

Ruth Crow (Miller) in the 1980s

Tennis party at "Rossie" 802 Mair Street Ballarat in the early 1920s.

The little girl sitting cross legged in the foreground wrote these memories in 1989. Her name, then, was Ruth Miller.

Others in the immediate family circle were from left :-

Aunty Anna, mother. (sister) Winifred leaning on mother's knee, (cousin) Alice with dark headband. (brother) Forbes, standing behind seat, (cousin) Betty with hand on knee, other cousins and friends: then on far right near small tree. Aunty Rue with racket and (sister) Betty leaning on her, Uncle Matt behind tree, the men partly hidden by tree were probably uncles.

From left seated on ground :- Two cross-legged boys were sons of my mothers "best" friend, we called her "Aunty Flo" (she is holding her hat and sitting next to Auntie Rue); then Ruth (gathering her golden memories), Uncle Roy, (cousin) Dudley and (brother) Ken sitting cross legged far right.

Most of the unidentified people are probably relations I think the only people who were not related are the two boys in the foreground and their mother, (such an intimate family friend that we called her "Aunty") the seated woman, holding a hat.

The photo was taken by father using a camera with a glass plate. He developed and printed the photo in his home dark room, probably with one or two children watching.

Our home in Ballarat was called "Rossie" after the Rossie flour mills in Montrose Scotland. (see attachments)

Memories of the Golden Years of Childhood  
In the Golden Garden City of Ballarat  
Told by the Little Girl in the Foreground of the Photo

Index

Introduction  
Childhood Memories by Ruth Crow..... pages 1  
Afterword..... page 11  
Childhood Poetry..... page 12  
Souvenirs about Great Grandparents..... page 13  
Cousins and Their Age Range..... page 14  
Chart of Relations and Friends..... page 15



This document has been prepared for June Factor in appreciation of the contribution to Australian history and culture by the European migrants who came to Australia because of Hitler's oppression.

This is a draft document and thus contains some typing mistakes and other errors. No part of the document can be republished without permission of Ruth Crow (328.2345).

This document has been prepared entirely from memory, but of course the way the facts are presented is from hind-sight. There may be a few inaccuracies in detail but these do not change the facts.

For serious students oral anecdotes to illustrate the facts are available if interviews are arranged by phoning Ruth Crow 328.2345.

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Memories from the Golden Years of Childhood  
in  
The Golden Garden City of Ballarat  
Introduction

My parents were first generation Australian born; my father, Dougald Forbes Stalker Miller, and my mother, Winifred Maud Miller (nee Coutts) were born in Ballarat in the 1870s.

They were both born into large, prosperous, Scottish migrant families which arrived in Australia in the wake of the gold rush and established businesses. One grandfather was an importer of tea and had a grocery shop and the other a tailoring establishment.

My parents would have been brought up accepting a strong protestant ethic (see Afterword) They would have moved in the same social circle which would have had the "Kirk" at its centre.

This first generation born in Australia included several who continued the family businesses but also some who studied to become professionals. For example, my father was a dentist and my mother, before her marriage, was a teacher. I had uncles who were solicitors, and one who was an architect. some of my aunts were trained nurses until they were married.

My childhood home was at 802 Mair Street, Ballarat and it was the home in which my mother had been born.

It was an old rambling two storey house which my grandfather would have bought before 1870. It was one of the first substantial houses to be built in Ballarat and the original building can be seen in the sketch in Wither's "History of Ballarat". It was demolished in the 1940s or 1950s.

I was born at home, as were my brothers and sisters. My mother would have had Sister Allen, a midwife and friend, living in the home for a few days before and for several weeks after my birth. Also she would have had her closest sister, Anna, staying in our home to give her support. The housework and cooking would have been the responsibility of Effie and Maggie (the two "maids" who worked for the family for a number of years).

As well, my grandfather would have been living at our home. So at my birth there would have been quite a large household.

There were five children in our family: (two boys and then 3 girls) all born within eight years.

As I am the second youngest, I have no recollection of any of my mother's pregnancies. My sister, Betty, is two and a half years younger than I am.

We all were very healthy and most of us (parents and children) rarely had to see a doctor. If he was needed he came to the house. His name was Dr Robert Scott. He was a family friend as well as our general practitioner. As a staunch Presbyterian he moved in the same social circle as we did.

The 1920s were truly Golden Years for me: my brothers and sisters and our parents had good health, we wanted for nothing in food and clothing, we had a great sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and town, plenty of room to play at home both outdoor and indoor, a wide circle of friends, neighbours and relations (see charts attached), plenty of comings and goings of other adults and children (living in the "family home" we were the place relations and friends stayed at when they came to Ballarat), plenty of opportunity for sharing and caring with children of various ages (listen to tape "Another Time, Another Place" and see charts attached), we had plenty of books and enough toys.

Introduction continued....2...

We knew "where we were" (or thought we did) in relation to how to behave at home and abroad.

We were reasonably secure in our everyday social relations with members of the family, with neighbours, friends, school teachers and others who peopled our world.

My father's "outside" interests included the Caledonian Society, the Fish Acclimatisation Society and the Workers Education Association. He was very much instrumental in introducing science lectures through the WEA and the lecturers from Melbourne often stopped over at our home (WEA was the forerunner of the Adult Education at CAE).

My mother's "outside" interests included the Old Collegians Association of Queens College (later this school in Ballarat was called Ballarat Girls Grammar), the Baby Health Centre Association, the National Council of Women, the Ladies Guild of St Andrews Church and the Victoria League.

My brothers' "outside" interest was scouting.

My sisters and I also had an "outside" interest. We were in the Girls Order of the Covenant. This was a club for Presbyterian girls where we learnt about the Scottish covenanters. Our pass word was "Pentland" and our oath was "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my god than to dwell in the tents of wickedness for ever".

I was educated during my very early years at Clarendon College Kindergarten, I then attended Pleasant Street State School and later Ballarat Church of England Girls Grammar School.

It may be wondered why I did not go to (Presbyterian) Clarendon; the reason was that my mother had been a pupil at the fore-runner to Grammar. Originally it was not a church school. It used to be called Queens and I think it may once again be using that name.

My mother's name was on the Dux Board of Queens (Grammar). She was very very active in the Queens Old Collegians.

My brothers were educated at Pleasant Street School and Ballarat College. a Presbyterian school. My father had been a student at one of the fore-runners to Ballarat College and was dux there.

My parents scholastic successes were a great spur to me to study and do well. By attending these secondary schools we really felt we were carrying on a family tradition.

My mother believed that the State Schools "gave you a good grounding". She was absolutely right ! I was really shocked at the low standard of education I was given at Grammar.

To give you an example. The State School teachers were very strict on the use of the word "got". We always had to say "I do not have" not "I have not got". Imagine my utter surprise, when, soon after starting at Grammar I said to a teacher "I do not have a locker" and she said "Have'nt you got one yet ?" I was humiliated for her sake.

This may seem trivial but it was not so at the time for me: in any case. I remember the insecurity I felt when I did not have full confidence in my teachers.

For a number of reasons I did not find my years at Grammar as challenging as my educational experiences at Pleasant Street School.

Of course there were other reasons for my insecurity during my secondary schooling, but as this is about the Golden Years of Childhood they are not included.

My childhood ended when we left Ballarat soon after my father died in 1931. He left us penniless even after the house and his practice were sold. Some facts about that period of my life are on the tape "Another Time, Another Place".

*Brothers and Sisters in 1918*



*Ruth 2+, Ken 6, Winifred 4, Forbes 8.*

*Summer 1919*



*Ruth 3, Winifred 4+ and Baby Betty.*

*Christmas 1925*



*Tylers and Millers :- Ruth, Peggy T., Aunty Rue,  
Forbes, Betty, Gwen T., Winifred, Bobbie T. and Ken.  
The Tylers lived next door.*



Childhood Memories

Ruth Crow

June 1989

My grandmama is very old, she sits in her armchair,  
She wears a shawl and a white lace cap to cover her snow white  
hair.

She knits a little now and then, or sits just thinking there.

I think it must be very dull to spend one's daytime so,  
But, when I mention it to her my grandmama says "No !  
"I think of all the pleasant things that happened long ago."

"Remember you are making now, your memories," she said.  
"So have some very pleasant ones to store up in your head.  
Or else you will be sighing and regretting them instead."

Now, when I grow to be quite old and sit in my arm chair  
And wear a shawl and a white lace cap to cover my snow white  
hair

I mean to have the nicest things to think of when I am there.

That was one of the poems I recited at birthday parties when I was a  
child. Perhaps my memories of childhood have been shaped by my ambition  
"to have the nicest things to think of" in my armchair. (See attachments)

"Shades of Sweetness and Anguish"

There are some who believe that children who really had a happy  
childhood only remember the unhappy events and vica-versa: whether this is  
true or not, in writing down my memories. I am not aiming at only recording  
events. My intention is to describe the relationships between our family  
and society in the 1920s.

I am not attempting to analyse relationships in the family. Willa  
Catha, an American writer early this century explains that Katharine  
Mansfield had a gift for showing

"the many kinds of personal relations which exist in an everyday  
'happy family' who are merely going on living their daily lives, with  
no crisis or shocks or bewildering complications to try them. Yet  
every individual in that household (even the children) is clinging  
passionately to his (/her) individual soul, is in terror of losing  
it in the general family flavour.....One realises that even in  
harmonious families there is this double life : the group life which  
is the one we can observe, in our neighbours household, and  
underneath another - secret, and passionate and intense - which is  
the real life that stamps the faces and gives character to the voices  
of our friends...One realises that human relationships are the  
tragic necessity of human life; that they can never be wholly  
satisfactory, that every ego is half the time greedily seeking them,  
and half the time pulling away from them. In those simple  
relationships of loving husband and wife, affectionate sisters,  
children and grandparents there are innumerable shades of sweetness  
and anguish which make up the pattern of our lives day by day,  
though they are not down in the list of subjects from which  
conventional novelist works."

I was born in Ballarat in 1916 and thus my childhood memories are about living in a large provincial city during the 1920s.

In the Introduction I have given some factual information about our family. This may be useful to those who are interested in family relationships and may help to indicate some of the "anguish" in our lives, but mainly I am describing my "nicest memories" although, in this day and age these memories may not be regarded as being "nice", for example my memories of how we regarded people who were not of Scottish origin.

### "Not Like Our Scones" (Racism in the 1920s)

A pet saying in our home was "They are not like our scones", meaning that the person was not to be cultivated as a personal friend. In hind-sight we were unconsciously quite racist, as these examples will show.

1. One day my mother came to where we were playing and said "Go quietly through the porch and have a look at the woman I have given a cup of tea. She is a black Aboriginal women, she is part of the dying race, you may never have a chance to see one again!"

2. My aunt lived on the outskirts of the city and she frequently said "I am so lonely that if Ching Chong the Chinaman knocked on the door I would say "Velly good, come in Johnny! Come in! Velly glad to see you !"

If we put a coin near our faces we were always warned "Don't do that it may have been in a Chink's pocket !"

3. When I told my mother my place in the class test she would always subtract the Jewish girl :- "You say you came third but where did Miriam come, did she come first or second ? You can't count her, the Jews are too smart and its not fair competition." However our family was friendly with several Jewish families and had a very high regard for several of the Jewish professional and business people.

4. When I made a new friend at school I had to make sure they had a Scottish name, for example my mother accepted a friendship with Margaret McGregor but frowned on one with Patsy Murphy.

5. My mother and father cultivated several French friends and some of my early teenage memories are of these relationships. They were "Allies".

6. In all our games the enemy was the "Huns". So I remember being surprised when my mother gave lunch to a German youth who had come begging for work. I especially remember how she cried afterwards saying "He said the German people didn't want the war".

7. We sang all sorts of racist ditties in our games :- "If you step on a crack you will marry a Chinaman": "Catch a Nigger by the toe"; "Charlie kissed a black girl and blamed on to... "

### "The Cradleship and Other Stories" (Sex Education in 1920s)

"The Cradleship" was the title of a popular book about reproduction of birds and bees.

I think towards the end of the 1920s with the growth of the Infant Welfare Centres and the increasing number of women doctors the more "enlightened parents" realised the need for some sex information and the "Cradleship" was a very popular introduction. I also learnt elsewhere :-

1. Rev Dr Clifford Norman Button was the popular young minister at St. Andrews. He gave very easy to listen to "Children's sermons" as part of his morning service. One day, from the pulpit he explained where babies come from and how "they were kept warm for nine months inside their mothers". This was a much more detailed description than in the "Cradleship" and it certainly put sex education onto the drawing-room agendas in Ballarat. (See attachments)

...3...

2. When on holiday at Point Lonsdale I discovered a whole window full of holiday greeting cards. Most of them ended up with the words "I wish you were here !", but not really meaning it. They were very garish, the words were simple to read and I puzzled over the double meanings. I was fascinated.

I think it was the first time I realised that men and women could be antagonistic to each other. I can't remember any particular jokes but some of them were about women having short hair, particularly the "Eton crop". This was probably the first time I read something that was not provided by my parents or school teachers.

3. In our bookcases there was quite a number of books on anatomy but despite giving us the "Cradleship" to read and more or less supporting Dr Button's public instruction, my parents were not prepared for us to learn the details of sexual organs from diagrams and photographs in these books. In all the anatomy books the lower part of the diagrams were carefully pasted over with thick brown paper.

4. In the early part of this century my mother taught physiology at private boarding schools. She would encourage us to be modest in the words we used by saying "When I first had to teach the girls about their bodies I would blush when using the word stomach so I used to turn my back and say it as I wrote it on the board."

5. I also learnt a little (very little) about sex from the Bible; but not from the children's Bible. My sister and I tried to discover what the word "womb" in the bible meant and found the dictionary stated that it was a "hole or cavity". This was difficult to envisage. The word "begat" was also a puzzler and we looked that up and found it meant to "get" or some such word that did not describe what we really wanted to know.

#### "Be careful Crossing the Roads and Don't Speak to Any Men" (Street Life)

This saying was always part of our goodbye ritual and we carried it out very conscientiously; especially on our way to and from school.

1. We walked about half a mile to school and came back for dinner each midday. I think the midday break was called "dinner time" not "lunch time" Nearly all the teachers and children at our school went home for the main meal of the day. The dinner break was about an hour and a half or at least an hour and a quarter. I remember when it was shortened.

2. I remember our walk to school as always being pleasant as if there was no bleak winter in Ballarat ! There was plenty to do on the walk, such as; looking after another younger child, racing to catch up with friends, skipping with a rope, whipping tops (I was a real champion at this and could keep a top running for about a quarter of a mile.. that is if my memory serves me correctly), bouncing balls, boat races with sticks floating in the gutter, running a stick along the fences to hear the noises, particularly on the iron railings and the corrugated iron.

3. Every Friday was "Bull Day" when herds of cattle and sheep were driven down our street to the stock market which was really very close to the city centre. We would never wear any red on Fridays.

4. We had our "time keepers" on the way. These were men and women walking towards the city (in the opposite direction to our school). You could tell how late you were by where you passed a time keeper.

Very few children had watches and this is one example of how we could check on time. We also had factory whistles to inform us about the passing of time, especially the time to get up at the 7.30 am whistle.

5. We met neighbours of all ages on our way to school, mums saying goodbye at the gate, toddlers watching for us and so on.

6. We made up all sorts of stories about the houses we past imagining the lives of the people living in them. There was a "haunted house" on our way. This was a house we could not find a clue to let us know who lived there. The windows were curtained but we never saw anybody about the house or front garden and none of our acquaintances knew who lived there. It was probably not deserted, but it was a mystery house as all the other houses we passed had some special personality about them as between us (our mates who walked the same way) we knew a bit about who lived in them.

"What Did You Learn at School Today ?" (Playing and Learning at School)

I think this universal saying really shows how fascinated parents are in the whole process of how their offspring is learning.

Our family folk-lore includes a story about my first days at school and how for days and days my answer to this welcoming query was "Nothing" until one day I came in breathless to pant out "I learnt something ! I learnt something today !" only to be immediately downcast when my mother asked me "Well what did you learn ?" because my answer was "Oh I forgot !" I don't remember the incident so it is not actually a memory; but it is good start to this section on what I did do at school.

1. My favourite summer game was making pine-needle houses under the tall pine trees in a far corner of the school ground. We made the houses by drawing lines with the pine needles; that is doing a ground-plan of a house, leaving gaps for doors and windows but placing sticks for window ledges. We made pine needle beds and used sticks for other furniture and made armchairs in the knotted roots.

There were about six old pines so about a dozen children would play day after day in this remote corner. Each tree had a house and each house had two or more occupants.

It seems remarkable that our dwellings were not destroyed by other children. I think a contributing reason would be that the boys were strictly segregated from the girls and these particular pines were well away from the boys' yard.

2. One of my favourite winter games was playing chasey in the shelter shed when the seats were "home". There would be lots of different chasey games going on at the one time. the noise was deafening and that was part of the fun. The girls and boys shelter sheds had adjoining walls and thus the shoutings from both sheds were mingled. I know many schools don't have large shelter sheds now and this popular past time is dying out.

Another favourite game developed from the fact that the school had buttresses. which are not now an architectural feature of most schools

About a dozen girls would push and shove each other in a line against the buttress wall with the object of getting the girl in the corner "out".

In the girls' playground there were three buttresses and thus about twenty or so girls could play at the one time. As there was a great deal of coming and going in the game the groups would keep changing so lots of children did have a "go" in the shoving game.

I am not sure what we called the game it was some such as "shovey" or "squashy" or "squeezey": anyhow. it did get the blood circulating !

3. In summer "Fly Catcher" was the name of the monitor who stood at the school door and used a clean handkerchief to swish the flies from the children's backs as they marched into school.

4. In Winter our first lesson after the singing of "Father We Thank You" was "handkerchief drill".

We produced handkerchiefs or were sent out to stand in the freezing corridor. Not all children's dresses had pockets.

Some children had their hankies attached to their dress with a safety pin, others had them stuffed in their bloomers or up their sleeves. My mother did not approve of these practices so we had little pockets on the outside of our bloomers which we found very practical.

After waving our hankies we then were shown how to put one corner on the bridge of the nose and fluff out the rest of the hankie, hold it to the nostrils, to snort both nostrils, then, snort each nostril separately, and to wipe our nose after each snort.

5. I was in a class of 60 when I was eight years old. Every now and again our teacher would ask us to fold our arms on the desk and put our head down for a rest (on reflection it was probably for a rest for her). She used to say we had to be so quiet that she should be able to hear a pindrop. She had a pin-monitor who would collect a pin from the teacher's desk and go to the back of the room to drop it. I always listened for the drop and always believed that the teacher did hear it even if I did not.

6. On thinking about what I actually learnt in the class room I am interested to find out that the lessons where I really knew I did learn something.... really ticked over.... were lessons given by student teachers. I can vividly remember what I learnt from them. Perhaps we took our classroom teachers very much for granted as we took our parents.

7. I did learn out of the classroom and a particular project I thoroughly enjoyed was when I was in the 5th grade and the teacher organised a project about Lake Wendouree.

Each week we studied a bird, a tree or some water life and we had nature study books in which we drew and described what we studied.

8. At our school the only musical instruments we had were a drum and a kettle drum. These were used for marching into school.

There was a piano in the Higher Elementary part of the school. Each teacher had a tuning fork and we started each song with "Doh. Ray Me...".

The school had no gramophone and of course wireless was still at the cat's whiskers stage or not much better. So we really had only singing for music.

Mothers Clubs were just starting when I was at the State School and I think even in the 1950s "luxuries" such as pianos were bought by money raised from the Mothers Club.

11. All the children in my grades at school were either Australian born or migrants from Great Britain except for one Italian girl. Her father was Mr La Gruta, the conductor of the Ballarat Regent Picture Theatre Symphony Orchestra. In the days of silent films in the best theatres there were whole orchestras. I think some La Grutas are still involved in orchestras in Australia.

Mr La Gruta introduced us to classical music when he played at some of the school concerts. I remember how the rowdy hall settled down to quietness when he played. It was really miraculous.

9. At most of the Ballarat State Schools drawing was taught by a visiting teacher who was not on the Department's roll. His name was Mr Foster and he was very old (possibly a retired unqualified teacher). We called him "Daddy Foster" and we paid a penny a week towards his wages.

He taught drawing in four inch squares and 3 inch radius circles with various designs through shading. We had the same type of lesson week after week for at least three years and then in the sixth grade we sometimes graduated to drawing in perspective, sighting along our pencils at a flower pot. We had no free hand drawing from grade four to grade six.

10. We had drill (by an ex-army captain) in the school yard at least once each day but no sport was organised except for scholars in the Higher Elementary section of the school.

We played sport which we organised ourselves: for example rounders was a game which involved quite a crowd of girls and of course the boys kicked paper footballs. No balls or other sports equipment was provided by the schools, to my knowledge.

The gravelled playground lent it self to drawing a great variety of outlines for games, for example hoppy. I think that asphalted playgrounds are very sterile with their permanent markings for games which are seldom played. We also enjoyed playing hoppy over the gutters and jumping the school yard puddles I think the conditions for such "adventure play" has been reduced in most school yards.

"I Love A Sunburnt Country" (England and Scotland still "Home")

Despite the fact that my parents had lived their whole life in Australia there was little evidence of any deep regard for anything Australian.

1. Our large garden had one gum tree and two wattles. I think all the other trees, shrubs and flowers were exotics.

2. In the Spring my mother would take us for a picnic to Victoria Park where we picked buttercups, daisies and harbingers of spring. These grew under the shady elms and oaks. We did not go on picnics to see the wattle in the spring.

3. My father usually gave the oration on Robbie Burns's birthday but we did not celebrate Adam Lindsay Gordon's birthday even though he had had some association with Ballarat.

4. I learnt all the names of the exotic trees around the lake and in the streets. We did not go to the bush to learn the names of the plants.

5. Our bookcases were full of English and Scottish poetry but I don't think we had one book of an Australian poet or even a collection of poetry by a number of Australian poets.

6. All the periodicals we subscribed to were from overseas (see later).

7. Our bookshelves had plenty of books from England on biology and botany, particularly on fresh water biology and field botany. Thus we could read about fish and other water life in the rivers and streams in England and Scotland, and about the flowers that could be gathered on the moors of Scotland and beside the lakes in England. We knew nothing about alpine daisies at Mount Hotham or the heaths at Wyperfeld.

8. A dried sprig of Scottish heather was a prized bookmark in the family Bible. Although we pressed flowers in large heavy books I do not remember ever collecting native blooms or leaves for this purpose.

9. As president of the Fish Acclimatisation Society, my father had an abiding interest in acclimatising trout into the streams and lakes in Victoria. He took no interest whatever in what waterlife existed in the streams and lakes before white settlement.

10. On reflection, I think the School Readers and the School Newspapers did have quite a bit about Australia but I don't remember discussing any of the poems or stories with my parents.

11. The poems in the School Readers we were encouraged by our parents to "learn by heart" for school were all from the traditional British poets. Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats were our parents favourites. This is understandable as these poets described the English countryside my parents still envisaged despite the fact that they were born in Australia.

Read only Good Books You May not Have a Chance to Read Them Later."

I think this is from one of Thoreau's essays, but who ever wrote it, it was a saying well heeded in our home. Here is some information on the books we read and where they came from.

1. Our school had no library what so ever. In each classroom there was a cupboard about the size of a wardrobe, but narrower. This was used for storing chalk, the strap, the books and any other teaching aid. I don't think any teacher had more than a couple dozen books in the cupboard.

2. Most Friday afternoons, after recess, we had free reading time when we brought our favourite book to school to read and sometimes to swap with another child.

3. I used to greatly envy children who brought Annuals. My parents did not believe in such "trashy" literature for children. The sort of books I took to school were not valued for swapping so I rarely saw the inside of one of these big colourful books.

4. Our home was the headquarters for all the relations and whenever a household shifted they used our place to store their odds and ends. We were frequently storing books. Many of these books were children's books so we had lots of books to choose from at home, but quite a few were old fashioned.

5. I loved the "What Katy did " books, the "Anne of Avonleigh" series. We were encouraged to read Dickens, Robbie Louis Stevenson, George Elliott and Victor Hugo and probably did read parts or all of some of their novels but possibly we also read versions written for children. I really can't remember but I do remember the plots.

6. Our playroom bookshelves did include a few novels by Australian writers for example Mary Grant Bruce ("Norah of the Billabong" series) and Ethel Turner ("The Seven Little Australians" series). We greatly prized a book by Mary Rentoul Outhwaite (I think that is how her name was spelt) who was an Australian but did not write about life in Australia.

7. Our bookcases in the dining room reached from floor to ceiling and were packed tight with scientific reference books and novels. Here also were stored the dictionaries, encyclopias and Bibles. We had the Australian Encyclopaedia, Castles Books of Knowledge (8 of them) and Howard's Art of Reckoning; all of which I used for school study.

My father had some really valuable books such as "Ingleby's Legends" with wood cuts. These used to scare the day lights out of me. Also a very big copy of Danti's "Inferno" with wonderful woodcuts which were also very scary and a copy of Rabelais "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel". He had whole shelves of books in French which he really enjoyed reading.

8. We had the old family Bibles from both sides of the family. These were huge books and inside them was information on the births, deaths and marriages of the relations. For some reason these family pages were securely hidden from prying eyes by having brown paper pasted over them.

It was probably because of some mock modesty. This may have been because my mother was well into her thirties when she began her family and was (if my guesses are correct) conceiving in her early forties. She may have been concerned about what her children would think of this as they grew up.

9. A regular Sunday ritual was sitting around my mother's knee listening to stories from "The Children's Bible". I think these were written by Arthur Mee (or some such named person).

10. My father subscribed to a number of publications including the French "L'Illustration" and the English "Sphere" an art magazine (the name of which escapes me) edited by Orpen (I think). It was all about European art. He also subscribed to popular scientific journals, published in England. So we had lots of browsing material in these periodicals.

I can't remember any publication my mother received regularly and of course she did enjoy the above publications. She did not read French as well as my father but there were plenty of beautiful pictures in the L'Illustration so that even those who knew no French at all could really enjoy it. I loved the pictures of the French streets with their trees.

I also loved the "Sphere" which was a pictorial type of magazine. I can remember the pictures of the English Police Strike or some such rather fierce street demonstration in the early nineteen twenties and the photographs of the Royal Princesses when they were babies.

Our parents subscribed to "My Magazine" for the children. I think this was edited by Arthur Mee. It had some poems by Robbie Louis Stevenson in each issue and I really enjoyed them, particularly because of the graceful line drawings on the same page as the poems.

#### The Flower People in the 1920s (Games I Played with My Sisters)

We had a large rambling garden with a considerable variety of flowers blooming all through the summer months. We (the children) made great use of these both for decoration and for play. We were allowed to pick the flowers almost any time we liked.

1. Each of the girls had a flower vase to fill with fresh flowers for the dining room.

2. We invented a game with the flowers. For example :-

Flower Families in which the mother in her crinolin would be a rose. the father in his velvet suit would be a large pansy. the children would be fuchsias, or delphiniums, or whatever pleased us.

Little school children were lobelias or wattle or some other prolific flower such as phlox; delphiniums were useful for larger school children, and hollyhocks were just right for ballet dancers.

We would make moss houses in the roots of the hawthorn hedge, use hydrangea leaves for areoplanes and so on and on.

We would begin the game with "I bagged the ... prettiest family.... or the richest family... or the happiest family". (I like to think that I always bagged being the "happiest"; but have no way of verifying this). We then played a type of dolls house game, visiting each other and generally playing out home-making.

Dressing Flowers was a variation of this game but we would use the flowers to dress up a large rose hip or iceland poppy head. This was popular when the petunias were plentiful and we could put several flowers on the stem to make petticoats and dress. Men's and boy's clothing could be made out of canterbury bells, or fox gloves. We used lobelia petals for eyes and red geranium petals for mouths, pressing the petals well in.

Face painting was also popular. Flowers were used as make-up for concerts (usually performed to each other in the garden). We would use geranium for both lipstick and rouge and the blue bag from the laundry for eye shadow.

The Button Game was the winter version of the flower game. We used different buttons for different members of the family and constructed houses out of blocks or cards or used some corner in the room or the space under a chair as territory for our button family.

The button games were not as absorbing as the flower games which continued for several days, particularly when we had moss houses to build.

Mostly, we each had our own flower families or schools or whatever, but if we had a friend we may have played two girls playing with the one family. I can't remember involving any boys in the game.

### The Flowers That Bloom in the Spring (Birthday Celebrations)

I used to cry when my father sang "Oh Bother the Flowers which Bloom in the Spring". I was the only member of the family with a birthday in the spring and I thought he was singing about me.

My birthday happened to be on the same day as a very dear friend of the family who was a widower with two sons the same age as my brothers. So the two families always celebrated the birthdays together.

This friend had a really enormous garden and was a grower of prize winning daffodils.

On my birthday he would arrive in a horse drawn cab which was full of spring blossoms, white cherry-plum branches, pink blossom and buckets of daffodils.

1. At our birthday parties when we were little we played : "singing games" (Green Gravels, Oranges and Lemons, the Thread follows the Needle, and others such).

2. When we were older we played "parlour games" such as the Priest in the Parish has Lost His Considering Cap, Family Coach and Consequences as well as charades. We did not have competition games and prizes.

3. At most parties each guest would present an item. During this concert part of the party the adults would crowd around so that your recitation, song or dance was given for the adults as much as for the children. At some parties a small gift would be given to those who performed, but this was not always the case.

### "The Melbourne Trains in !" (Train Travelling in the 1920s)

At eight o'clock each night we would hear the horses trotting past pulling the cabs from the station and we would call out to each other "The Melbourne train is in !".

1. Sometimes this would inspire my oldest sister to tell us about "Going to Melbourne". We loved this story. she really described the whole trip. What she saw out the window, the stations the train stopped at and the farewells and greetings.

It would go like this "Mr Billings is here with the cab. come on lets get in. Gig jog, gig jog.....(that would be repeated for some considerable time with snatches of conversation that could take place in the cab). Then she would describe what took place at the station goodbyes and then off on the trip and all the way she would tell us what she saw out the window interspersing this with calling out the names of the stations.

Then the arrival in Melbourne and being met by our aunt. then riding on the tram. going under the railway lines at Flinders Street Station. then the electric train and so on.

The parts I liked best was when she would see the big electricity poles (near Melton) and then, fairly soon after reaching Sunshine, the excitement of seeing a yellow cab from the train window (we had no yellow cabs in Ballarat) and also the way she described the tunnel near Jolimont with all the lights in its walls.

This story could go on night after night, mostly to Melbourne, but sometimes to other places one or the other of us had had holidays.

2. By the way there were still horse drawn cabs in Ballarat in 1939 and Mr Billings was the name of the cabbie who usually took us to the station.

3. The cabbies had their shelters in various parts of the city, for example there was one near us on the corner of Sturt and Drummond Streets, near the Hospital.

4. When my sister was telling the story we all held our noses as the imaginary trip took us through Footscray. It is impossible to imagine the terrible smells that used to be part of that district with all its meat works.

"A Modest Dress. Neat but not Gaudy" (What we Wore)

I think this is one of Samuel Wesley's admonitions. In any case it was a touchstone for my mother in choosing our garments.

1. In winter we wore navy tunics and white blouses to school. velvet dresses on Sunday and knitted dresses on Saturday and in the holidays.

2 In summer we wore checked gingham or flowered trabolco dresses to school, on Saturday and during the holidays and on Sunday we would wear crepe de Chine dresses or voile dresses.

3. Most of our clothes were made at home. not by my mother but by a dressmaker who came in for several days to mend and make new clothes.

4. We rarely went shopping for clothes and I don't remember ever going window shopping with my mother.

5. Even when buying shoes and hats for us, my mother would make a choice from advertisements and then have the several pairs of shoes or several styles of hats sent home so we could try them on at home. This was called "buying on apro." I think "apro" meant "approval". The shop let you have the goods without paying until you had made your choice.

6. My mother bought most of her dresses at the wholesale part of the Lucas Clothing Factory and she also bought some of our ready made best dresses there, she was able to do this because of her friendship with the management.

"Some Have Meat and Cannot Eat and Some have None That Want It" (Meals)

"But we have meat and we can eat, and so the Lord be thanked."

These are the words of Robbie Burns' Grace. We said this Grace at meals.

1. We ate the traditional three meals a day. Porridge for breakfast, two course meal at midday and soup, or savoury or salad for the evening meal. The family all ate together.

2. All the food we ate was delivered to the house.

3. Milk, meat and bread was delivered daily, groceries once a week or when ordered special deliveries would be made, vegetables twice weekly.

4. All the trademen came in horse drawn vehicles.

5. Often there were home-made cake or biscuits in the pantry.

The End



Golden Years of childhood

In the Golden Garden City of Ballarat

Attachments

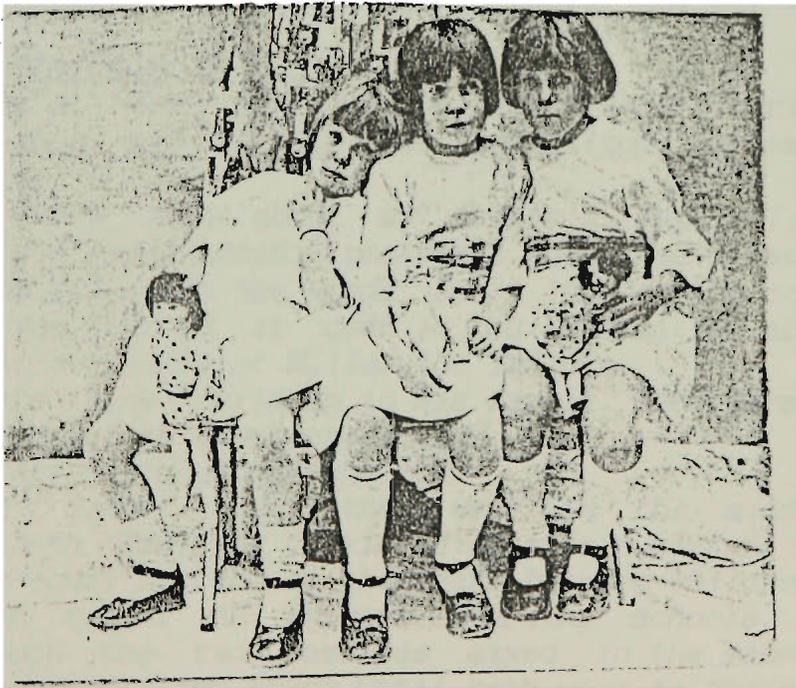
Afterword      *Facts About the Migrant Generation and First Generation.*

Verses         *Poetry Learnt "at my Mother's Knee".*

Curios         *About Great Grandparents.*

Time Span      *Three Generations*

Networks      *Relations, Friends and Nearness to home.*



*Betty, Winifred and Ruth  
c. 1926*

### Afterword

#### Memories from the Golden Years of Childhood

##### The migrant Generation

All four of my grandparents migrated as children with their their parents from Scotland to Australia and settled in Ballarat in the 1850s.

One of my mother's grandfather was a Presbyterian minister and the other was a baker. (see attachments).

I do not have information on the way my great grandparents on my father's side earned their living in Australia, but I think it was through some kind of business based on the expanding gold rush population.

"I Don't Say It Boastingly Mind You But...."

My mother's father was a grocer and a tea merchant. He sold his own brand of tea called "Coutts's Celestial Tea" My mother used to sing a little ditty that was used to advertise it but I cannot recall the words.

I can barely remember my grandfather but I remember quite a few stories about him and one of his sayings was often repeated, mostly in a mocking way. It was :-

"I don't say it boastingly mind you. Indeed I thank God for it ! But when I was your age I ..... had a business of my own..... or.... had bought my own home.....had an importing business earning x-pounds a year"..... or some other fact that he regarded as showing how successful he was as compared to the off-spring he was reprimanding.

There were eight children in his family and all lived very healthy long lives.

"Don't Look on the Other Side !"

My father's father was a tailor with a very flourishing business at his Ballarat shop and through his travelling salesmen throughout the Western District.

I don't know much about my father's family life. I do remember finding some old advertising postcards which had a rather corny picture and joke on one side with the words "Don't look on the other side" written on it. When you turned it over it had information about the suits and other men's wear available at Miller the Tailors.

There were nine children in his family. They were all very healthy but they all died before they were sixty.

##### The First Generation of Australians

Both my mother and father were in the middle of their large families and both families consisted of a fair mixture of girls and boys all with fairly equal spacing of the years between children.

My mother taught at private boarding schools. My father was a dentist. Although the two families mixed in the same social circle in Ballarat my parents did not marry until both were in their early thirties.

##### The Second Generation of Australians

My parents had five children (two boys and three girls) in eight years. The last two were probably born when they were both over forty.

The two boys were the eldest. There was a two year gap between each birth except between me and my sisters. There was a year and half between my older sister and me and two and a half years between me and the youngest in the family. The three "girls" are still living, one in Ballarat and the other two in Melbourne.

To Mother  
A childhood Poem by Ken Miller

I know so many little girls,  
Eyes like diamonds, teeth like pearls,  
Valda, Marion and many another  
But none of them I love like Mother

My mother's a darling !  
My mother's a pet !  
She is so worried if I do fret.

She watches me carefully lest I should fall  
Or knock my head against a brick wall.

One day the Minister shall call  
"Do you love this woman better than all ?"  
My truthful answer will be "Sir !"  
I love my mother better than 'er !"

Golden Memories of Childhood

For good measure I thought I would write out some of the poems I learnt "at my mother's knee," and recited to adults at children's parties

Pa's Darling

"I wish I were a boy", said little Anne.  
"Oh don't say that !" said Ma.  
"What was it that Pa said last night ?  
"My own little darling has been here.  
"I know for the room is so bright."

Little Boy Blue and Little Bopeep

Little Boy Blue was weeping out in the fields alone  
For Little Bopeep, who he loved so well, away to the Court had flown.  
With powder and pearls and patches and bows on each dainty shoe  
She was queen of them all as she danced in the hall  
Forgetting her Little Boy Blue.

But at night when her heart was aching, her jewels she laid aside,  
She passed through the palace weeping into the dark night tide.  
THERE stood her true love awaiting. THERE stood her Little Boy Blue  
And she CRIED "Take me home I am wanting nobody else but YOU !

Ten Little Steps and Stairs

(It is a little garbled).

Sorry I cannot remember all the words but it was my favourite poem.  
When I recited it the adults used to cry. I think it was written by the  
Australian Irish priest who wrote the stories in "Around the Bourrie Log"

There were ten little steps and stairs  
... Missing a line or lines here...  
Coming in through the kitchen door  
With the vine like pattern of their naked feet  
Marking the polished floor.  
.....lines I can't recall....  
In their home made frocks and Sunday suits,  
Up through the church with their squeaky boots  
While the folk went astray in their prayers.  
There were ten little steps and stairs

There were ten little steps and stairs,  
But the years have shuffled them all about  
Has made them thin and straightened them out  
With the weight of a hundred cares  
With a gap in the line and break. Ah well.  
There were ten little steps and stairs.

A Farmer's Life

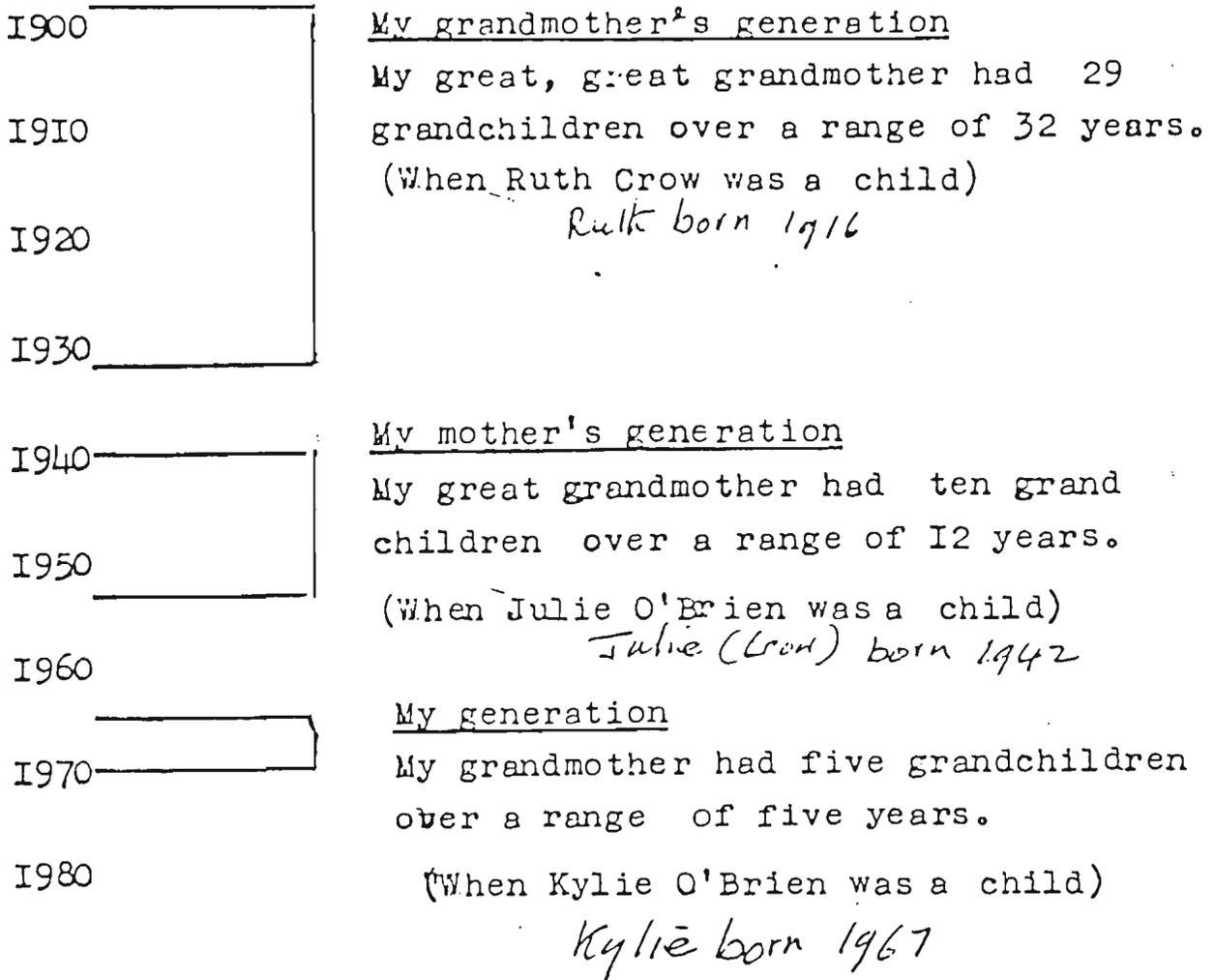
(This was my encore recitation)

Its hard to be a farmer I think I ought to know,  
The folks in our house laugh and laugh, but do you think it fun ?  
I planted a whole handful of feathers and not a chicken not one.



Chart Prepared for a Grandchild's School Project

Time Span Showing Number of Cousins and Age Range of Cousins



.....  
The above diagram shows the relations on the maternal side. The generations that can be traced on the paternal side show a similar pattern; but the interviews showed that paternal relations were not involved in supportive networks.

.....	Great, Great Grand Parents	Alison / George Coutts
.....	Eight Children one of whom was	Winifred Coutts
.....	Great Grandparents	Winifred Coutts / Doug Miller
.....	Five Children one of whom was	Ruth Miller
.....	Grandparents	Ruth Miller / Maurie Crow
.....	Two children one of whom was	Julie Crow
.....	Parents	Julie Crow / Lindsay O'Brien

.....  
Appendix 2 and 3 have been prepared by Ruth Crow for Kylie O'Brien in response to her questionnaire on extended families and supportive networks.

Chart Prepared for a Grandchild's School Project

by Ruth Crow

Nearness of Relations and Friends to Family Home

Code.... R = Relation.....I = Intimate Friend, (like a relation to famil.  
F = Friend of one parent .....(H) = Home..... K = Kilometers  
Distance from home to circumferences = 5 kilometers.

Diagram 1. In 1920's When My Granmother was a Child  
(Friends not included)

*likely to be in a different age group from para*

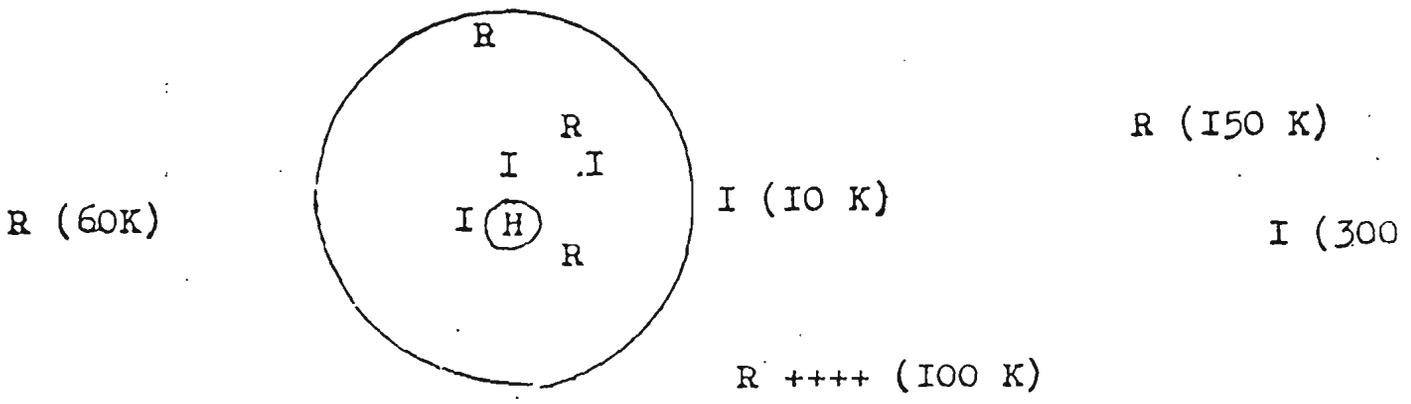


Diagram 2. In 1940s When My Mother was Child

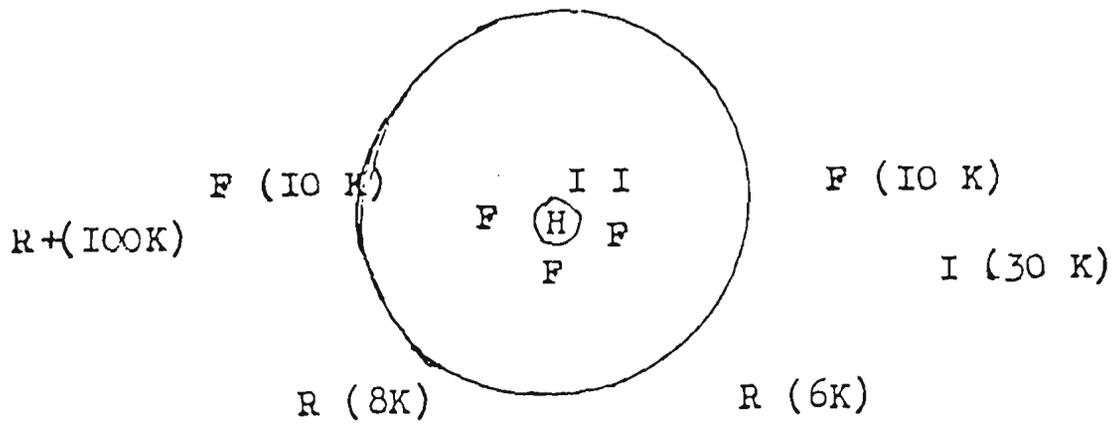
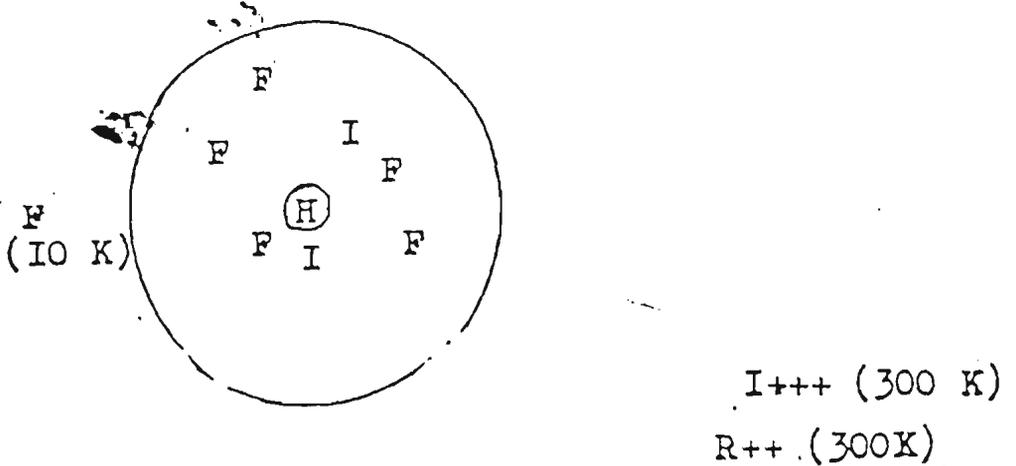
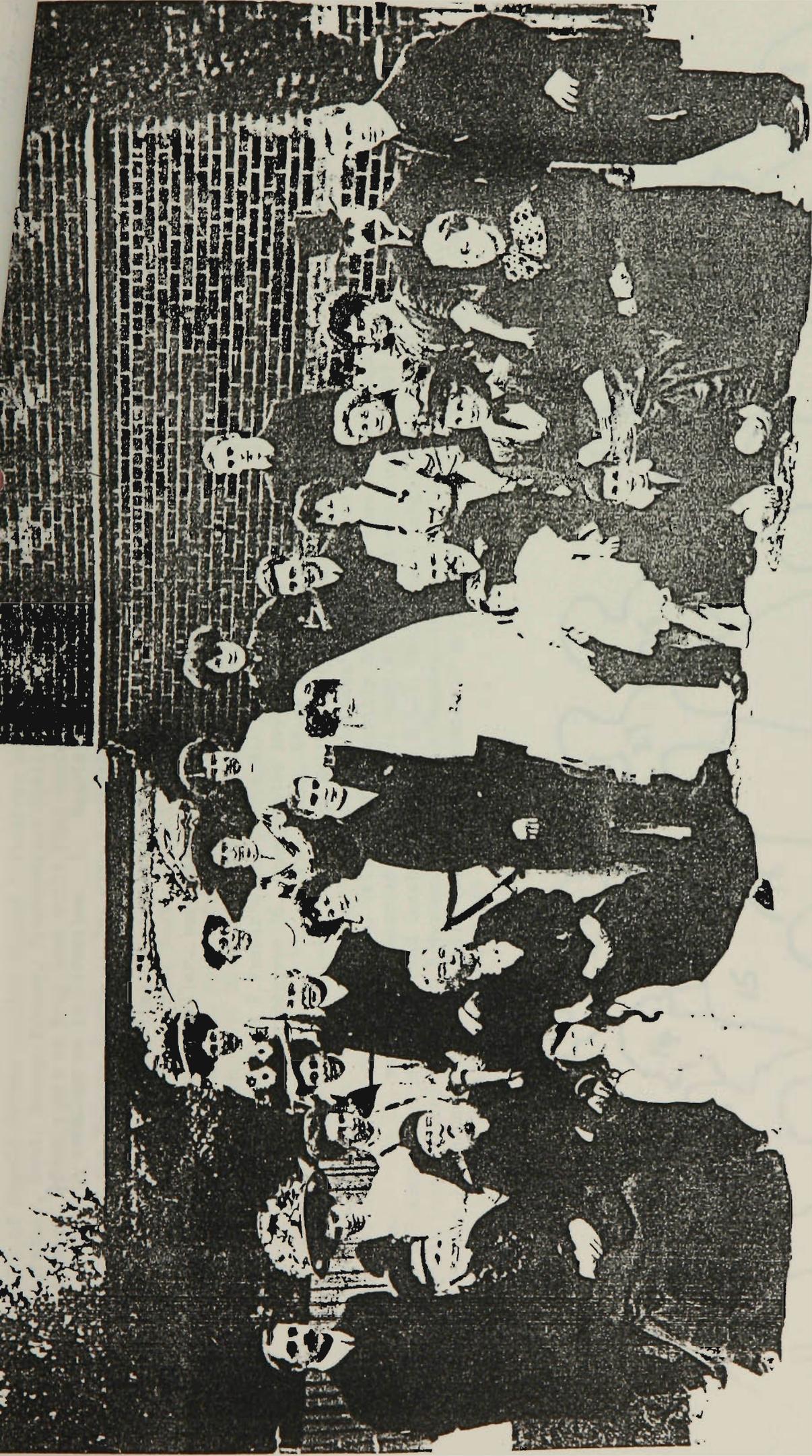


Diagram 3. In the 1970s When I was a Child



Comment : For three years the nearest relations were thousands of kilometers away as the family lived in Canada.

.....  
Note 1920s mixture of relations and intimate friends within walking distance and some relations and friends in various parts of Victoria  
1940s ...friends and intimate friends within walking distance, relations within half hour public transport.  
1970s... Relations 300 K. many friends, few intimate friends near home  
*(with intimate friends same age as para)*



Wedding in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century

Bride, Winifred Coultts; groom, Dougal Miller; officiating minister, Rev Duncan Fraser (bride's grandfather). Names of wedding guests are on the back of photo.

The house in background was the Heidelberg Presbyterian Manse. It was built with a flat roof like the houses in Palestine.

WEDDING of Dugald Forbes Stalker Miller & Winifred Maud Coutts (probably 1908, not later). Married by the bride's grandfather, Revd. Duncan Fraser, Presbyterian Minister, Heidelberg, Vict. Photo taken at his house in Banksia St. Heidelberg. After visit to Holy Land built flat roofed house seen in background as thought ideally suited for sitting out on roof in evenings as in Jerusalem. 1. Maggie May, elder daughter of Rev. D. Fraser by 1st marriage - it is said she hid the Welcome Nugget in her oven overnight for the digger who found it. 2. Revd. Duncan Fraser. 3. unknown child. 4. 2nd Mrs D. Fraser (bride descended from Alice his first wife), 5. D.F.S. Miller 6. W.M. Coutts 7. Alice daughter of Ethel (nee Coutts, sister of bride) and Hugh Baird 8. Clyde, bro. of Alice. 9. Margaret Miller nee Craig, widow, born Rutherglen Scotland 1843, to Australia on 'The Ocean Chief' 1859, went to Ballarat where in 1865 she married Alexander Miller, born Falkirk Scotland 1841. Came out on same boat trip as Margaret. Home: "Craigie" - Soldiers Hill, Ballarat. 10. Bessie Fraser, crippled daughter of Revd. D. Fraser, 2nd marriage. 11. Bert Smith, ? head of Art Dept. School of Mines. 12. Bert's wife Florence, great friend of bride. 13? Lottie Fraser who married Somers Dobbyn - dtr. of Revd F. Fraser's 2nd marriage. 14. Jean Miller wife of bridegroom's bro. Billy. 15. Tom Miller bachelor bro. of bridegroom 16. Anna (Coutts sister of bride) 2nd wife of Hugh Baird & stepmother of her sister Ethel's children, 7 & 8. 17. Mathew Baird, State Member for Ballarat West, Minister of Education & Chief Secretary in Argyll or Peacock Govt. 18. George Keith Coutts, father of bride, born Rossie Mills, Montrose, Scotland about 1840, to Ballarat with family in "Champion of the Seas" 1854 & married Alice Fraser daughter of Revd. D. Fraser's 1st wife. Home, "Rossie" 802 Mair St. Ballarat. 19? Possibly Ethel Baird (nee Coutts) Hugh's 1st wife. If this is Ethel then Anna, No 16, was still unmarried, she married Hugh after Ethel was drowned. 20? Francis Fraser unmarried dtr. Revd. D. Fraser's 2nd marriage. Head teacher (female) P.L.C. Melbourne - taught Henry Handel Richardson. 21. Lizzie Campbell (nee Miller) sister of bridegroom. 22. Charlie Campbell husband of Lizzie. 23. Billy Miller, bro. of bridegroom. 24. 25, 26 & 27 unknown. 28. Ruby Baird (nee Coutts, sister of bride) wife of Mathew Baird. 29. Roy Coutts youngest bro. of bride, flew in Royal Flying Corps 1st world war.

