out Keith's advice on the best way to go about raising money.

We lived in Glen Iris for about fifty years and in about 2005 moved out to Dorset Road, Croydon – as we were getting older. We bought a house with a cottage behind and after the residents of the cottage left we moved into the cottage and Jennifer and her family lived in the house.



David, Jennifer, Richard and me holding Robyn in about 1965



Keith and me dressed up for a Rotary evening



Keith, me, my sister Coral and her husband David

Guides and Scouts

I joined Guides with my twin sister, Joan, when we were twelve, as there had been a long waiting list. It was during the war, in 1942. We used to walk down Kennealy Street, cross over Canterbury Road and go under the railway line. We would then turn left and walk towards Canterbury Railway Station. The Guide Hall was on the right and it had room out the back of the hall where we could do tracking, make fires and pitch tents. We had to wait for Mr Gill to come and meet us after the meetings and walk home with us, as it was dark and Mother did not like us walking home by ourselves. Mr Gill often stayed at our house for the night.

Guide Promise

Trusty, loyal, helpful, sisterly, courteous, kind.

Obedient, smiling, thrifty.

Pure as the whistling wind.

I promise that I will do my best

To do my duty to God and the Queen,

To help other people at all times

To keep the Guide Law.

I was not able to do anything about Guides when we were living in Laang as we were too far away from larger towns. When we went to Carisbrook I would ride my bike into Maryborough after work one night each week and be the Junior Leader. The lady, who was running the company, had me go to her house and light a fire and cook a meal to pass the cooking test. I had already passed a number of tests when I was going to Guides in Canterbury. I stayed with the company in Maryborough until I came down to Melbourne in 1949. I used to go into Guide Headquarters in Melbourne for training. The first night I was there, a girl came up to me and said, 'I know you, you are Joan, aren't you?' Joan was nursing at that time and spending some weekends with a lady who lived

next door to Margaret's family, up in the hills. From there, Margaret and I became good friends. Later on, Keith and I went to Margaret's wedding. They used to visit us until they moved interstate.

In 1950 we all went home to live behind the old stone church at Campbellfield that was originally brought out from Scotland. Father's churches were Campbellfield, Glenroy, and Fawkner. There were no Guides out further than Essendon, so I used to go to meetings there and I would stay the night with the McNichol family, who lived at Glenroy. A company then started in Strathmore, so I would go by train and walk quite a long distance to where the meeting was held. I did that for about three months, before I started a company at Glenroy. We had thirty girls (starting off with six a week, until we had four patrols) and then had thirty on a waiting list. The local priest used to tell the girls, 'Go to Guides, as you will get good training.'

We had to use the church when we first started, then we were able to use the Scout Hall. I had an assistant, Joyce, until she moved away. We used to take the Guides hiking a lot. We would often go across to the Essendon airport and signal Morse Code from hill to hill. We were the first in the line when Queen Elizabeth stepped out of the aeroplane at Essendon airport when she came to Melbourne in 1954.

When Keith and I were married, we had a Scout Guard of Honour and a Guide Guard of Honour. When we were living at Glenroy I used to walk all the girls home from the guide meetings, as the parents did not like them walking late by themselves. We used to walk around the streets in a square. When Keith and I went to England at the end of 1956 I found out where there was a Guide Company and started assisting there. The leader was a young girl and I had only been there a week, when she asked would I run the company. I had to be tested by the Guide Commissioner and ended up running the company for the next twelve months.

I was still interested in Guides, so made enquiries, and they needed a leader at Ashburton so I started running the company there. At the end of 1978 the doctor told me I had to take twelve months off from everything. Keith wanted to know was I just going to lie down and look at the walls! In 1980 I started leading the Guide Company at Chadstone, as both the leaders had left. I did weekend training at campcraft courses, so the Guides could go camping. We had meetings to work out what we would do for the next week. We had a lot of fun, teaching the girls how to pitch tents, make fires, and do the cooking for all the girls. We usually had camps twice each year and an indoor camp in the middle of the year. I always took the Guides to the Anzac Day march. I went to different Guide State Camps and assisted in the QM department. I also went to Scout Jamborees (where Keith was) and assisted there.

In 1985 I left Chadstone and joined the Lone Ranger Guides; this was for girls between ages fourteen to eighteen and I ran one of the two companies. We had to send

out a magazine once a month to each girl and they had to write in a letter and anything they needed to do for tests, etc. I had to make a booklet for each girl once a month. We also had an annual weekend at our house when the girls came and we met them all – we had a large rumpus room and they all slept there. Some of the mothers occasionally came as well. We would have some type of activity and often go into the Melbourne market or some other place. When a girl had done all the tests necessary for the Queens' Guide, I would go to their place and present the badge and all the girls who were able, would come to the meeting. I would go to Government House when the girls received their Queen's Guide Awards. They really worked hard for them. I was with the group for ten years and then resigned.

At the same time I was running a Cub Pack. In 1960 one of the Scout Leaders came to visit Keith, who had been a Scout Leader for many years and did Scouting while we were in England. This man asked could I help at a Cub Pack so I went to one just down the road, in Malvern. When I first went to Cub training the leader called out Walter Allison and it took a bit of effort from me to get him to call me by my correct name.

I was only there for a few weeks when I was asked would I be the leader. I stayed with that group until 1962, when I left to have another baby. A few months later I started running the Cub Pack at 2nd West Waverley and stayed there for a year. Then I was asked to be Leader of 6th West Waverley, and I stayed there for nine years – the longest anyone had stayed. I then went to different groups when needed. We used to have Pack Holidays twice a year and Leaders meetings to work out our weekly meetings.

I received a ten year and then a twenty-five year award for Cubs, and had to leave at sixty-five, as that was the cut off age for lady leaders. I received a ten-year award and then a thirty-five year award for Guides, and left when I finished running the Lone Ranger group. They were great years, and very busy.

I remember taking our Cubs to the airshow at Avalon airport and on the weekend of the moon landing we organised a gathering to celebrate. I had to think up games and find songs ... looking back I don't know how I found the time.

With the two assistants we would have meetings to plan the three monthly, monthly and weekly programs. We would take the Cubs away for quite a few weekends and there was a lot of planning. We hired a site that had a hall and sleeping accommodation but because we had to do our own cooking I had to work out the menu.

I would send notices home to their mothers to let them know what sort of food we would be having. It was amazing the number of kids who said they couldn't eat this or couldn't eat that. If we couldn't work out what they wanted to eat we gave them bread and butter and amazingly no-one starved. It was up to me to organise and shop for the food and I would always try to get a couple of the mothers to help.

I took Guide and Cub zones at the camps, this is when on the Sunday morning we would sing some hymns, read a lesson from the bible and tell stories. I always had the children write their experiences in a log book.

I helped with three different Cub packs when they wanted to go on pack holidays. I had done the pack holiday course and none of their leaders had so I got involved. I remember teaching them to do a pink elephant trail (cut outs of pink elephants were hidden in the bushes) and even though the kids said there wasn't a pink elephant I convinced them otherwise. We had a lot of fun. Two of the packs were the ones my sisters helped out at.

They wanted me to be a district leader at one stage but it was not something I wanted to do.

A wood badge is a training course for Cub leaders that is run for a week and I learnt how to run a Cub pack. In both the Cubs and Guides we had inter pack visits and with the Guides we used to visit a Guide Company at Meredith, near Geelong. I had met their leader Margaret and I wrote to the parents to ask if they would be interested. We had a weekend stay and had lots of fun.

My friend Marjorie in Bath, England had a neighbour who was in the Guides and we caught up one day and had a long talk about the Guiding movement. She said I was one of the best Guiding people she had ever met. This was a nice compliment to me.

On one of my trips overseas I went to America first then visited Canada. I had a Guide pen pal in Canada who I stayed with. I attended their group one night and ran the camp fire. I got them into groups and we sang *Kookaburra Sits in the Old Gum Tree* in rounds of three and we had a lot of fun.



Me in middle of front row at a training course with Cubs

A Short History of Keith's Life

This is an excerpt from Keith's story that he wrote in 2008. Keith called his book: *Where am I going?* because of an incident that happened to him in Paris in 1957. We were staying at a hostel in Paris and Val, Roma and I were in a huge tent and Keith was in another area. There was only one toilet (a hole in the ground) and there were rats running around and it was a terrible place. Keith and a young American college student walked into the city one evening and came across a lady of the night who stopped them and asked, "Where are you going?"

The young man answered, 'Home to Mum and the eight kids.' The words "where are you going?" stayed with Keith and gave him encouragement throughout his life.

Keith's story is many things, part history, part travelogue, part reflections and put together as it happened and reported through the eyes of the man accurately. Keith is described as having an uncomplicated and generous personality. With Keith what you see is what you get, a man in a hurry and squeezing more into one lifetime than would seem possible.

While Keith may arguably be described as a man with a mission he has been more a man with many missions. A Scouting mission, a Rotary mission, a church mission, a local government mission and so it goes on. Keith seems to have spent a lifetime taking on much too much but then somehow managing to get it all done. At the core of what Keith has done has been the concern and a fierce determination to improve the lives of others not to be a hero but because he simply believed he should.

Written by Dr. Michael Kennedy. (Former CEO of City Of Boroondara)

I was born on 5 January 1930 at Moonee Ponds, a suburb of Melbourne. I am enjoying a very full and varied life. I am neither flamboyant nor am I extroverted. Some might say I am bloody minded and persistent.

Allison and I were married by Allison's father, the Reverend Keith Hamill, at the small Glenroy Presbyterian Church on 22 August 1953. I remember it vividly to this day with great joy and satisfaction. It also rained a little as we were leaving the church.

My strong Christian faith has undoubtedly come to me through my parents and being maintained and encouraged by my wife and family. I am not a theologian but hope and pray that my faith is conspicuous in my life. I honestly believe that your life is what you make it to be. I have no doubt that you can be influenced but not necessarily persuaded in certain directions. It is up to you as to what you do with them.

I have no doubt that a conversation with my Uncle Tom when I was twelve set me on the path to becoming an architect. When he asked me, 'What are you going to do when you grow up?' At the time I had no idea but he knew I loved to draw and said, 'You should become an architect. Becoming an architect has not made me wealthy in material ways but it has certainly allowed to me to do and achieve wonderful things that I may otherwise not attempted or even known of. I have enjoyed being an architect and in all modesty believe I was a good one.

I have no doubt that my being led into joining the Scout movement at the age of eleven has been a compelling influence of my life from that day onwards. I have often wondered what inspired me to plan and build with my own hands a house for Allison and myself when I was only twenty-one to twenty-three. That was an experience that would prove irreplaceable. Then after a few short years at that house to sell it and to set upon my urge with Allison's support to go to England, the other side of the world, to attend the Jubilee Scout Jamboree, thus sowing the seed that many years later fuelled my enthusiasm for travel.

Why did Beth and Bill Lee decide that I of all people should be encouraged to become a city councillor? Active politics had never entered my life – I had never attended a council meeting of any sort – yet one visit was enough to make me listen and give it a go. Frustrating as it often was, I found it a remarkable way of satisfying my life and allowing me to serve the community.

Am I my father's son? Dad gave me a small piece of land and we built a house. That started me, with Allison's support, and in very small ways we are now seeking to help our families to establish themselves in their homes.

I am convinced that my life has been guided not only by wonderful parents, family and friends but by my belief in the supreme existence of God almighty. I don't claim to have witnessed any divine revelations or had vivid dreams that I have followed.

Keith commenced his studies to be an architect at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1946 and in 1953 was accepted as an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. Keith was a partner in Howden and Stevenson (later known as Howden, Wardrop and McLean) when we left for England. On our return from England Keith worked for two firms that ended up going broke and finally started his own business in 1990.

On a trip to the Grampians with Daisy and Fred and their children in about 1958, their son Derek stepped off a ledge. Luckily Keith was able to grab him by the braces of his overalls and pull him back. I don't think his parents ever realised how close their son came to falling over the edge.

Keith joined Kiwanis in 1973 and stayed a member until 1977. Kiwanis are not well known in Australia but are a highly respected organisation involved with helping the youth. In 1977 Keith joined the Melbourne South Rotary Club and in later years joined Carlton, Camberwell and Kew Districts.

Through his involvement with Rotary, Keith was responsible for bringing Interplast (International Plastic Surgery) to Australia. Interplast is a not for profit organisation founded in America and started in Australia in about 1983. It is a joint venture between Rotary International within Australia and New Zealand and the Royal Australian College of Surgeons. The aim is to bring reconstructive or plastic surgery to the needy people in nearby developing countries.

The first trial run was in Apia, Western Samoa and Keith's role was to liaise with the authorities and the Rotary Club. The patient was a twenty-year old girl who had been badly burnt when she was sixteen when paraffin fuel from a bedside lamp had exploded as she lay in bed. The medical team felt confident they could improve her appearance and life expectancy. Keith was the founding President of Interplast Australia.

Keith was called "Disney" as he used to like to draw and paint and was very good at both. One Sunday morning when we were leaving church our friend John gave me an envelope with *Disney's So Dear To My Heart* in it. It was at the time a Disney film was out with the same name.

In 1980 Keith went to New Guinea with Rotary to build a butterfly laboratory. This was a functional laboratory as well as a local tourist attraction. The butterflies were the size of bread and butter plates

Keith was awarded Member of the Order of Australia AM in 1999 for recognition for services to the community, Scouting and Rotary,

Keith was the inaugural councillor for the Solway Ward when the City of Boroondara was formed in 1996 and served in that position until 2004. Keith was elected Mayor of Boroondara for the 1997/98 Mayoral term and was a councillor of one of Boroondara's predecessor Councils, the City of Camberwell, from 1992 to 1993. When Keith was Mayor of Camberwell he would go to Ashburton shopping centre to have a coffee so anyone who had any problems could talk to him.

In 2007 Keith attended the 100th anniversary of World Scouting in Essex, England.

Keith was the manager of Victorian Cricket teams that would travel interstate, usually in the January. When our boys were young we went to Adelaide. The managers would meet in the evening and one night at midnight Keith had not come back to the room. I was a bit worried so I had to wake up the captain of the team and ask him if he knew where Keith was. He said they are probably still at their meeting.

We had another trip to Brisbane but this time our children did not come with us and with three other wives we hired a car and toured around.

One day our son Andrew asked Keith for his keys to his car saying he was getting his car fixed. It was an excuse to get the keys and take the car away as Keith was not allowed to drive. When Keith got dementia he finally had to move into aged care.

Keith died on 30 January 2018.



Bits and Pieces

I have a very large doll collection (about three-hundred and fifty) and my collecting started when a pen pal Barbara from Kansas, sent me a Barbie doll when my daughter Jennifer was born. There were friendship books going around at the time and people would write in what they liked – for example – dolls. I remember one man wrote in his book that if someone sent him ten postcards from Australia he would send them a doll. I think he may have been from Turkey so I sent him the postcards and he sent me the doll. Friendship books were sent between pen pals with requests for more pen pals or items they were looking for.

At home Keith installed a big glass cabinet on one weekend when I was away and when I arrived home Keith said he had put all the dolls in the new cabinet but I would need to move them around.

Philomena (Phil) was one of my pen pals in Ireland. My first trip was in 1991 and I went to Europe first then travelled to England, Scotland and Ireland. I stayed with Phil in Ballyshannon in County Donegal. Coral and David were living in England at the time and Coral came with me when I travelled to Ireland. I remember we hired a car and had many laughs going around the big roundabouts until we found the correct exit. When I first visited Phil she was living in a typical old original Irish cottage with bedrooms upstairs. She would clean out the small sitting room and that would be my bedroom.

One time when Coral was with me and we stayed with Phil's son and daughter-in-law. They had a spare room for us and in the morning we would make ourselves a cup of tea and then walk to Phil's and spend the day with her.

I have another very special pen pal, Marjorie, who lived in an amazing house like a castle in Bath, England. Keith and I stayed with her on our first trip to England. Keith travelled overseas a couple of times with the Scouts and Rotary and Marjorie said to Keith, 'Can't you send Allison over?' So my first trip on my own was in 1970 and twice in that year I went to New Zealand. I had quite a few pen pals in New Zealand at the time and stayed with them on the trip.

I enjoy swimming, tennis, hockey and basketball. I have always loved reading books and my favourite flower is daphne – which I added to my wedding bouquet.

I also taught Religious Education at different schools and did that for forty years. One of the schools I taught at was Camberwell East and would attend one day a week and I always felt the children really looked forward to me coming.

Graham studied to be a minister and when he and Dorothy were first married they moved to New South Wales. Later they settled in Highton, a suburb of Geelong and have lived most of their life there. When their daughter Meredith was a baby they used to go camping at Wye River and occasionally I would go and stay with them.

Over the years I have had a broken wrist and ankle and ended up on crutches.

I was always very quiet and shy and yet I was able to run groups of Guides and Cubs. How I managed to give them their lessons I do not know, but somehow I just did it.

My grandson Tim was in the Australian Boys Choir when they did a tour of New Zealand. Jennifer and I both went as helpers on the tour and Jennifer and I visited New Zealand again later and stayed with my pen pals.

We had ten Rotary exchange students staying with us over the years, the first one was Lotta and she was from Sweden. When she went home she told her friends that if they ever visited Australia to contact the Walter family and they would be looked after. Her younger sister Anna lived with us a few years later as an exchange student. She later visited again with her future husband Patrik after they had travelled through Asia. She was very ill when she arrived and we nursed her back to reasonable health so they could travel home.

Another exchange student was Sabina. She was from Sweden and she met her future husband Justin during her stay in Australia. They returned to Sweden to get married and later on Sabina and her family, now with three children, came back to Australia as she wanted to update her skills. They found it difficult to find a place to stay for three months so Keith and I decided that they could stay with us.

I started doing babysitting when Andrew was at Caulfield Grammar in about 1980 and continued on for over twenty years. One of the first children was a little New Zealand boy, Keir. I would go to his school and collect Keir and on our first day walking home from school he said, 'Could I have a sweetie?' So I stopped at the lolly shop and bought him one. I would bath him and get his dinner and he would be in bed when his parents got home from work. At one stage I lived with Keir for a week when his parents wanted to go on a holiday.

Another family had two snobbish children and I would get them home from school, prepare the vegetables for dinner, do the ironing and make sure the children had a bath before I headed for home. I would have a cup of tea before starting my work and

on one afternoon the young girl said to me, 'Mum said, make sure you do the ironing!' I replied that I did the ironing every night.

One more family I babysat for was Janet, her husband and their two daughters Laura, aged three and Charlotte was a baby. I looked after the daughters for twelve years. I would pick them from preschool care and sometimes I would take them to our house, give them dinner, bath them and they would stay overnight. Other occasions I would take them to their home and cook their dinner and wait for their parents to come home. I would then go back in the morning by seven o'clock to get them ready for school. Eventually, Janet had to give up work. I remember Keith would get on all fours and play with them under the table.

My sister Coral and her husband lived on King Island for about three or four years. She was the Uniting Church minister there and I had a few trips to visit her.

I made two trips back to England on my own, one in 1991 and the other in 1997. My first trip I flew to Kansas and stayed with Barbara and her husband, who was a pen pal of Amy, my pen pal in Indiana. I then moved to stay with Amy and Barbara rang Amy and said, 'She is a very nice lady but make sure you have lots of teabags.' I am not sure where I went next but ended up in Norway and stayed with Anne –Marie (a pen pal) and then she drove me to another pen pal, Aud, who did not speak English very well. I then travelled across to England and Ireland and I think I was away about three months.

A man called Deiter, came out from Germany to work with Keith for a while. I had a pen pal in Germany who I had planned to stay with on my next trip. Keith gave Deiter my pen pal's phone number as he had returned home and he rang my pen pal, but for some reason she could not have me to stay. Deiter arranged to pick me up at the airport and as I got to the bottom of the escalator this man stepped forward and put his arms around me and said, 'Allison.' His wife was sitting outside with a big koala that Keith had given them. I soon realised it must have been Deiter and on the way back to his house he said he would be away for work for the next five days.

His wife did not speak any English but they had a daughter about eight. She was watching the movie *Lassie* and I said, 'Lassie, my dog.'

Next day we had a bit of problem when we went shopping as when the time came to return back to their house Deiter's wife said, 'I do not know which way to go.' I was of no help as I had no idea where we were.

I collected teaspoons over the years and had amassed quite a few from my travels and from pen pals.

Keith won a trip to Japan when others pulled out from the trip and he got in touch with an acquaintance who he had met at the Jamboree previously who worked at

a tourist bureau. I am not sure if the trip was for one or two weeks and we stayed in a lovely hotel in Tokyo. They were going to give us a big Japanese fan to take home to put on our wall until they found out I collected dolls.

Joan was always the laughing, happy one and I was the quiet achiever.

I would drive up from Glen Iris to Jennifer's at Mooroolbark and stay one or two nights. I would take the boys to school and pick them up in the afternoon. When Liam came to see me before he headed off to England to play cricket, I said to him how good it was you had a good education and grounding at the Lutheran School. He replied, 'No grandma, we got it from you and granddad.' It was so nice to hear this from my grandson. I remember when Liam and Tyson were about six and eight they used to have fisticuffs and I would have to separate them.

When we were about eight or nine our grandfather took us to visit a lady friend and she had a doll called Jennifer Anne in a pram. Guess where my daughter Jennifer Anne got her name from! Joan's daughter Rosemary called her daughter Jennifer. I believe that there is something special about Jennifers.

Some of my proudest moments are when I received badges for my service with the Guides and Cubs. I am also proud of my religious education teaching at the schools. I hope I made a difference to the younger children and I always felt I was giving them something to follow that would make a difference in their lives.

Being part of the Guide movement has been very special in my life. Also being a member of PFA (Presbyterian Fellowship of Australia) was wonderful. It was being part of a group that shared a prayer, had fun together and went on outings.

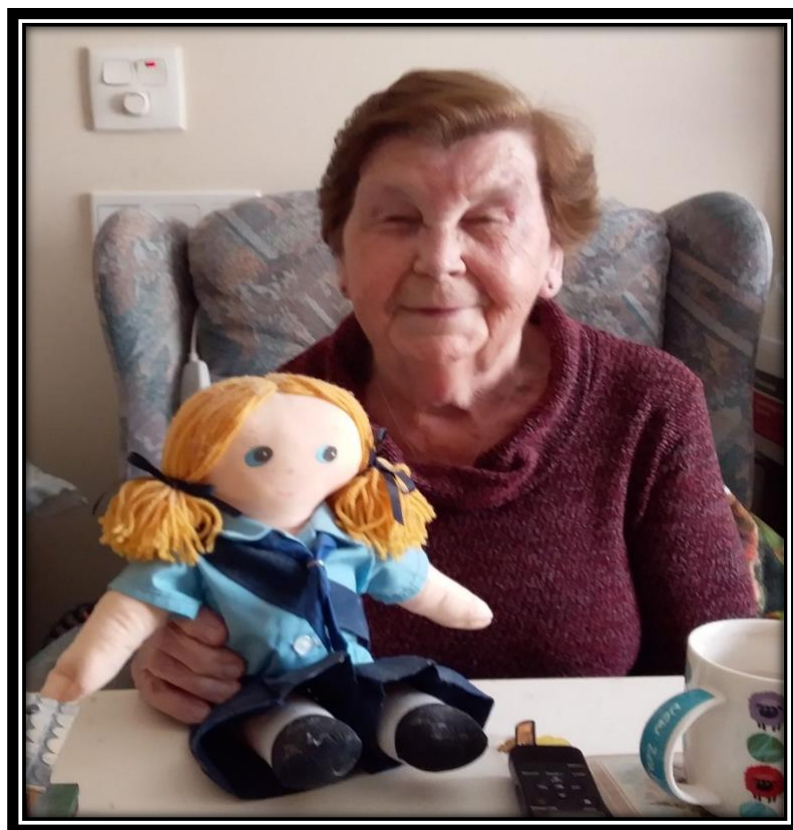
Belonging to the church has been a stable influence in my life and I believe that God wants me for something. I know there is a God and I know that he looks after us. I can only go to church once a month now as I rely on someone to take me.

When I die I have expressed my desire to have my ashes scattered at Wye River on the Great Ocean Road.

My advice to future generations is to believe in God.



Me with my doll display at 6th West Waverley Cubs ladies meeting



With my very special Girl Guide doll



From Phil in Ireland
One of my favourite dolls



Dolls given to us by our hosts
in Japan



Jennifer and Martin brought this back from England for me
Martin said it took up a full seat on the plane



**These dolls are from a lady I stayed with who said
she thought the old man looked liked Keith**



A couple of the many cards I make

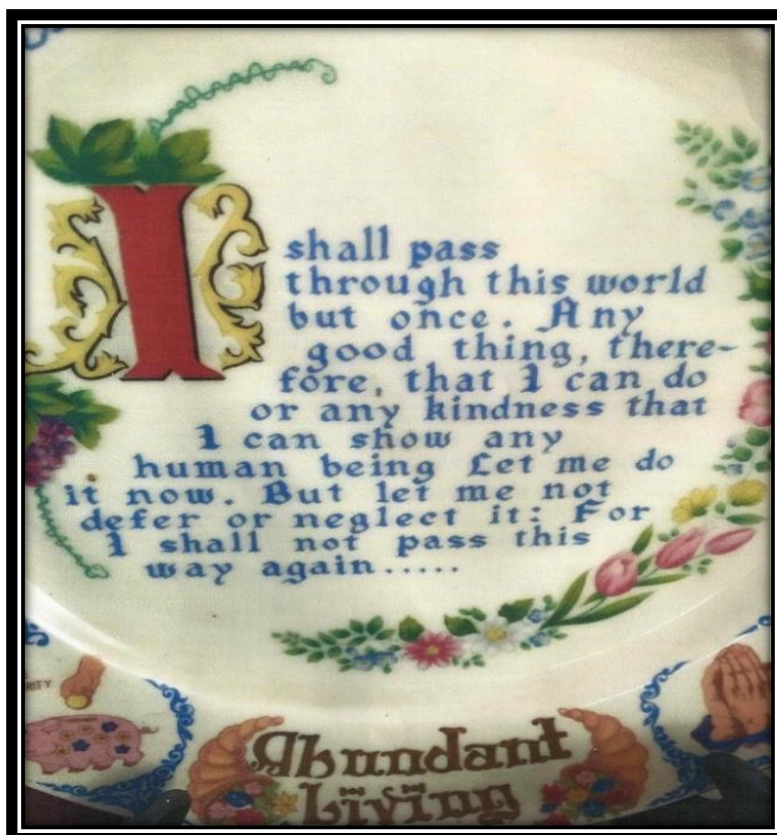
Walking With God

YOU brought us through the winter, Lord,
Go with us into spring,
And keep us always safe and strong
Whatever time may bring.
Please walk beside us through the year
As seasons slip away,
And let the light of hope be bright
To lead us day by day.

And should there be some darker times
When we are sad at heart,
Then wrap us gently in your love
And let the hurt depart.
Please walk beside us week by week
And make your presence known,
Reminding us with every step
We never walk alone.



My favourite flower the daphne



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