

Marjory Long (*nee* Lawrence)

'I remember ...'

■ **Marjory Long** wrote: "I remember starting school: **Wales Street State School, Thornbury.**

I wore a pretty organdie bonnet hat tied under the chin.

It was a few weeks before my fifth birthday and I was sent home on enrolment, and **Mum** had to return with me to explain the near-date of my becoming school age!

I remember using slate and slate pencils at school for the first years.

We learnt what were called pot hooks, and did rows of them.

At school there was a big hall and we had 1d (penny) concerts where pupils who had talent tap danced, recited or played the piano.

Most children at that time learned one of the following: dancing, gym, piano, violin or elocution.

Lots of little girls learnt to tap and to dance - they mostly wore their hair in '**Shirley Temple**' curls and had cute dresses, with big bows on their tap shoes.

The children who did not learn to dance used to peep round the door to watch the pupils, then we would imitate what they did at backyard concerts.

These were concerts which about seven or eight of us would act on each other's verandahs and hopefully get a few mates to watch.

We usually got around in groups; big sisters and brothers with littlies following. It was quite safe to wander around streets and parks (even at night time we could play in the street on a summer evening).

I remember our street, or rather two, as we lived on a corner. We knew most neighbours' backyards nearly as well as our own - a lot of people had chooks and had a hen house, and they also had wood sheds.

Wood sheds had a nice smell when the woodman called with his load of cut wood. The wood was usually too big for most stoves so boys had to cut the kindling (that was small wood to start the fire).

Quite a few mothers (mine included) could use an axe on the wood. I think the small axe was called a 'tommy hawk'.

As well as a woodman, we had a 'Bottle-O' - the man who bought the empty bottles.

There was an iceman, as this was before fridges. In fact, as a little child



● **Marjory Lawrence, aged about 2 or 3, at Thornbury.**

we didn't have an ice chest and had to have shopping done daily to get fresh meat from the butcher.

A butcher boy would bring an order even if only 1lb (pound of weight) of sausages.

Also in the summer, a milkman called twice a day and measured out milk from a large can with a quarter-pint measure into our billy can.

We used to wait about for him to arrive to get a cool drink. Mostly we drank water or cups of tea.

Cordial was for **Christmas**, and lemonade, ginger beer or Kola Beer were party time.

At mates' parties we put paper hats on and played ordinary games with

perhaps 'musical chairs', then had a tea - usually bread and butter with 'hundreds and thousands', sausage rolls, cakes and jellies.

They were very simple and children didn't usually take along presents.

On our birthdays we would get presents from our parents and family, usually books in our family, and we read each other's books thoroughly.

The only cards we would get would be from '**Sunbeams**' in the Saturday **Sun** paper.

Sometimes our **Sunday School** teacher would give us a card.

Marjory Long: 'I remember ...'

We went to **Sunday School** in the afternoon, and for a lot of churchgoers it was a full day with services in the morning and evening.

Most people had a roast lunch on Sunday, and a cold meat and salad tea with scones and trifle.

It was usually alright to ask friends for tea Sunday night, and it was great fun to be guest at your girlfriend's house on Sunday as it seemed quite a different place to weekdays.

At one of my friend's place (**Dulcie**), she had a lot of lovely cups and saucers that had been gifts, and on Sunday tea I would be allowed to use one set.

As we got older we would go to evening church in a group (girls and boys) or listen to the wireless plays.

★

Other tradesmen to call were the grocer, baker, rabbit-O, and we had an egg man.

There were lots of men who used to call and open a case and sell things like combs, shoe laces and pins.

Sometimes a man called to sharpen scissors and knives.

Lots of houses had ladies call to help in the house or do the washing. They usually sat down and had lunch with the family.

We had a lady help called **Edie** and she stayed a number of years.

The postman called twice a day and even came around on Saturday.

Thinking back, our home was a hub of people. My father had lunch at home - also afternoon tea (a cloth was laid for every meal).

We children while at state school came home for lunch.

Different aunts would have calling days for afternoon tea.

Then when we got older with **Scouts and Guides**, there would be different mates of my brother and sisters calling daily.

My two sisters and I shared a bedroom, and crammed it with our belongings.

Sister **Joy** organised us into a club called **Chummy Club** (I think). She wrote us a magazine regularly.

I was a **Brownie** and remember, at our meetings for a long time, our **Mushroom** to dance around was a dish painted brown on a stick. Money was scarce to buy things.

At **Brownies** we had outings and once we went on the **Yarra River** to the **Botanical Gardens**, and another time to the **Fairy Tree** in the **Fitzroy Gardens**.

(These were special days.)



● Marjory Lawrence at Clarendon St, Thornbury. 1930s

As a **Brownie**, I went one day to the **Jamboree** at **Frankston**, and we did as dance in the area before **Lord** and **Lady Baden-Powell**.

I had a dog (**Meggs**). The family, before that, had a dog **Billy**, and we had a lot of dogs at the factory.

One day **Meggs** was with me on the main street and a policeman took my name and address as dogs weren't allowed on the street.

The factory mentioned was **Lawrence Leathers**. My **Dad** was Managing Director.

It was a tannery, and as well as doing leather work, my **Dad** did the

office work. The factory was on the same block as our house, and as most of my Uncles worked at the factory, some of them lived close by, and I saw them often as I played in the factory grounds.

I used to chat with the men as they tacked skins on to boards.

When I was older I used to play tennis on the court at the factory.

The tannery was pulled down about 1970.

At one time at the factory, instead of, or as well as making leather bands for inside men's hats, a lot of leather belts were made.

The Long Way

Marjory Long: 'I remember ...'



● Marjory with bicycle at Clarendon St



● Lawrence sisters: Marjory, Sylvia, Joy



● Marjory beside the family car (Pontiac?) at Merricks



● Marjory's parents: Honora and Albert Lawrence



● Dulcie Nash, Peg Murray and Marj at Preston Girls' High



● Marjory outside 18 Clarendon St, Thornbury



● Marjory at Merricks Beach

Marjory Long: 'I remember ...'

These were about two inches wide with big leather buckles and were quite a new venture - all colours including gold and silver.

Of course, my sisters and I had loads of belts (also small wallets). Later, after many years, money purses were popular.

The leather hat bands had short silk ribbons threaded in each end and this was called 'piecwork' and lots of neighbours did this work at home getting a gross (144) box at a time.

A lot of the girls who did sewing machine work at the factory lived in our street and they would go to work already wearing aprons.

My **Grandma** and **Grandpa Lawrence** lived in a home a few houses from ours and this had a flat beside it. At one time my **Mum** and **Dad** had lived in the flat till I was born and they built our home.

My **Grandma** had a wash house which was a large room in the yard and contained a bath, as well as a copper and troughs for clothes.

Grandpa also had a rain barrel for washing his hands.

Grandpa always dressed well and wore a gold watch chain. He liked going to horse races.

My **Grandma** was a little lady and when she died they laid her in a coffin in her bedroom, and we all went in to see her body.

Grandpa also had a house with a tower at **Black Rock** (later it belonged to an Aunt and Uncle).

Some days we went there and had a swim at **Half Moon Bay** and for a treat had an ice cream soda - this was



● Surf Street, Merricks Beach. Circa 1920s.

a soft drink poured over an ice cream.

We were allowed to go up to the tower room and look out across the bay.

We had a holiday home at **Merricks**, across the road from the sea shore.

In the winter the road for the last few miles was so bad we had chains on the car.

Often we came home Monday mornings and had to get up early for the trip so that we could get home for **Dad** to open the factory (8am I think), have some breakfast and go to school.

One morning there was a kangaroo on the road, and always there were dozens of rabbits.

My **Dad** had a big net and a friend with a boat used to help, and the net

was taken out to sea and then everyone who was about helped pull it in (often full of seaweed, shells and perhaps a few fish).

There were only about six houses at the beach side and all the children gathered together.

We would sometimes light a fire on the beach and cook potatoes.

One house was a store and we could get milk in a billy can and then we could try a trick.

The billy had no lid on it. We would slowly swing it a little way back and forth, and then higher and faster, but we swung it in a complete circle without spilling the milk.

We walked miles and miles on the beach and around the countryside, mostly all swimming at the same time, complete with family dogs.

The car we went in had a running board (a step along the side), and for packing bedding and clothes, a rug was put on the floor, a few things put on top of it, and the rug rolled like a big sausage, and tied a few times, and fixed to the running board.

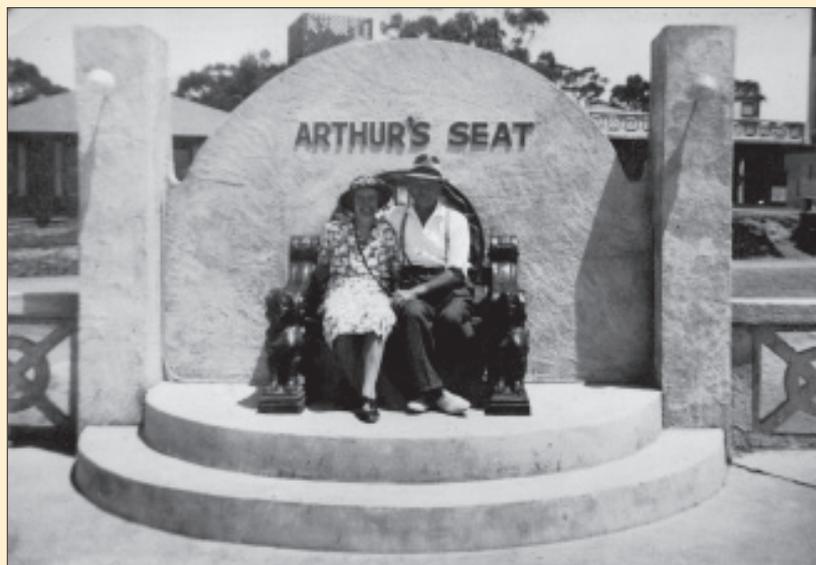
There was no TV or wireless at the beach house, but we had a gramophone (record player) and our neighbour had a piano.

Our light was a few lanterns and candles with holders when we went to bed.

One day we went to **Phillip Island** by a ferry boat and took our car on the ship.

One **Christmastime** some neighbours called in for some **Christmas** pudding. People used to put sixpence (5 cents) in the pudding.

These people must have collected



● Marjory's parents, Honora (nee O'Brien), and Albert Fletcher Lawrence at Arthurs Seat on the Mornington Peninsula. 1930s.

Marjory Long: 'I remember ...'

all the coins and put in my piece because it was full of money. I couldn't believe it.

As more people stayed at **Merricks Beach**, we had a sand castle competition one day each summer.

Most children built large castles and older people would make models in the sand.

Prizes were usually about 10/- (one dollar) or sweets. One year I was proud to win first prize.

When I was young at the beach my Uncles would come down and drive cars and motor bikes along the sand just above the water line.

Motor bikes often had little box cars on the side and a lady and/or children sat inside the side car.

For large picnics people would sit in the back of furniture removal vans, and as they rode along they would sing songs.

When we had **Sunday School** picnics on **Cup Day** we went to the site by steam train.

The day before this picnic we always got new canvas running shoes, and that night would go to the Church hall for our tickets, all the children very excited.

At the picnic we had lunch of sandwiches and buns, and a drink of red cordial, and then had races, winners receiving sweets,

The trip in the steam train was an event in itself.

Another day out was at the **Royal Show**. School holidays were the same time. We would go by train, usually taking a picnic lunch.

We collected sample bags. Samples were free and we would collect rulers and pencils, also blotting paper (which was used when we wrote with pen and ink).

Food samples were little tins of biscuits, perhaps six biscuits in the tin. There were also tins of condensed milk and quarter-size bottles of tomato sauce.

Guy Fawkes Day was another event when we built a bonfire on a nearby paddock and all the children brought their fireworks, and we congregated together for the fun.

Our fireworks (crackers, bungers, sparklers, 'Catherine Wheels', 'Jumping Jacks' and rockets) were bought off a **Chinese** man at his laundry.

We were scared of the poor man who had a pigtail on his head, but that added to the excitement of getting the fireworks.



● Marjory's brother Jack, with friend George, at Merricks Beach

Another day for fireworks was **Empire Day**. At school we lined up and saluted the flag and usually a Councillor gave the school a painting and each child received a bag of lollies and an apple.

Each Monday at school we had a march around the flag pole, and the flag was raised with the children saluting.

Thinking back to the **Sunday School** picnic, the teachers spent hours the night before, cutting sandwiches, etc. One **Cup Day** it rained heavily and we all went to the Church hall and had games and had the picnic in the hall.

Sunday School had anniversaries when the hall would be decorated with fresh and paper flowers.

A large stand would be erected for the children to sit on and we would practise hymns for weeks to sing on the two Sundays.

At the end of the year we had prize giving when we got books, if we had attended enough Sundays in the year.

Another event was the **Sunday School** concert. Most costumes were made of crepe paper.

Each class put on an act - one year

I was a fairy in a yellow paper dress, and sang and danced with several other little girls.

We often had fancy dress parades where people dressed as characters, and also parades where we decorated bikes or dolls' prams with coloured paper.

There was a big pageant at our **Town Hall (Northcote)**.

My sister (**Joy**) was a princess, and brother (**Jack**) was a page dressed in white satin.

I was a **Brownie** and asked to stand on the stage and hold a flag. I was too shy, but was disappointed later when the girl who took my place received gifts of flowers, chocolates, etc from the audience.

I remember games we played of rounders, skip rope, hopscotch, ball throwing, cherry bobs, hoops.

Hopscotch was played on the paths with a pattern drawn by chalk, and cherry bobs played with cherry stones. There was a cardboard spinning wheel with race horse names on it - this was about **Cup** time.

The cherry stones were for bets on horses.