

Margaret Dyker's Reminiscences

In 1941 the war started, but Bruce was in essential services in the Telegraph service and couldn't join up, even though he badly wanted to go with his friends.

Victoria was building corvettes at Williamstown and they needed trained wireless operators. Bruce was one of 25 who were allowed to go. He did his training at Port Melbourne and Cerberus for 3 months. He was due to go away with the Castlemaine and decided he wanted to get married, so we were married on May 16, 1942 at St Bartholomew's Church, Burnley.

Christine was born in 1945. When she was 3 months old he came home and saw her for the first time; the next time he saw her was when he was discharged and she was 15 months old. I continued to live at home. My mum wasn't well and suffered with my brother Gerald's loss (Bruce's best friend, he was killed on Ambon early in the war but listed as MIA not dead until the end of the war). My sister Val was still at home too, going to school. I did volunteer work at ANZAC house, serving meals to the soldiers. Our time was filled in looking after family and writing letters to our husbands.

Bruce was discharged in September 1946, and went back to the Telegraph service to work. He found that hard, as other men had stayed behind and earned money - also, the machine noise bothered him. He wasn't well when he came home, as with many returned servicemen, and found it difficult living with all the family in a small house. Christine wouldn't have anything to do with Bruce as she didn't know him, but he kept trying and they had a strong bond in the end.

I had bought land at South Oakleigh at auction in 1945 for 120 pounds, so we built a four-room weatherboard house with money borrowed from the bank. We shifted out to South Oakleigh in 1949, a new area with many young families like us. Despite Bruce's mother saying he couldn't hammer a nail in, he added on a rumpus room, another bedroom and a garage. I also made the curtains and bedspreads. Bruce did the garden, we had a vegetable garden, chooks and fruit trees. Roslyn was born in 1948 and Geraldine in 1951. Later we moved to Mount Waverly, to a new modern house built by our son-in-law Trevor Fasham, and then to a smaller unit in Glen Waverly.

Bruce studied at night at Taylors College so he could get promoted. I earned some extra money by smocking at home and making all the children's clothes. When I found out I was pregnant again we decided we needed a car and Bruce thought he'd get another job; I found him one as a milkman. He worked shifts in the Telegraph service, so would do the milk round from 11pm to 6 am, come home and sleep for a few hours and then go to work at about 11am til 7pm. He worked on the milk run for nine months and earned 300 pounds. With this we were able to buy a 1934 Vauxhall.

Bruce did well in his job and became a Grade 5 Postmaster at the new post office at Clayton. He retired at 56 due to ill health, but still managed to have a busy life with a wide group of friends from Church and sporting clubs who loved to camp and travel with each other. We were devoted grandparents who spent a lot of time with our grandchildren, taking them camping and looking after them when our daughters needed extra help.