

DANDALOO

I use to be in the office till late at night, either talking to clients, drawing or quoting. As it turned out my eyes would close but I was quite awake, so I went to have them checked and the answer was I needed to rest them. Sallie and I decided to go on a coach tour. The Coach was named “DANDALOO” [Aboriginal meaning Pretty Nice] and the name has stayed with us ever since.



Bob Marsh - 1937

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This book is dedicated to our family,
our very dear friends and particularly
our grandchildren, they have made our
life that much more wonderful..

Bob and Sallie Marsh

Chapter 1: Childhood Memories

It all started on 6th of June 1934 when I was brought into this world, but my memory only goes back to early days at number 66 Nungurner Street, Deepdene when I was three.

I was the third child to Cyril and Nellie Marsh. I had a brother, Ray who was five years older than I, and a sister, Ellen, four years older whom I have always known as Laine. Dad was a plastering contractor, and while those were depression times and life was hard, we were looked after very well. Our grandmother on Mum's side lived with us in a room at the rear of the house and I spent quite a bit of time with her. She did not keep good health and passed away not long after coming to live with us.

We lived on the outskirts of the built up area and so had a lot of open space to explore. On our left was one house, on our right were five vacant lots, and then a church which we used to attend. Not very far away on Belmore Road was Myrtle Park; it was built for football and cricket, and we often went there with our friends. They were all older than me, and I thought they were special. On the far side of the Park, was a barrel drain, and further up there was a creek which was more like a tip; we used to spend time there too. We always kept ourselves occupied and made our own fun.

Deepdene was not like it is today. Opposite our house, across the main road, was a paddock. It was obviously going to be a new estate, but had no houses on it at the time. There also used to be a creek where a lot of people dumped their rubbish. It was somewhere interesting to play, as back in those days we used to make our own fun, searching through the rubbish.

One of the problems Mum had - in fact the comment was made to her by the woman next door, Mrs Rosevere, who said, "I hope Bobby thanks you one day for all the nonsense he's caused" - was that I used to disappear fairly regularly and Mum or somebody else would track me down by looking for the dog jumping out of the grass, because the grass was taller than I was.

I remember that when I was four or five years old, it was natural to have the baker, the greengrocer and the bottle-ome come around to the homes in their horse carts. I'd wait for the baker because after he'd called next door, he'd come out and treat me to a bread roll. Most of the time, he would stop to do a little bit of bookwork - entries of what he'd sold and what he still had left, and so on. While he did that, I'd sneak to the back of his cart and get on to the rear step, which was only about fifteen inches wide by about nine inches deep. He didn't know I was there, but I'd know exactly where he was going, so I'd hitched the ride for about half a mile and, when he slowed down, I'd jump off and walk the other way. If he ever caught me he would get very annoyed. I can remember that.

I can also remember the paddocks on the lower side of Belmore Road in Deepdene. There were about three or four ponds. They weren't big enough to be dams, but one of them that was obviously man-made of clay. I used to put my hand in, stir it around, and pull yabbies out. I was only a little toddler but there were so many things we could do in those days to play and pass the time of day.

Naturally, there was no television yet in those times, but you never missed it, because you never knew about things of that nature. Instead, I saw my first 'magic lantern', as it was called.

It was actually a glass slide projector. A chap who lived over the back fence and down one block, had one. His son used to put on slide shows out in the middle of nowhere, in a tent. Funny the things you used to do in those days.

Another interesting thing that always sticks in my mind is that our house backed onto two side fences – the division between the two houses at the back. On one block was a mate of my brother's, John Brown. Those two were pretty pally. On the other block lived a boy called Keith Wadsworth, also a cobbler of my brother's. There was no problem, about visiting each other's houses – my brother could go to John Brown's house any time he liked; they had pulled off a few palings. I'd go in after him, and what do you think I'd be looking out for? Their jolly rooster! That bird knew I was scared of him and he used to chase me.

At Nungerner St. I was four years old at the time and dad and uncle Peter were putting a new driveway in at home, they were not far from finished and I thought I would go down to them so I walked down to try the concrete out, it was still wet apparently that did not worry me I walked all the way to them.

That rooster would be hiding in their backyard. I don't know how he knew I was coming, but he'd hide - when I say 'hide', I mean it would be lurking behind a shed or something - and once I went in so far he would come out of hiding and stand menacingly between me and the fence, crest erect, and ready to pounce. I'd made a beeline for that fence, I'd dive through it and he'd chase me all the way, but he'd never leave their block. He'd stop at the fence. I'll always remember him.

I didn't know the people down the road. I heard they had a magpie they used as a watchdog, and that if you would walk along there, this magpie would strut out and give anybody coming his way "what for!". It got the best of my curiosity, so I just had to go in to see if it worked.

And it did!

They were carefree days, and we kids had a sort of free rein in the neighbourhood. And, of course, the neighbours would be quite pleased to see you. Somehow, people were friendlier then, and if you hurt yourself, they were quick to try and help. People weren't as pushed or under as much pressure as today. Fortunately too for me and my friends, there was no one running around molesting people. It's a different story now.

The milkman used to come every night. As well as milk, he also delivered cream, eggs, and butter. You'd put out a can or a billy by your door, and he'd fill it with fresh milk from his ten quart can with a half pint ladle; that's of course if you had first put your money in the bottom of the billy for him. It did happen occasionally that he would pour the milk in before taking the money out. There was also the bottle-o, he didn't sell anything on his round, he collected empty bottles, for which he'd pay you a ha'penny or so for each - beer bottles mainly. Then, of course, there was the baker and the greengrocers who would also come around. So you really didn't have to go out like today, load yourself with shopping then carry it home. When you think of it, women didn't have to go out much at all, they'd go shopping for different items but it wouldn't be daily.

We didn't have refrigerators. We might have had a Coolgardie, or an ice chest. The ice man would call round maybe two or three times a week in the summer. He'd stop at the house, cut the blocks of ice and chuck them in. I can't recall where the ice was made, but probably around Deepdene. I know it wasn't Box Hill, but things have changed so much - we're talking about sixty odd years ago.

There were a lot of services that came to the home. There was a chap that would come around to sell blinds, clothing and manchester. I don't know whether he called because Dad had contacted him or just because he was doing his rounds. He never had any goods with him. You ordered what you wanted from a catalogue. Then, about three days later, he'd bring around the things that you had ordered. But he didn't have a shop,

necessarily, although one of his competitors did. This was quite an interesting business when you think of it. Our man could supply a bigger variety of goods perhaps than you might find in a shop, because he'd buy his stocks from all over the place. He had a fair bit of know-how and he could get you anything at all. I also remember the tradespeople around that area at the time, like the gardener, who had kept the garden at Kew Council, the bricklayer, the shoemaker, the tool maker, and the plasterer, to name a few of those long gone, familiar Deepdene characters.

We moved to Humevale in 1939, where Dad kept cows and milked them. While he now had a farm, he also kept busy in the building industry – the whole family, one way or another, has been in the building trade.

Dad had installed the copper in the community hall – you can make beautiful coffee in them. At one stage, he was doing some painting there and he set up a separate area so that the people visiting could still play cards. He told my brother and I to take his gear home – and we cleaned his brushes on the inside wall of the hall. It turned out rather comical in the end, because everybody in the community put their hands on that wet wall and left their prints. That's the sort of community they were. It obviously wasn't the colour scheme they wanted!

On one occasion when a cobbler of Ray's Frankie Barr came up to our place at Humevale, Jacky McDonald from the farm next door rode over on his Shetland Pony, and we decided we would all ride on it together. They put me on the mane as I was the smallest, then Frankie, Ray and then Jacky on the rump and off we went. The pony was trotting and the bumping caused Jacky to slide off the back and as he was holding onto Ray he in turn fell off; as the load was getting less, the pony went quicker and in turn Frankie fell off too, so I was left on and had a good ride by myself.

On another occasion Ray and I were sitting in a car owned by a friend of dad's, he was inside with mum and dad having a cup of Tea. It was a 1924 Dodge Tourer they had a starter motor and without knowing it I pressed the starter button and would you believe it, it started up and it went backwards I jumped out and Ray steered it backwards he was enjoying it, the man ran like out of the house and jumped in and stopped it, I was only four and a half then and didn't realize that that would happen.

This is the way life was in Humevale.

We moved back to Balwyn after about six months. My paternal grandparents lived in Haig Street, Deepdene, so we'd see them often. I used to go to their house quite regularly.

I can recall that my family was always involved with farming of one sort or another. When I was a little boy, a little tacker roaming in the paddock, my parents used to go to a town just near Leongatha, to a farm where we had wonderful times. But then again, I'm relating this to my boyhood sense of adventure and my eagerness to roam around. Funnily enough, when I think about it, I was on my own a lot of those times – I'd be out in the paddocks, down by the river, exploring around and about. I enjoyed that, I was in my element. It was a lot safer than today, where children need to have somebody with them all the time because anything can happen, so to speak.

I would set rabbit traps about twenty at a time, which I would check about three times each day, and change their location if necessary.

I saw the need to check them regularly because sometimes a fox would have killed the rabbit.