

**Reflections and memories from Brian and information from the Interview Dad and Mum had with Phillip when Joey was a baby**

Dad (Earl Symonds) was the second eldest of Five children Merle was the eldest with a gap of 1 ½ years to Earl then 1 ½ years to Keith with a 5 year gap to Roy and a further 5 years to Vera

Their father (Phillip Henry Symonds )was born in Boards Flat SA and Their mother (Ethel Harper )was born in Prospect SA

As the land was scarce they decided to move to Wycheproof Victoria . The Symonds moved at the beginning of the year the Harpers at the end of the year.

Phillip and a Mr. Spencer moved there first for twelve months mallee rolling and the Families followed in 12 months time.

In 1902 they planted 900 acres of wheat but had no crop because of the drought. They had to take their stock back to SA for feed

In 1903 they cropped again with a similar result. The land had a fall of 2 inches to the mile so there was no run off for water hence they had to cart all their water.

In 1910 Phillip and his brothers Stan Jim and Lesle moved to Temora NSW where they share farmed for a few years (The rest of the Family Followed Later)

In 1913 Jack Lesle Stan Phillip and their father won a ballot to buy the old Coobang station. The land was cleared but had no fences.

Lesle had the home block of 390 acres, Phillip had 400 acres, Jack had 400 Acres and Stan 400 acres

The father had 170 acres. Phillip at a later date bought some of his brothers out and acquired some further acres to bring the Total of “The Gums” to 900acres

It was not until they were at Temora that Phil and Ethel Met and were subsequently married.

Farming consisted of sheep a few cattle but mostly wheat which was planted by teams of draught horses. Farming was done this way till 1939. Phillip's wagon was the last wagon to use the Parkes silos in 1939. This trip started with a 3am wake up for a 4am start, 3 ½ hour journey to Parkes to be at the silo when they opened at 7am . Unload and then travel back to “The Gums” arriving about 2pm ,feed and rest the horses and load up ready for another trip the next day.

Initially there was no house so they lived in Leslie's house. Whilst bringing timber from Parkes to build his house his team was spooked by a motorcycle without an exhaust and his wagon was smashed and he received a broken arm. It was then that Phil had Westcott the coach builder build two wagons of his design. One is on display in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney

The children attended the Coobang Public school K-6 which averaged 26 students and had one teacher

Earl left school at 13 to work on the farm. There was no pay just tucker and clothes. He did this for about 6-7 years Then did some other jobs and share farming with his father's second horse team. From age 13-20 was spent on the Farm,20-25 was share farming and at 25 was called up into the Army

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## Mums early History

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Joseph Nash and Louisa Nash were married in Camden and had a number of Children Mum's (Grace Doust ) Father (George Doust ) married Martha Ann Loomes and moved to Canowindra where the three eldest children were born. George then won a ballot for land at "Loomvale" Fifield in 1902-03

There were 12 children in the marriage. Tony, Norman, Florence, Charlie, Hettie Thelma, Rebecca (died as a child) Ben, Joseph, Lilly, Miller or Doll, and mum Grace was the youngest.

Most of the children worked on the farm and share farmed . When Grace was 4 months old her dad comes down with pneumonia. So Grace and Doll were packed into a sulky for the 70 mile journey to Parkes Hospital. He died there a few days later.

Tony 17 and Norman 16 then ran the farm. These were hard times, they lived on underground mutton (rabbits) eggs milk and flour. The farmhouse was made of peasy mud with white washed walls and an earth floor. There was a tent in the side of the house with a wood floor where they slept. All except the eldest three children were born in the house at "Loomvale" attended by a mid-wife. It was 8 miles to Tullamore and 8 ¼ miles to Fifield.

The children attended school at "Kelvin Grove" 3 ½ miles away by horse and sulky which had 20-30 students. Chores started at sunrise so that they could be finished before they set off for school. Mum only remembers coming to a big town like Parkes or Orange once when she broke her arm falling off a horse and at about fifteen she visited Orange. The first motor car she seen was when she was 16 when her brother Norman brought one. Jim Lamont used to pick Doll up in a T Model Ford. . The grocery bill was paid for by a weekly trip to Tullamore in a horse and sulky once per week to sell eggs and butter. The proceeds were used to buy groceries. Mum worked on the farm till she was married attending to the stock, blow fly sheep, milking cows etc.

When war was declared it was left to the women to run the farm while the boys were at war.

Joseph was called up and did time in New Britain, Tony and Norman enlisted but Norman was refused on health reasons. Ben was also in the army and served Time in Papua New Guinea. Charles was married at this stage and so had his own farm and family to attend to.

Once when times were difficult Graces' Mum packed her bags and was leaving George. There were no fences and cattle and sheep had to be manhandled from morning to night to keep them off the crops so they were fed on the stock route and other parts of the farm. This was getting her down as it seemed to be never ending. George through a rope over the house and told her to go to the other side and pull against him. This did not work. So George said now come over and pull with me and the rope was easy to pull. See how much easier it is when we work together!!..Martha unpacked her bags and never did it again.

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Dad and Keith were called up. Dad went as a sapper to the engineers and Keith to the light Horse. (Keith was eventually dishonourably discharged apparently for desertion)They went to camp at Narellan for six weeks then was supposed to return home but that never happened, dad ended up in

Darwin. Roy was too young to fill in the cards but he did not register when he was old enough to Times were tense in the country. There was a line drawn west of the Blue Mountains and they were prepared to defend the coast but General Macarthur returned from fighting in the Middle East and he said they (the Japanese) can have none of Australia and hence set up plans to defend the whole country. Time spent at Darwin and Alice Springs were lonely times for the troops. The news was sparse and there were few letters from home. Dad was lonely so Joseph Mums brother suggested that dad write to his sister, Dads comment was she will probably have a boyfriend of her own. Mum wrote back to her brother and said she had no boyfriend but she wanted a dark hair blue eyed boy Just like Joe. Loneliness and hardship finally caused Dad to write to someone he didn't know. Mum at that time was writing to 4-5 soldiers. They wrote letters for 18 months before they met. (Mum kept all these letters in a plastic bag Joy is currently transcribing these. She said it is an interesting read on their courtship, like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. Dad travelled from Darwin to Melbourne to Sydney to Parkes on leave and visited Fifield to meet mum. Mum, Doll and Norman were playing Tennis when Dad arrived. Dad had arrived to talk in an old Studebaker Ute. Conversation was apparently no more than a Yes or No as both of them were very shy. He then visited six months later, then harvest leave and then on discharge.

War finished and they were engaged in August but Dad had to stay in the army when the rest of the platoon was discharged as he had no trade. Finally in March the following year they set Dad a blacksmithing trade test, if he passed he could leave. He achieved 98%, He was taught by his Uncle and father on the farm whilst growing up and this helped in the final outcome. He was married in May after his discharge. He spent the next few years share farming with Keith on the Barbers place.

Dad and mum settled in a 4 room house at "Myralee" 10ft by 10 ft Rooms with verandah front and back. It had a small tank for water and a wood fuel stove. Dad set up a 24V electricity supply for lights. They had to run a motor to charge the batteries every 3-4 days. The home was 10 miles from Parkes. Here five children were brought up. Four children slept in one room and the baby in with them.

School in the early days for Phillip and Brian started on the farm. This meant an early rise to catch the bus which involved a 1/4 mile walk across a ploughed paddock to the Alectown road to catch the bus to Parkes. In the early days the Bus consisted of an ex army truck belonging to dad with a board seat up each side and a canvas top. One day in winter after some rain, it was dark when we embarked off the bus. Phillip ran ahead and left Brian behind, Brian got scared and even though he lost his shoe in the mud kept going and arrived at the house minus one shoe. Rose had to then walk down the paddock and retrieve the shoe. We only had one pair of shoes which were used for school and good (church visiting etc) Most of the time we ran around bare foot. The bottoms of our feet become that hard we could even run over cat heads. Mum used to put out a half gallon jug of milk on the table and a mug. Phillip was never satisfied until he finished the jug. Delivery time for the babies varied, Phillip took 8 hours Milton was slow, Rose came early, Graham ,Lesle and Joy were quite quick

Dad tried to buy a farm and put down a deposit. Roy took over Dads share farming with Keith. With a mix up between the bank and the real estate and a 90 day limit on finance dad lost his deposit and Keith and Roy did not want him to return to the share farming.

He took up jobs saw milling and tank sinking for 9-10 months and finally found a job with the caterpillar tractor company servicing the caterpillar tractors He spent 2 years doing this before they wanted him to travel away for weeks at a time and he resigned from this.

He started up his own blacksmithing and repair business on the outskirts of Parkes on an 8 acre block he had purchased. With the sale of some farm machinery he owned he added a further three rooms but it remained unpainted for a number of years as they had no money to buy the paint.

The first shop was a 12ft by 12 ft shed at the back of the house. A father of one of his army mates Ted McPherson said "You'll never make it, you will go broke" There was always food on the table and most bills were paid on time so things turned out all right. He did picks; crowbars forge work bending and farm machinery repairs. Eventually the business was moved further down the block where he spent 28 years in business before he sold the block and built a bigger shed next the house garage. His first lathe he bought for 20 pounds and it had a 40 thou sand of an inch error in the lathe bed. He was trained as a blacksmith by his father and his uncle Les Symonds since he was 14 years old. With the help of Les he made his first crowbar. The business mended all types of faults bent chassis, repaired caterpillar tracks, rippers, tippers, loaders, mad table tops, trailers sheds cold chisels and all types of tools. Some manufactured gear were, cement mixer, posthole digger, log splitters, engine run welders. Engineers sometimes came to dad with problems of some sort and he would always work out a solution. I remember when they were building the telescope they couldn't get the track as level as they wanted to. Dad made a number of matching bevels to level the track and when the track was level this was locked in place by a weld tack. This can still be seen under the track on open day inspections today.

Looking back dad said the only thing he would change is that it would be easier to have the same gear he had today when he started. His comment on his children. "I think the world of them, They are the bestus"

Some things that happened on Peak Hill road. David wood the next door neighbour said we were not to touch the olive tree as it was poisonous. The well was uncovered in the early days and Milton and David were down the well Playing. Rose decided to go fishing and tied a string on a brick and threw it in the well to catch a fish promptly hitting David in the head and knocking him out for a few seconds. Milton and David were always building underground cubbies and lighting fires down there. One time it collapsed on them and Old Bert Woods had to dig them out. For 12 months we had a foster girl named Jeanette Parry. But Mum sent her back as Graham and she would fight each other all the time. Fun times were had driving old made up cars around the property much to the disgust of the neighbours with the amount of dust we kicked up. We would go down to Mrs Crabs' Place in Webb Street to watch the Mickey Mouse club after school each day. Dad eventually got given a TV as payment for a job he had done and we spent many a night watching Bonanza pick a Box and Gunsmoke on TV .Another favourite was watching the quiz show which had Barry Jones on it .We also attended three Sunday schools. Presbyterian at 9:30 am Webb Street with Mrs Crab at 11 am and The Parkes Baptist Sunday School at 2pm. There were telephone systems made out of copper wires from woods place to our place, claxon horns turned into motors for the meccano set, model aeroplanes Time was also spent doing chores ,cleaning shed and house chopping wood ,planting in the garden cleaning chook housecleaning bricks and removing nails from floor boards in the old houses dad bought moved to the block and rented out. Phillip riding his bike 100yards to the toilet, Brian staying in to Toilet til the water went down the sink and then finding he had been tricked by Rose and Phillip. Milton throwing a piece of bread into Roses mouth to stop her from talking. Time spent shooting and going to our aunties place on our bikes and horseback. Even though times were tough they were good times Before TV arrived we would come home and do our chores. When they were finished we got up close to the radio and listened to "Search for the Golden Boomerang" Hop Harrigon" "Tarzan" and in the evening "Jack Davey" "Bob Dyer" "The bunkhouse boys" and our Favourite "Life with Dexter" ( Lesle got called deck for some reason from this show)

Dad and Mum seemed to cope with the help of the children doing the chores, Mum did the bookkeeping for the business sometimes with a baby in the pram and one playing on the floor in the dirt. Mum said all were Good babies . But Phillip and Rose demanded to be fed whilst the others would be content and wait to be fed. The boys were successful in their schooling all though Milton had problems passing exams in High School. Phillip had to repeat a year and go up a class to receive his intermediate certificate. Dad insisted that each boy do an apprenticeship of some sort. He was worried about Milton but managed to get him a job in a garage as he was good with his hands. He never failed any of his trade tests. Lesle had to do a review test once. Brian graham Ian Joined the PMG as Technicians and did very well and Phillip was apprenticed to Dad as a fitter and turner. Some of the boys ventured of into other areas after they had finished their time in the trade.

Holidays in the early consisted of a weekend visit or a weekly visit to Fifield for Christmas and Tullamore for New Years Eve. I remember the Strudrick boys were going crook because they had run out of beer so June took sudsy glass dishwater to them to drink. They spat it out as they were not very impressed and let out a few swear words. When in primary school Brian palled up with Christopher Lusted and joined the band eventually Phillip and Ian also joined. Mum and Dad went to a band meeting and met Pat and Harry White. Harry talked dad into taking the family on a three week holiday to the beach. So Dad made Harry a trailer and Harry purchased a 12ft by 12ft tent. Somehow we all slept in it the first few years .I think Mum and Dad Slept on a mattress in the Trailer Brian was about 12 at the time. He still has the trailer Dad mad and is still using it. He is now 68.. We went many times to Kioloa beach, Carol and David woods joined us and other Families also.

Life was always interesting, sometimes hard, and sometimes lonely. But I could not ask for a better upbringing.

Brian Symonds