
FOLLOW FAIRBRIDGE THE FOUNDER



NOVEMBER 2018

THE OLD FAIRBRIDGIANS' ASSOCIATION - MOLONG

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Hello everyone,

Thank you to those who've sent stories for this edition. If these bring back memories of something that's happened to you, please write to me, as I'm sure your OFA friends would enjoy hearing about it. Stories can be about your time before coming to Australia, the journey here, your time at Fairbridge, after you left Fairbridge, what's happening in your life now or perhaps your opinion about one of the items covered in this newsletter. We'd love to hear from you. If there is any difficulty with things such as e-mailing, please contact me and I'd be happy to help you put your story together.

Please note that the cut off date for the May 2019 newsletter is the 15th April.

Dennis and I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year, with special thoughts going to our friends who might be going through challenging times.

June Piercy
Editor

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi once again to all Old Fairbridgians, Associate Members and Families.

I begin my report with two recent events that I feel would affect most if not all Old Fairbridgians in some way. While those members who have provided us with their e-mail details and others who access The Old Fairbridgians Facebook page are already aware, for those who have not, it is with much sadness I have to report the passing of long serving past President and Life Member, Dennis Silver.

Dennis had been ill for some time and in fact while on his way to the Reunion in March this year, became violently ill and after sitting on the side of the road for three hours, decided to return home. He stopped at Tamworth until he felt well enough to make the trip home to Coffs Harbour a couple of days later.

His health deteriorated over the next few months until he was finally hospitalised in the Blue Mountains and was eventually transferred to Springwood Hospital where he passed away on 14th June.

A number of OF's visited Dennis at the hospital, including Sandra and myself, David Hill, John Harris, Jim Napper, Daphne Appleby and especially his old mate from Northcote, Maggie MacLauchlan, who was a constant companion. Maggie and Dennis were in the party of forty that came from Northcote to Fairbridge in December 1944. If I have left someone off that list of visitors, I do apologise.

I could not do justice in a few words to describe the importance of the role Dennis played over some fifty odd years, the majority of which he was President of our Association. Suffice to say he, along with his good friends John and Laurie, were responsible for the revival of the organisation following a period of inactivity in the early fifties.

The newsletters, the reunions, the huge increase in membership, the updating of the Constitution, the introduction of IT into our filing system and so on, are all part of Dennis's dedication to detail over a lot of years "at the helm".

Such was his dedication, that when Sandra and I visited him in hospital, as sick as he was, he mentioned the Fairbridge Children's Farm Park and said he would like to make a contribution. Imagine my surprise when he sat on the edge of his bed just long enough to do a "bank transfer" on his mobile phone! Needless to say, that took a lot out of him and he lay back exhausted. However, I am sure he was satisfied that he could still give a little more to The Old Fairbridgians despite his failing health.

However, he sent me a text two days later to say he had made a mistake and he would get his son Geoff to contact me and adjust the amount. I am very happy to say that two weeks later, Geoff called me to say he had just deposited a further

substantial amount to the Project as per his Dad's request. As a last wish, Dennis asked that in lieu of flowers, a contribution to the Project would be most welcome. I am happy to say some of his closest friends obliged. A number of Old Fairbridgians and their spouses attended the funeral Service in the Magnolia Chapel at Macquarie Park Cemetery & Crematorium, North Ryde. Terry Field, wife of Long serving former Secretary and Treasurer Laurie, also a Life Member, read a moving tribute by Laurie to his great mate Dennis, remembering many evenings shared at their respective homes and that of John & Deral Harris, John of course, himself a Life Member and former OFA President, being the third member responsible for getting the OFA back on track, how they held monthly card nights playing Pontoon. When the clock struck twelve midnight, they would play one round of poker, followed by supper then home. To use Laurie's words, "The good times which we will always remember and times that forged life-long friendships".

The condolences of all Old Fairbridgians were conveyed to Dennis's family. He will be sorely missed. RIP Dennis (Titch).

The second event I feel sure will be of interest in one way or another to most OF's is that on Monday 23rd July the old Principal's House was completely destroyed by fire. A triple 000 call was received around 1.15am and despite a number of brigades and around twenty fire fighters from Rural Fire Services from surrounding towns answering the call, including Borenore, Orange/Molong Rd, Molong, Gamboola, and Fire and Rescue NSW, by the time they arrived the building was well alight and could not be saved. Also assisting were Police, Cabonne Shire Council and Essential Energy crews.

All that remains are two chimneys still standing and a great pile of ashes. RFS Captain Tim Roberts said that crews remained at the scene until about 7.30am to make sure there were no spot fires breaking out around where the house had stood. Police were investigating what (or

who), may have caused the blaze but said they had very little to go on.

While the house held many secrets, some good and maybe some not quite so good, there can be no denying it was a magnificent structure and was certainly built to last.



However, it had become very run down in recent years due to lack of maintenance and a bit of TLC.

From an historical viewpoint I feel it held great significance as "the epicentre" of Fairbridge, as basically everything to do with the running of the place went through

The Boss's office, or if it didn't, it most likely should have.

I'm sure also that such an imposing building as it was, perched high on the hill, where travellers heading either east or west, would surely have noticed it and made inquiries about it before they had left the district. The demise of such a landmark, built, incidentally, around eighty years ago, would have stood out like a sore thumb in those days, just as it still did before the fire. Looking up from the Mitchell Highway now, there is a huge hole in the landscape and I feel this is another reason to push on with the Fairbridge Children's Farm Park, (FCFP).

There was a lot of the history of Fairbridge connected with the Principal's house and it is one of the main reasons for the Project. We want to establish it before all the history is gone. I personally, and I think your Committee also, would be interested to hear how you feel after hearing about the fire. I'm sure Editor June could probably find some space in the next Newsletter.

On a somewhat brighter note, I would like to briefly mention the recent Apology by both the Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten, which took place in The Great Hall on the 22nd October 2018. The Apology was a recommendation of the Royal Commission, along with the setting up of the National Redress Scheme, which is covered in detail in this Newsletter by Michael Georgenson.

Many of you would have received notification of the event and how you could attend, in a letter sent out from The Child Migrants Trust. Unfortunately the advice came at quite short notice, around five or six days before the cut-off date for applications and I believe this resulted in just a handful of Old Fairbridgians gaining selection in the ballot process.

I was fortunate enough to be selected and along with Sandra, travelled down by coach and was booked into a hotel with meals provided, plus the return trip on the

Monday, courtesy of the Federal Government. In what was an emotion-charged event, I thought it was well done. The Apologies appeared genuine, but as ever the pessimist, I will watch with great interest as the success or otherwise of the proposed Redress scheme unfolds.

Please read carefully the advice and information provided in Michael's article.

I would like briefly to mention the **Family Restoration Fund, (FRF)**. I have received the latest update from The Child Migrants Trust and am happy to report that UK Prime Minister Theresa May has agreed to extend the fund at least to the end of 2019. The conditions under which the Fund operates have not changed and the advice I have been given is if you are thinking of applying, do so sooner rather than later, even if you do not have definite dates selected.

For further information and/or to receive an application, contact The Child Migrants Trust at:

Melbourne-Tel: (03) 9815 2022
Perth: (08) 9472 7582.
Free Phone (Australia): 1800 040 509.
Or visit the website at:
www.childmigrantstrust.com

To date there have been some 1200 trips since The Fund began, but Mr Norman Johnston, President of The International Association of Former Child Migrants, (IAFCM) has vowed to campaign for The Fund to continue for as long as there is a genuine need

I am giving notice that the Annual General Meeting for 2019 is to be held at The Penrith RSL Club, 8 Tindale Street PENRITH, NSW 2750, on Sunday 10th March, commencing at 1.30pm.

Lunch is available from twelve noon at the Star Buffet, with over one hundred meals to select from or light snacks can be purchased from the coffee lounge. Please be sure to mark the date in your diary, put it on the calendar, or maybe stick it on the fridge like I do! **If you have**

not already provided us with your email address please do so as we will probably send a reminder out via email early in the New Year.

In closing my report, to any OF's or Family members not enjoying the best of health we wish you well. As Christmas fast approaches, on behalf of your Committee, I trust you and your families have a wonderful Festive Season and may 2019 be kind to you all.

Derek Moriarty
President.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Greetings all.

On October 28th we held the OF Executive meeting at the home of Stegista and David Hill. During lunch Ian "Smiley" Bayliff provided an update regarding his website (The Bayliff Papers) which is the most extensive historic collection of files and photographs of Fairbridge.

David Hill gave an update to the Fairbridge Children's Park and has included details of it in this newsletter.

Special thanks to Stegista for a delicious lunch and to Smiley for the years he has devoted to collecting papers and photographs to maintain the history of Fairbridge Molong.

E-mail addresses

I have 174 OF members on record, of which, I only have 48 up-to-date e-mail addresses. After every mailing two or three drop out of my system as being uncontactable. E-mail is the fastest, easiest, and cheapest method for the OF executive to contact our members.

As events unfold with a possible UK redress scheme, it is important I have e-mail addresses to update our membership. I will pass on any decision by the UK government and, in the event OFs can make a claim, I will pass on the relevant details for doing so.

At the moment we are still waiting for the UK government to make a decision. See David Hill's update.

I look forward to catching up with you at our Annual meeting in March.

Mary O'Brien
Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT

The full report for the financial year 01/07/2017 to 30/06/2018 appears attached to this Newsletter.

Annual subscriptions

A Statement of Financial Standing was included in the May 2018 Newsletter. If you did not receive one it is because you are financial to 2020 or beyond.

Subscriptions can be paid at any time and would be most welcome. Annual subscriptions are \$10.00 per year, (includes spouse) and covers the year from 1st July to 30th June. Please send to:

Sandra Moriarty

Treasurer

Old Fairbridgians Association - Molong
Incorporated
46 Holborn Street
BERKELEY NSW 2506

Sandra Moriarty
Treasurer

WEBSITE UPDATE: **oldfairbridgians.org**

Hi to everyone.

Please submit any information you might have for the website to
kirkby@senet.com.au.

Brian Kirkby
Webmaster

MOLONG HISTORICAL SOCIETY **Sue Milne**

Excerpts from Molong Historical Society Newsletter:

FAIRBRIDGE FARM SCHOOL NEWS
OLD FAIRBRIDGIAN'S REUNION

The bi-annual reunion of the Old Fairbridgians Association (OFA) was held in March. It marked the fact that it is eighty years since the first children arrived from

England as part of the British Child Immigration Scheme, Molong. On Saturday 10th March, the Museum welcomed about seventy Fairbridgians and families to view the museum and afternoon tea.

During the afternoon, the "FAIRBRIDGE CHILDREN'S PARK" was launched by David Hill, Leonard Lynch (Landscape Architect) and Peter Morton. This project is to develop the present Fairbridge Memorial Park, along the creek bed. The Fairbridge story in the children's eyes, will be displayed in a series of objects and panels. The aim is to have it as an active area for travellers to stop for a break and learn about the village. The Eddie Lambert Collection of photographs was on display along the verandah. There were several groups identifying house mates and catching up with them. The extended displays within the museum were of interest, especially the copy of a book that contained children's works from 1952.

Many of the Fairbridgians returned to Orange to attend the formal dinner and prepare for the AGM the following day.

ORANGE SHOW

Molong Historical Society featured at the recent Orange Show with a display of Fairbridge Farm that included Junior Farmers Organisation and sulkies loaned by Bob Sullivan.

As a follow on from this FAIRBRIDGE will be the feature event at the Molong Show which is on Sunday 16th September. It is 80 years since the first child arrived from England and over 1000 children came from England over the next 30 years.

DONATIONS TO THE FAIRBRIDGE COLLECTION

The museum has received the following donations to their collection
1947 Autograph Book Belonging to Clara Elizabeth Mann Park (1938 Oransay). The book was used between 1943 & 1947 and contains quotes from several people. Names include Bigrigg, Jacobs, Watt, Bennett, Sampson, Silver, Mitchell,

Richards, Gillies, Hill, MacDonald, Ball and Oates

Navy Records Stewart James Park (1938 Oransay). Original Service Record of Stewart Park who served from 1943 to discharge in 1946.

1952 POETRY AND ART BOOK

In 1952, Mr Frederick Mott, Headmaster of Fairbridge Public School encouraged the children to write poems about everyday life. He compiled these into a small book which has recently been donated. Many of the entries were by OFA's who attended the reunion. Mr Mott wrote one of the School Anthems and the original manuscript was also donated.

Recently the museum has had donated two new newly compiled lists of all the children who are known to have spent time at Fairbridge, Molong. One is in alphabetical order, while the other is in chronological order. A book including the lists, along with other information is available for sale at the museum for \$25.00 (\$20.00 for Fairbridge kids) Also available DVD's:

- ☐ History of Fairbridge Farm by Ian Bailiff
 - ☐ Eddy Lambert Board Photographs
- These are available for \$20.00 each

VALE

Recently we received news that Old Fairbridgian, Dennis Silver passed away in Sydney. Dennis was President of the Old Fairbridgians Association (OFA) for many years and was a supporter of the Molong Museum. He attended most reunions, missing the most recent due to ill health. Dennis left England in 1937 (aged 7) and arrived at Northcote Children's Farm School, Victoria. He was transferred to Fairbridge, Molong in 1944. Our condolences to his family and friends (Photos relating to some of these stories could be viewed by e-mailing suemilne@colourcity.com or molongmuseum@hotmail.com. Ed)

Regards

Sue Milne (Secretary and Researcher)

My mother was June Milne (Burt) who also came out on the Ormonde in 1947.

Phone 02 6362 8960
 Mobile 0400 425015
suemilne@colourcity.com

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT COMPENSATION FOR SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

(Advice provided by Michael Georgeson, a retired lawyer and friend and supporter of the OFA)

As recommended by the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse in institutions, a National Redress Scheme has been established to provide financial compensation for victims of such abuse. This raises the question of whether former Fairbridge kids who were sexually abused at Fairbridge will be eligible to receive financial compensation under this new Redress Scheme.

The short answer is that it may be possible but there are obstacles to overcome. The longer explanation which follows gives the reasons for this.

Firstly, the guidelines state that you cannot apply under the National Redress Scheme if you have already been to court regarding the abuse that occurred and the court has made a "ruling" on your case, including awarding damages for the abuse. Fairbridge kids have been to court, via the class action brought by Slater & Gordon, pursuant to which the court in 2015 approved a deed of settlement which approved a total of \$24 million in compensation and established a settlement procedure to determine individual payments. It is not made clear in the guidelines whether such a court approved deed of settlement constitutes a "ruling" which would prevent you applying under the Redress Scheme but it may well be that the court approved deed of settlement is more in the nature of an out of court settlement than a "ruling".

If the court approved deed of settlement does not constitute a legal "ruling" but is considered to be more in the nature of an out of court settlement, you would then probably be eligible to make a claim. However, the guidelines state that any compensation that you might then be

entitled to would be reduced by any amount you have already received for the same incident or incidents. It may be that the payments available under the National Redress Scheme will not be as generous as the payments made under the class action, in which case it is possible that any notional amount awarded could be reduced to nil or close to nil.

For greater certainty as to your eligibility or likelihood of receiving a payment under the National Redress Scheme, it is recommended that you contact the free legal advisory service called "Knowmore" which has been set up to assist those who think they might be eligible. You can phone them on 1800 605 762 or write to them via their website which is knowmore.org.au. For more complete information regarding the National Redress Scheme, their website address is nationalredress.gov.au

If you want to be kept up to date with your entitlements on this and other matters send your email address to OFA secretary Mary O'Brien queenslanders@ozemail.com.au

UK GOVERNMENT COMPENSATION FOR SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

The UK Independent Inquiry into the Sexual Abuse of children published their report into British child migration schemes last March.

Among its findings the inquiry found that the institution 'most responsible' for failing to adequately protect the British child migrants from abuse was the British Government.

The inquiry recommended all surviving child migrants be given compensation - even those who have already received compensation from other sources. If the British Government accepts the recommendation all surviving Fairbridge child migrants would be entitled to receive some payment.

The inquiry said the same amount should be paid to every surviving child migrant. The inquiry did not say how much should

be paid and left it to the British Government to decide.

The inquiry also recommended the Government introduce the scheme 'without delay' because the former child migrants are aging and dying. The problem now is that the British Government has so far failed to respond to the inquiry's recommendations - even though it promised to reply by last September.

We are regularly writing to the British Government pointing out that Old Fairbridgians are dying while they delay. We also have the terrific support of Labour MP Lisa Nandy, who has been raising the issue on our behalf in the House of Commons.

If you want to be kept up to date with your entitlements on this and other matters send your email address to OFA secretary Mary O'Brien queenslanders@ozemail.com

FAIRBRIDGE CHILDRENS PARK READY TO START

Planning is well advanced for the Fairbridge children's park we want to build at the bottom of Fairbridge on the Molong Creek and we hope to start construction before the end of this year.

We are still waiting for the financial grant promised to us by New South Wales deputy Premier John Barilaro when we met with him in Orange in February this year.

Stage I can proceed as soon as we receive local council approval because Old Fairbridgians have already donated \$20,000 to the project. Stage I involves the installation of the village 'bell', which you will remember was a big piece of metal railway line hanging from a wooden frame behind the village kitchens. The bell dictated daily life of the village. On the ground fanning out from the bell will be giant 'clock hands' with signs telling what happened at different times of the day at Fairbridge. We hope to have Stage I finished to allow a big celebration 'launch'

of the building of the whole park sometime early in the New Year.

HAVE YOU MADE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE FAIRBRIDGE CHILDREN'S PARK YET?

Congratulations to everyone who has already made a donation to the Fairbridge children's park. We promised the NSW Government that we would raise the first \$20,000 (which would then help trigger their grant) - and we did!

So thank you to the 65 Old Fairbridgians who have already contributed. If you have not yet contributed, it is not too late.

Please send your donation to:
Account name: Fairbridge Children's Project
BSB: 802124
Account number: 100086713
The account is administered by Old Fairbridgians Association Treasurer Sandra Moriarty and President Derek Moriarty

We are currently working out how we can acknowledge the names of donors into the park. If you are donating but do not want your name to appear, please let us know.

DEREK MORIARTY OFFICIALLY OPENS THE 2018 MOLONG SHOW

President of the Old Fairbridgians Association Derek Moriarty was invited on September 16, 2018 to officially open the Molong Show, which was a great honour for all Fairbridge kids. Most Fairbridge kids have fond memories of the show and Derek's speech was a pleasant walk down memory lane that proved to be a hit with the locals. The local Federal Member of Parliament Andrew Gee said he thought Derek was 'a good guy' and that he thoroughly enjoyed 'his reflections on the show'. Local State MP Phil Donato who was also there said Derek 'did great' with the speech. Here's what Derek said:

'Thank you very much for inviting me as a former Fairbridge kid to officially open the Molong Show. It is a great honour for me and a great honour to all Fairbridge kids, some of whom I can see are here today.

Let me say, if I look a little nervous, it's because I am.

I have taken the liberty to write a few things down here owing to the fact I have recently reached middle age. It is a well-known fact that when you attain that milestone you frequently forget half of what you intended to say and ad lib with a lot of detail which was never on the agenda.

The Molong Show was one of the annual highlights of our lives at Fairbridge. And we all looked forward to it with great excitement. I first came to the Molong show more than sixty years ago, but still remember it vividly, and fondly. Most of us would get here from Fairbridge on the Fairbridge Farm School bus. It was painted the school colours of yellow and brown and was instantly recognised throughout the Central West of New South Wales. It was an old World War II 'Austerity' bus that had a wooden frame and no doors and licenced to carry about thirty passengers but regularly carried over one hundred Fairbridge kids into Molong, be it for church, to the town swimming pool, for sports, and of course to the Molong Show.

A few of the Fairbridge kids got here on horses, and the pony club ribbons they won at the show had pride of place hanging on the walls of the big village hall out at Fairbridge Farm.

We were involved in lots of the show's events. I remember being taught at Fairbridge how to make jam rolls by the wife of the deputy principal, Mrs Harrop. First you would bake a sponge cake in a shallow baking dish, then while it was still hot you would spread strawberry jam on it before rolling it in a damp linen tea towel to prevent it from cracking. We entered them in one of the cake baking competitions each year and I can still remember how excited we got when we won a ribbon. While I can't remember if it was for first, second, or third, I like to think it would have been first on more than one occasion.

Our biggest involvement at the Molong Show and other shows throughout the Central West, was the Junior Farmers exhibit. Our club was officially named the Molong Fairbridge Junior Farmers Club because it was a joint venture between the farm school and the town.

We all remember the preparation of the Junior Farmers' exhibit involved a lot of work. Normally Fairbridge provided the different grains - wheat, barley, oats, sorghum and so on. Many nights for weeks before the show, several of the Fairbridge kids would go to the village hall and tediously pick out all the impure or scarred pieces of grain so that what we put in the exhibit was absolutely pristine. There is a terrific photograph in this year's Molong Show official program of one of our exhibits at the 1961 show. The wool-embroidered back drop for the exhibit was designed by Fairbridge kid David Hill, who still proudly boasts he won the five shillings prize in the design competition. Five shillings was a lot of money in those days and paid for quite a few events in sideshow alley.

We still remember side show alley, the dodgem cars, the roundabout, the ferris wheel, the clown's head where you dropped a ping pong ball in its mouth and it ran out the back and into a numbered slot and the air gun rifles where you shot at little white tin ducks that were a moving target.

The prizes if you won, were usually cheap little coloured fluffy animals that probably cost less than the price of a chance to win it! And many were close to impossible to win! There was one where the prize sat on a plinth and you won if you could throw a hoop over the prize and the plinth, but the hoop was very small and rarely could anyone win. You could also throw a soft ball at a pyramid of cans but you had to knock all six cans down with three balls to win, which proved almost impossible. It was all great fun and I have not met a Fairbridge kid who does not keep the fondest memories of the Molong Show.

The biggest attraction for many of us was the Jimmy Sharman boxing tent. With the beating of a big drum outside, Sharman would line up his young fighters, many of them aboriginal boys and call on locals to earn some easy money by fighting them for a few rounds. "A pound or two, for a round or two", he would yell. The lining up of challengers was filled with yelling and controversy and by the time the fights started, the tent would be full of spectators, each paying a shilling to get in.

Of course most kids in those days, and not just the Fairbridge kids, had very little money and making the big decision as to what you would choose to spend it on was agony. Most of us would watch how people with more money than us spent theirs and we gained plenty of satisfaction cheering people on as they attempted to outsmart the stallholders and relieve them of some of the prizes on offer.

The country shows are an important part of Australia's history – and of our personal histories. Congratulations to Molong for reaching the milestone of a massive 154 annual shows and thank you from me and all the Fairbridge kids for providing us with some of the best memories of our childhoods. I am delighted to now declare the 154th Annual Molong Show, officially open".

IAN "SMILEY" BAYLIFF THE MOLONG SHOW BOXING TENT

Derek Moriarty's speech about the Molong Show brought back another great memory - about the boxing tent. We Fairbridge boys liked that most of all. But FKS Woods didn't like it at all and told us not to go there. It was also popular with a lot of the former Fairbridge boys who worked on farms in the district, or who were back visiting Fairbridge when the show was in town. Some of the former Fairbridge kids fancied themselves as fighters and took up the offer of a few rounds in the ring with one of Jimmy Sharman's boxing troupe to earn a few bob. Woods told us that if the old Fairbridgians wanted 'the few brains they had' knocked around, that was up to them. But those of us who were still at Fairbridge were banned from going even

to watch in any circumstances. We of course ignored Woods because we all wanted to watch it. The problem was that it cost a shilling to get in to watch the fights, which was a lot of money and twice what it cost to go to all the other attractions at the show. The answer was that we didn't pay. Being Fairbridge kids, we waited until the fights were under way and everyone was focused on the bouts and were cheering and shouting inside, then we went round the back and slid under the bottom of the tent. I think the owner of the boxing tent, Jimmy Sharman, knew, but realised we didn't have the money to get in so just let it happen.

DAPHNE APPLEBY MY ROOSTER AT THE MOLONG SHOW

Derek Moriarty's lovely story about the Junior Farmers and the Molong Show brought back some memories.

I recall that at Fairbridge I was a member of the Junior Farmers and lucky enough to own four chooks and a rooster. The rooster was a beauty and I entered him into the Molong Show where he won second prize. I did better at the show with the scones I cooked, which won first prize. But after the show I was able to make money from the chooks because I was able to sell my eggs to the village kitchen at Fairbridge for half the usual price and even after having to pay for the grain to feed them, still made a bit of money.

The chook story had a sad ending. I was keeping them down near the village hospital but one night forgot to lock them away and the fox got them. I hope my rooster fought to the end for his ladies!

RON WRIGHT YOU'LL BE BACK - NO WAY

I have been asked many times to write a book about my life. Why me, I thought? There are many stories of people who have come though Fairbridge Farm School and became successful in life, and others who have been destroyed by the experience. Such bittersweet memories.

I am proud of what I have achieved. However, I don't want to boast about it or

be part of the tall poppy syndrome. I hope fellow Fairbridgians will like my story and I know it will bring back memories for them too.

As with all Fairbridge kids, it starts well before you get there. I was born in Islington, London in 1942 while the bombs were dropping. My father was in charge of North London Fire Brigade and he was on duty 24/7.

My mother was very sick and could not look after me so I was put into an orphanage as a small child. I was there until the age of nine. My mother died aged 45, the year before I came home. I have vague memories of my mother pushing me on a swing. I hope that is true.

My two older sisters, Philippa and June, were training as psychiatric nurses, living in at the hospital, so could not look after me. My youngest sister, Joy, who was eight years older than me, asked dad to bring me home. She was and is, a wonderful sister. She taught me love and got my imagination going by sitting around the fire at night, and asking, "What can you see in the flames?"

One of my memories living at home was Guy Fawkes night. I made an image of him with a potato sack and put it in my kart, went down to the Odeon Theatre where there was a queue to get in and I would go up and down the queue saying, "Penny for the guy." I came back home with a pocket full of money. That was my first of many experiences of being an entrepreneur.

Dad was a keen fisherman and taught me how to fish. We went to the river Thames. He used hemp to sprinkle around the water. I still don't know if that was legal. He had a piece of black and white electric wire which looked like the hemp. It never came off. He caught so many fish, giving one to the local cat, and letting all the others go. I remember my first fish, he said it was a flying fish, over my head and up the bank. I also remember Dad taking me to see the movie, *Singing in the Rain*. I have got the

CD and still love to listen to it. I loved the swing gardens (playground) just down the road and on Saturday there was a Punch and Judy and Magic show. I was spellbound by the magic, which has lasted my whole life.

I was not always a good boy. One day I climbed the fence to a building site with a friend of mine. We saw some sheds and wondered what was in there. We found lots of nails etc. I thought, "I can take some of them home" and put a few in my pockets. Suddenly, the door opened. "We caught you at last!", two men said. My friend managed to race past them and got away. Not me! They rang the police and took me to the station and told me to empty all my pockets. "You are in serious trouble", the officer said. "We are going to put you in jail and chuck the key away".

They put me in the jail and locked the door. "Give me your parent's phone number and address". I was shaking like a leaf and crying my eyes out. One and a half hours later my Dad turned up. The police officer said, "You are very lucky your father is a very important person, so we are going to let you out in his custody". My Dad just looked at me with this very stern look, not saying a word!! I was just shaking. No pocket money, no sweets, no going to the pictures, come straight home from school, no going out. I have never forgotten that experience. I have been very good ever since. Well??

I was twelve when Dad said, "How would you like to go to Australia, a beautiful place, lots of oranges and sunshine?" Of course, I thought that was just somewhere in the country.

First up, I had to be interviewed at home, then sent to Australia house to have an IQ test. They asked some funny questions, but somehow I got good marks, higher than average IQ. "That can't be right", my sister said, "he can hardly spell". I found out later I was dyslexic. When I had first heard that word, I thought it was a disease. Left-handed, with the surname Wright, how confusing is that? Left/Wright.

So, off to Knockholt in Kent, a stately home where all the children from around the UK were sent before boarding the ship. Some had been here for a couple of months. I was only to stay two weeks. What a beautiful place, so big, with lots of bedrooms, toilets and showers. You could get lost going from one room to the other. The people there were so kind and yes, it was out in the country. While there, we were taken to London to be outfitted with brand new clothes; suit, shirts ties, shoes, socks and more, all put into a suit case for me to carry back. I couldn't believe how good I looked, all dressed up to the nines

My Dad and three sisters came out to say goodbye and that was the last time I saw my Dad. My sister Joy gave me a small leather writing case which I still treasure today. That was in April 1955. The only time he contacted me after I left England, was to send me a Christmas present, which was a magic book. I'm reading the words right now, "to Ronald, From dad wishing you a happy Christmas 1958." I never realised how unemotional those words were, no love. He never contacted me again. He died when I was 22. I will never know why he did not want to have anything to do with me.

I believe there were eleven of us who boarded the ship, the Arcadia, that day. Six weeks of absolute magic. I thought I was in Heaven - three scrumptious meals a day, morning and afternoon tea. I had never tasted ice cream before that time and you could ask for seconds and thirds! What was that fantastic taste? Real orange and pineapple juice. The waiters were so friendly. People met us at the ports and treated us like Royalty, taking us around and giving us lots of treats. (My husband Dennis Piercy and his brother Barney were in that party with Ron. Ed.)

When we arrived in Fremantle, three kids got off to go to Pinjarra. I only remember one. He was a Scot. He taught me a Scottish song I have never forgotten it, In My Wee Gas Mask.

We arrived in Sydney early in the morning, watching the ship going under the Sydney Harbour Bridge thinking, "Will we hit it?" I will never forget the experience of being sorted out on the docks. Children were being sent to all the different orphanages. "Fairbridge children over here please".

There was a big man waiting for us, lovely smile, he's named Mr Woods, The Boss! "How would you all like to go to the zoo?" "Yes please", we said. As if you would say "no". Of course you learnt later never to say "no" to the boss.

That night, we caught the train to Molong. It was the 24th May, 1955. Empire Day. Do you remember it? Watching out of the train window, fires were everywhere. It was bonfires celebrating Empire Day with fireworks. It was so cold in the train they gave us a little canister that had hot sand (I think) in it to put our feet on. The heat did not last very long and we were so cold. We got to Molong station at about 5 o'clock in the morning and put in the back of the icy ute, for the next four kilometres to Fairbridge. We were absolutely freezing!! We were all sent to different cottages to meet our cottage mothers. I was put into Canonbar Cottage.

End of part one.

Part 2 - my experience at Fairbridge farm Molong New South Wales. I have not started writing about it yet. It's going to be an emotional rollercoaster.

SUSAN CARANTINOS (nee CRANDIGE) SNIPPETS OF LIFE AT FAIRBRIDGE 1960. WHAT I REMEMBER AND WAS TOLD.

I was five when I arrived at the farm along with my two sisters, Heather and Cheryl and my three brothers, John, James, and Phillip. We girls were sent to Lilac cottage. As I was the youngest child in the dorm, on cleaning days, I would have dusters wrapped around my feet and the older girls would pull me up and down the floorboards until they were shiny.

My older sister Heather told me a story about what she and her friend Geraldine wanted to do to our cottage for Christmas to brighten up the cottage. When they were doing their homework they had to go and get some supplies from the office near Mr Woods. They took a packet of crepe paper from the store room and hid it in the bushes to retrieve it later. The paper was to make paper chains for our cottage but this wasn't meant to be, as Mr Woods caught them and well we know what happened next. Ouch! Ouch!

My first Christmas on the farm was very sad as Mum and Dad weren't with me. One of my favourite memories is the tuck shop. I remember running down with my money to buy a bag of lollies and when my sister, Heather, was on tuck shop duties, boy did I get a big bag full. Heather later told me that she used to sing in the choir and go to Junior farmers to get extra money to pay for my lollies.

These are just a couple of memories that I wanted to get into the newsletter before I miss the dead line. More to come next year. Have a great Christmas and best wishes for 2019.

Regards
Susan Carantinos. (nee Cranidge)

JOHN MARSH & BARBARA SCOTT

We're just back from a VERY LONG and TIRING caravan trip to W.A. (14,000 kms all up over 8 weeks). Down to Adelaide firstly to see daughter Anne and family then off we go but only as far as Port Augusta where, on the servo driveway, my ute, in Rolls Royce terminology, *fails to proceed*. It's the starter motor, so the ute to the garage and us to the caravan park. Two days and \$640 later we're underway and thankful that the problem didn't occur 200 kms west of Ceduna otherwise I'd have been under the vehicle and hitching back to town for a new starter. (The \$640 would have come in handy across the Nullarbor with diesel a gift at ONLY \$1.99.) The rest of the trip was without any further mechanical problems, although a rat did decide that our fire-wall insulation was pretty good material with which to

build a nest on top of the motor while we camped at Kondinin. Fortunately it hadn't started on the hoses or wiring so it was all good. Did all the usual touristy things as we had spent a good deal of time beforehand planning what we wanted to see and do.

For me, the highlight of the trip was catching up with Mike Walker and his lovely wife Glenys, east of Fremantle. While Mike and I discussed our lives both at, and post Molong, the two ladies were apparently discussing, amongst other things, Mike and me. From later conversations on our journey it seems that the Fairbridge experience created some fairly common outlooks on life and also a resilience. The topic of the Fairbridge Children's Farm Park came up and the suggestion that one of the cottages be part of it. As I understand it, the location of a cottage at the bottom of the hill would require a caretaker otherwise it would, in all probability, be vandalised or, worse still, destroyed, as was the school. As we already have a presence in Molong would locating it in town be a possibility? It's been a while since we were through Molong but there was a block near the Yarn Market. Is it still there and would the cottage be safer there?

A tour of Fairbridge, Pinjarra was a real eye-opener. If you haven't been there and the opportunity arises then go have a look. The village and surrounding land are now owned by an aluminium company with the village leased back. The revamped cottages are let out for tourists and various courses and there is a museum, but it is not always open. I happened to be able to tag onto the end of a tour group. Some of the accounts were familiar as regards work and discipline but quite a few of the photos presented a rather romanticised view, with pictures of groups clustered around the fireplace while the cottage mother read to them. Also noted that all the dining room tables were set with crockery, none of the stainless steel we used. My overall impression of the village was that the planners were attempting to create something akin to an English village with cottages vastly different from

the Molong ones and a very impressive large brick church presiding over all. (Ruby Fairbridge is buried there). Maybe there were different ideas about what to build or perhaps there wasn't the money available by the time Molong got underway but Pinjarra is certainly more substantial. It's a pity that an alternative use wasn't found for Molong before it became a chicken farm.

On a final note: as we've travelled over the years, I wonder how many OF's I've driven past or even live in my area: it's a pity that we dispensed with the address list because of privacy provisions. Is it possible to have a list, providing people agree to be on it? I was able to contact Mike because his details are listed as the W.A. contact in the newsletter. Will get this off so that I don't do my usual of missing the newsletter deadline. Only

home for a few days then off to farm-sit on 35,000 acres for three weeks for some friends in western Queensland, making sure the sheep and horses have water, feed and exercise the ten working dogs and bottle feed the half dozen poddy lambs before getting back home around late October for a rest. Always look forward to the newsletter.

Cheers to all, John and Barbara.

VALE

It is with deep regret that we record the passing of:

Dennis Charles Silver (Titch) at Springwood on 14th June 2018

Thomas (Tom) Barron 27.6.1942 – 6.11.2018

Our sincere condolences are extended to their families and friends