



## Lyn Lillecrapp ... “The Growing Up Years”

Interview by Judy Ferguson for the Gawler Oral History Project

October 2019

Transcript of interview follows:

**Judy:** I'm interviewing Lyn Lillecrapp on the 25th of October 2019 and my name is Judy Ferguson. Well, hello friend, I've known you for a long time. What we're going to talk about I think Lynn is mainly about your childhood and your young adult years if that's all right with you.

**Lyn:** That's fine.

**Judy:** Okay, so let's go right back to the beginning. Tell us about when and where you were born and about your parents and your family.

**Lyn:** I was born in Albury on the Victoria and New South Wales border. It was Albury and Wodonga then. They've never the two would meet. But it's Albury/Wodonga now. In July 1945 about two weeks before the Pacific War ended, before the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and ..... my parents ..... my mother had married my father and they'd gone to Albury to live. I'm not sure why. But they settled there and when I was born dad was a truck driver and Mum wasn't working at all. I was born in a private hospital which three years later was closed down because of unhygienic ..... oh gosh carryings-on!! But however, that was probably the standard back in those days ... and all of that.

At about six weeks mum said that I had a fever and she nursed me through some of it, and then about the third day she noticed that I got very stiff and wondered what was going on ... called the doctor ... the doctor didn't know .... and a couple of days later I started to unstiffen on the top half, and then I unstiffened over all my body. But what it did do was leave me with no movement in my legs, or virtually from the waist down and the problem was diagnosed as being Polio and interestingly enough I was the only case in Albury at that time. The next case was eight years later and the next one about nine years. So, where it came from ...

**Judy:** Isn't that unusual?

**Lyn:** Yes, and no one seems to know but, there's only been about four cases in Albury in toto. I happened to be the first of them.

**Judy:** And you were six weeks old.

**Lyn:** About six weeks old, which is a brilliant time to get it Judy because I've never known anything else.

**Judy:** And you don't remember anything?

**Lyn:** Well, I don't remember anything about the sickness or anything and it was a brilliant time to get it because you just grow up with it I guess. It's like being born without a limp. You just learn to live with it and get on with it.

Mum and Dad traipsed around for a while looking for treatment. I went to the Far West Home in Sydney at first and then I went down to Melbourne. When I was about 18 months old a doctor down there called Dame Jean McNamara, who was principally a research scientist, discovered that myxomatosis had the same effect on rabbits as polio had on children and that's why she was awarded her Damehood. And so she, as a medical doctor, transferred across to treating polio victims. I don't like that word but, never mind, and at 18 months old she said: "Oh yes, no problem. We can get her up walking and there's no reason why she can't lead a reasonably normal life", ..... and at 18 months old I was put into long leg calipers, which were only about ... I don't know .... a foot long. And I learnt to walk in a walking race that I have a photo of at home ..... and then a few months later after I learned to walk in the race I was put onto elbow-length crutches. I just took off. You just got on with it.

I don't have any siblings. The expenses of getting equipment and everything else in those days ... there was no government assistance. So, I think that had a reasonable result on why there were no siblings. As that turned out that was probably a good thing too, but that will come a bit later. Yeah, I've had a pretty normal life.

If I didn't have my calipers on I just pulled myself along with my hands around the garden. Dad rigged up a tricycle for me and whilst I couldn't pedal it he had a stake on it that he pulled me along with and I could just go all around the garden. I've got a photo of me sitting in a box and being pulled along while he was gardening ... and me watering the garden and probably dad too (laughter) and all of that ... and yeah, so all of those things. I mean I did what most normal kids do I suppose. At three and a half Dame Jean [00:05:00] decided that it would probably be good for me if I went to preschool kindergarten. So, I did that, and I don't remember much about it. Other than that, I probably had good fun because that's what it was all about. (laughter) Yeah, and then at four and a half, she wrote to the education department and asked could I start school, which normally we didn't do to the beginning of the year, which meant I would have been five and a half. She felt that that wasn't the right thing for me, that being an only child I needed to get to school. Also, mum needed to go back to work to get money to help with equipment. And also my father had taught me all my numbers. I was counting up to 50 by then.

I was reading. I was getting books out of the library and reading and so from that point of view it was probably a good thing. At four and a half I started at the Albury primary school and can remember that quite clearly .... some aspects of it. I really enjoyed school. Out the front there was a bar .... basically a handrail that ran the length of the path that was in front of the front classrooms. And my legs didn't grow properly. They didn't grow because of the polio. So, I was short enough that I was able to swing on these (laughter). That wasn't the right thing to do .... and I still remember that. (laughter) ... and I could also very easily get onto the monkey bars and the gym and all that because although I couldn't bend the knees my legs were short enough that I could get them up there to get onto rungs and climb up on to seesaws. And that was all good fun and what I couldn't climb on I pulled myself up on anyhow. I remember a little bit later on I climbed up on the roof of the house a few times and ..

**Judy:** Oh my God!

**Lyn:** And finally dad said: "next time you get yourself up there you will get yourself down". Well, that's all right, I did get myself down.

**Judy:** How old were you?

**Lyn:** Probably five or six ... and I learned many many many years later that he didn't like heights and that's why I had to get myself down (laughter). Anyhow, I stayed at Albury primary school and in those days Mum and Dad used to take me to and from school. Dad would take me to school as he went to work at about half past eight. And then from the school, where Mum was working at Coles which wasn't too far up, I'd walk up there and she'd bring me home, because dad had finished work earlier. But in those days we didn't have a car, so I sat in wicker basket seats on the back of their bicycles. Yes. And my legs would stick out either side because I couldn't bend them (laughter). But we didn't have a car until I was about seven I suppose ... and that was the way we got around.

And at whatever age you could, I think it was about eight, I joined the Brownies ..... this will probably amuse you seeing you know me ... I was put in the "Fairies". (laughter)

**Judy:** There is a God up there (laughter)

**Lyn:** Yes! anyone less likely to be a fairy! But anyhow on Saturday mornings with a couple of friends we'd walk about at least two miles to Brownies.

**Judy:** That's a fair hike for someone in calipers.

**Lyn:** But you just did it. Because Mum and Dad weren't going up. They were going to work .... and we would just amble down and amble back. I do remember getting a couple of hidings when I walked in the creek on the way home (laughter) ... simply because my boots were expensive .... especially the ones that went on to the calipers ... and yes ... that wasn't appreciated. But also, at school I used to walk down to the corner a bit later on and catch the school bus. That's when they put a bus service on, but at nighttime the bus would let us out at the top of the hill. Our house was halfway down between the top of the hill and the end of the street, or the end of the block, and I used to lie down and just roll down

(laughter) ... and that was fine, except I have white cuffs and collars on my uniform. So when mum made my uniforms she used to just use poppers. I think they called them press studs and you pressed the cuffs and collars on so that they could come off that night ... and get the Blue Bag to get the green stains out. (ongoing laughter)

And then I had jobs to do. I was meant to have the vegetables ready in the [00:10:00] saucepans for mum to put on when she got home, have the table set and a couple of other things that had to be done. And if I didn't get them done .... because quite often in summer I just stayed outside and played with my friends .... and their parents would call them in and I would think; "whoops mum must be about ready to come home", ..... and if I didn't get inside and get things done there was a little bit of contention there. Having said that, my mother these days probably would be held up for child abuse in the way I was disciplined, simply because that's was the way she was disciplined ..... and that was the way it was ... and probably the way her parents were disciplined.

**Judy:** They didn't make any allowances for your disablement did they? Probably seen you in good stead has it?

**Lyn:** Yeah. Well, my father had a philosophy .... probably not at that age but certainly later in my life .... that this is a cruel world. It's not going to change for you. You have to learn to live in it. And that was the way he raised me.

**Judy:** Do you have any negative memories of school or teachers?

**Lyn:** Yes. Bullying by the kids. This went on right through my school years. I'd sit at the desk and I put my crutches down the side of the desk. And many many was the time Judy when I would go to get my crutches, particularly in high school when you move classrooms, and the crutches had gone. And they'd been dragged along by the one behind me and dragged in front .... and quite often they are out of the door. In primary school when that happened whenever I found them I used to just belt out with them and hit kids. I was forever at the principal's office ... and told I was the bully. But the kids used to take great delight in, just as I was coming along beside a building, they'd stick their leg out or something. Yeah bullying is not new. It has definitely changed its format. Yes, but bullying is not new and that's one of the negatives.

I remember from school another negative and that is that in primary school we used to have these 1/3-pint bottles of milk. And that was fine in Winter. They just about froze but in summer the cream would be so thick .. yuk .. and it put me off milk forever. I don't have any bad memories or negative memories of teachers or anything. I enjoyed school. Yeah. I really enjoyed it ... had a lot of fun ... and learned heaps.

When I was 8 my parents ... well I went down to Hampton Rehabilitation Hospital in Melbourne. We were just out of Melbourne for 12 months. It was to try and correct the major scoliosis of my spine. They put me to bed for 12 months into what they called a Double Thomas splint, which was a basically the shape of a skeleton. And your legs went into an iron frame and you had plaster boots on your feet and your arms went into arm-pieces

and they were strapped down in my case. I had a head strap across and virtually that was it for .....

**Judy:** You were like that for 12 months?

**Lyn:** Yeah. We used to get out certainly during weekdays. We got out for about an hour of physio a day. The rest of it we were in there. That was the treatment in those days.

**Judy:** What was that like?

**Lyn:** Not very nice.

**Judy:** Did you get schooling at all?

**Lyn:** Yes, we were schooled. Usually if you were sat in a sitting frame then that was wheeled to the classroom. If you weren't allowed to get up like that then you were put onto a long pram, perambulator, and that was wheeled into the classroom.

They were proper education department teachers but, one of the things that happened with me was, because I'd done third form in New South Wales and went down to Victoria for 12 months, they wouldn't recognize that I'd done third form. So, I had to repeat third form. Then when I went back to New South Wales the following year they wouldn't recognize it.

I'd already done two years of third form because the last one was in Victoria. It was a little bit hard on the teachers till they finally put me up into fourth grade. We really should have been fifth grade.

**Judy:** Did you see your parents much during that 12 months?

**Lyn:** I didn't see my father because I went into the rehab hospital in the January and he had a very very major operation and they removed probably about half of his stomach. He had ulcers. These days they treat them just with a tablet. Those days they operated and he lost about half of his stomach and he nearly died. (00:15:00) I didn't know any of this until about the following March.

Mum came down to see me and told me that they had separated. That in a way didn't surprise me because the last 12 months hadn't been good at home. Part of the reason was that dad was sick, but mum right up until the day she died, could not cope with anyone being ill. She just couldn't cope with it. Also, part of the reason was that mum really was a city girl and should never have lived in it a little town of about seven and a half thousand people. And the people there .... some of them bullied her in that: "What did you do that your daughter caught polio?"

**Judy:** What.

**Lyn:** Yeah. Small-town mentality Judy and when I first came to Gawler that wasn't uncommon in some cases....

**Judy:** Good grief.

**Lyn:** ... 40-odd years ago. Yeah, but mum came back in the March and told me that they had separated and then and she said that dad had nearly died. Well, I didn't catch the "nearly". Then in the November, by this stage they were going to release me and I could go home ... and they'd started sitting me up into a sitting frame and I was starting to walk again and all of that sort of thing and one day I was just there in the sitting frame and then dad walked in. Well!! ..... I had a big shock thinking he was dead.

Yes, so I went back to Albury with him, or his sister came, and I went back to be with him. But one really good thing that happened while I was at Hampton ... 1954 was the year the Queen came out and as Brownies we were able to go into government house. We were taken in the pantehnicon and we lined the road of government house and I have a photo of me lying in my double Thomas splint in my Brownie uniform waving the Australian flag.

**Judy:** Oh! That's a fantastic memory.

**Lyn:** Yes, that was good. In the November I went home and dad enrolled me at a private Presbyterian girls' school. The education standard was abominable but the school was set up principally as a boarding school for the daughters of the surrounding areas farmers, and in those days, and we're talking the 1950s, girls from farms were expected to marry farmers, didn't have careers outside the farm or whatever, so the education standard really didn't have to be very good. And I went to first form .... first form is it was called then and then dad decided that things really needed to be changed. But what I did like about that school was that there was a choir ... there was an elocution choir ... singing choir ... elocution choir .... and I was able to join them. There wasn't very much homework because really it was mainly your craft, your sewing and those sorts of domestic arts. Yes, because that's what the women who were going to go back onto the farms would be doing. Yeah. We were taught English and those sorts of things history and geography.

I mean we were taught the basics, but the standard wasn't very good at all. So, in 1959 I went over to the Wodonga high school and because I went to a Victorian School, although I didn't live in Victoria, I was able to come in under the Victorian Health Department's Polio Division. And from there on in I was under them till I left Victoria in 1971 and I was able to receive free treatment, free equipment, all of that sort of thing .... and that made a huge difference to Dad because in about 1960 he became a totally permanently incapacitated war veteran.

**Judy:** He'd been in the second world war?

**Lyn:** Yes, he was a Rat of Tobruk. He was in the original Australian contingent that went over. He was in the first lot that went over and I've still got his badge at home that's got the T on it for Tobruk

**Judy:** Oh! That's fantastic.

**Lyn:** Yes, and by then he was a TPI pensioner and .....

**Judy:** And you were living with him?

**Lyn:** When my parents actually filed for divorce the court awarded me to Dad .... in that Mum had got up and said she didn't want me now. (00:20:00)

That sounds a bit harsh, but I can understand it to the point that back in those days. There wasn't a single parent pension Mum could have. In fact, she had to go to work. And from that point of view I can understand it. A few of my friends can't. But from that point of view ... and in the long-run Judy it was the best thing that happened .... because I think I'd have been a screaming heebeegeebee wreck if she'd stayed at home.

**Judy:** in your childhood are there any things like books or toys or films or visits to any special places that stand out for you?

**Lyn:** Books, books, books, and books. My father as I say taught me to read before I went to school and I can still clearly remember to this day ..... when you became five you could join the public library. You couldn't do it before that. So dad used to get my books out for me when I was about 4. And I remember clearly the first day I turned five I went and enrolled under my own name at the library and the books I got out were The Three Golliwogs by Enid Blyton and I can still remember a phrase from that from one of the golliwogs ... "ah splits my sides laughin" (laughter). And the other book was Alice in Wonderland. It was a big thick book, had big print, but it was a big thick book. It was probably a good A4 size and probably about two inches thick.

**Judy:** Golly?

**Lyn:** Yes, and I can still remember that, and I was at the library every week and dad loved poetry so there was a great deal of poetry and I learned so many of Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson .....

Judy: Still remember them?

Lyn: I remember some of them but unless you repeat them fairly often .... Dorothea Mackellar and her Australian poems. He was a great patriot so, I was very early put on to Alan Marshall's book "I Can Jump Puddles".

**Judy:** That would have had particular resonance.

**Lyn:** It did. It did. But my comment to someone afterwards was "I can jump puddles too".(laughter) But yes, that was good and I've read all of his books all of the ones he wrote and, interestingly, he didn't have any less of a hard time than any of us back in those days who was disabled trying to find a job, but eventually we did.

Films. Used to go every Saturday afternoon to the local Cinema with my friends.

**Judy:** What did you see?

**Lyn:** Hopalong Cassidy, ..... all of the cowboy and itchy bums as we called them back then. (laughter) It was just a whole group of us who use to meet at the theatre on Saturday afternoon. Part of my pocket money was the money to get into the theater and to buy an ice cream or a bag of lollies. Quite often we bought things like Maltesers and used to just roll

them down the aisles and that was just such fun. And we learnt a bit of Australian history because you had the Movietone News. That showed us what was going on around Australia. I was there at the time that the snowy mountain scheme was being built and went to school with a lot of the kids whose fathers were working on it.

The drowning of Tallangatta or Old Tallangatta as it's called now and the removal of all the houses and those workshops and everything to the new town. And that was all on the Movietone news. So, we caught up with all of that and there were two films particularly I went to see with the school... "A Queen is Crowned" which was 1953 there was a Coronation and "Elizabeth is Queen". Also, in those days in that year we were given a New Testament and Psalms by the Education Department that had the Queen's Crest on it. And somewhere along the line, and I don't know by whom, I was given a tiny replica of the coronation coach and horses and it was in gold.

**Judy:** Still have it?

**Lyn:** No I haven't. Got lost in all the travels. Probably broken and then thrown out. But yeah, they are the really good things I remember from that era, but we just had fun. And then as I say in 1959, I went to Wodonga High School and we had some brilliant teachers there. Teachers for whom it was a career. It wasn't just a job. And Mrs. Ellwood was our English teacher and very very strict on not ending sentences with prepositions.

[00:25:00] And one thing that still sticks in my mind ... "similar to" ... "different from" ... "compared with" ... and even today I have trouble with books. And I have been known to write to correct reports and give them back to the reporter (laughter) ... but a brilliant English teacher and she gave me a love of English expression that you just don't see these days.

And our geography teacher Miss Bray ..... absolutely brilliant. We made paper mache models of continents, the rivers, the mountains and she also taught us arithmetic, and back in those days' arithmetic and mathematics were two separate subjects.

And also, in those days I was going to school with the students from Bonegilla Migrant Camp. Their parents had come out here for the fathers to work on the snowy scheme and they taught us a lot. I started school in Form 2 ... or year eight I think it is now. It was at Wodonga High. Those kids came into the year at the beginning of the year barely speaking English and by the end of the year they were in the top five. Not the top 5% but the top five of the class. And Rainer (Frisch) ... I still remember .... Rainer went on and he duxed the class and duxed the school. He went to what was Duntroon. Otherwise, he'd have probably gone to the officer school up there now. Went to Duntroon and came out and with the Queens Sword Award and went on to become the Australian Army ambassador to America.

Brilliant brilliant mind but the others were no less. Yes, and they went home, and they did the chores and they did their homework, but I was determined I was going to beat him in something, absolutely determined. I beat him in arithmetic by one mark. (laughter) I got a hundred he got 99 and I've still got the report book at home.

I really really enjoyed high school till the final year. We had a brilliant history teacher and the final year ... no .... form five .... year 11.... we did the Renaissance and Reformation and our teacher just brought it to life. Absolutely brilliant. They were brilliant teachers and I'm sure they're around today, .... but just dedicated. I had to learn three years of French in one year because I was put into the General class. We went into our streamlines in Form 9 proficiency, and I was put in the General because, as I was told, I was a cripple or wouldn't get a job. And then they decided they'd put me in the Commercial class and that was shorthand typing and that .... and then someone said; "No, she's too good put her into Professional". But by that stage I had to learn years one two, and three French all in the one year. (chuckles)

**Judy:** Gosh. How did you go with that?

**Lyn:** We had a teacher come home. One of the French teachers from school came home every Monday night. And then in first term I did first and second year French, second term I did second and third year French, and then in third term I put it all together. I like French. I went on and did it through to matric.

**Judy:** And she came to your home?.

**Lyn:** Yes. Monday nights.

**Judy:** Wow! That's dedication.

**Lyn:** Yes. She came home for about an hour and a half.

**Judy:** That's amazing. So high school was your teenage years. What about your social life during that period?

**Lyn:** It was fairly good. I was in the church. I went to youth group. Dad drove me everywhere because obviously I couldn't drive myself at that age. But when I was in ... I had to wait till I was 18 .... which was form six year 12, I was old enough to get my license. In those days you just had a test and got your license ... no p's or anything. Dad purchased some hand controls. We had to wait till I was 18 though before you could apply for them, and then they had to come from Sydney and had to be put on the car and I learned to drive and in October of 1964 ... no 63 ... I was eighteen and got my license. That night I wanted to go out and I asked Dad to take me. He said: "No, you've got your license off you go". But I'd been driving back and forward to [00:30:00] school. And in those days it was about 11 miles from where we lived in North Albury. By then we'd shifted. Lived in North Albury to school in Wodonga and so I was driving 22 miles a day through the main street of Albury ... all of that sort of thing.

So, I was getting plenty of practice and the day I went for a license the policeman asked Dad to come in the car because he'd never seen hand controls and I think he was petrified by the time we got back to the police station. (laughter) You could see the beads of sweat on his forehead.

**Judy:** That's amazing.

**Lyn:** He didn't even ask me any questions. It was just: "You've passed, here you are."

**Judy:** That must have been very liberating to get your license.

**Lyn:** Yes. It was.

**Judy:** Tell us what happened, what it meant.

**Lyn:** It meant I could go anywhere I wanted to, when I wanted to, and all of that. Dad knew that he didn't have long to live for a variety of reasons. He had cancer by then. He had very very bad emphysema, for which I blame cigarettes, simply because he smoked. He used to roll his own but when the ready roles came in, the ready-mades, his consumption tripled, just absolutely tripled. It was so easy to smoke, but he was in a lot of pain and I think that partly killed him. He was consuming a box of Bex ... remember Bex?

**Judy:** Do I ever. Awful stuff. Poison.

**Lyn:** He was consuming a box a day. And everything combined he knew he didn't have very long to live. So, in the last couple of years of his life, he ensured that I understood finance and banking. I had a very good understanding of saving and not spending everything I earned. In year 6 I applied for a Commonwealth Scholarship to go to teacher's college but was told very clearly that because I was a cripple I wouldn't pass the medical tests. So, I tended to drop my bundle a bit. I didn't do as well as I should have.

**Judy:** It must have been so demoralizing.

**Lyn:** It was, but it was life back in those days ... and nothing was our way at all.

**Judy:** But what a wonderful man your father was

**Lyn:** He was a visionary. He was a real visionary. Yes, and as soon as I got my license he signed the car over to me so, that if at any time he suddenly went, I had the car. It was mine. He had a little battered old utility ... a little Bedford ute. We all used to just sit in the back of it and he'd drive it around. It was fun.

He loved his garden and everywhere we went ... in the first house in the whole of the backyard there were fruit trees and vegetables .... totally self-sufficient.

**Judy:** The two of you in the house?

**Lyn:** Yeah, basically from the age of 8. And when we were still at home, the three of us, dad grew all the vegies. Mum used to preserve them in the old Vacola bottling outfit.

**Judy:** Yes. Yes. I remember.

**Lyn:** But when we went up to the other house it was just the two of us ... and it wasn't so much in the veggie line. Then it was more flowers ... dad grew them, and he got a lot of pleasure out of that. Vegetables would have been too much hard work.

**Judy:** So, what about your social life during this time?

**Lyn:** Mainly church, youth group. At school we had end of term socials. Most of it was with family. Every Saturday night we went to dad's sisters ... my aunts. Dad and Aunty Lil and Uncle Bill would play sixpenny poker ... and I used to play every so often and won enough money every so often to buy little transistor radio that I wanted or a few other things. But dad's idea was that if you want something you saved for it. There just wasn't the money to hand out. So I saved. Of course, by the time I'd saved for it the fad had gone. (laughter) But with this three penny ... no ... three penny poker it was ... I did save enough to buy one of the first transistor radios that ever came out.

**Judy:** Really

**Lyn:** And that was great fun. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed music and we had a big stereogram which had the radio, the record player, and we had a lot of records.

**Judy:** What sort of music?

**Lyn:** Mainly some of the old crooners; John Charles Thomas, Patrick O'Hagan, Father Sydney MacEwan, Richard Crooks. Dad was a crooner. He was quite a good singer.

**Judy:** What about you?

**Lyn:** I'm a messy soprano (laughter). And I remember when I first went to the choir out here at Lyndoch, that I was involved with, [00:35:00] I went in and the leader asked me; " did I know what I was", and I said; " a messy soprano and her eyebrows just about went in to her head ... (laughter) I can reach top e .... Anything over that is a "sqeeek" (laughter). Yeah, lots of music. I listen to the radio a lot.

And then when I was 12 we moved down .... Dad had a job for a couple of years as caretaker of the local Council Caravan Park, which was on the banks of the river and that was fun. I lived down there and that's where I first learned to swim. And we had a jetty that went out from the bank out to the river and I used to crawl up onto it and pull myself along and then just fall into the water.

**Judy:** You are self-taught. You didn't get ....?

**Lyn:** No, it's basically self-taught at that stage.

**Judy:** And you were still on crutches at this point?

**Lyn:** Oh yes. Still walking. I didn't go into a wheelchair until about the 1980s and then ...

**Judy:** So that was your first swimming experience?

**Lyn:** No no. I'd been in water a lot prior to that but it'd never been other than just splashing around ... and I'd never done any proper swimming. Hydrotherapy had been used since I was about 18 months when I first went to Dame Jean McNamara. She was a great one for that. And I think that's where my love of the water came from .... and oh! .... a few times I nearly drowned in the big pool. I went into the big pool and I'd hold onto the edge and just go along the edge. I must have been only ..... mum was still home so I was under eight. And I

remember one day clearly. Someone jumped in and jumped on my head and I went down and I came up again, but I came up out away from the wall. And in those days, I wasn't swimming and dad jumped the fence and put his hand out and I could just reach his longest finger and he pulled me back into the side.

He had an absolute fear of water because when he was young he nearly drowned in the farm dam and he used to turn white just to go and have a shower. He hated water ... anything above paddling. But it didn't stop me. I still went into the water and in the river ... not really swimming but I'd float down and then pull myself back up along the edge.

**Judy:** So, the dog paddle.

**Lyn:** Yes, dog paddle my way up, clawing at the earth on the bank of the river. I went back 40 years after that to see the river and the jetty would have been about 5 metres up from the water. The river just didn't have any water in it.

**Judy:** So, was that the beginning of your interest in swimming?

**Lyn:** Probably the beginning of being able to swim properly and then when I went down to Melbourne in 1964 permanently, after dad died, I joined the local wheelchair sports club and they had a swimming group going that practiced twice a week and that's where the competition aspect really all started.

I was staying at a hostel in Melbourne then and it was set up for the physically disabled who had jobs. By that stage I had finished Tech College on the commercial course shorthand, typing, commercial English bookkeeping to trial balance stage, and the old-fashioned switchboard.

That was 1964. So, I was still training then. I was getting the training pension which was the equivalent of the invalid pension, and I finished my training, then in 1965 got a job at the Victorian Botanical Gardens.

**Judy:** Doing what?

**Lyn:** Secretarial stenography work. And worked for the director of the gardens there. That was brilliant. Lunch time you'd just go out into the garden ... and the only trouble with that job was that he didn't use my shorthand often enough for me to keep it up, so that when he did want it ...

**Judy:** Got a bit stale.

**Lyn:** Yes, and I didn't do it very much. I stayed there for that year 65 then in 66 I went up to Sydney and joined the Commonwealth Public Service at Paddington Army Barracks ... or Victoria Barracks is its formal name ... again as a stenographer and got back up to speed by then and was able to use it a bit. So basically, typing and shorthand in those days [00:40:00] and then what was in Division 4 became Division 3 and we all became Admin officers or Clerks ... clerical officers ... admin officers ... whatever the metamorphoses was each time. (chuckles) And I stayed with the Department of Defense until they all .... but sorry ...

Department of Army till I went back ... I came back to Melbourne by then. I'd met up with my mother again.

**Judy:** And how did that go?

**Lyn:** It was okay, but it was never a close relationship. She'd been gone for 11 years of my life. She remarried ... my stepfather. He was very like my own father. Yeah, very like him ... and they'd both been to the war ... all of that ... and I really enjoyed his company. I used to go over to Mum and Gerald's a couple of times a week and have a meal or something. One night I was scratching, scratching, scratching and mum said: "What's the matter?" I said; "I've got a bit of a rash mum." She said let me have a look. So put my head down between the knees and she pulled up my shirt. She said just a moment and I'll get something to take the itch out of it. And next thing I just about went through the ceiling. She'd slapped a handful of methylated spirits up my back. It took the itch out (laughs) but it turned out that it was shingles.

**Judy:** Oh, my goodness!

**Lyn:** And I didn't get treated for it for that episode ... but yeah, it was a fractured relationship and she was still a bit funny, because whenever she introduced me or spoke about me to anyone I was her niece.

**Judy:** Oh really.

**Lyn:** Until Gerald put his foot down very very firmly and said this is not right ... and in front of one of her friends, which was probably the only way that would stop it. He said: "She's not your niece, she's your daughter".

**Judy:** Gosh, that must have been hard for you.

**Lyn:** It was just who she was Judy. I think I accepted a lot of the things. I remember them but I just sort of think ... well, that's who she was so ... and really it didn't affect me. I wasn't living with them or any of that.

So, it was with Army back then and then in 1970 ... aah early 71 ... I went up to live in Sydney and went to the Department of Navy at Garden Island Dockyard and that was interesting. At one stage I was in charge of the workers compensation section and in those days the workers had to bring in a doctor's certificate to say they couldn't work, and if they didn't bring that in then there is no money for them for that fortnight ... and everything still was cash.

So we had to have those certificates by Wednesday so the money could be prepared for them to pick it up on Friday. Well, this guy came in .... and a lot of the stevedore workers were Maltese. They come out as migrants from Malta where there was a British shipyard. So, they came to Garden Island dockyard to work on the naval ships ... and this guy came in ... he had a walking stick ... he came in and said; "Money". And a lot of them couldn't speak much English. "Money", and I looked up and said; "No money. No certificate no money".

"I want my money". I said; "No money. No certificate no money", and he raised his walking stick and slammed it down on the desk and said: "I want my money". So I just picked up my stick and slammed it down on the desk and said; "No certificate no money". (laughter)

**Judy:** What a story. That's fantastic.

**Lyn:** And obviously we actually had pickets on the gate in to work, but I was also there when the Queen came out to open the Opera House. I was sharing a house with two others in Coogee at the time? And because I worked on the island we were able to go on the island out to the Point and we could hear it. It was broadcast very loudly. We could hear her opening it and we could see the fireworks .. and that was magnificent. Absolutely magnificent. We were able to see the yacht cruise down the harbor that that she and the Duke were in .... absolutely brilliant. Yes. It was great and that was 70 early 71 to 77 when I came over here to get married and I transferred back to Army at Keswick for a few months and then went out to DSTO, and by then it was all Department of Defense and I [00:45:00] was a civilian, and that was fine. and then I ended up at the RAAF base. But I was with the Department of Defense for 41 years. Got to the top of the middle management level.

**Judy:** Well done.

**Lyn:** And then in 1997 when I had cancer and on chemo I asked to come down a couple of levels as I was managing the 17-million-dollar budget across three states at that stage. Yeah, so came down but fortunately had been at that level long enough that I could keep the superannuation up at the high level.

**Judy:** That's good.

**Lyn:** It's just that I've had a great life Judy .... a great life. Yes, it's had its ups and downs. But ...

**Judy:** It's made you a very strong person hasn't it.

**Lyn:** It has. But I thank my father for that because I'd go home from school and say the kids bullied me and he'd say well sort of accept that that is life.

**Judy:** Yes. You've got a lot to thank him for.

**Lyn:** Oh, yes. He was a wonderful man. Yeah ... and insisted I went to year 12 .... absolutely insisted. And he always said when anything around finance came up; "Do you want it or do you need it?" If you needed something for school or something like that... an excursion ... and there weren't many in those days .... went down and saw a couple of Shakespeare plays at Wangaratta, which was about 40 miles away. The Wangaratta High School was putting them on in years 5 and 6. I still don't like Shakespeare. It was always money for school things. If I wanted it I had to save for it. Yes. As I say the fad had gone by the time I'd done that. But education was prime. Yes, absolutely.

**Judy:** He sowed some very important seeds didn't he?

**Lyn:** Indeed, and he made me as independent as he possibly could.

**Judy:** What a legacy.

**Lyn:** Yes, and that has stood me in good stead for the rest of my life. Yes, certainly made me strong and to fight for myself ... and there are times when probably my fighting for what I believe in .... and you've seen me in action on that ... It's not gone as PC as it should have but I've got there.

**Judy:** Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. Yes, and I think you know that people admire you for your courage and your strength and your integrity.

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