

The Best of Both Worlds



Den Kingston

Preface

These are the recollections of a person who as a small boy lived his early life in the dairying district of the Bega Valley in the N.S.W. South Coast. When I was about six years old, my parents moved to Sydney after which my time in the valley was confined to holidays only.

Here I record my impressions of people, places and events which combined to shape my life and attitudes in those early days. These people, no longer with us, are well and faithfully remembered. Places no longer available to us, and the events which occurred there, will always be cherished memories. Remembrances, not in any chronological order, but as they tumble to the fore. As Henry Lawson wrote:

*Time too quickly passes
And we are growing old
So let us fill our glasses
And toast the days of gold...*

These are my vivid recollections of the golden days of childhood and teen years, in both country and city. Consequently I consider, I had “The Best of Both Worlds.”

Sydney, 1999

Revised 2002, 2008

Front cover: Candelo, ca. 1920

Inside back cover: Map of the Bega district

Filmer family background

My maternal grandfather, Edgar Hugh Filmer, left England in 1882 with his parents and siblings. My great-grandfather, Frederick John Filmer, was born in Kent, England, on 8th July, 1848. He married Fanny Budds on 7th April, 1875. Frederick John was a farmer in Surrey. Their family at the time of sailing was

Edgar Hugh	Born January 13th 1876
Herbert Duncan	Born March 14th 1877
Harold Eric	Born May 19th 1878
Frederick Leslie	Born October 6th 1879
Kenneth Norman	Born October 5th 1880
Marion Agnes	Born February 12th 1882

After arriving in Bega they had six more children:

Conrad Stewart	Born November 13th 1883
Oswald	Born December 24th 1884
Dora	Born March 12th 1886
Bernard Morley	Born August 28th 1887
Elfreda	Born May 10th 1889
Howard Stanley	Born November 20th 1890

My grandfather Edgar Hugh Filmer (1876–1953) married Elizabeth Linger (1870–1954) in Bega N.S.W. in 1897. My grandmother Elizabeth was born at Tanta-wanglo N.S.W. in 1870. She was the only child of Thomas Linger and Sarah (Williams). Elizabeth was directly related through her mother to William and Maria Nash, who arrived in N.S.W. with the First Fleet in 1788. Their son William was the first free-born child



*Great great
grandmother
Williams,
daughter of
William and
Maria Nash.*

in the new colony.

After their marriage Edgar and Elizabeth had a dairy farm, first at Ravenswood, near Bega, then Mogilla, and finally at Candelo, 15 miles south-west of Bega. This is a 500-acre property called Springvale, which they bought in 1914. Their family consisted of two girls and five boys:

Hilda Zettie (my mother, 1897–1969)

Sarah Annie (1899–1976)

Frederick Thomas (1901–1974)

Edgar Linger (1904–1984)

Henry Nash (1906–1977)

William Athol (1908–1980)

Boyd Wesley (1911–1932)



*Headstones
of my great
grandparents
Leonardt
and Ann
Holzhauser,
Kameruka
Cemetery.*

Holzhauser family background

My paternal great-grandfather, Leonardt Holzhauser (1811–1892), married Anna Flegler (1818–1880). They left Baden Baden in Germany for Australia in 1855. Leonard was a farmer and migrated to Australia to take up sharefarming at Kameruka, a farming property just south of Bega. When they left Germany their family consisted of three sons and one daughter. Due to an outbreak of cholera on board their three sons died and were buried at sea. Their daughter died after the ship arrived at Eden N.S.W.

This must have been a traumatic time for them. However, there were many more families on board – some destined for the Bega Valley, others going on to Sydney. Husbands lost wives and children; wives were left without husbands; but most distressing of all must have been the children left without parents. What became of them, how did they survive?



Jane Turner married Leonard Holzhauser in 1880 at Kameruka, the year Leonard's mother died.

Those disembarking for Kameruka had to walk, with the aid of a guide, approximately 30 miles to their destination. Great-grandfather Leonard and wife Anna subsequently had six more children:

Augustus

William

Leonard (my grandfather, 13.10.1858–25.4.1926)

Emma

Ellen

John

Leonard married Jane Turner (1860–1926). They had five children:



*My son Jeff beside
the headstone
of the grave of
my grandparents
Leonard and Jane
Holzhauser in
Candelo cemetery.*

May
Beatrice
Bertha
Edgar
Cyril Edward (my father, 13.10.1894–11.5.1980)

Both my great-grandfathers were therefore ‘migrant ancestors.’

My parents

My father Cyril Edward married my mother Hilda Filmer in Candelo in October 1924. When they married, my father was a country policeman in the N.S.W. Mount-



*My two
grandfathers,
Leonard
Holzhauser
(left) and
Edgar Filmer
(right),
posing for the
camera.*

ed Police Force. When he joined the service in the early 1920's, Dad changed his name to Kingston just as his cousin and brother (Edgar) had done before him. Why change at all and why Kingston?

In the early part of the 20th century Dad's cousin was engaged to marry a young lady. Her parents were in favour of the marriage, but did not much like the name Holzhauser. The young lady's name was Kingston, and Holzhauser chose this as his adopted name. Later, when my father's brother joined the army in W.W.I. he too changed his name. To save confusion he too chose Kingston as his new name. Dad followed his example. Consequently I still have Holzhauser cousins, none of whom I know. I am well acquainted with Dad's brother and children and his sister (Bower) and their children. The Holzhauser side of the family are the is-

sue of Dad's uncles – Augustus, William, and John.

My father was stationed at Mt. Hope. The nearest hospital was at Lake Cargelligo where my sister Joy (19.11.1925) and I (19.7.1929) were born. Later he was moved to Wolumla in the Bega Valley. Therefore my brother and younger sisters were born in Candelo: Gwenyth Marjory (16.7.1931–26.3.2006), Boyd Filmer (1.8.1933), and Janice Ruth (11.7.1935).

Recollections of early childhood

As stated earlier, my sister Joy and I were born in Lake Cargelligo, and of this period of my life I have no recollections. Looking back I have clear remembrances of my early life in Wolumla.

We lived at the police station, an imposing red brick building set back from the main road. It included not only the necessary living quarters, but a fully constituted courtroom. All the furnishings and fittings were made of cedar. The lockup, down below one corner of the house, consisted of one room about ten feet square with a high barred window and a steel door with a small grille. There was a wide verandah at the front and one side of the house, and a paddock at the rear where the police horse was kept.

The police horse was a bay mare called Bluebell. When Dad went to other towns such as Eden and Pambula he would ride the mare. He would be away for several days, but when he was due home my sister and I would watch the road. When he came in sight we would



*Our home
in Wolumla.
The jail is at
the far right.*

run down to meet him. Dad would put us both in the saddle and walk alongside to hold us on while Bluebell ambled around the back to the stable.

Sundays we travelled in the '27 Chev. tourer to lunch and tea at Springvale. That was the highlight of our week.

School at Wolumla was only a short walk across the gully. My first day at school is my only recollection of my time spent there. We had a rain gauge in the yard and we were told not to touch it. It was one of the policeman's duties to measure and record any rainfall.

The mention of the Chev. tourer reminds me of the time someone slammed the door while my hand was in the way. The thought almost brings tears to my eyes even now. I recall being taken to Bega Hospital to have my adenoids and tonsils removed. The anaesthetic was a cotton pad over the mouth and nose and chloroform dropped onto it. When I woke up we went home to Springvale where Grandma and Auntie Sadie looked after the patient. The outstanding memory of this visit was the sore throat. Food was not immediately wanted.

When the throat was less sore, the first meal, which is always remembered, was fresh bread and butter.

Christmas was always at Springvale. One year Santa left me a pedal car. These cars were constructed of heavy metal, and the rather large verandahs became my race track.

Later, my family moved to Candelo, and we went to school there for a while. Candelo is about two miles east of Springvale as the crow walks. Compared to Wolumla, Candelo is a very pretty town. There is a creek running through the centre and the shops and houses are along the flats and up the hills on both sides. There was a large wooden bridge spanning the creek. There are big willow trees along the banks. Lately I was told by one of the long time residents that my father planted the willows from cuttings he brought from another area many years ago.

To Sydney

Our family moved to Sydney in about 1936. We lived in Dulwich Hill where we enrolled in yet another school. We moved to a second house closer to the school and shopping – in fact, the new house was only four doors from the school. I was to attend that school to the end. It incorporated kindergarten, primary and high school.

The benefits of city living were not immediately appreciated by me. Most small boys tend to take everything around them for granted, but the one big advan-

tage we in the city had was electricity.

We continued having our Christmas holidays at Springvale however, and life on the farm was carried on as it had been for years past. Even the absence of electricity was of no consequence.

We skip a few years at this point to the age of about 12 years. At this age you start to take more critical notice of your surroundings; it is when people stop being just people and become individuals with their own personalities.

For instance, when I was very young I was more than a little in awe of my grandfather, not for any particular reason, except he had a rather stern countenance. It may have been just my impression that his attitude was 'Children should be seen and not heard.' He was the head of the family and the 'Boss' at Springvale, and we treated him with due respect.

The uncles (Ted and Athol) who worked on the farm were much more relaxed, having young children of their own, and we were treated as their extended family. They had a marvellous sense of humour, each in his own way.

Grandmother was a tiny wisp of a person, strong willed but kindly and generous. She had a strong religious conviction, having been brought up in the Methodist faith. In her days before marrying my grandfather, Grandma was in the church choir, a Sunday School teacher and part time local preacher. Her conviction never wavered, and was passed on to her children and grandchildren. It is still evident a lifetime later



Left: Grandma and Auntie Sadie in the garden, which they loved. Grandma had the front yard full of rose bushes. Above: Grandma and Grandfather relaxing.

and although not all of her grandchildren are attached to any particular church, the qualities of decency and goodness which Grandma displayed are still persisting.

Auntie Sadie was similar in stature to her mother, quiet and unassuming, with a lovely nature, a gentle person. Although Auntie had no children of her own, she was always in tune with her nieces and nephews. When I was a small boy holidaying at Springvale, I used to sleep with her. Auntie Sadie stands out in my memory as the loveliest of all. I always looked on her as my second mother.

Dulwich Hill, meanwhile, was the centre of our city life. All our activities were there: school, sports, church and special friends. The school was a two storey affair, two large brick structures and a long wooden building which housed the Woodwork room, Science room and



*Mum and
Dad at our
wedding,
October 1952.*

Staff room. The playground was asphalt with a weather shed and several shade trees scattered throughout. A row of five camphor laurels stood along the front behind a high wooden fence.

During the war (1939–1945) we had underground air raid shelters built in the playground. On air raid practice days we would march down the stairs into the shelters and sit on the benches along the walls. The shelters were all lined with timber.

We had a flag pole in the playground and every Monday the flag was raised at morning assembly. We would take the Oath of Allegiance: *I honour my God, I serve my King, I salute my Flag*. Then on command we would all salute the flag and then the National Anthem would be sung.

On Empire Day the whole school would march down to the local picture theatre after lunch, to listen to speeches by the headmaster, the local police sergeant,

and sometimes a minister of religion. These would be interspersed with patriotic songs sung at the top of our voices. Best of all, we would get home early. Why do I still get goose bumps when I hear tunes like 'Rule Britannia' and 'Land of Hope and Glory?' Why do I still get the urge to stand to attention when I hear 'God Save the Queen?' Old old habits die hard I suppose.

At school at that time we were mostly Anglo-Saxon descent and very conscious of national identity. King and Country were things to be held in highest esteem, to be cherished and defended. This is clearly demonstrated in two world wars when young Australian men and women answered the call to arms and left home and family to defend our country from possible invasion.

Some Saturday mornings we would go into the city with Mum. This was quite an adventure for a small boy. The trip was taken by tram which would rattle and clang along. The journey would take about 30 minutes, with many fascinating things to look at along the way, and the time spent travelling was always a delight.

As each school year drew to a close, the anticipation of coming holidays would increase, but always at this time two problems would arise. Workers in some industries would threaten to stop work if their demands were not met. The first was the brewery workers, and if you were a drinker your worry was, would there be enough beer for Christmas. This never concerned us: being Methodists, alcohol or the lack of it was not a problem.

The second was coal, would the miners mine enough coal. All country trains were moved by steam

engines and they required lots of coal. We were always on tenterhooks over this, would we be able to get to the farm for Christmas holidays.

How these problems were overcome I don't know, but we never missed Christmas at Springvale. In those days school broke up for the holidays on Thursday afternoon. Mum would spend all day packing our travelling cases and making last-minute preparations. I suspect some of these cases were full of our Christmas presents, for our pillow slips were always full of good things on Christmas morning.

After tea we would travel by tram to Central Station and find our seats on the train, which on Thursday nights always left the station at 9.30 p.m. When the driver blew the whistle we would say goodbye to Dad, and with a jerk and in a cloud of steam we were on our way. Just six hours after finishing school we were headed south through the Southern Tablelands, destination Nimmitabel, arriving there about 9.00 a.m. on Friday. After the train, it was only a short bus journey down Brown Mountain to Bemboka, where one of the uncles would pick us up, and thirty minutes later we were at Springvale. This is what I waited a whole year for.

Springvale

Nothing ever changed much in all those years, then around 1947/48 the electricity came through the Bega Valley. What a difference it made to life in the country! In the city we took it for granted. Without electricity and refrigeration in particular it must have been diffi-



*The
Springvale
homestead:
gone but not
forgotten.*

cult to keep things like milk, butter, and meat for very long. The old meat safe, as it was known, helped only a little. This stood on legs with mesh on four sides which allowed any draught to pass through, but kept the flies out. Refrigeration was handy not only for keeping perishables for long periods – I remember still the ice cream one of my aunts used to make. It was sheer bliss for a boy. I have not tasted such beautiful ice cream since.

The old house was a large typically country style home standing on the central ridge which bisects the property, with a commanding view across the front paddock to the main road one mile away. There was a wide verandah all round, but the back corners were built in to make four small rooms. Three were bedrooms, one an office which Grandfather used. Its door was never locked, but we children never ventured in. In my whole life I only twice opened that door and peeped inside.

There were two large rooms at the front of the house – one a lounge/music room, the other a bedroom. Each had French doors onto the front verandah. The kitchen and bathroom were disconnected from the main

building, but both were accessed along the covered verandah. The kitchen was a large room. At one end was an open fire and in the fireplace hung a large fountain, from which protruded a long, highly polished brass tap. Beside the fireplace was the fuel stove where all the cooking was done. These consumed quite a lot of wood which had to be cut and carried to the house. There was a long wide table, with a stool standing between table and wall. Several sturdy chairs stood along the other side. A high, open-shelved dresser accommodated the crockery and plates.

The kitchen was also home to the only wireless in the house. It stood in the corner of the room, and was powered by a wet cell battery, and alongside the wireless was a cane chair where my grandfather sat, with his head resting on his hand and eyes closed, to listen to the 7 p.m. news on the A.B.C. The signature tune of the A.B.C. then is the same tune used today.

There was a walk-in pantry opening from the kitchen. There were shelves in there on which stood jars of preserved fruit and jams. Close to the house was the orchard, about one acre in size and full of a great variety of various fruit trees. This was the source of the jams and preserves in the pantry.

The laundry, or washhouse as it was called, was away from the house. The room itself housed the tubs and a hand wringer. Outside under an awning was the copper. The clothes and whatever else were put in there to boil. When they had been boiled to within an inch of their lives they were transferred to the tubs for rinsing,



During a long weekend holiday at the farm. From left: Valerie, Jean, Gran, and Auntie Sadie with little Barbara.

put through the wringer, and hung out to dry.

Grandma employed a lady from a nearby farm to do the Monday washing. This lady was rather large and always walked from her farm, and in the summer time this made her face very red. She was a jolly person and always had a kind word for us all. I don't know how much she was paid but she earned every penny, I'm sure.

Two other stories interwoven with the farm are about old men. The first is set in a grove of wattle trees growing on a gentle slope on the eastern side of the farm, facing roughly west. These wattles we called gum trees because they exuded a sticky gum from the trunk and branches. This gum was rather good to eat, sweet and sticky. Eaten in moderation it was fine, but eaten in excess it would cause quite a bit of wind. These trees shed their bark in summer, and it lay in strips on the ground.

There was an old man who used to come around driving a very old horse which pulled a very very old

cart. He would drive over to the 'gum' trees and pick up every bit of the fallen bark. Off he would go without a word to anyone. I asked my grandfather about this and he said the bark was used in tanning hides and this was how the old chap made his living.

Another old chap lived behind Springvale on a small holding of about 30 – 40 acres. Here he had built two huts. He lived alone and didn't seem to have any cattle, so I have no idea how he supported himself. His name was Danny Grant but because he was from Scotland everyone called him Scotchie. About every three or four weeks he would walk the three miles to Candelo to buy groceries which he carried home in a sugar bag slung over his shoulder. On his return trip he would come by the homestead. He had been doing this for years and his visits would always follow the same routine. Grandma would call, 'Mr. Grant, come in and have a cup of tea.' 'Thank you Missus.' Grandma would have hot scones for him which he obviously enjoyed. He was old and losing his sight and not fussy about his personal hygiene, nevertheless he was a real old gentleman and Grandma always gave him her best China.

After he had had his tea and scones, he would say 'Thank you Missus, and now a little tune before I go.' Then he would sing 'Danny Boy' or some other Scottish ballad and head off home.

During the war

The war years were very difficult for everyone, both in the city and country. Rationing was introduced for

food and clothing. The most affected foods were tea, sugar, meat and butter. All citizens had a ration book of coupons about half the size of postage stamps. These were cut out of the book when making a purchase. You were allowed a certain number of coupons per month, so you had to gauge your needs very carefully.

Petrol was also rationed. This did not affect us at home as we had no car, but they had to be careful on the farm, although they were allowed extra, farming was deemed an essential service.

Dad was in the army during the war years and because of his police background he was put in the Military Police. He later transferred to Supply, he felt he 'was getting too old to mix it with the young blokes.'

Rationing was not the only hardship people had to endure as most families had relatives in the services or friends and acquaintances who joined up. In our family, my father, Mum's brother, and two of her cousins were in the army. Newspapers published the names of those killed or wounded or who were missing in action. Friends of my parents had a son who was killed when the H.M.A.S. Sydney was sunk.

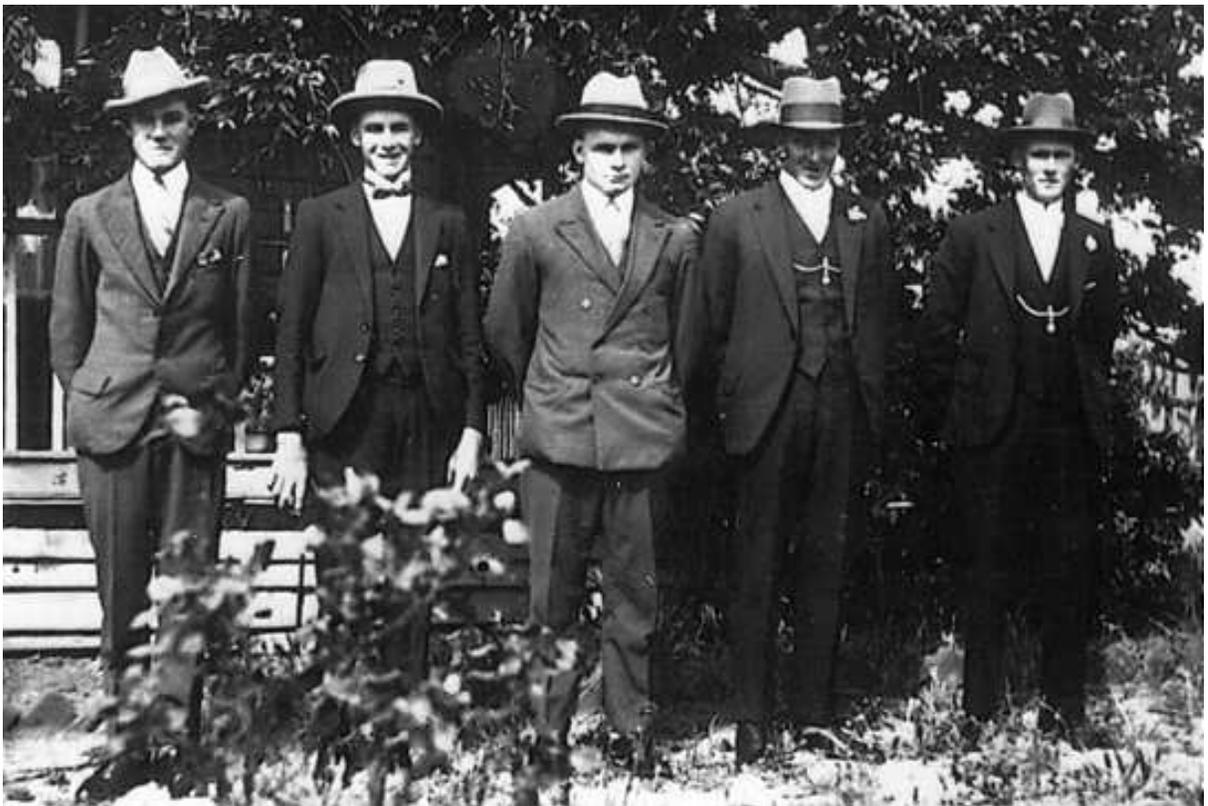
The war came to Australia in February 1942. This followed the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 7th 1941. As a result of this America entered the war. The Japanese then attacked Singapore and after bitter fighting they took control of the island on February 15th 1942. There were 85,000 Allied servicemen captured. These P.O.Ws were taken to Changi. Singapore was supposed to be impregnable, but when the at-

tack commenced it lasted just a few days. Four days later Darwin was bombed. For the first time Australia felt the weight of enemy attack on our country. One of the men who worked for me spent 3½ years in Changi and suffered terrible privations at the hands of the Japanese. His name was Jim Cracknell.

Because of the bombing of Darwin, Australia was on war alert and preparations were commenced in case the Japanese landed troops on the Australian mainland. The preparations for possible invasion affected those in the Bega Valley as well. Grandfather was one of the people who had to decide what action to take. The decision was the 'Scorched Earth' policy. Cattle and horses were to be turned out onto the roads, houses, buildings, machinery etc. were to be destroyed, and any crops to be burnt or made useless. Road signs were removed to confuse the enemy. The population would then head over the mountain towards Cooma and Canberra.

To keep the women of Springvale on their toes, Grandfather would ask them at meal times 'What do you have to do if the Japs land at Twofold Bay?' A very serious question indeed, which required a serious answer. Auntie Sadie, who always saw the funny side of a situation, would answer very seriously 'Grab my jewellery and clear out.' This, of course, exasperated Grandfather, and since he got the same answer each time, he gave up asking the question.

When the American troops arrived in Sydney there was a march organized through the city so we went along with most of the population of Sydney. The crowd



The Filmer brothers in front of the Springvale homestead. From left: Boyd, Athol, Nash, Ted, and Tom. This photograph was taken on Uncle Tom's wedding day. He married Ellen Robinson (Auntie Nell) on 20.10.1928.

Boyd died in 1932. Athol and Ted stayed on the farm until they sold it in the 1970's. Tom had his own farm about two miles north of Springvale. Nash moved to Melbourne before World War II.

They and my father all had nick-names and Dad invariably referred to the uncles by these names. The nicknames did not necessarily refer to their physical or intellectual development. Boyd was known as Buck, Athol as Squib, Nash as Chonker, Ted as Longfellow, Tom as Crazy, and Dad as Chibba.

was enormous and we were separated from Mum. When the crowd dispersed we waited in a shop doorway. Mum couldn't find us and assumed we had gone home. The

police arrived at our front door and told Mum we were down town at a police station, to be picked up.

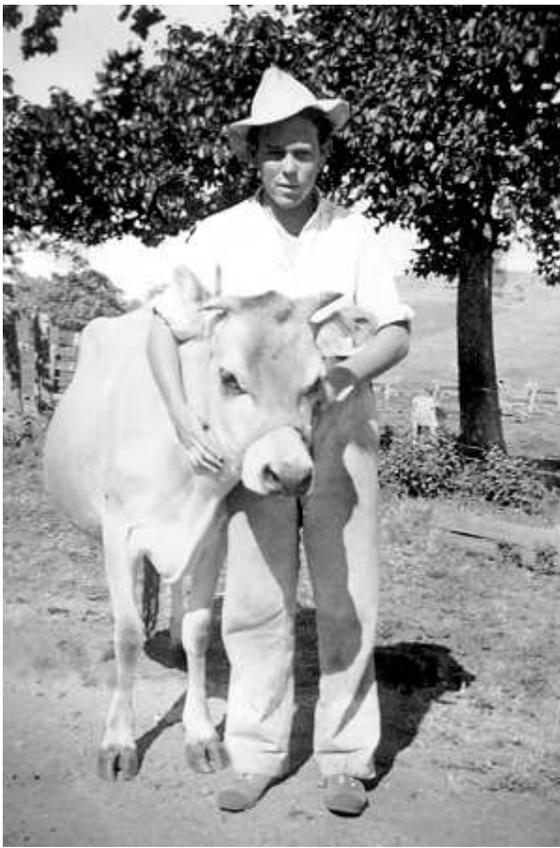
That finished me with crowds.

Holidays at Springvale

When my cousin Rodney started school at Tanta-wanglo his Dad bought him a pony to ride. Tantawanglo is a one room country school about five miles from his home at Springvale. The pony was named Playboy, he was a great little pony, and, as I discovered, easy to ride. He had a mind of his own, however, and could sense when the rider was a new chum. After a few false starts he and I came to an understanding, and spent many enjoyable hours riding around or rounding up cattle at milking time.

Milking was done twice a day. In the summer, whilst we were there the herd was at its maximum of about 120 cows. Every cow had a name and was referred to by her name. In more recent times cows have a numbered tag attached to their ear. I may be old-fashioned but I prefer the names rather than numbers.

When I was about thirteen, I made the acquaintance of a Jersey calf, born about one week before we arrived on holidays. Each day I would spend time with her, rubbing and patting and she soon became very quiet. When I approached she would come to meet me. Because she was born on a wet day I named her Drizzle. Before long I taught her to lead using a halter made from old rope. She was groomed and given extra feed



Drizzle... the queen of the Springvale herd, with special friend.

each day. It was not long before we dispensed with the halter, she would follow wherever I went. She would come when I whistled provided she was within hearing distance. Drizzle was a beautiful animal.

Having taught her to lead properly, I decided to take her training a step further. Rodney had a slide or sled about three feet long by eighteen inches wide, so I decided to harness Drizzle up so she could pull it. This frightened her at first, she would jump about trying to rid herself of this foreign object, and only succeeded in getting herself tangled in the harness. However, patience and perseverance won the battle and she soon became accustomed to the slide.

In the evening we would go down under the gum trees and there pick up kindling for the fires and come back home with the little slide loaded. I used the halter on her for a while, just in case, but soon realized there was no need. Drizzle would follow patiently and stop when I stopped. We had complete trust in each other, and she knew there would be extra feed and a good grooming at the end.

My grandfather retained about 200 acres of rough country when he sold the Mogilla property, and he used this to run young cattle. The idea was to bring the cows back to Springvale before their first calf was born, so it happened that I didn't see Drizzle for two years, because she was away from the farm.

When we arrived at Springvale my Uncle Ted told me that Drizzle was back and we looked for her as we drove through the front paddock towards the house. I saw her at the top of a long hill, got out of the car and whistled. To Uncle Ted's amazement and my great delight Drizzle walked down the hill to me. She hadn't forgotten as everyone expected. What a reunion we had.

I had her in a small yard one afternoon after milking. I intended to groom her and give her extra feed, after I had finished my other jobs. As a joke, Uncle Athol let her out and of course she went down the paddock with the other cows. When I came along looking for her, he said he had let her go, and I would have a long walk to get her back. Not so. 'Watch this,' I said, then I whistled and back she came. Uncle Athol couldn't believe it. He didn't know that my whistle would bring her back.

He said, 'I've never known a cow to act like a dog.' So his little joke back-fired.

I used to ride Drizzle when she reached full size, using the halter as a bridle. I would sit back over her hind legs, because cows are not very strong in the back. She would amble along quite unconcerned, until one day a dog ran behind her and she lurched forward leaving me flat on the ground. She took off down the paddock and I hadn't enough wind left to whistle her back.

One afternoon when all the cows were yarded for milking, Grandfather had a visitor who was there to buy some cows to improve his own herd. As Grandfather and he walked amongst the herd the chap would point to the cow he would like and one of the uncles would note its name. I was watching this procedure when the man pointed to Drizzle, and my heart dropped through my boots. I loved that cow as much as any young fellow could love his well trained pet, and I was ready to make my feelings known, when Grandfather said 'She belongs to the young fellow and is not for sale.' What a relief! I never considered that I 'owned' her, but I was forever grateful to Grandfather for his thoughtfulness.

I was more fond of Drizzle than any pet I ever had.

Over the years, Springvale had a variety of working dogs. I remember being told about one working dog. His name was Fudge, and he was not only good around cattle. Apparently, according to the uncles, he could climb up and down a ladder and walk along the top rail of a fence.

Darcy was a blue cattle dog and he was a one man

dog. He would not work for anyone – just the one. He was also a bit testy. One day I was walking not very far from his kennel and, thinking he was chained up, I picked up a lump of wood and threw it at him. Surprise, surprise – he wasn't chained up at all and came rushing straight at me. I had just enough time to rush into the dairy and slam the door. There I stayed until someone came to my rescue.

Dusty was a smallish dog and very good around the cowyard. After work we boys and the uncles would have a game of cricket. Dusty would rush for the balls. Anyhow, she must have decided to play wicket keeper. The batsman did not know she was behind him and swung his bat. Poor old Dusty got the bat right between the eyes, which knocked her senseless. After we had given her a good drenching in cold water she revived. After that she was very careful around cricket bats.

Tojo was a dog given to uncle Athol during the war. Thus the name. Tojo reached a ripe old age and had to be retired from active duty. He had rheumatism fairly badly, and uncle Athol asked if I would take the dog away and put him out of his misery. Being seventeen and knowing nothing was any trouble I took old Tojo away and with my .22 rifle did what I was asked. There has to be a first time for everything but this was definitely the last time I'll ever do anything like that.

Ben was part Kelpie. The uncles would send him for the cattle morning or evening. Off he would go and would be rounding up cattle well out of sight of the dairy. The cows would be counted as they came into the

yard. If any were missing I would hop on a horse and go looking for them.

Ben developed a fair turn of speed and would bring the cows home at a trot. The uncles would yell at him to 'Sit!' but he kept on. To slow him down they attached about a metre of heavy chain to his collar. This slowed him down for a while but later he learned to run almost sideways, so he still brought the cattle home at the trot, much to the uncles' dismay. The problem was, if the cows were hurried they were more difficult to milk.

Uncle Ted had a Pomeranian dog in town. Each Sunday, Pom, as he was called, would ride out to the farm on the running board of the old Ford. When they bought a smaller car, with no running board and no room inside, Pom had to stay at home. This arrangement did not suit the little dog so he travelled alone across country and arrived at the farm soon after, so space had to be found for him on subsequent Sundays.

Uncle Ted lived in town, with his wife Auntie Emmy and family, and he would ride the two miles across country to start work about 6.30 a.m. The morning ritual was tea and toast before starting work. The toast was a large slice of bread and toasted in front of the open fire on a toasting fork, hand made I suspect from stiff wire with four prongs and a handle about two feet long. Nothing ever tasted as good as that toast eaten at 6.00 a.m. each morning.

Afternoon tea was taken to the men (and boy) whilst the milking was in progress. One afternoon Auntie Sadie brought tea and freshly made ginger bread

for our refreshment. I was first to stop work, and that gingerbread freshly baked and buttered was irresistible and I ate all of it. When the uncles came for their afternoon tea, no gingerbread.

The water supply was always good, although Springvale had no surface water. Grandfather had wells sunk on the property and from one of these 700 gallons of water per hour could be pumped. The water for general use was pumped to a holding tank on a hill above the buildings. This tank had a 4000 gallon capacity and the water reticulated to wherever it was needed.

The dairy was a five unit affair, accommodating ten cows at a time. Milking was done with milking machines and the milk collected in a large vat which sat on a tall stand. The milk gravitated to a separator which separated the cream from the milk. The separator had two spouts. One delivered the cream into a large can. The other sent the separated milk to the calf pens or pig styes. Feeding stalls, which accommodated about 20 cows at a time, were situated nearby. These were used to give the herd extra feed during drought times. Adjacent was a large corn crib. Further up the hill was a large hay shed full to the rafters with hay. It was always kept well stocked in case of drought.

The stored dry lucerne had to be cut up or 'chaffed.' This meant putting the dry hay through a chaff cutter. It was a very dirty and dusty job. The hay was pushed down a chute, the machine chopped it up, and the cut-up material dropped into bags which were then tied.

The dust generated was almost choking. My first



Milking time. From left: Jean, Uncle Ted, Valerie. Ted looks rather pleased with himself.

experience with it was on a very hot day, and I took off my shirt. The dust stuck like glue to my sweaty skin and found its way down my trousers. That was the only time I removed my shirt while chaff cutting.

When my grandfather bought Springvale in 1914 they were the third owners. Before them the farm belonged to Kerrisons and then Foleys. Candelo has always been a dairying district, and in the early days most farmers produced their own cheeses for sale. After curing, the cheese was shipped from Eden to Sydney wholesalers. As time went by, butter and cheese factories were established throughout the Bega Valley, owned and operated as a co-operative.

The Bimbaya factory where the Springvale cream was taken was about two miles west of the farm, and Monday, Wednesday and Friday were the cream days, when cream cans would be loaded onto a spring cart and roped to the side to stop them sliding about. The trip to the factory was always good fun, and I was allowed to drive, which was not difficult, because the old horse

knew exactly where to go.

Not only did they process the cream to cheese and butter, the factory area was like a small village. They had a post office, a store where you could buy bits and pieces for home and farm. For sale was timber, wire and hardware. There was a petrol pump (hand operated). There was a carnival atmosphere at the factory on cream days, with the farmers calling to each other, joking and laughing and general good fun.

Later, old trucks and utilities gradually replaced the horse drawn carts. This was not as much fun for me – not being able to drive, I was only a passenger.

There was one incident concerning that old Chev utility which I can admit to now without fear of retribution. There was a chap working on the farm at the time and he and I went to get the truck to deliver the cream. The truck had to be cranked to start it. The fellow took the crank handle and before he proceeded with the cranking, he moved a lever attached to the steering column. This, I found out years later, was to advance or retard the spark. After he had given the motor a few turns and nothing happened, I thought I might help and moved this lever to another position. At the next turn of the crank he let out an almighty yell of pain. Quick as a flash I moved the lever back to where he had it. The result of my effort to help was his broken wrist.

Sometimes, when I went to stay with my cousins, I would go with my Uncle Tom after he had delivered his cream to the factory. He had four boys: Ken near my age, Bruce (now deceased) a little younger, and two



With cousins Ken (left) and Bruce, and sister Ruth. Part of our grandfather's workshop can be seen in the background.

small boys, Max and Ron. Their mother, my Auntie Nell, made the beautiful ice cream mentioned earlier.

We had some good times there. The farm was on the river. We could swim during the day, and at night we would all go eeling. Eeling was always a lot of fun. We had to walk quietly up the shallow water of the creek and by the light of kerosene lamps look for the eels. When we spotted one, four eager kids would pounce. It was always a source of amazement to me that one of us was not killed or maimed by the weapons we used. There were sword-type things, used to crash down in an effort to stun, and a long thick wire with fish hooks tied to one end used to try and jag the eel. Most lethal of all was a spear with five or six stiff wire prongs sticking out one end. Imagine the mayhem when we all rushed in to hook, hit and spear one eel. If catching them was a lot of fun – skinning them was not.

They introduced me to ferreting during one such holiday. Ferreting was really something special, so they

said. Along with the ferrets, carried in small cages, there was a great variety of dogs including one greyhound, wire traps to put at the entrance of the burrows, plus picks and shovels. I soon found out what these were for. If a ferret refused to come out you had to dig him out. That day we did more digging than anything else. That finished me with ferreting.

Ferrets as I remember them were smelly, cantankerous little monsters. We had to be very careful when handling them. They were not averse to taking a bite at your hand. In more recent times I have seen ferrets treated as house pets, ferrets on leads, ferrets draped across the shoulders of their owners. They keep them bathed and groomed and seem very attached to them. I wonder how they would feel if the ferret attached itself to their ear.

Other times I would go just for the day and this meant riding about two miles. This suited me just fine because I loved riding. It was not long before I graduated from the pony to the regular stock horses. What a tremendous boost to the ego, but I was always being told to 'Go steady or you'll break your *fool* neck!'

On the way to my Uncle Tom's farm it was necessary to cross a wooden bridge over a culvert. The Springvale horses were not used to the drumming sound of their hooves on the timber decking, and they would dance and prance across, snorting and looking about. When they were away from their home environment anything strange would upset them. It was sometimes difficult to get them to cross a river, even though

the water was only ankle deep.

I remember one particular visit when I stayed until about 10pm. It was one of those pitch dark nights. We had to use a torch to find my horse in the small yard. When I saddled up I couldn't see the horse's ears, so I just let him have his head. When he stopped I had to feel for the gate latch. This led us onto the road. Next stop was the gate to the farm. Next stop was at the end of my journey. The horse found his way home without any help from me. Is it instinct or good vision?

When I was in my early teens Grandfather would enlist my aid with some of his jobs. He was a great old gate-maker, we would get out timber, saws, brace and bits, rules, sawing horses etc. and go to work. He had a huge workshop full of all manner of tools. No power tools in those days, everything was done by hand. He also had all the equipment required for blacksmithing. The gates we made were farm gates about ten feet wide, and when finished these had to be transported to the site on a slide pulled by one of his draught horses.

One job he occasionally wanted done was to chip weeds out of the corn. The corn paddock was about four acres on the side of a hill and it was necessary to walk between the rows and chip the weeds out with a hoe.

Occasionally he would have two of us to help with these jobs. We boys would be sky-larking around, throwing dirt clods at each other or something equally silly. Grandfather would soon become exasperated with this and say 'Dear Oh dear Oh dear, when you've got a boy you've got one, when you've got two you've got none.'

These times spent with my grandfather gave me a great opportunity to know him better. The feelings of awe I once had towards him soon changed to admiration. We discussed animal husbandry, crop growing and storing, water conservation, building and all manner of things.

One day whilst he and I were digging potatoes, I found what looked like a tomato growing on the bush. I took it and asked him what it was. 'A tomato' was his reply. He took out his knife and cut it in half and sure enough it was a perfect tomato. He went to great lengths to explain the relationship between the two.

After a period of heavy rain followed by days of humidity, occasionally we would have mushrooms. Right at the bottom of the front paddock there was a shallow gully. If we happened to be on the front verandah we might see a car stop on the road and someone jump over the fence. Grandma would say 'There must be mushrooms down there. We had best pick some before they all vanish.' Off we would go with a small basket. Grandma would check them out. Then we would have mushrooms on toast for tea.

Although the uncles worked in unison about the farm, they had their areas of special expertise. Uncle Athol took care of the cattle breeding and everything else concerning the milking herd. He was also somewhat of a greenie, and planted lots of trees around the property. He also planted an avenue of trees along a gravel road which bordered the farm.

Uncle Athol was also a dab hand at leather work.

He made bridles, halters and other harness. His workmanship was equal to that of any tradesman.

Uncle Ted was the mechanic. If one of the motors refused to go, or needed some special attention, it was he who sorted out the problem. He also had a battery charging arrangement rigged up in the dairy, where he would charge batteries for other farmers and the town folk. This augmented his income. He also kept bees in his early days and marketed the honey in jars with his own label.

Grandfather, for some unknown reason, never learnt to drive, although he always had a good vehicle. He bought Plymouth motor cars, it must have been his English ancestry asserting itself. When he went to town one of the uncles had to drive him, usually Uncle Ted.

If Grandfather was just going to a nearby farm on some errand he would ride his horse. He had a very black horse called Charcoal, which no-one else used. It would remain idle in the paddock between his infrequent uses. The uncles said he was 'a mongrel of a thing to ride.' However, when Grandfather saddled up and climbed aboard, Charcoal seemed as meek as a black lamb, and off they would go, with Grandfather sitting erect like a Grenadier Guardsman, as often as not with his curly-stemmed pipe in his mouth, and never faster than a sedate walk.

I clearly remember my first real spill from a horse. It was early one morning while I was rounding up the herd for milking. One of the young cows broke away and headed up a gully. It had been raining and was a bit



*Brother Boyd
(front) on
Playboy, I on
Grasshopper.
We all learned
to ride on
Playboy. He did
yeoman service
to the young fry.*

foggy, and when I galloped across the side of the hill, the horse got his feet caught in low lying gooseberry bushes, slipped on his knees, and off I went. The horse took the shortest way home and left me to walk.

There was one horse they called the Grasshopper. The other horses had to trot to keep pace with his walk. He was supposed to have been bred for trotting, and was a very tall horse. Around cattle he was useless because he could not walk slowly enough. Apart from this, if he was used just to get from A to B and if you were in a hurry, Grasshopper was the way to travel. He was very very fast and very sure-footed. A most exhilarating horse to ride.

When the heifer calves reached a certain age they had to be earmarked, branded, and de-horned. The ear mark was the shape of a two leaf clover which was clipped out of the edge of one ear. The branding iron was an upside-down F in a box: . The iron was heated and applied to the left hip of the calf. To de-horn a calf, a paste was applied to the horns just showing on the calf's

head. This paste stopped the growth of the horns. To achieve these operations we grabbed the calf and held her against the fence. I didn't like this job much, in summer you were working in close proximity to a very hot fire. The calves didn't like it much, for other reasons.

I asked the uncles if they would let Drizzle's horns grow. When I saw her again two years later, I was delighted to see she still had those beautifully curved Jersey horns.

Rabbits were plentiful, especially towards the back of the farm where it bordered some rough country. When I was a small boy and not yet strong enough to set a rabbit trap, I devised a way to lever up a piece of heavy machinery, slide the trap under, set it and slide it out again. The trap was carried to the burrow already set. When this produced no result after a couple of days, I repeated the exercise. Next day I had one rabbit caught by two legs in each trap and I carried the hapless bunny home alive, suspended from both traps. One of the uncles had to extract it. It was necessary for me to give up any notion of rabbit trapping until I learned to set a trap in the conventional way, and deal with the rabbits.

I rounded up a tiny kitten rabbit one day, and thinking my young sister might like it to play with I put it in my trouser pocket and rode home. When I offered the little bunny to her she said 'I don't want that stinking little thing.' I must agree with her because on the way home it wet in my pocket and what a smell! I had to strip off and hose myself down. The only one to benefit was the cat.



*Dressed for
rabbiting. My
sometimes
helpers on
my evening
rounds.
Sometimes
more of
a hindrance.
From left:
Boyd, Jean,
Jeff, Rodney.*

When my time came I had 60 to 70 traps set around the farm. These had to be attended morning and evening, usually after tea when it was dark, and with the aid of a kerosene lantern. The skins were pegged out to dry then sold. Summer skins were not worth much, it took about 15 skins to make one pound weight, and 9 skins to make one pound weight in winter.

I was a little apprehensive in the early days of my trapping career. I felt that a burrow would be a nice cool place for a snake to hide, but as time passed this feeling left me. In all my rambling over the hills and along the gullies of Springvale, and this mainly in summer, I only encountered one large brown snake, which did not take kindly to shotgun pellets.

However, one day whilst riding with Uncle Athol we tied our horses to a fence and with our whip handles started to turn over flat granite rocks which were lying around. I asked him what were we looking for. 'Snakes,'

he said. I was back on my horse in two seconds, and left him to finish the job.

Almost every summer, bushfires became a problem, usually originating in Brown Mountain or from Tanta-wanglo. When a fire broke out somewhere, the men would gather and attempt to put it out. Sometimes they were successful, but more often they were not. Bushfires only once threatened Springvale. It was during a hot summer holiday when everything was dry and the cow yards baked as hard as concrete. The fires came to within a couple of miles to the west of the farm. Because of the extreme weather conditions plus added heat from nearby fires, Grandma's chooks were dropping dead in the fowl yard, and the dry ground opened up with cracks two inches wide.

The Bega Valley had to endure many droughts through the years. At one such time, when the drought was very severe and long lasting, the Protestants came together to pray for rain. Some time later it did rain. It rained and rained for days until there were floods, and bridges washed away. Whilst in Bega, one of Grandfather's Roman Catholic friends admonished him: 'Edgar, next time you so-and-so Protestants pray for rain, stipulate how much you want.'

Overleaf. Candelo, looking west. When we moved to Candelo we lived in the pink house at the extreme right near the top. Springvale is over the leftmost gap in the hills behind the town.

During my final year at school the horrible thought struck me that my next holiday at the farm would be my last six weeks' stay. When I started work my annual leave would be two weeks only.

My Intermediate Certificate examination would be at the end of third year (Year 9). Like many of my friends, I had no firm idea what type of work to pursue, but office work seemed to be the logical choice as I had completed a commercial course at school. During my previous holidays Grandfather offered me a job on the farm, and this appealed to me greatly, I suppose it would seem to be twelve months' holiday once a year. I did not realize at the time that it would mean real work and responsibility. Anyhow I had one year to think about it and discuss it with my parents.

Christmas lunch at Springvale was always a great day. We would help Grandma select two likely hens, which the ladies dressed and baked, along with potatoes, pumpkin, and other vegetables. There was salad with a special dressing Gran used to make, plum pudding and cream. There were always threepences and sixpences in the pudding for the young fry to dig for.

Most enjoyable was the relatives who came to the homestead for Christmas lunch. We had twenty-seven one year including our uncle and aunt from Melbourne. What a day that was.

There was only one other occasion when the whole family was together. That was my Grandparents' golden wedding anniversary. As well as all their children and



*My grandparents,
Edgar
and Elizabeth
Filmer, on their
50th wedding
anniversary. This
was one of the
few times we were
all together as a
family.*

grandchildren there were many other relatives, including Grandma's two bridesmaids, and many many good friends from near and far.

My grandfather did not confine his activities to farming alone. He was a Bimbaya Factory director for 46 years, part of that time as chairman. He was Patron of the Candelo R.S.L., head of the local Bush Fire Brigade, a director for many years of the Bega Hospital and Deputy Chairman part of the time, board member of Merimbula Co-operative Society, member of the local Agricultural Society and their delegate to quarterly meetings in Sydney, at which times he stayed with us at Dulwich Hill. In about 1953 Springvale was judged the

best farm in the region.

During my last year at school I mentioned my grandfather's offer of a job at Springvale and my parents refused point-blank to allow me to accept. No amount of talking, arguing or pleading could change their minds. I was bitterly disappointed, but lived in hope that by year's end they might change their minds. It was not to be.

My grandmother had a lot of illness in her later years and the local doctor prescribed medicine for her. I remember well the pint bottles of white liquid with a label which read 'The Mixture – Shake Well.' Whatever the bottle contained remains a mystery. My mother made several trips during the years when Grandma was not expected to live, but she seemed to confound the experts by making a complete recovery, maybe it was 'The Mixture' or perhaps her tough constitution.

In the evenings we young ones would get cleaned up and go down to the 'Little House,' as it was called, where Uncle Athol lived with Auntie Vi and cousin Rodney (otherwise known as Fred). It was like a night out for us. Uncle Athol would tell yarns about some of the bush characters and could do a fair imitation of their voices and this added colour to his tales. If he was busy with an order for some piece of harness, I would go into his workroom and watch, fascinated, as he cut and assembled an item, and I loved the smell of leather.

Occasionally we had to go out to the Mogilla property to look over the young cattle. If they expected to bring cattle back, we rode out, but if not we went in the



From left: Uncle Tom, Grandma, and Uncle Athol. Must be Christmas Day.

old Chev. ute. Hopefully the cows could be brought back to Springvale before they calved. I always enjoyed these excursions, especially if we rode the stock horses. The journey out took a reasonable time but the homeward trip was always slow, especially if there happened to be a small calf. We often lifted the young calf onto the horse and it rode home across the pommel of the saddle.

During the war years my sisters and I were at Springvale for the May school holidays. At that time the Japanese entered Sydney Harbour and caused quite a stir, and it was decided we should stay at the farm until things got back to normal. In my folly I imagined a full term without school. I was in sixth class. The nearest school was in Candelo, two miles away, and there was no way we could be expected to walk that distance. Wrong. My sister and I walked the two miles each way daily. We used to hope for rain, but it never came. Other children



Springvale in 2008, showing two of the many dams the uncles made. Candelo School was through the saddle on the left.

walked various distances to school, but there was one family of three who rode bareback on the one horse.

Did I say walk... Well we walked *to* school but the homeward journey was a different story. After we crossed the bridge we had a very very steep hill to walk up. After that the country was just slightly undulating, so I would start to run as fast as I could. Gwen, who is two years younger than me, would try to keep up, but her chubby little legs were not up to it. Soon she was yelling ‘Wait for me, wait for me.’ Like a dutiful big brother I would stop and wait then be off again. Little sisters can be a nuisance sometimes. When we came to the farm boundary and the house was in view about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away, we could see the cows yarded and being milked. The uncles would be watching for us to come over the top of the last hill, and we could hear Uncle Athol paraphrasing Henry Lawson’s poem ‘The Ballad of the Drover,’ at the top of his voice:



Dulwich High School, now 116 years old. I was enrolled in this school when we moved to Sydney, and I completed my schooling here.

*Across the stony ridges
Across the rolling plains
Young Denny and his sister
Are home from school again.*

Then I knew I was home, and rushed to change and help with the milking.

These days children in the country no longer walk distances or ride on horses to school. Buses comb the district and pick them up for school and deliver them home in the afternoon.

When we came home to Dulwich Hill for the last term to our own schools, I marched in and sat in my usual seat. Mr. White, our teacher, started the lesson, then part way through he noticed me. He called me out in front of the whole class, put his arm around my shoulders and made a bit of a fuss. He said how much I was missed and how glad he was to see me back. Guess what? I started to blubber like a baby. He was a nice old chap. On Friday afternoons we had the last hour as free time. You could read comics which he had confiscated



*With Roy
Litchfield at our
school centenary
dinner. Good
cobbers for
almost a lifetime.*

from boys who were reading them in class, or you could listen to stories told by other pupils.

High school

High school brought with it the school cadet corp, and once a week we dressed in our army uniforms and spent 1½ hours after school, marching around the playground with Boer War rifles over our shoulders. The novelty soon wore off and I resigned. The teacher in charge (our Maths teacher) indicated in his own words 'He was not amused.' This made no difference to me, I would not re-join.

High school was a very social time and I had many good friends, some from our church plus others. We played sport together, went to Saturday pictures (flicks), and rode our bicycles all over the city and suburbs.

One such friend is Roy Litchfield. Roy came to Dulwich Hill from Marrickville and joined our little group. We were in First Year (or Year 7) so we would have been in our 13th year. Roy and I have been firm friends ever since. That is almost a lifetime of friendship.

After school and Saturday mornings I had a job



*My 21st
birthday
party, with
Val, Mum,
and Dad in
background.*

with the local chemist at twelve shillings and sixpence per week, \$1.25 in today's money. Later I was a grocer boy at fifteen shillings per week (\$1.50), later increased to \$2.00 for 14 hours' work. As a first year apprentice my wage for a 44 hour week was two pounds and six pence (or \$4.05) and the Taxation Department took the 5 cents. But the after school money was very handy.

When I turned 21 Mum and Dad gave me a birthday party. All my friends were there. There were others I did not know – friends of Dad's from work who he had known in his Army days. It was a night to remember.

More on Springvale

At Springvale, many crops were grown and there were several cultivation paddocks, some dedicated to



All dressed up for the Tuesday trip to Bega. From left: Jean, Grandma, Grandfather, Mum, and Ruth with the big grin.

lucerne or corn for the cattle. They grew potatoes, pumpkins, some of which were for the pigs, and sometimes watermelons were sown.

Grandfather used to breed his own pigs which were taken in to the Bega sale yards and sold when they were big enough, but not fully grown. Tuesday was cattle sales day in Bega, a day out which we all looked forward to. However, it was a bit of a lottery, if too many adults wanted to go to town, some of the kids missed out.

We boys spent a lot of time at the sales yards, watching and listening to the auctioneer. Cattle, horses, calves were sold to the highest bidder.

Lunch was always at the Niagara Cafe, usually a hot meal. Occasionally Grandfather had to stay in Bega for a meeting and this meant tea in the same cafe. The drive back home at night along the fifteen miles of quiet country road from Bega to Candelo was particularly memorable.

The crops had to be harvested at the correct time. We were never there when the corn was picked, but I did enjoy cutting the lucerne. A horse drawn machine was used which had a long horizontal arm which was operated off one wheel, and the cutting was done by a chipper action. The cut lucerne was then raked into rows using another machine with a wide rake at the back. The rake scooped up the mown hay and dropped it at intervals when the rake was lifted. The result was several rows of hay in line right across the paddock.

Fresh corn was a favourite food which we would roast in front of the open fire, turning occasionally to roast all round, then butter all over and a sprinkling of pepper and eaten off the cobb. Beautiful to eat.

When I was a teenager I slept on the side verandah on a single bed. This allowed more freedom as I could rise early for work without waking others. How I enjoyed sleeping out there. Sometimes possums would scuttle along the wooden verandah. Often I would wake with the cat on the foot of my bed.

If I couldn't sleep I would put on my slippers and go for a wander. There was always enjoyment in standing in the open and just looking at the stars on a clear night, or listening to the farm noises, plus the smells of the country, and many other pleasures not available in the city.

Every holiday we would spend time with my father's sister and her family. The Bowers lived about six miles south of Candelo, and they called their farm Bowerdale. We really enjoyed these visits, but our Auntie



*The women from Bowerdale.
My Auntie Bubba and cousin
Freda. Aunt used to prepare
meals it would take a small
army to consume.*

put on meals it would take a small army to consume.

Our cousins Gordon and Freda both played the piano, and after tea we would gather around and have a good old-fashioned sing-song. We all had a jolly good visit and Gordon would drive us back to Springvale where we would fall into bed dead tired.

Travelling to Bega

Our trip back to Sydney was to Bemboka by car, after breakfast at the farm, then bus to Nimmitabel for the train to Sydney. School started on Tuesday morning at 9.00 a.m., just 24 hours after leaving Springvale, so not a minute was wasted.

There is no direct train to the Bega Valley. In the days when we were travelling to the South Coast, our preferred route was the train to Bombala which we left at Nimmitabel. Now that train terminates at Canberra or Queanbeyan.

The other way is via the coastal route to Bomaderry then bus to Bega. The train line terminated at Bomaderry, mainly because of the sparseness of population further south, and I suspect this was taken into consideration in the decision whether or not to build bridges over the Shoalhaven River at Nowra or the Clyde at Bateman's Bay. I can clearly remember having to cross these rivers by punt. If you were driving your own car you waited in the queue for your turn, but if you took the journey by train and coach, then the coach had preference and drove onto the first available punt.

Consequently Bega remained fairly isolated until the roads improved and bridges were built. Then the 300-mile trip from Sydney was less arduous.

In earlier times the approaches from the west from Nimmitabel via the Brown Mountain and Bombala via Tantawanglo were rather hazardous. Early settlers using this route travelled on roads which were nothing more than tracks through the bush. Usually they travelled by wagons pulled by bullocks and when making a steep descent, which they often did, they had to attach a heavy log to the rear of their wagon to act as a brake.

My maternal great-grandfather Linger came to Eden by boat and surveyed the valley on horseback before making his selection.

The Bega Valley is situated on the far South Coast of N. S. W. It is reputed to be one of the prime dairying areas of this state. Bega is the main commercial centre of the valley. Other towns include Bemboka, Bermagui, Candelo, Cobargo, Tathra, Tilba Tilba, and Wolumla.

The Princes Highway from Sydney to Melbourne passes through the centre of the town. The main wealth is now derived from milk production.

The first European to see the Bega Valley was George Bass during his journey to map the coastline in 1797. Bass actually sailed into the Bega River. The first industry commenced early in the 19th century when cattle and sheep were driven down the mountain from the direction of Goulburn and Braidwood. Corn, wheat, and vegetables were grown, and fruit trees were planted to sustain the settlers. Cattle, sheep and wool were the main industries for some time. Later, milk, cream, cheese, and butter were produced by farmers scattered throughout the region. As time passed, factories were built in various districts to cope with the expanding production and to arrange the marketing of the produce.

The climate of Bega is variable. In summer it is hot with possible droughts or bushfires. Winter can be very cold and wet, with bitter winds off the surrounding mountains.

After travelling from the north through the mountains, the road winds through this most picturesque valley. The first view of Bega is from a lookout a short distance out of the town. From this vantage point Bega can be seen clearly, nestled in the river valley. Prominent

buildings are visible, built along the banks of the river. The town rises up the hills to the south and trees are in abundance throughout the whole area.

When approaching from Nimmitabel down the Brown Mountain to the south west, the traveller has another expansive view of the southern end of the valley from Fred Piper's lookout.

I can never make up my mind which view I like best, but each gives me a feeling which is difficult to describe. I suppose having spent so much time here and with so many good times associated with this area, there is a feeling of reliving these experiences.

My mother and her generation and their parents used to refer to England as 'home.' They could be heard to say 'It would be nice to take a trip home.' In some strange way this is just my feeling when I return to the Bega Valley.

Rifles and horses

When the time drew near for me to leave school, I raised the subject of working on the farm with my parents. The answer was the same and I realized it was no use persevering with the matter.

The next holidays I bought a .22 rifle and as many boxes of bullets as I could get by walking all over town and haunting the gun shops. Ammunition was not easy to get at that time.

When I arrived at Springvale I took the rifle out of my bag and started to assemble it. When Grandfather

saw it, he asked what I was going to do with 'that thing'. I told him that when I had cleaned out all the rabbits and foxes I would start on his horses and cows. This was not necessarily a cheeky remark by a 16 year old, but rather it demonstrates a more relaxed relationship with my grandfather. He cautioned me to 'be very careful.'

It wasn't until years later that I found out that 'pea rifles' as they called them were not welcome on the farm. Although they had two 12 gauge shotguns, neither Grandfather nor the uncles cared for rifles, so I can only speculate as to why I was allowed to use 'that thing'.

I thought I was a cowboy and tried to get one of the horses used to gunfire from its back. What a disaster that was. I only tried it once because it was obvious the horse had no liking for playing Cowboys and Indians.

Riding horses was what I enjoyed most of all while I holidayed at Springvale, but I thought I would never become an accomplished horseman. The uncles told me quite seriously that I could not consider myself a good rider until I had had 'twenty-seven busters'. This worried me a little for I had had only about three spills to this time.

One day, whilst riding with my Uncle Ted to bring cattle back from Mogilla, we met another farmer riding towards us. Of course we stopped for a yarn and he remarked to Uncle Ted, 'I see you've got the city slicker down again. Can he handle that horse?' Imagine my surprise and great delight when he said 'I'd back him against any kid in the district.' Boy, did I puff up.

The farmer we had been speaking to was Mr.



*Left to right: Max,
Melton Alcock and Ken.
In Sydney for the Easter
Show. We often had
visitors around this time.*

George Alcock. It is he who bought the Mogilla property my grandparents sold in 1914.

I remember Mr. Alcock wore a wide leather belt to which was attached a watch pouch, a pair of pliers, and another pouch containing a pocket knife. As a boy, these things fascinated me, and I determined that I would have such a belt one day, but it didn't happen.

One of George's sons, Melton, stayed with us at Dulwich Hill when he came to Sydney for the Easter Show.

During one of my farm holidays, I went with Ken and Bruce to Alcocks' farm, and in company with Melton's brother Alan we rode into the mountains to Devil's River. They had a yard built of saplings for the horses, and a fireplace to boil the billy, right beside the river. I could never forget that ride through the mountains or that day's fishing.

The home my grandparents lived in at the Mogilla

farm was still there at that time, in good condition, and occupied by Mr. Alcock and his family. In recent times it has succumbed to old age and fallen into disuse.

I continued having my holidays on the farm right till the time I was married. Springvale always drew me like a magnet. It may have been the change of lifestyle, or as the old saying has it, 'You can take the boy out of the bush, but you can't take the bush out of the boy.'

Almost a stranger

It has been said, often, that country people are very friendly towards strangers, and they are, when they get to know you. As I mentioned earlier I had frequent business trips to the South, many years after my marriage. Here are a couple of incidents when I was the 'stranger' to the younger residents around the Candelo area.

Having missed lunch in Cooma, I continued through Nimmitabel, down the Brown Mountain and through Bemboka, towards Candelo. By this time I was becoming a little peckish. When I crossed the bridge at Candelo I noticed a log fire in the cafe as I passed. Since it was a cold, wet, miserable winter's day I decided this would be a nice warm spot to have a bit of lunch. 2 p.m. may have been a little late for lunch and the two ladies sitting in front of the fire drinking tea obviously thought so, because it took a little time for one of them to disengage herself from her cup of tea to serve me.

Whilst giving my order (one tea, two toasted cheese and tomato sandwiches) the radio which was tinkling in

the background interrupted the broadcast with an important message – that Dr. Loftus had just passed away in Bega Hospital. I remarked that he must have been very old. The lady asked if I knew Dr. Loftus. I told her ‘No, but he used to attend my grandmother.’ ‘Oh, who was she?’ ‘Mrs. Filmer from Springvale.’ The lady called to her friend that ‘This gentleman is the grandson of old Mrs. Filmer.’ ‘Filmer’ must have been the magic word and I had two ladies to chat with over lunch.

One client on my rounds was in Merimbula, and he had a young secretary, who was never very talkative if I tried to engage her in conversation while I waited. However, after one particular visit my client asked where I was headed next, and as it happened I was going to visit various relatives, so I told him where I was going but not who I was going to visit. His secretary remarked that I seemed to know my way around pretty well ‘for a stranger.’ When I told her I started school in Wolumla and later moved to Candelo, she said I may have known her mother. I certainly did, and her uncles as well. What a change in her attitude on future visits! It was her mother and uncles who used to ride to Candelo school, three on one horse.

Is it a small world? You be the judge

About forty years after starting school at Wolumla, I bought a small second-hand caravan from an old chap on the Central Coast of N.S.W. His name was Eric Laird. He wanted my name for the receipt. When I told him, he asked if I had ever lived in the Bega Valley. I

told him Dad was the policeman at Wolumla. He informed me that he was a teacher at Wolumla and clearly remembered Dad.

A few years ago we had a chap to fix our rotary clothes line. At the time we had a very nice little Kelpie running around the yard. We called her Sox. The chap remarked that she looked like a well bred dog. He said he had lots of experience with kelpies when he was driving cattle.

I asked him where was that, he told me around the Bega Valley. I asked his name and he told me 'Lord'. I asked if he was related to Bill Lord. 'Bill was my father's uncle'. Imagine my surprise. 'Old Bill' Lord as he was known is probably the first person apart from family I can remember. I was about four years when Mum lifted me over the fence with my lunch. I had apricot jam sandwiches which I ate with 'Old Bill' Lord in a paddock in which he was working, near the police station.

The factory manager of one of my clients announced he was going on holidays. I asked him where he was going. 'A property near a little town you wouldn't have heard of, south of Bega.' We soon determined it was a property near Candelo. 'What's the name of this property?' 'Bumblebrook', he said. I asked him what he could see if he stood on the hill at Bumblebrook and looked south. 'A most beautiful spread...' 'Would that "spread" be called Springvale?' 'How do you know that?' He could hardly believe my explanation.

I went into a Bega health food store on one of my visits, to buy something for my Aunty Emmy, and was

served by a young lady. I felt instinctively that I should know her. I asked Aunt if she knew who the young lady was, and to my surprise was told she was the daughter of my cousin Max. I went back to the store and introduced myself, and we had a very nice chat. I had never met her before that day, and we have not met since.

A representative who called at my office every week told me he would not be around for two weeks, he was taking holidays. 'Where are you going?' 'To a place you wouldn't know.' 'Try me.' 'Just a little joint south of Bega.' I rattled off all the 'little joints' south of Bega. He was going to Bemboka. 'Who do you know in Bemboka?' 'A family called Filmer.' I recited the first names of all the cousins. 'How do you know all those people?' I told him they were all my cousins. His wife and my cousin's wife were related.

When I first wrote this book, I sent a copy to friends in Palmwoods in Queensland. They had visitors one day and with them was an aunt from Bega. My friends showed her my book and the people and places mentioned were well known to her. The lady's name is Kit Reeves and she is a relative through the Williams line.

It really is a very very small world.

Recollections of a country policeman

A few years ago I took my dad for a trip out west and we visited some of the towns where he was stationed as a young country policeman. One of the towns we visited was Lake Cargelligo where I was born. After



*Dad during his
time in the N.S.W.
Mounted Police
Force*

we drove up and down the main street a couple of times, Dad directed me off the main road and we wound our way up a small hill and stopped across the road from a large stone building. He told me that that was once a hospital and my birthplace.

That was my first and only visit to Lake Cargelligo. I felt I had gone full circle. My life had started right there and now I have that memory to add to my others.

During this trip with Dad, as we were leaving a particular town (I don't remember which one) he noticed two old ladies talking over their front fence, and thought he recognised them. We stopped and walked back. The ladies were watching us, and one said 'Good

heavens, it's Constable Kingston!

We spent a very pleasant couple of hours with them and enjoyed a nice cup of tea. One of the ladies took me next door to see her beautiful garden, and whilst there, told me they remembered Dad very well. Because of his influence the rowdy element was quietened down and the young ladies could walk through town at night without being hassled. It was over forty years since he was stationed there and he was still well regarded.

Dad had an excellent memory for detail, and was a great story teller. He had a phone call from a lady who was writing the history of one of the western towns for their Centenary. Some details were lost from the memory of the locals. They told her that they had a policeman, Constable Kingston at the time (45 years before) and that if she could locate him he might be able to fill in the missing details. Dad remembered the missing details, so the story was completed. From that interview he found out that the daughters of a home he boarded at were living still and had a home on the Central Coast, and he was able to visit from time to time.

On one occasion Dad was sent to a property to look for an old farmer. The old chap always came to town on a particular day each week, and didn't show up on that day or the next, and some of his friends were worried. When Dad returned to the police station he reported no sign of the farmer but his vehicle was missing. The next day Dad and others went to make a more thorough search. They were attracted to a spot by a swarm of flies. It was a rabbit warren and the dismembered body



Police passing out parade. Dad closest to camera.

of the old man had been pushed into it.

When travelling in the west, the police sometimes took a short cut across country passing through properties. This method is also used by locals who know the way. It involves going through many gates which have to be opened and most definitely shut again, but it is often much quicker than going by the 'road.'

Dad had to go across country one time, and hopped into his Chev tourer and set off. When he came to the first gate he slowed ready to stop and open it, when a voice behind him said 'I'll open it.' This gave Dad the shock of his life – he thought he was travelling alone. One of the town folk had had too much to drink and lay down on the back seat to sleep it off, and woke to find himself taking an unscheduled journey. I suppose when Dad recovered from the shock he appreciated having a gate-opener with him.

Country policing was not an easy job in the days when Dad joined the force. The towns were many miles apart and the connecting roads all unmade, no

more than tracks in many cases, and not always clearly marked or easy to follow.

One system they used, when a traveller called at the police station for directions, would be to tell the traveller to report to the police station on arrival there. Dad would then ring ahead and tell the police there to expect the man to be reporting at their police station in say three days. When the person reported in, those police would ring Dad. If however he failed to report, the other police would ring Dad and a search would begin from both towns, each with an Aboriginal tracker if possible. Sometimes the story would have a happy ending, but there were times when this was not the case.

The west of N.S.W. in summer can be extremely hot, and if the traveller ran out of water or lost his way, the chances of survival were limited and indeed the person could perish, as in the case Dad quoted to me.

When a person is lost and delirious from lack of water, he usually starts to remove his clothes, and there is no need for an expert tracker because you can follow from one piece of discarded clothing to another. When they finally reached the hapless traveller, he is usually naked in the boiling heat, and all the police could do is dig a grave alongside the bloated body and roll it in and put up a marker.

Dad was a good football player and cricketer. When there was a match on between the public servants and a local team he would find himself on temporary transfer to boost up the local public service side. This happened often, both in the cricket and football seasons.

Dad bought himself an Indian motor cycle as a quicker means of transport, otherwise horseback was the accepted method of moving between towns. He told me once about going to another town which was on the same rail line about fifty miles away. He and two others borrowed a manual trolley from the station master, and completed the journey and returned much faster than on the horses.

One of the duties of country policing was to test people for their driver's licence. At one town Dad was stationed at, it was the sergeant who performed this task. A young lady came to town from an outlying station for her test. It was customary to drive to the end of the main road, turn and come back and park in front of the police station.

However, where this young lady chose to turn was close to a horse trough, and whilst turning, she bumped into it. She parked in front of the police station and feeling a little dejected said to the officer 'I suppose I'll have to come back and try again.' 'No fear', said the officer. 'You don't think I'd drive with you again do you?'

Dad remembers Griffith as a wild country town where all the dwellings were tents and the strongest building was the lock-up which the police built, using timber and corrugated iron.

He remembers the abundance of snakes in the west. My mother kept a blue cattle dog in and around the house, as protection against the snakes.

The policeman's life was not always a pleasant one, but they did their best under difficult circumstances



Springvale homestead area about 1960.

and it is the same today. The difference is the police ride in high-powered motor cars on excellent roads.

Changes at Springvale

My grandfather died in 1953 and Grandmother a few short months later. The uncles carried on with the farm, but changed from dairying to cattle dealing. They sold the farm in the 1970's. Uncle Ted moved to Bega and Uncle Athol came to live in Sydney.

Aunty Emmy died in Bega in October 2004. Aunty was a great-grandmother. Our cousin Jeffrey died in Ballarat in 2002. Sister Gwen died in Bega in March 2006. Cousin Max died in Bega in 2007. Cousin Janice died in Adelaide in 2007. Cousin Ray died in Sydney in

February 2008.

Dairying is different now, more intensive, larger holdings with large herds which are kept to full strength. There is no winter decline in the number of milking cows as in the earlier years. All the butter and cheese factories scattered throughout the valley have closed down and the milk goes either to the Bega Cheese Factory or to supply milk to the A.C.T.

When I was working I had business which took me to Queanbeyan, Canberra and Cooma, and I extended this activity to include Bega, Merimbula and Eden. This gave me the opportunity to visit various relatives about every two months.

Just before Springvale was sold, I spent one day looking around the old place. I took my .22 with me and walked right over the farm. What memories that walk invoked! Walking through the paddocks where I roamed countless times as a boy, remembering the places where I used to set my rabbit traps. Now even the rabbits are gone thanks to myxo. The corn paddock where Grandfather and I chipped weeds, the cultivation paddock where he and I dug potatoes, the gates I helped him make – it all seemed such a long time ago.

Everything looked much the same, but different somehow, or was it me that had changed? Even the old house was changed internally, modernised for more convenience. The old kitchen where we enjoyed so many good meals, now used as a store room. The yard in which I used to groom and feed Drizzle still there near the old corn crib. The cow bails silent, now no longer

in use. Still in evidence, the swallows with their nests in the rafters, still darting about as in earlier times. I recalled how as a small boy the uncles told me that if I could sprinkle salt on their tails I could catch one. I have to admit, I did try, but without success.

But now it is to be sold.

The new owners demolished the beautiful old house to make way for the new. The old house with its circular picket fence around the front yard, the path to the front steps which divided around a circular garden, the front yard full of roses Grandma loved, the wisteria across part of the front verandah. The old house, full of precious memories, which stood looking across the front paddock for over one hundred years, is gone from view, but not from the memory of those who knew and loved her.

My grandfather gave Springvale his best years, my uncles spent most of their lives there, and the farm benefited from their husbandry.

The people who bought Springvale from the uncles stayed there until 2002. In April of that year they sold the farm to Johnno and Beverley Hergenhan. The Hergenhan family are friends of my sister Gwen.

Because of our previous association they arranged a family picnic at Springvale, and for the first time since the uncles sold I was able to walk around the old place. It was an emotional time for me. Of course there were changes. We knew the dear old house had gone. However, when we actually viewed the homestead area, there were changes not visible from the main road. The



*The new owners of
Springvale, Beverley and
Johno Hergenhan.*

old two-storey stables had gone, along with the harness shed. Grandfather's workshop was gone. The corn shed had gone, and the two large hay sheds were flat on the ground. All the internal fences have been removed, and there is no sign of the pig pens or the calf pens.

On the good side, Johno is spending a lot of time, effort and money bringing Uncle Athol's house up to scratch after years of neglect. He has started on new fencing and has introduced a small herd of cattle onto the property.

The old pine tree alongside the house is still going strong. I was pleased to see the two old Morton Bay fig trees on top of the night paddock hill still as big and vigorous as ever. The "bear's tree" which will be remembered by all grandchildren and great grandchildren who called Springvale home was still standing on the day of the picnic but looked a bit ratty, and was considered dangerous. When Jeff and I went back later to take some photographs, it was flat on the ground. That lump on the side extended almost all round the trunk. We parked in the shade of the Morton Bay trees for lunch. There were only two rose bushes left of all those in the front yard. Those roses were planted by my mother



“The Bear’s Tree” as it was on the day of the picnic.

when she was a young woman. The big trees in the fowl yard and those around the calf pens are still standing.

We had a nice sunny day for our picnic. Johnno drove Jeff, Boyd and myself around part of the farm, and it was great just being there. We had our picnic alongside the old dairy which had been altered a bit. The cow bails were rebuilt whilst the uncles were there but all the milking equipment has been removed. The orchard is in need of renovation.

Thank you Beverley and Johnno for making the farm available to us. We did appreciate your generosity. For my part, that day at Springvale was tremendous. We wish you every success in whatever you do there. I am thankful the old place belongs to someone who will take proper care of it.

When I left the farm for what I assumed was the

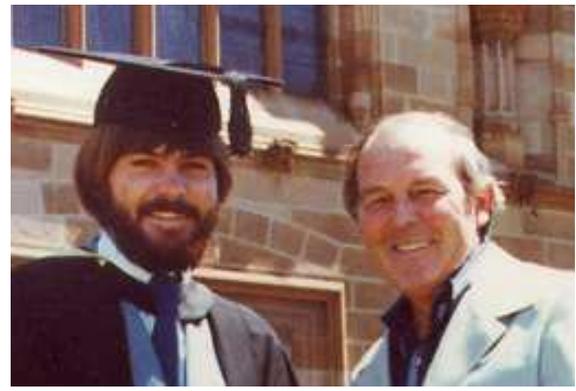


At the family picnic at Springvale (left to right): Ruth, Denzil, Jeff, Gwen, Margaret, Jean, and Boyd.

last time, just before the auction, it was with a great sense of loss. I was fortunate, I suppose, in that I often drove along the road on my way from Cooma to Merimbula and could stop for a while and look up the gully at the old place – just sit and remember. I have heaps of memories associated with the farm, but I can remember much more than that. My memory goes back to well before starting school at Wolumla. Then school again at Candelo. Walking home with two friends Noreen Hafner and Shirley Miller. Their ancestors probably came to Australia with my great grandfather. Having to walk along the Candelo creek to find our cow for milking. Running through the sand at Merimbula barefoot to make the sand squeak.

Something for the future

In years gone by, my paternal grandfather had some acres at Mogilla. He had cleared an area and built a small cabin. When he needed timber for fencing or building he could stay at Mogilla for as long as needed,



Left: Stephanie at her graduation from Macquarie University, with Valerie. Right: Jeff at his graduation from Sydney University, with me.

cutting and splitting the timber. He would have used a bullock team for this work no doubt.

My friend Melton Alcock knows where this is and next time I'm at Mogilla, he or his son Scot will take me to see it. There is a small house there now but the property is still known to the locals as Leonard's Paddock.

Conclusion

Am I sorry I couldn't accept my grandfather's offer and work on the farm? Things certainly would have been different, but looking back and considering all things I know Mum and Dad were wiser than me.

Valerie Rochester and I were married in 1952 and we have two exceptional children, Stephanie born in 1953, a high school teacher, and Jeffrey born in 1958, a computer scientist and Associate Professor at Sydney University. We live at Dulwich Hill still in an old Federation style home we bought five years after marrying,



*Our home in
Dulwich Hill.*

and renovated it to our liking, much of the work done by me. Stephanie lives next door, in the home that belonged to Valerie's mother; Jeffrey has his own home in Mosman and commutes to work by ferry.

After leaving school I worked in an office for a short time, but found this not to my liking. I completed a five-year apprenticeship course as a lithographer in the printing industry, became foreman then factory manager with one company, then manager and major shareholder in another. Later I opened my own business which I sold after some years, and worked as a technical representative until my retirement in 1992.

During my working life, I completed my five-year apprenticeship, a two-year supervision course, and finally a four-year management certificate course. My hobbies include woodwork (thanks Grandfather), lapidary, stained glass (leadlighting), oil painting, and I like reading. I had ten years singing tuition which resulted in my entry in the City of Sydney Eisteddfod Baritone Championship. We have a mobile home on the Central Coast

north of Sydney, in a beautiful spot which we all enjoy, where we can fish, swim or just relax and do absolutely nothing. My favourite sports were soccer, surfing, cycling, tennis, and bushwalking.

As a family we have travelled extensively throughout Australia and New Zealand. Stephanie and Jeff have had several trips overseas and Jeff spent three years lecturing in the U.S.A. He has also lectured at Nottingham and Reading Universities during two visits to England.

In 1995 Jeffrey and I had an overseas trip to Canada, U.S.A. and England. Whilst in Edinburgh Jeff spoke at a science conference. Our last day in England we spent in Sutton Valence, a small town in Kent. It was from this area the Filmer family had their beginnings, recorded history suggests as early as 1316. This copy of the will of John Filmer which he made in 1498 would seem to verify this:

“In the name of God Amen the year of Our Lord 1498 the 14th of the month of January, I, John Filmer of the parish of Ottreden being of sound mind and good memory make my will in this manner. First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, the Blessed mary the Virgin and All Saints, my body to be bury in the churchyard of St. Lawrence in the parish aforesaid. Item I give and bequeath to the high alter there xij d. Item I bequeath to the Church of Boresfield lij s. iij d. (3/4d) to repair the Chalice. Item I bequeath on the day of my burial and trental 11 masses to be celebrated and to each priest vj d. Item I bequeath to Alice Heyward, Isote Plomer and Alise Brock vj d. each one. Item I bequeath to the Blessed Mary the Virgin there nine sheep. Item I bequeath to James Filmer one sheep, and to my three sisters three sheep. Item I bequeath to Joan my sister one chest. Item I bequeath to Thomas Silver my brother vj s. viij d. which same Thomas I make and ordain my executor. The residue truly of all my goods, my debts and legacies being paid, I give and bequeath to Thomas my brother.

These being witnesses – Sir Walter Baccheler, his curate, Benedict Filmer and many others. “ Proved before the Official of the Dean of Arches Canterbury. 4th July 1498.



*St. Peter and
St. Paul's
Church at
East Sutton,
Kent.*

We visited the old Norman church of St. Peter and St. Paul at East Sutton where the cemetery has many graves of family members and many more monuments and plaques within the church. One such monument is a life size engraving of Sir Edward Filmer of Kent and Dame Elizabeth his wife, daughter of Richard Argall. Also depicted are their nine sons and nine daughters. This engraving in the floor of the church is reputed to be one of the best in Europe. We visited East Sutton Park, their old home, and were lucky enough to be given a tour of this and other buildings on the property, which is now one of Her Majesty's prisons for women.

Edward Filmer married Elizabeth Argill in 1585. Elizabeth's brother John Argill was at this time owner of East Sutton Park. This magnificent residence was built by Thomas Argill in 1547. After the death of Thomas his son Richard completed the building in 1570. Edward and Elizabeth bought East Sutton Park

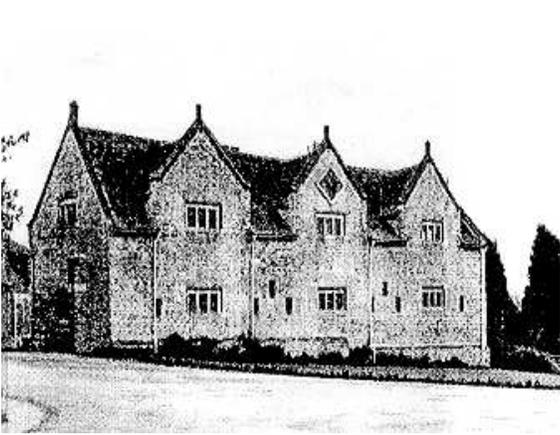


A brass rubbing of the engraving of Sir Edward and Dame Elizabeth Filmer in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church at East Sutton, Kent.

from John Argill in 1610, for one thousand pounds. The name Filmer was at that time Fynmers, and they had huge estates at Otterden and all over Kent. In the 16th Century Filmer became the recognised name. In 1858 the manor at East Sutton was renovated and enlarged, and has been in constant use for five hundred years. In 1939, death duties and other taxes forced the sale of East Sutton Park, when it ceased to be a private home.

It is a long way from Kent to Bega then Dulwich Hill, and a little overpowering to realize you are one tiny link in a very very long chain.

Hardly a day goes by without something reminding me of my association with Springvale. If I am sitting under the trees in my yard, having a cup of tea, I am reminded of the time Uncle Ted and I were working in the



East Sutton Park. At left, the original house, dating from 1432. At right, the present house, dating from 1547, renovated and enlarged in 1858. Both photographs from Rita Greenfield, 'Life and Times of East Sutton Park,' privately published.

cultivation paddock furthest away from the homestead. We took our lunch, boiled the billy, and sat under the trees to eat it. The smell of cut grass when I am mowing the lawn reminds me of lucerne being cut. Corn at dinner brings to mind the freshly picked corn we roasted in the Springvale kitchen. When we have mushrooms, I remember the little gully in the front paddock, with its delicious offering of field mushrooms. When I hear the signature tune of the A.B.C. radio news, I can see grandfather listening in the Springvale kitchen those long years ago. And so it goes on.

I have asked myself at times, why not share these thoughts and experiences with any interested party, and was finally inspired to do this when my cousin Rodney sent me a copy of his impressions of his time growing up on the farm; and since, as my mother would say, I'm 'On the Western Slopes and going downhill fast,' I thought I had best get on with it.

I was interested to see how in some areas our impressions were almost identical and in some not at all. This could be expected as he lived at Springvale until his mid teen years, I as a visitor, slipping in and out of country life. Rod titled his little book 'Nothing Special,' and although I understand his thinking, my remembrances of time spent in the Bega Valley are all very special to me.

Finally, my wanderings down memory lane must come to an end. Life has been full of little adventures, but none as enjoyable as my time at Springvale. I feel I have only scratched the surface, but suffice to say that all the people mentioned above (and those who are not) are remembered with love and affection. All had a definite influence on my life.

When you consider that my generation and our children are now scattered across the cities and country areas in four states and the A.C.T., then the one thing we have in common is that lovely old homestead on the 500 acre farm.

Recently my son Jeff asked why it was that when I get together with my brother or cousins, the conversation always came around to Springvale. Until then this fact never really occurred to me, but on reflection I have to admit it is true.

Why then? is the question. Perhaps it is because we have all congregated there at times as one family. Perhaps it is the good times we all enjoyed there. Perhaps the farm with its beautiful old house seemed like home to us regardless of where we lived. Also our grandpar-

ents were there whilst we were growing up, and they were the focal point for us, which embodied Springvale as a whole, and they were the thread by which three generations were drawn together as one family. Maybe it was all of the above. I know for my own part that a lot of the warmth and anticipation vanished when our grandparents and Auntie Sadie died. That is not to say I was no longer welcome there – I was always – but with these three special people no longer there something very precious was missing, which seemed to rob Springvale of some of the intangible feeling it once had; and I know that my life was more fulfilled because of the time spent there plus the opportunities that city living afforded me; and because of these unique circumstances I consider I had *The Best of Both Worlds*.

My special thanks to Jeff who used his expertise to typeset the text from my rough draft, and to scan the photographs. The whole production is his work and without his help the project might have floundered.

Information about the early history of Bega has been taken from 'Gold from Gold: The History of Dairying in the Bega Valley,' by Stephen B. Codrington (1979).

