

# Indomitable Mouse

An Autobiography



EDNA PAECH

*The bulk of this autobiography was written  
and printed in January 2010, and given personally only  
to members of Edna's family and close friends.  
Her Postscript, written in 2012, is included  
for the first time in this revised 100th Birthday edition.*

This digital edition was published after Edna's death,  
13 October 2021.

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*Edna Paech asserts the moral right to be  
identified as the author of this work.*

*Please address inquiries about any aspect of this book to  
John Paech [johnpaech2@outlook.com](mailto:johnpaech2@outlook.com)*

*LOVE is patient, love is kind.  
Love does not envy, love does not boast,  
love is not proud.*

*Love does not dishonour others,  
love is not self-seeking,  
love is not easily angered,  
love keeps no record of wrongs.*

*Love does not delight in evil  
but rejoices with the truth.*

*Love always protects, always trusts,  
always hopes, always perseveres.*

*Love never fails...*

*These three remain:  
faith, hope and love.*

*But the greatest of these is  
LOVE.*



Edna's children ask her readers to remember Edna with the words of St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

# Edna Emlie Paech (Müller)

28 January 1921–13 October 2021

Died peacefully in her 101st year at  
Sunnyside Lutheran Retirement Village, Horsham.

Beloved wife of Lutheran Pastor John (dec), and his  
partner in establishing Luther College, Croydon.

Loving and caring mother of John (Vivienne),  
Paul, and Kathy (Noel, dec).

Highly respected and loved grandmother of Matthew  
(Leanne), Miriam (Brent), and Sarah (Chris).

Role-model and dear great-grandmother to Miriam's  
Alicia & Callum, and Matthew's Liam, Connor and Jesse.

Sister of Vida Lehmann, Herb Miller, Dorothy Seers,  
and Elsie Web (all dec).

Loved by all with whom she engaged, as she  
lived out her strong Christian faith.



**"The world is a lesser place today."**

Attributed to a loving member of the staff at Sunnyside  
Lutheran Retirement Village when meeting the village  
Chaplin on the day after Edna's death

Edna Paech  
is turning...

100

Her family would be pleased if you would join us to celebrate the blessings that her life so far has brought.

2:30–4:30pm, Sat 30 January 2021

Horsham Sports & Community Club  
(‘Sporties’), Horsham Vic

RSVP John Paech 0417 529 330  
by 27 Jan at the latest.



*When 21-y-o Edna Muller graduated from the University of Melbourne, she could never have imagined what lay ahead...*

This photo was the cover of a special edition of 35 copies of this autobiography produced by Edna's family for guests who attended her 100th birthday celebrations.



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# Indomitable Mouse



## I BEGINNING

In Dimboola, in the midst of a typical Wimmera heat wave, my mother, Agnes Muller, aged 32, was in labour for the fifth time. Her first baby, Paul, born in 1910, had lived for only three days, after what she later described as “an awful birth”. She successfully bore three other children: Vida, in 1911; Herbert, later to be called Bert, in 1913; and Dorothy in 1917. On her marriage to my father, Paul, in 1909, she had become a loving and devoted stepmother to his young son, Ernst, then aged almost five. Ernst’s mother (nee Evaline Mibus) had died in 1906.

The doctor attending my mother was a young and relatively inexperienced general practitioner, Dr Germon, ably assisted by Mrs Hirth, proprietor of the hospital and a capable midwife.

On January 28, 1921, at precisely 6 o’clock in the morning, a healthy little girl (Edna) was born, weighing eight and a half pounds. I imagine that Mum must have said something like, “Oh, at last this hard labour’s over! Now for a rest.”

But not for long. Dr Germon roused her with the startling news of a second babe ready to be born. “Twins!” she gasped. “Oh, it can’t be!” So, at 6.30, Elsie emerged, healthy and weighing eight pounds. Identical twins. Such news to tell all the families.

It was evening before Dad gave the news to my siblings: “You’ve got two little sisters.” At that time – or at least in my family – children were kept in ignorance of such happenings as pregnancy and childbirth, and so even Vida, then in her tenth year, was stunned by such news, but at last she was able to grasp the reason for Mum’s unexplained absence from home, and the fact that Auntie Het and Auntie Lou, Mum’s sisters, were in residence. What a surprise for my eldest sister! I believe she was thrilled. Not so, Grandma Schaefer, who promptly consigned her then only

son-in-law to the terrors of everlasting divine retribution. This malediction proved utterly ineffective.

During their stay in hospital the babies were given provisional names by the nurses: Betty and Rita. A final choice of names was made some weeks later, when our parents and one of the Schaefer aunts were driving to Kornheim for the sacrament of baptism, to be administered by the Lutheran pastor. I was given the names Edna Emilie, and my twin, Elsie Louise. Our second names were those of our two grandmothers, but I have no idea of the source of our first names. No matter.

So we thrived, as expected, and Mum coped admirably. Not only was she extremely busy with her new infants and three older children, but she opened her heart and offered to board the new teacher who had come from Melbourne to take charge of the brand-new school that had just opened, a mile from the homestead.

## 2 EARLY YEARS

My memories of early childhood are based mainly on stories told me by my older siblings and reinforced by treasured photos of peas-in-a-pod little girls.

I am certain that the nature of our twinship, encouraged to a marked degree by our close resemblance and our mother's insistence on our being dressed alike, even into our late teen years, had a lasting impact on what I still believe to have been a late development of our individuality. It will be obvious that I still use the pronoun *we* when referring to childhood and adolescent aspects of my life. This presents no problem to me, nor, I am sure, to Elsie. Elsie and I must have appeared to others as inseparable, for that was just the way it was. No-one questioned this. Like so much else, it was simply accepted as the norm.

A handful of escapades from those early times live on for both of us. Our teddy bears, Christmas presents from about five years of age, endured amateur haircuts, from which they never recovered. Mine suffered an even worse disfigurement, when my curiosity concerning the source and nature of his friendly growl left him permanently silent.

On another occasion, when Mum had been shopping in Dimboola and eventually laid the groceries out on the kitchen table, and briefly disappeared – probably to change into “home clothes” – we little ones found a small tin full of wrapped chocolate squares: irresistible Laxettes. Too late! A panicky phone call to the doctor brought swift relief in drinks of salt water. Again a risky attempt at experimenting brought long-lasting shame.

One summer's day, we were enjoying watching the men perform a necessary task in slushing the home dam. The slush-box, pulled by the draught horse, was laboriously dragged through the near-empty dam, to be emptied at the end of the dam, there to dry and set before the autumn channel run. The smooth surface of the mud proved utterly enticing and, somehow or other, we found a couple of sticks to write on it.

By this stage, our elders had taught us some basic spelling and writing, so here was an opportunity to show them what smart little kids we were. I cannot recall which of us made the ultimate decision to honour our parents by writing their names in the mud: Paul and Agness (*sic*). Discovery led to a good old-fashioned hiding, which cured our initiative and the disregard of children's duty of respect for parents. Enough of learning the hard way. But our childhood through pre-school years was basically carefree and happy.

### 3 FARM LIFE IN THE 1920S

My father's farm was situated five miles north-east of the township of Dimboola and consisted originally of somewhat less than the one square mile (640 acres), which was the regulation measurement of land that could be purchased by immigrant settlers around the middle of the nineteenth century.

How or when Dad acquired his farm I do not know, but I have in my possession a beautiful engraved silver tea kettle that he won in a farm competition in 1911, giving evidence that, at that time, his farm was less than the above figure. At that time, he was aged 33, a young man to have scooped the pool among those progressive farmers interested in competitions sponsored by the Dimboola A & P Society.

Over time he was able to acquire some adjacent land, all of which he farmed admirably. Some framed certificates attesting to later successes now hang in the Dimboola Museum, after adorning our earlier homes for many years. These trophies surely did not come without effort and the application of fine-tuned skills and knowledge.

Dad learned from his family elders the then customary routine of alternating crops of wheat, oats and barley, and the regular fallowing of paddocks to retain the excellent fertility of the Wimmera plains. When superphosphate came into general use there I do not know, but it remained a dominant fertilizer for decades.

So very different a scene from those same plains now in 2010! Another huge change from then to now is the complete out-dating of grain delivered to the rail-head in hard-filled, sewn jute bags.

Those were the days when a good bag-sewer earned a good wage at harvest time, and strong men ruined their backs by carrying many a bag on their shoulders, up a wooden plank and into the railway trucks at the railway station. Draught horses and wagons were the common mode of transport, slow but efficient, not to mention the evident understanding existing between these well trained horses and their owner.

Dad was justly proud of his Clydesdale horses. They truly were magnificent creatures, and, as in the quality of cereal production, they won numerous awards in agricultural shows, including in Adelaide. So highly regarded was my father's knowledge of horseflesh that he frequently judged draught horses in district shows.

Towards the close of the 1920s, when many farmers were making a change from horses to tractor power, Dad resisted this modern trend, and kept on with his teams. Dad was to retire and move into the substantial home in Warracknabeal

Road, Dimboola, at the end of harvest in 1929, just prior to the Great Depression that was to hit the world soon afterwards.

I doubt that he was prescient about this at the time, but the new owner of the farm found serious difficulties for some years in even paying the interest on his mortgage, leave alone the principal. I am aware, however, that Paul was a most generous benefactor to many who were facing financial difficulties during the Depression, though such practical help was given without our knowledge until many years later.

The retirement home, a substantial brick house, with grey roughcast exterior walls and deep brown terracotta tiled roof, was something of a show place in Warracknabeal Road. My father had purchased a large block of land, adjacent to the house block, which boasted many mallee trees which provided him with the enjoyment of continuing work in the early stages of retirement as he swung his pick and axe to clear the scrubby trees for firewood, as well as grazing land for a couple of house cows. Always a very active man, he quietly eased himself into retirement living, and eventually joined the bowling club, where he enjoyed men's company. My mother became enamoured of the game of croquet, which shared common ground with that of the bowlers. Both of them found new friendships through these connections, along with their close association with the local Lutheran Church.

From much earlier times, Dad was a respected elder of the Dimboola congregation, an office that he continued for many years. He was also a competent lay-reader, including, in the years prior to World War II, leading services in German as well as in English. I used to think that he was incapable of refusing any request to be useful as a member of the community, whether this was family, church or municipality. He certainly set a fine example for all the family.

I should be doing a great disservice to my mother if I were to neglect in this portion of my story to write of her equally significant role in social responsibility. In addition to being, naturally, prime carer for the children, she also took upon herself the provision of a home with the family for the teachers – a succession of trained women, all single – who were to take control of the state school where we were to receive our first taste of formal education. Then, too, she was a founding member of the Women's Guild of the Lutheran Church in Dimboola. I believe that she also served on the executive committee for some considerable time.

The sheer magnitude of the domestic side of farming in the 1920s involved long hours and busy days, especially during the summer, when, besides seeing to the needs of the family and especially the harvest workers, this was the time when the big orchard was producing abundant fruit which, of necessity, had to be processed

as jam or preserves, on the big wood stove, and eventually stored in the underground cellar.

That she taught herself to drive the car, a grey Dodge tourer, meant not only a remarkable achievement and a degree of independence for herself, but a most welcome opportunity for her to drive into town and secure any essential spare part that might be needed should there be some breakdown in the machinery. This is so typical of the versatility that was part of the farming families' lifestyle in those days.

School days were happy and fulfilling. I never felt that learning new skills was hard work, nor were any of us children at that stage aware of the word boredom. Maybe part of the reason for this was the fact that I always had Elsie's pleasant companionship, along with a great sense of freedom and safety, and of order and cohesion in the family circle. The house yard and extensive garden were bounded by a high picket fence, with gates beyond which we twins were not allowed to wander without supervision. After all, there was a large dam nearby, and a pet black swan who guarded his own quarters and tended to be jealous of his rights there.

On Sunday afternoons there might be a visit by car to the Schaefer homestead about three miles away. Grandma, ample of build and dour of nature, was disabled (for as long as I could remember) as a result of a stroke, and always needed help to walk; there were always my single aunts on hand, or the married ones who might be visiting at the time.

But Grandpa, always looking the thoroughly dapper gentleman, sitting in his Morris chair gave us little children a great deal of fun. Individually, we sat on his outstretched leg, while he bounced us up to the accelerating tempo of an old German action song – while he sang.

*So reiten die Herren,  
So reiten die Damen,  
So reiten die Bauern,  
Dumpsa, dumpsa. dumps!*

When we came a buster, it was all great good fun.

Mum's younger brother Otto, single then, seemed always ready to take us Müller nieces on bush walks especially in spring, when we picked bunches of pretty wild flowers such as orchids, heath, purple peas, bread-and-butter and thryptomene. In the little "stone reserve" we found a wonder-world of nature's gifts, though our siblings continually warned us of tigers and lions that lay in wait for little kids who might invade their small area.

As we grew older and slightly more adventurous, we would climb up to the straw-thatched roofs of the sheds and reach into sparrow nests to steal new-laid

eggs or hatchling “spridgies”. Such ugly, wriggling, squawking things! Mum never knew about these adventures, so she was able to live on to her 95 years.

At home our mother was kept perpetually busy. We were a big household: parents, six children, a farm helper and a maid, plus the teacher. Housework was meticulously done without benefit of electricity for cooking, washing, ironing and water heating. But the rest of the surrounding farming community followed the same pattern, accepting certain drudgery as the norm. Ours was no different.

Of course, no one had a refrigerator until the 1930s, and thus a cellar was essential for keeping food fresh: milk, butter, meat, home-smoked ham and bacon, plus sausage made at pig-killing time, etc. At the Gums, the cellar lay under a hinged door in the large room beside the kitchen. Raising this door by a leather strap handle revealed a flight of wooden steps, without a hand rail, and up came a healthy odour of cool goodies that had been processed in season.

Mum and her maid were extremely busy during the summer months, when harvesting was in full swing; meals had to be on time and generous, and morning and afternoon lunches needed to be carried out to the paddock for the men’s rest breaks. The fruit from the orchard, picked at peak ripeness, was processed into jam (mostly plum, peach and apricot) or preserved in syrup, all on the wood stove, regardless of the weather. Mum’s jams, pickles and chutneys won prizes in the local agricultural show, where many other housewives enjoyed keen competition.

Once the busy harvest season came to an end, it was time for the family or at least some of the children and our parents to head off by car for a week’s holiday in Portland. This respite had to be timed also for the school year. In turn all of us children attended the Dimboola North State School, which was about a mile from our home. In the year of my birth that school had been acquired through the efforts of my father and Mr. D.S. Anderson, who was Shire President at the time. It was shifted by bullock wagon from Salisbury and remained in use for about a generation. From 1921 to the end of 1928 the teacher always boarded with our family. Elsie and I began our education there at the age of six. By that time Vida had left school, having earned her Merit Certificate, and Bert was already attending the Higher Elementary School in Dimboola, boarding in the town. His interest was not in farming, and besides this, an early attack of rheumatic fever had left him with a somewhat impaired heart; this probably contributed to this decision to follow engineering, which he did at the School of Mines in Ballarat. Bert spent the bulk of his professional life with BHP, initially in field work and eventually in administration, particularly in the ship building enterprise in Whyalla.

On June 1, 1926, my half-brother Ernst became seriously ill and died of a

brain tumour in a Melbourne Hospital on the eve of his 22nd birthday. Mum had spent time with him there during this illness. In later years she spoke to me with deep emotion of their mutual love and understanding. I never really knew Ernst well, I suppose because of our age difference – after all, he was almost 17 years my senior – and also the unexplained nature of who he was and of his position in the family. Again, a case of “ask no questions”.

I am sure that Ernst's death at such a young age must have been a tragic blow to both of our parents, but they would have found comfort in the inscription that they chose for the headstone on his grave: “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy Cross I cling” from the 18th Century Hymn “Rock of Ages” by Augustus Montague Toplady. The double grave in the Dimboola Cemetery would be shared later by my parents, Paul in 1957 and Agnes in 1985 respectively. Of Ernst's funeral I recall only his coffin and a posy of violets on it in the Lutheran Church in Dimboola. Nothing else.

In our family children did not attend burials of even the closest relatives. In fact I had my first experience of attending a funeral, and that a cremation, during my first year of marriage (1946) in Wellington, New Zealand. I had a great deal yet to learn.

But, back to family life. Vida, now out of school, had become Mum's general domestic and unpaid assistant!

## 4 MY DAD'S RETIREMENT

With Ernst's death and Bert's decision on a career in engineering, Dad now had no son to follow him on the farm, and retirement in Dimboola beckoned. Plans were underway for a new home to be built. He purchased land in Warracknabeal Road, not far from where his mother was then living in a neat weatherboard home that he had provided for her and adjoining the big stone and brick home where his brother Ern and wife Sarah lived with their family of two sons and three daughters. He engaged Arnold Hoepner to design and build a substantial brick retirement home where I would spend my adolescent years.

On Sunday mornings during 1928, we would keep an eye on building progress when stopping by after Church, we kids dreaming our fanciful dreams while our parents were making more concrete plans for their retirement. It truly was for its time a quite grand dwelling, comprising a spacious entrance hall, four big bedrooms, a combined lounge/dining room and a breakfast room (the daily dining room) and ample kitchen, bathroom, laundry and Mum's delight, a sewing room. All this surrounded by garden space and an adjoining farmlet for poultry and a cow. The residence was named Kuruga and still presents well.

After harvest in 1929, the farm was sold to Lou and Pearl King (I think from Kalkee). A clearing sale apparently successfully took care of stock and farm equipment.

I must say that Elsie and I had little regret over the move from the farm to a brand-new home and to a big school where each grade, averaging somewhat over twenty pupils, had its own teacher and also its own separate class room. Life began to be exciting, despite the initial shock of integrating into a new environment where we two needed each other for security. We were both shy, scared to ask for help and direction.

On our first day at the Dimboola State School, our cousin Avis (youngest of Uncle Ern and Aunt Sarah's children) told us to wait for her at dinner time in the corridor. Neither of us knew what a corridor was so we just waited, successfully, at the main doorway until Avis found us and escorted us home.

Our Grade IV teacher was Miss Bessie Webster, whom I remember fondly, typical of primary teachers in those days: firm in discipline, sound in method and genuinely keen to do her job, with no nonsense and no favourites.

We newcomers adapted readily enough, neither shining nor causing trouble. Mice would have been role models for us at that stage. I felt that we twins were regarded by our peers as oddities, always together and not seeking friend-

ships among the other girls, who seemed to be permanently having lots of fun and games at recess time. We were quite content in our ready-made companionship; we needed no one from outside – not yet – and an invisible and seemingly impenetrable barrier surrounded us. Only much later did this confining barrier begin to crumble, as we gained strength.

Our first year as townies passed quite smoothly for us children, though it was a grim year for the world, the onset of the Great Depression. I know that it was very hard for the farming community, and many bad debts eventuated in the Wimmera.

In later years, when I was old enough to have some grasp of economics, Bert would remind me that our father had remained committed to horse power on the farm during the last years of the 1920s when neighbours were switching to tractors and going bust. Had Dad foreseen the Depression? Perhaps. I know that the King family suffered then and also a decade or more later during World War 2. In fact the whole world suffered in those years. But my father was made of stern stuff and so was our loyal Mum.

## 5 SECONDARY SCHOOL

The two years spent in Primary School passed without major events, barring perhaps a developing of some degree of sociability and a weakening of sisterly interdependence. I should include a long-delayed tribute to my primary school teachers, who were meticulous in imparting an excellent grounding in spelling, grammar, mathematics and time management. Since that time, various alternative theories have been tried, such as the “look and say” method of reading, later found wanting, and also the quirky Cuisenaire method of teaching elementary arithmetic.

Come 1932 and we twins were embarking on secondary schooling in the Higher Elementary School, which was only a few minutes walk from our home. Among changes were strict requirements for uniform. Curriculum brought significant changes that proved to be exciting and challenging, even though the first year intake, F Form, were the little kids, many of us having sophisticated siblings in higher forms. For us this was sister Dorothy.

The greatest change, for me at least, was a raft of new subjects: science, mathematics (for this divided into arithmetic, algebra, geometry and trigonometry) which I really liked. Then art and French best of all and a specialist teacher for each subject.

Wide-eyed and naïve, Elsie and I threw ourselves eagerly into this new and wonderful academic world. We both did well enough, vying for first or second place in our term exams. Learning new skills and memorizing presented few problems, but even now at 90 years old I am regretful that reading for pleasure was something that was missing from our agenda. Thus imagination lay neglected and undeveloped during those school years.

Reading having been actively discouraged at home, I went through school years lacking understanding of human nature, social intercourse and appreciation of literature. Right now I confess to an addiction to print. Believe me when I write that it was only during this last winter, at ninety, that I relished my first reading of “Lorna Doone”. I can scarcely believe that I have had so much joy and benefit from the later study of classical English literature.

But back to DHES, a secondary school to year 10, that was built as a memorial soon after the end of the 1914–18 War, a most appropriate and truly progressive effort by the townspeople. The original building is still in use, and partly surrounded by numerous new buildings and sports grounds to cope with growth in student numbers and consequent upgrading to the status of a High School.

It was during my years in this school that I decided to become a teach-

er. I was hoping to teach at secondary level, and Elsie, primary, and in time these ambitions would be realized. How much my teachers inspired me I cannot determine, but I am certain that some of the more progressive ones greatly influenced my choice of career.

With heads spinning and dreams appealing, Elsie and I achieved good results in the Public Exams and attained Intermediate Certificates at the age of 14. Somehow I ended up with a gold medal in 1935 for being Dux of the School. Most likely my aggregate exam marks were only marginally higher than Elsie's! We were rivals in most areas.

Then followed a year of correspondence study at school, where we occupied a dingy corridor. We did four Leaving Certificate subjects with lessons provided by the Education Department. Minimal supervision and some ready help given by various teachers kept us busy. The weekly assignments had to be delivered to the Head Master by 4 pm every Friday afternoon for posting. Marked papers would be returned with comments a week or so later. Many were the willing and spirited interchanges between us two, but I am sure the competition was beneficial.

Early in 1936 wedding fever was in the air. Vide had become engaged to Herb Lehmann, a farmer from Katyil, and they had set April 15th as their wedding day, the same date as our parents had chosen back in 1909. This was to be the first marriage in both the Müller and Lehmann families. Exciting times for all of us.

Our mother found herself very busy, attending to hundreds of details. Vide told me many years later that Mum did an enormous amount of organizing, including selecting the bride's beautiful magnolia satin gown and elegant veil, the personnel of the wedding party (us three younger sisters and Herb's older sister as bridesmaids and also the male attendants). The bridesmaids' dresses were also Mum's choice, autumn colours, exotic styling and something to be talked about. All this without a word of mother-daughter consultation! It was to be "the wedding of the year" for the mother of the bride as well as for the sweet and mild-natured Vide in her 25th year. A Dimboola version of Melbourne's Table Talk? Vide was a lovely bride, for sure.

I should mention that, during this final year at DHES, I became aware of boys, particularly of the Headmaster's youngest son who was becoming something of a distraction. But more of this later.

## 6 HORSHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Here I must pay tribute to our ambitious mother, ambitious for her twins. Somehow she managed to persuade Dad that they should provided funds to enable us to continue study to Matriculation and even tertiary level. It was she who organized enrolment for us at Horsham High School in 1937 and private board from Monday to Friday. Another step along the career path. She spent much time at her sewing machine making new navy blue uniforms and after-school wear. Luckily for us, we boarded with the Hinneberg family in Dimboola Road, an easy walking distance from the school. We were two of four boarders there, and well and happily cared for.

Our new school, much bigger than Dimboola's, proved to be a real turning point. Adolescence brought many surprises, not least some stinging barbs from over-critical and under-sensitive girl class mates, especially concerning a common conception that twins, particularly identical, were really only half persons with half brains. But we survived that.

Great teaching from thoroughly admirable teachers enabled both of us to develop skills, hitherto very ordinary, in study as well as in self esteem and social niceties. But we were very happy when Friday afternoons came around and Dad would be waiting in the car at the school gate, suitcases on board, ready to take us home for the weekend.

We joyfully awaited the birth of Vide and Herb's baby, sweet little Margaret who was born on December 27, 1937, in Dimboola. We twins had knitted some clothes for her in fine white wool, as we had done earlier for babies in the Schaefer family. We were in those days kept in the dark of ignorance of who was pregnant. Such things were not discussed within reach of little pigs' ears until Margaret was making her presence obvious. Belatedly and secretly we became aware of some basic facts of reproduction. No more talk of cabbage patches.

By year's end at school our exam results were more than satisfactory and we were re-enrolled for another year in Horsham. I felt that finally I was coming to grips with real study, especially in English and French. Probably a growing realization that broadening of the mind through challenging texts, allied with expert and encouraging teaching, was more than compensating for lost opportunities that I have already mentioned.

Associating more easily with peers was also a source of pleasure and a stimulant to a more mature attitude to study. I found a great deal of enjoyment in English Literature, under the inspiring leadership of Miss Brosnan in "King Lear" and of Miss Taysom in "Macbeth". The benefits are still with me now in 2010, a mark of

truly engaging instruction. Mr. Mein brought me a useful and more than satisfying knowledge of French and Mr. Jamieson, the Headmaster, guided me through Economics and Commercial Practice. I am grateful for their efforts.

The final public exams, all of them three-hour papers, resulted in my gaining a scholarship for an Arts Degree in the University of Melbourne. At the beginning of 1939 I was appointed as a Junior Teacher in the Nhill Primary School. My job was to understudy the Infant Mistress, Miss Sporn, taking charge of a group of "infants". I disliked this work intensely, but it was all part of a process of teacher training. Several weeks into this program, I received word of the above mentioned Scholarship. What a windfall! So totally unexpected!

## 7 UNIVERSITY

My scholarship was worth forty pounds a year, enough to cover lecture fees. Mum took me to Melbourne, and, due credit to her, led me through the necessary interviews and procedures. I was fortunate to be welcomed as a boarder by Aunt Lena and Uncle Otto in their home in Seddon. They were wonderfully good to me for the ensuing three years, giving me a loving and supportive home away from home.

The Schaefer household at 16 Princess Street, Seddon, consisted of Uncle Ott (favourite uncle), Aunt Lena, their children Brian and Agnes (then aged twelve and nine respectively), and two young male boarders. Aunt Lena was a most capable housewife, always understanding, sweet-tempered and exuding Christian tolerance and love. Her splendid Christian example was truly an inspiration to me as I was coping with my late entry into adulthood, and the demands of tertiary study.

The developments of 1939 were really quite life-changing for Elsie and me, now that we had to face the inevitable separation that neither of us had seriously contemplated until then. For the first time we were missing that intimate togetherness we had long found so comforting; it had, I suppose, something of the quality of a youngster's security blanket. Now tossed aside, it had left us to sink or swim as we were forced back onto our own resources.

Other young women managed to cope on first leaving home – and so could we, if only we would keep both eyes focused on our dreams, and not give way to useless tears and self-negation. For my part, I was living with an extended family, but Elsie had no such emotional cushion, no tender-hearted aunt to “soothe a troubled breast” when sympathy and reassurance were desperately needed, and nowhere to be found.

Besides this very special advantage that had come to me, she had, because of her extreme shyness, been deprived of even the shadow of a more confident twin, a shadow that she admitted to only many years later. I had had no inkling of this until she spoke of it in a regretful way when we were in our senior years. Shyness is a great burden to a sensitive woman – as Elsie is by nature – and it delayed her developing of the remarkable blossoming that she is now enjoying in her years of independence in Mt. Barker, WA. The mouse had finally triumphed for her.

I was in awe of my lecturers and tutors, indeed of the whole institution, the venerable buildings and extensive grounds and the huge prospect of coping with my tasks. I must not disappoint my parents who were supporting me in hope as usual. Once I had settled into the routine of lectures and tutorials, I found new interest in study and enjoyed the growing challenges of note-taking and assignments. Mousi-

ness was still a huge disadvantage for me. I hoped that no one noticed me. At first, rather than study in the Uni Library, I would walk down Swanston Street at lunch-time – my lectures were all in the morning – past the obnoxious Carlton Brewery, to the Public Library and use reference books there. Eventually I was able to find enough courage to spend valuable time in the “on the spot” library. A significant breakthrough for me.

After some weeks, when travelling to Uni on the morning train, I spotted a handsome young woman whom I had seen in my English lectures. She made herself known: Betty Brett from Cobram, on scholarship and planning to become a secondary teacher. She proved an excellent find; we began a friendship that continues until 2010.

Another pleasant aspect of my Melbourne years was the continuing friendship of Hughie Butler, which had begun in Dimboola when we were both sixteen. We would meet in the City sometimes on Saturday afternoons and go to the cinema, as was the usual boy-girl entertainment in those days. It was a pleasant part of life for both of us.

Every week I would write to my parents, my sisters (especially Elsie) and Bert and to overseas pen-friends. Long-distance phone calls were far too expensive in those days, even for quite affluent people, and for penny-pinching students they were not on the agenda at all. When I passed my exams the best I could do was to send a brief telegram home costing about a shilling (ten cents) each time.

My subject choice was English A, B & C, French I, II, III, my majors. Then Economics I and Economic History (sub-majors) Philosophy I and Natural Philosophy I to make up the quota of ten. My nose was kept down for three years of truly hard work.

While I was home in September 1939, World War 2 broke out. Those who had been keeping abreast of international affairs had been predicting this for a comparatively long time, while Adolf Hitler was growing more popular and more powerful as Der Führer in Germany. For years, his intense hatred, scorn and fear of the Jews in Germany had been escalating. News of their being outlawed was appearing daily in the newspapers, along with horrifying stories of arrests and persecutions as Hitler’s henchmen pursued the villainy of the Nazi policy of ensuring the “purity” of the German population. Horrific concentration camps would accelerate this radicalism as the war progressed.

At home in Australia war had been declared immediately Great Britain had taken that step. We, too, were at war. Grim times would follow for our nation. Soon khaki uniforms became a common sight. Radio news was vital. Posters

appeared everywhere in the city – on trains, trams and hoardings. Slogans such as “Loose lips sink ships” were taken seriously. We became suspicious of strangers, all of us fearing the worst. While this was a new experience for my generation, for my parents it was a resurrection of perceived bitterness of their 1914–18 War experiences.

Our German-sounding name, with its umlaut over the u [ü], sometimes elicited racist jibes, I think from unsympathetic residents of Dimboola. But already by this time numerous foresighted European people, many of them Jews, had packed up and emigrated to freedom-loving Australia. Unusual surnames were popping up on attendance sheets doing the rounds in my lecture theatres. This was a beginning of a new multi-culturalism that would intensify in post-war years, but first the War was to be fought and won, and who could predict how and when that might be?

Men and women in service uniforms walked proudly through the city and on campus. At first, volunteers, but in time more and more were conscripted into the forces. Conscripts bore open scorn for their alleged lack of loyalty, being labelled “chocolate soldiers”, the name abbreviated to “chockos”. Women in uniform were growing in numbers, engaged in non-combatant work and proving invaluable in these roles. (It would be many years before women were given the right to take part in Australian military combat.)

In 1940, my boyfriend enlisted in the Army and went overseas with the 8th Battalion. Many were the letters we exchanged in the euphoria of first love and under the constant fear of bad news. But that didn’t happen to him!

During 1941, my final year of study, Dorothy joined me in the Schaefer home. She had learned men’s tailoring in the Dimboola shop owned and operated by Mr. Bob Galtry, but his business was being adversely affected by the War, and he could no longer employ my sister. Luckily she found a job in Melbourne in a menswear workshop located in the T&G building in Collins Street. We were compatible and sometimes I waited for her after work, travelling home with her on the train.

As the War progressed in Europe, everyone was hungry for news on radio and in the daily papers. Of course, casualties were numerous, the Luftwaffe was menacing Britain, Hitler was thriving on the crazy adulation of the German nation, and we in far-off Australia were feeling also the effects of stringent rationing and mandatory blackouts. The charismatic British leader Winston Churchill inspired not only the British nation but also the whole Commonwealth to defy the enemy, to do everything possible to keep the Allies fully equipped to gain victory. The

USA joined the British and French (the Allies) in November 1941 after the disastrous and utterly unexpected Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbour. This catapulted the USA into war.

It was during the early part of this year that brother Bert and Doreen Henley planned their wedding. Doreen had single-handedly been running the Henley family's newsagency in Sydney Road, Brunswick, only a short distance from the University. I would sometimes take a tram ride to call on her and her family. Doreen invited Dot (Dorothy) to be bridesmaid. Dot set to work and made her gown of cream satin-backed taffeta. The wedding took place in Wesley Church, Melbourne, on May 7, 1941. Our parents, Vide, Elsie and I came down by train and somehow Aunt Lena and Uncle Ott managed to accommodate us for a couple of nights. This was typical of their unflinching generosity.

Elsie and I had made our identical outfits of sky blue woollen fabric (dress and jacket) during the first term holidays. Some effort! We passed muster, and were thrilled to be present at the wedding service that brought a charming new sister into our family. Our brother now had a lovely lady of his own choice, not just the four sisters whom he had not chosen. Bert and Doreen were to spend many years in Whyalla, SA, until Bert's retirement and their move to Adelaide.

My final Arts year saw me striving to pass English and French and Nat. Phil., the latter challenging because my school preparation ended with Intermediate General Science. (I had to front up for an oral exam, and I really believe the examiner was very lenient in giving me a pass, for he had asked me whether I intended to continue with the subject, whereupon I said something along the lines of "Oh, no, but I need this unit to complete my Arts Degree.")

So now, with adequate results to qualify for a BA, my Uni study came to a satisfactory end. I did not wait for the Conferring of Degrees, but, mouse-like, I headed for home without delay. Conferring would have to wait until December 1943, but with a joyful heart I had succeeded thus far.

I had, meanwhile, applied to the Department of Education for an extension of my scholarship in order to study for Dip. Ed., and this was granted. After all there was at that time an acute shortage of qualified secondary teachers. However, when I asked Dad if he would continue to pay for my living expenses, he was definitely not in favour. Memory tells me that he replied, "Edna, you have had enough; and anyway, the cow's died." My disappointment was immeasurable and long-lasting, but I might have known that for most of those three years, Elsie had been hard at work learning the arts of primary school teaching and earning her keep. Why

should I then live in the lap of luxury? Why, indeed!

Elsie had, around the middle of 1941, accepted an offer from Mr. John Stubbs, the then Manager of the National Bank of Australia in Dimboola, to join his staff as a ledger-keeper. This meant, among other advantages, that she could once again live at Kuruga, earn a considerably higher salary, and not have the onerous responsibilities of being in charge of a small rural school at Kellalac, near Warracknabeal, along with producing evidence of studies and assignments. Add to this the anxiety of knowing that her boyfriend Roy Webb was doing Army service with the Rats of Tobruk during Rommel's campaign in the desert.

Around this time Dot had moved back to Dimboola and was working in the Dimboola Stores, a General Store that had developed a sound business out of a long established co-operative. She was happy there and home life suited her better than boarding life.

## 8 NEW HORIZONS

During that January I endured the self-inflicted misery of being unemployed: I had achieved graduate status but had no teaching qualification. I had had no worthwhile experience and certainly no professional guidance in this situation. Finally, the Department of Education offered me a job as Junior Teacher in Warracknabeal. Board was secured with the Lindner family (parents and four daughters about my own age) within easy walking distance of the Primary School. Once again I was allocated a Grade 1 class of about fifteen beginners.

Under the watchful and critical eye of an experienced, middle-aged Infant Mistress, Miss Alice Hempel, I made another beginning, but this time I had no illusions about my unsuitability as a primary teacher. No way could I replicate that switched-on smile that illuminated Miss H's face every time she addressed the little youngsters. My memory can't discard the artificiality of my trying to teach these youngsters the habit of saying "I did" and "I saw", knowing all the time that "I done" and "I seen" were the proper grammar used at home and which would continue into their future. This seemed so pointless, a losing battle, apart from the few rewarding lessons, and rather humdrum and unfulfilling. I was longing to be exploring and sharing the wealth of English literature of Shakespeare, Browning, Dickens, et al. But that wasn't to be.

While this was going on my boy had returned from overseas service to be posted in an Army camp in Adelaide. He would often phone me after school and we rejoiced over his return unscathed. Coincidentally Mum phoned me with news from Mr. Stubbs that I should phone him re a job offer. What an escape!

I signed off from infant teaching and soared into a romantic dreamland and became a bank clerk. Elsie was by then doing duty as a teller since the man she replaced in that position had been conscripted into the Army. This was typical of what was happening as the focus of the War, as far as Australia was concerned, had meanwhile shifted from the Middle East to the Pacific, and the enemy was now Japan rather than the Nazis.

How I rejoiced in my new job! Hughie had proposed and I was wearing a sparkling diamond ring and thinking of marriage. All of this at 21. No 21st birthday party for Elsie and me, but we had cashed in a life assurance policy of 100 pounds and bought ourselves a bike each.

In general country town life continued on a low key. Local committees organised social events as needed, including a Welcome Home event for soldiers when they were reunited with families if only briefly before leaving again for service

in New Guinea or in the defence of such strategic places as Darwin. "War effort" fund-raising events raised money for the Red Cross and a so-called Comforts Fund lifted the drudgery of life under restrictions.

At the bank we were coping with an increase in the number of accounts as the Government closed down systematically the smaller banks in surrounding towns and transferred their business to stronger ones such as ours. This was being done to free man-power for military service, as well as for the manufacture of essential goods that could no longer be imported. I was just another of those wage earners who were buying ten-pound War Bonds. Rationing of petrol, followed by that of clothing and fabrics, was making everyone conscious of our collective need for austerity. Coupons issued to every citizen ensured a fair distribution of scarce necessities. We all learned about frugality and the futility of complaining.

My parents, who had endured the seriousness of the Great War of 1914–18, during which German ancestry was often worse than embarrassing, spoke little in the family circle about their attitude towards Germany and Nazism under Hitler and less about the horrific number of Allied casualties. Their stoicism, like so much more, was never probed by us girls.

Before many months my engagement was broken off. The shock affected me deeply, of course. I felt betrayed, angry, hurt and even ashamed. But one does learn to get on with living. Why drown in self-pity? I learned a valuable lesson: I managed to strangle the mouse that had been gnawing inside me all these years. It was time to take myself in hand; no more mouse! A friend advised me: "Edna, there are more fish in the sea, and better, too." Cold comfort in the circumstances, but right on target. Was this older woman speaking from her own experience? Perhaps.... But I was not then thinking of any fishing expedition.

There were bright spots in the family to rejoice over. Vide and Herb now had two daughters, Margaret and Elaine, and Bert and Doreen had welcomed their little boy, Ted. Dot had found love in Charlie Seers of Mt. Gambier, SA, a cabinet maker born in England, whom she had met on a visit to the "Mount". I shared their happiness. In hope she was busy with glory box or hope chest as Vide had done about seven years earlier. There were ways of finding how far ration coupons could stretch, and my sister found them. Elsie and I set to work embroidering our small contributions in the hope that Dot and Charlie would be as happy as Vide and Herb. Their engagement was short and the date of 26th April, 1943, Easter Saturday, was chosen for their wedding.

Just my luck: a quite sudden attack of appendicitis necessitated immediate surgery in Dimboola Hospital a week before the wedding. How fortunate that Dot had asked Elsie, not me, to be her bridesmaid! My absence was not particularly

noteworthy. The newly-weds came to my bedside on their way to the reception so that I could wish them well. Dot was wearing a pretty blue crepe dress with a cleverly made toque, not the traditional white or cream outfit. Clothing coupons didn't allow for such extravagance. Dot and Charlie would spend the first year or so of married life in a boarding house in Adelaide before moving to Mt. Gambier where Charlie built a home and where their four beautiful daughters lived until the girls married. At time of writing, two of these daughters are still in Mt. Gambier, and Dot is in dementia care in the same town.

While I was enjoying my work in the bank in Dimboola, something new was brewing for me, something which my Lord had in hand. Readers of our Church paper, "The Lutheran", were made aware of the impending retirement of Mrs. Dorsch, a pastor's widow and renowned teacher of long-standing at our Church's one and only secondary boarding school, Concordia College in Adelaide. Congregations were invited to nominate candidates to replace this lady. It came as an enormous surprise to me that the Whyalla Congregation submitted my name. How come? Brother Bert and his Pastor, Eric Blaess, must have had an inspiration from somewhere, for what followed proved to me to be among the most wonderful things ever to happen to me.

Exactly how many other teachers (or would-be teachers) had been nominated I never discovered. The then General President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, Dr. Clem Hoopmann, wrote to me and arranged that I should meet him at the Dimboola Railway Station in a lunch hour so that he might briefly assess my suitability for possible appointment to the teaching staff at Concordia. He had been in Melbourne on Church business and would be returning home to Adelaide on the day train which always made a brief stop in Dimboola in order to drop off and pick up passengers or light goods.

I fronted up to this tall serious-looking clergyman in his black suit, clerical collar and homburg. Much later he would remind me of my enthusiastic answer to his final question: "Miss Müller, would you like this position?" I believe I responded, "I'd just love it!"

## 9 CONCORDIA

In due course I secured this position and fell on my feet, though my head was in the clouds. This was to prove a major turning point of which I can say only that it was Heaven sent. Slowly I was learning that God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. I think Mr. Stubbs smiled with relief when, just before Christmas, I resigned from bank employment and he could look forward to the coming of a new ledger-keeper whose handwriting and accurate recording would far outclass mine.

During January of 1944 Elsie (on annual leave) and I travelled by train for a short holiday in Portland. It was on that day that a devastating bush fire was raging through the Western District, destroying vast areas of pasture and forest, as well as claiming homes, farm buildings and stock. A friend of my parents, a Mrs. Menzel of Tarrington, lost her life when trapped in her own home. This fire was a tragedy long remembered in the history of Victoria in general and the Western District in particular, and also notably of the Paech family then resident in the Tarrington manse.

In preparation for my new work, the Principal of Concordia College, Dr H Hamann, contacted me, organized board for me in the domestic quarters of the College and sent me various text books. A new life was beckoning, rosy sunrises and all. My family was very pleased for me, and Mary Joyce, a young secondary teacher who was boarding at Kuruga, presciently suggested to Mum: "You never know. She might get a minister." This was certainly not in my thinking. The bitter fact of my having been dumped once didn't augur well...

Travelling by night on the Overland express to Adelaide, I was expecting to be met by Dot and Charlie, but they weren't to be seen. However, Dr Hoopmann's son David had kindly driven Dr Hamann to the central railway station to meet me. There could not have been many 23-year-old women disembarking, for these fine gentlemen soon introduced themselves and took me to my new home-away-from-home.

Strangeness was to fade quickly as everyone I met was most kind and welcoming. Best of all, I recognized that being a rookie on the staff of a long-established church school, in unfamiliar surroundings, was temporary. The fearful trap of self-consciousness must not be sprung. This opportunity to at last begin to realise my long-held ambition of becoming a good teacher was in my own hands. It must not be missed at any cost. I prayed for all that. With no training, I had to learn the hard way, and so I gladly accepted all the encouraging help that was on offer. God has led me here, and he keeps his eyes on me.

Imagine my surprise when I first entered the big classroom that was to be

the home base of my Sexta class (equivalent to form E, Grade VIII, in Victoria). For the first time in Concordia's long history – it was founded in 1907 – the total enrolment in February 1944 exceeded 100. And almost half of that total of 123 were in Sexta! A mixed class of 53 boys and girls, mainly boarders from rural SA, Victoria and other states. Quite a handful! And what a shock for dear, venerable Dr Hamann when he discovered a girl and a boy sharing a two-person desk. Scandalous! He found a solution: fit in another desk. Simple of course, and typical of this fine man's excellent administration. He certainly did not upbraid me.

During those early settling-in weeks I learned much and happily adapted to this stimulating and pleasurable institutional environment. Predominant among all of its characteristics was an all-pervading atmosphere of Lutheran spirituality that I found new and inspiring. Not that this had been lacking in my home. Naturally, not until then had I shared a staff room with six men, five of them clergymen who were lecturers in the Theological Seminary on the school campus.

In turn they all invited me to an evening meal in their homes, where I got to know them less formally and to become familiar with their wives and families. Eventually I was given the exclusive use of a neat and Spartan little study of my own at a generous arm's length from the faculty room in the classroom block. Here I had a table that accommodated my books, papers and elbows. To this day my dining table reflects this persistent work-in-progress attitude. I am, as I was so long ago, answerable to no-one about my disregard of scrupulous neatness in my work areas.

Subject allocation meant that I virtually taught Sexta's 53 early teens every subject except Theology, German and Latin. No-one sat in on my lessons or otherwise supervised or inspected my work. So far so good. In the classrooms there was learning on both sides. I also taught Economic History to the Leaving Certificate class – all boys.

Lesson preparation and marking kept me busy as I plodded on my path to achieving what I would, years later, refer to as my STT qualification, but first, the essentials must be learnt and developed. I read a useful manual entitled, I think, "Principles and Practice of Teaching", by someone named Elijah. Otherwise all was left to my unquestioned resources.

However, apart from the above obligations there was time and opportunity for a pleasurable social life. Since the College Chapel was home to the Unley Lutheran Congregation, which was shepherded by Dr Hoopmann, this body's youth organization, the Luther Society, met regularly on campus.

I was welcomed into this lively group, which included Seminary students and families of Faculty and Staff members. In addition, I found delight in membership of the Church choir where I sang mostly alto. Slowly and with delight I discovered that there was a world of real music beyond the bounds of what I accepted as low-brow norm. Adelaide still has a reputation for fostering great music.

A group of young women from the Luther Society invited me to join the Unley Lutheran basketball (now netball) team in weekly winter competition. We actually won our section's premiership in 1944. A trophy cup on my kitchen window sill bears evidence of this my one and only sporting achievement.

## 10 SECRET ENCOUNTERS

This first year at Concordia was already proving to be yet another turning point. Among the Seminary students there was one to whom I had been attracted quite early. We had much to share: both of us were Uni graduates, we understood and appreciated English literature for example, we were country people, and enjoyed the fun of Luther Society gatherings with someone to whom we had become attracted. On rare occasions we met in secret, and sometimes with a third person such as one of the two Nagel boys, who were John Paech's closest friends.

Late in the year, in order to celebrate our netball premiership, as I thought, a final-year Seminary student invited me to accompany him to the Unley cinema on a Saturday night. I cannot remember the film. Innocent and unsuspecting of any deeper motive on his part, I was for once dumbfounded when, on our parting at the back gate of the Campus after this first date, this young man, soon to graduate and be assigned as a Parish Pastor, popped the question, "Will you marry me?" Phew! My reply was something like, "You don't know me!" He must have been really in want of a wife.

What was going on in my head was much more concerning. Already the mutual attraction between John Paech and me had been gathering momentum and although not yet quite blossoming, we had been meeting secretly for some time. Naturally we did not realize that our association was no longer the secret that we'd been hoping for. It seems that the father of this hopeful suitor must have spilled the beans in the Faculty room.

I should mention at this stage that a law of historic duration forbade Seminary students from associating or even corresponding with any young women other than their own sisters. Within a short time of the above incident, Dr. Hamann called me into his study to inform me that I had been complicit in a serious misdemeanour and that I must not offend again. I was told that I might meet with a Seminary student only in the family circle. "But," I answered, "I have no family here in Adelaide". (Dot and Charlie had by this time moved to Mt. Gambier.) Dr. Hamann's response I cannot remember but I had in the back of my mind the safety valve of possibly meeting John at "Belmont", the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Noske, John's maternal grandparents who had already made me welcome there. My very career and my reputation were in grave danger. I would soon discover that Dr. Hamann was already aware of my association with John, whom his own daughter Dorothy had for several years been eyeing amorously.

What followed for John and me would be mild panic, for our secret was

no longer secret but now exposed in a small community. Dr. Hamann called John in, apparently almost immediately, and John related the interview with me. He told John, "I can't have my daughter living in a fool's paradise." Poor girl! Poor boy! John assured Dr. Hamann that he had given her no encouragement, no ground for hope, although he suspected that she had not understood.

One very special event took place in early December. John arranged that I should meet him in the Adelaide Botanical Gardens after school one afternoon. We strolled beneath the wisteria archway to a rotunda, there to meet his elegant and completely charming mother. I need not have felt anxiety. She had ordered tea for three and typically put me at ease. I can't recall what we talked about over the tea cups, but it was all sweetness and light.

John eventually rode off to Unley on his bike and Mrs. Paech and I walked down into the city. I do remember that, chatting along the way, she implicitly indicated that I was already accepted as John's future wife. It was many months later, while I was spending part of the next September term vacation with the Paech family in the Tarrington manse, that she confided that John had already shared with her his love for me: "I've got to marry her, Mum. I can't do my work without her."

This first year had proved to be far more interesting than I could have envisaged. My teaching was never queried, and the Leaving Certificate candidates all passed their Economic History exam.

Naturally enough my own family welcomed and approved of my good news. They agreed that, for the time being and for obvious reasons, it should not be made public.

My happiness did not in any way impinge on Elsie's engagement to Roy and planning for her marriage. This was to take place on 31st March, 1945, in Dimboola. We were all happy for Elsie, wishing her a joyful marriage to her soldier boy, who was buying a farm at Wyn Wyn near Natimuk. Roy was the eldest in a family of six children, including twins, Avis and Alec. She was teasingly warned of the possibility, if not probability, of bearing her own twins sometime, for her future father-in-law, like herself, was a twin. But it didn't happen. Meanwhile she continued successfully working in the bank.

And I was back in Concordia College, a year's apprenticeship behind me, and feeling considerably more at home in the classroom. Admittedly, I was enjoying my work, finding satisfaction and a developing self-confidence in my lowly position in the staff pecking order. I really did give my career my best shot for that was why I was employed. I believed that I was deserving of my salary and as far as I know nobody criticized my efforts.

John and I found ways of secretly meeting (thanks to the friendly co-operation of Keith and Norman Nagel, John's trusted confidants). For instance, sometimes after evening study Keith would accompany John's singing in the Music Room downstairs from my eyrie, and when he had sung one particular song twice, I could sneak out and meet him beside a lone cypress tree. We froze and kept quiet when Dr. Hamann came by to make his customary rounds of the boys' boarding area. So close to the Principal's tracks, defiant of his clear veto, but so sweet.

As the Easter break neared, and with it Elsie's wedding, John kindly and thoughtfully enlisted Norman's help to make a threesome outing to Oak bank on the day of its annual racing carnival. In a secluded parkland the threesome split into two and one, Norman keeping his word of silence. We had gone up there by train, because an interstate train trip for Elsie's big day was not on the cards, owing to war-time restricted travel.

I learned later all the details of the wedding. Elsie was a shy bride. She wore the wedding gown that Doreen had worn in 1941. Dot was matron of honour. Our parents were pleased to have all but one of their children married, three grandchildren already (Margaret and Elaine Lehmann and Ted Miller), and Doreen pregnant with John, to be born in June 1945.

The War was moving on. Inexorably the Allies were wearing down the might of the Nazis on the East and Western fronts, but the Japanese assaults in the Pacific were impacting seriously and very dangerously on Australia. News of bombing raids on Darwin and of the presence of midget Jap submarines in Sydney Harbour was suppressed until Peace came. Keeping up morale was a vital aspect of the nation's war effort. On the 8th May, Germany capitulated. This was VE Day, the end of Hitler and his barbarous campaigns. VJ day was yet to come, but come it did.

Meanwhile I had been taking some lessons in conversational German from one of the Seminary lecturers because John often used German expressions in conversation or in his secret letters to me. This was to prove a worthwhile venture in later years. On more than one occasion, while having these lessons with Prof. Blaess in my little room, a fat envelope would be slid under the door and my tutor would pick it up, hand it to me and say, "I am sure this is meant for you." True!

Everything seemed to be running along smoothly for us. Immediately prior to John's graduation, there would be serious meetings of all the Church's District Presidents and Dr. Hoopmann, the General President, to allocate parishes to be served by the three graduates. John's father, Pastor Walter Paech, was at that time President of the Victorian District, and thus a member of the College of Presidents, which would decide the allocations. In his usual light-hearted teasings, John gave

me to understand that most likely he would be assigned to some up-country SA Parish near the borders of European settlement and uncomfortably remote from the warmth of Lutheranism. For just once I did not believe him.

We both assumed, rightly, that we would marry but it was not until late November that, among the cedar trees of Cheltenham Street one warm night, he asked, "You will marry me, won't you?" That was IT! He even said, humbly I thought, "I haven't much to offer you, only myself." So romantic, so unsurprising! A shining, life-changing moment and unforgettable. In less than two years we had both found true love and been blessed with so very much in common. The location of first parish was not yet known. We had had the blessing of our parents for many months, but no official engagement. That had to wait until graduation.

The end of year speech night of the College and Seminary was held in the Unley Town Hall, and on the afternoon of that day John bought me a diamond engagement ring. In a speech before a huge crowd, Dr Hoopmann wished me farewell on behalf of the Church, adding words to the effect that he hoped I would in the future just love everything that I had to do.

The allocation of calls was ultimately announced: Pastor Harry Hermann to Gympie, Queensland, Pastor Keith Nagel to Rooke-Siassi Islands in New Guinea and Pastor John Paech to Wellington, New Zealand. New worlds for all three graduates, the culmination of six years of intensive preparatory study and practical training.

## 11 A NEW BEGINNING

Invitations were printed in Adelaide at John's request. The wedding date, January 15th 1946. As expected January 15 in Dimboola was hot. The day before had been 106 degrees F, but a cool change overnight brought it down to only 104. The whole Paech family minus Lawrie (a Lieutenant in the Army), who was on Army service in the Pacific, and his wife Ivy, who was awaiting the birth in Adelaide of their first child, spent most of the day at Kuruga. Mum was gallantly baking all sorts of goodies for the reception. She did a brilliant job of providing festive food for a big crowd. All credit to her and to Dad, who managed drinks and kept out of the hot and busy kitchen.

John's only sister Marie was my bridesmaid and she and Mother Paech helped with flowers and general preparation in our home and also in the Church. Elsie, six months pregnant with Peter, accepted that being matron-of-honour would be awkward for her. Nevertheless she drove over from Wyn Wyn, near Natimuk, and was a real strength for me. She said she had been there and done that.

Both John's father and the Dimboola Pastor, Ed Starick, shared the marriage service. Keith Nagel played the little old reed organ and Pastor and Mrs John Paech achieved their new status.

I had borrowed my bridal dress from Dot, and Vide had lent me her embroidered veil, all of a decade old. Marie wore a sky blue dress; her bouquet of flame-red gladioli was perfect. Rob, John's best man, and the bridegroom himself sweltered in their woollen suits. What a day!

John's father lent John his car for our honeymoon in Warrnambool and Port Campbell, a kind gesture that was echoed by many Tarrington Lutherans who had put valuable petrol coupons on the offering plate the previous Sunday.

On the third of February in the huge St Michael's Church in Tarrington, my new husband was ordained by his father. This memorable and highly significant service marked the beginning of his new life's calling. On that same evening a phone call informed us of the birth of Ivy and Lawrence's daughter Elizabeth, the first child of the next Paech generation.

Wellington awaited as did packing. By ship "Rangitiki" from Port Melbourne we headed across the Tasman. A great anticlimax came as we stepped aboard: the steward who perused our tickets on board informed us, "Madam, you will have berth 24, cabin 16 on C deck and you, sir, will have berth 15, Cabin 20 on D Deck". Exact berths not remembered but decks, yes. This ship had been a

troop carrier and was not yet converted. Four days at sea, certainly a new experience heightened by the prospect of our new home overseas. Although we had expected an extension to our honeymoon, little were we to know that it would take quite a while to find one another on the first day at sea!

## 12 WELLINGTON NEW ZEALAND

The Pastor from Marton, who met us on the wharf, had taken up temporary residence in our manse and organised the Service of Induction for the coming Sunday. Our home was furnished, beds made and basic provisions stowed in the pantry – a thoughtful welcome indeed – and the ground was stable under our feet. Pastor Heidrich spent time outlining the workings of the parish and of the wider Church in New Zealand while I learnt some very basic housekeeping.

On Installation Sunday morning the modest church, in King Street off Adelaide Road in Newtown, was packed with local congregation members and visitors from up country. Pastor Heidrich was in charge as expected; John seemed not to be at all nervous, leave alone over-awed, for he possessed a great deal of inner strength and self control; I was proud of him, though my residual mousiness kept me on edge. The Church building, all remu timber, made a deep, lasting and favourable impression upon me. I especially remembered the beautiful blue hydrangeas on the altar on that day. Pastor Heiderich stayed with us a little longer, shepherding John in his senior status way. He was eager to start the new pastor off on the right path.

So we finally settled in, each in our own joint and individual roles. I knew precious little about living in a manse, being a pastor's wife and even less about cooking. I was wiling to learn and to enjoy everything.

We were both caught up in the beauty of the harbour, the distant mountain ranges beyond the harbour, the hills of the metropolis, the open sea of Lyall Bay, only a short walk away, and the sheltered waterfront of Oriental Bay that was visible straight down the street from our front windows.

In time we became familiar with the strong winds that funnelled across the flat isthmus that was our home ground in Lyall Bay. There were two services in the Church every Sunday morning and evening and thus two sermons to be written and memorized each week. John was kept busy with these and beginning on systematic visiting of members. It is important that I mention the sincere support that he was given by the Elders and other Congregation members throughout his ministry in Wellington. They proved to be loyal friends whose homes were always welcoming to him and to me.

At that time the NZ Church was running on a rather tight budget so no car was provided for the city pastors in either Christchurch or Wellington, but we used the convenient tram service to go into the city, and John did a great deal of walking and climbing since a number of his members lived on the heights. He eventually bought a second-hand bicycle which was useful for the gentle slopes but

quite useless for climbing maybe a hundred steps. "All in a day's work" was heard often but his dedication and zeal for the Lord's work would not be daunted. For my part I was learning ever so slowly.

Every month we took the railcar over the heights of the Rimutakas to Carterton where a loving family of Mr and Mrs W and their two adult daughters hosted us for a night or two so that John could give them a home-church service. They were a very special family with warm and generous hearts. Mrs W was an excellent cook who looked after us lovingly. These visits were a sheer pleasure.

Near the Church in Newtown lived another family, Mr and Mrs N, parents of twin adult sons, one of them an organist, an adult daughter and a teenage son. They often invited us to midday dinner on Sundays (always a traditional roast meal) and sometimes took us for a drive in the afternoon. Others, too, proved to be supportive in many ways as they assumed the role of surrogate parents to us. I remember with thanks to God the countless ways in which He blessed us through the many people that he put into our lives then and later.

Unexpectedly it was not long before I became pregnant, another new experience to come to fulfilment on the 3rd of December with the birth of John David, a skinny baby weighing 6 lb 10 oz. A mother-craft nurse from the Karitani organization made regular visits to guide me through the early stages of mothering, and later I would turn up at her local rooms to check on the little boy's progress. He was and still is a fine son.

Christmas 1946, the first one away from our parents and siblings, was nostalgic as expected. But we had also to celebrate our baby's baptism just before then. I must have coped somehow but memory has let me down on details.

Some time later, after we had been to Marton, John on pastoral work and I as Pastor Frau, a good friend from there put a proposition to John which he gladly accepted. This gentleman, an older man retired from farming, offered to lend him a car to help in the ministry. Ah, what a boon! The car was a black single-seater Whippet, complete with dicky seat, a rugged little vehicle in perfect condition and just in time to save John's legs and feet.

We had monthly women's guild and young people's meetings in the manse, and Sunday school after morning service. I recall two young men coming for confirmation instruction in the study, and our befriending a number of Lutheran immigrants, mainly from the Baltic counties, who were in need of someone who might help them to adapt to their new country and its language and customs. There was plenty of variety in our lives.

We were able to return to Australia in January 1948, especially to attend the wedding of Rob (Paech) and Lola Hoopmann, in Nuriootpa, South Australia, on 28th January, my 27th birthday. Our young boy learned to walk at that time, spurred on by his cousin Elizabeth. What joy to be with family again! John was best man for his brother, and Marie, bridesmaid for Lola. We never forgot the sumptuous reception, including plenty of champagne, a quite lavish party.

A short break and then back to work. Often people would ask, "Did you feel the earth move last night?" It took a long time before we noticed the tremors. One was quite unforgettable: first a noise like a heavy transport close to the back door, followed by a snake-like moving of the paling fence as I clung to the wall to watch. I had a few bucketfuls of powdered mortar to clean up in the study fireplace afterwards, but nothing serious.

Once again I had conceived and was consulting the fine obs and gynic specialist who had attended me earlier, and on 21st October Paul was born, bigger at birth than his brother and quite different in looks. We named him Paul Michael. I was, I think, a better mother this time. Experience is an excellent teacher. I should mention here that Dot had by now given birth to Helen, and Elsie now had two boys, Peter and Robert, and Ivy had her second baby, Peter. Lots of grandchildren on both the Müller and Paech families, and more to come...

Dr Hoopmann and other representatives of the Australian Church visited New Zealand, staying with us and checking out how the pastors were managing and attending in an official capacity various conferences of clergy and laity. I never kept a visitors book.

In addition, it was common for various rural Lutherans to visit the city for a break and stay with the pastor and his wife. One particular man arranged to bring his teenage son down every so often, so that the boy could have confirmation lessons and the two of them spend a weekend away. The reason behind this was ostensibly that the lad couldn't get on with the local pastor. Too bad!

During 1949 my parents accepted our invitation to come over to NZ (by ship, of course), and have a holiday with us "before we go back to Australia". John hired a caravan to hitch on to the bigger car that his country benefactor had provided in place of the single-seater, and away we went to see some of the sights of the North Island, new to me. Mrs N insisted on looking after the little boys – bless her motherly heart! It will be understood that, though John's work took him to other areas from time to time, it was just impossible for me.

We managed on a meagre salary. When Dad sent me 50 pounds, I bought an electric sewing machine and made my own and the children's clothes. This was a

great help. My culinary skills developed well enough, and with John's thriving vegetable garden and a pen of Rhode Island Red chooks we were well fed. Every winter a farming family sent us a bag each of potatoes and onions. Potato soup was a firm favourite and wholesome, too.

In late autumn 1950 John received a call to serve the Geelong parish. The answer you know. After almost four and half years we were on the move again.

## 13 GEELONG

At first we lived in the original weatherboard manse in Grovedale, where early settlers had worshipped in a traditional bluestone church next to the manse. Only a couple of years before our arrival that building had been deconsecrated, when the Grovedale (Germantown) Congregation merged with the smaller and yet vigorous city Congregation, which had purchased a substantial hall on the Yarra Street hill, now St John's.

We lived in Grovedale for about 18 months and then moved to a townhouse in Malop Street while a new brick, two-storey manse was built adjoining St John's.

The year 1952 brought to us our little girl, Kathy, born on 5th December. Our son John had turned six, two days before Kathy's birth and was already at School in Swanston Street. Paul had been attending kindergarten that year. We were thankful for our now-completed family.

With the new manse and our family complete, so was our happiness. John was six, Paul four a few weeks before we moved in. Our home was spacious, conveniently planned and beautiful; and it was very close to the church, only inches separating the upper parts of both buildings.

The Congregation was growing and thriving at this stage, and again John was giving himself wholeheartedly to his calling. He held services on Sunday mornings at St John's and at Freshwater Creek every Sunday afternoon. He served preaching places at Indented Head and at Parwan and occasionally at Colac. Soon a Saturday School with big attendances was humming along at St John's.

In the mid 1950s, the Congregation considered the possibility of opening a primary school in Geelong. John himself and all his siblings had had their early education in such a school at Tarrington and he was sold on Lutheran day schooling. Enthusiasm grew only slowly as members of the Congregation recognized the benefits their children might receive should the idea become a reality.

At the same time, John was using every opportunity to visit the growing number of Lutheran immigrants housed in Nissen huts in Norlane. Many responded positively to his invitation to worship at St. John's where he conducted occasional services and for festivals in German. Many even brought their children to Saturday school while they went shopping in the city. The work begun here would lead eventually to the establishment of a separate Congregation, St. James', in Norlane in 1958.

It became obvious that John's already heavy workload had expanded far beyond what could be regarded as normal and reasonable. It was taken for grant-

ed that I played no small part in all this, by keeping the domestic wheels running smoothly, attending numerous meetings, assisting with secretarial work and visiting parishioners, either with John or on my own.

The members of St John's were good to us; we made many friends among them and were soon truly at home. My connections with the Wimmera and John's with the Western District where he had spent his boyhood and adolescence were useful and pleasant advantages among those members who had come to live in Geelong. This seems typical of what had become a common drift of population to large towns and cities post depression and WWII, and the Church benefited thereby.

My baby, Kathy, thrived and the boys made the best of their time at school. Young John went through primary school at Swanston Street and then on to Geelong High. One of Paul's teachers at "Swanno", a Mr. Trezise, encouraged us to seek a Scholarship for him at Geelong College Prep School. This perceptive teacher recognized that our boy showed considerable academic promise. So that proved an excellent move and the beginnings of what we believed might eventually lead to his entering Church ministry.

Johnno, too, transferred soon afterwards to the Senior School at G.C. Both boys benefited enormously from their years in this long established and prestigious private school. I cannot gauge just how much their experience there contributed to their later success in their chosen careers and the development of their social skills and character; it was all worthwhile, and opportune.

Again, as in Wellington, numerous immigrants from Europe who had come to work in the booming factories in Geelong (Ford, International Harvester, Pilkington, the woollen mills and others) found a useful ally in the Lutheran pastor especially once it became known in their neighbourhood that he spoke fluent German. What with many of these so-called New Australians now needing a lot of John's attention, his regular commitments, plus the many hours he had spent as a builder's assistant on the site of the new manse, he was very busy. We had taken up residence in late 1952. One of his favourite pastoral tasks was the visiting of members in their homes. In fact he maintained; "A visiting pastor makes a worshipping congregation," and always made this an essential and substantial part of his work.

The Congregation decided to call a Deaconess, and in 1955 Eunita Traeger, whom we had known at Concordia, accepted the Call and was installed. Eunita had had two years' training and proved to be a most valuable and thoroughly lovable Parish Worker. Gifted with a wide range of people skills, she quickly endeared herself to many, and especially to us who lived in the manse. It is no exaggeration

to say that besides being a perfect assistant to John, she became almost a member of our family. She spent a whole eight years in Geelong.

It was in 1960 that the Congregation finally decided to establish its own school. Debates on how and where were short lived once the decision was made.

Provisionally, the Church of England Preparatory School, Bostock House, came onto the real estate market and the Congregation bought it. Newly named St. John's Lutheran School, it was ready for its first intake of students at the beginning of the 1962 school year. Our Kathy was one of these foundation pupils. The school has proved a most valuable asset for the congregation, its many pupils and parents, and the Church generally. At present we have two great-grandsons attending there.

## 14 NEW GOAL

Hardly had this new venture into Lutheran education in Geelong taken off, when John became influential in the establishment of the ELCA's first Victorian secondary boarding school. Months of discussion followed on such crucial issues as feasibility, location, staffing, even the name, (initially referred to as Concordia, and finally Luther College) until an extensive tract of land was acquired in Croydon.

John, with his BA and his strong commitment to Lutheran education, was perhaps the prime mover in this important venture, and it came as no surprise that he was called to be the founding headmaster. He declined the Call, feeling that pastoral ministry was his forte. But the College Council (representing the District of the Church) sent a second call. This time he accepted, on condition that he be given a year in which to study for a Diploma of Education (in University of Melb) and thus prepare himself for his new post. What a year 1963 turned out to be for our whole family!

During 1961 I had returned to teaching part-time at Geelong High School, largely to help with our finances, since both of our boys were now students at Geelong College, and Kathy would be at St John's School in 1962. I was thoroughly enjoying this new and challenging expansion to my life as pastor's wife and assistant, and mother of three. Besides, having my own income gave me a feeling of independence, of being a person in my own right beyond the shadows of "just a pastor's wife". Perhaps best of all the necessary continuous mental discipline was such that I began to lose my mousiness which had dogged me needlessly since childhood, and now this, at middle age, 40 to be precise.

But this lifting of the shadow, far from releasing me from my self-imposed reticence, gave me something much more valuable, for I believe that God's Spirit was at last stirring me palpably and urging me to enjoy and use this opening up.

How else can I say that a new and exhilarating vibrancy had come into my being? It was certainly not a sudden change as in the many stories of conversion or the receiving of heavenly visions, but nonetheless a blessed feeling that life would never be the same again.

Was something unexpected happening then to prove that "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform"? Whatever. The result was that, by the close of 1962, the Paech family was on the move and a very significant one at that. Twelve and a half very fulfilling years in Geelong coming to an end, and a brand new eventful beginning for all five.

## 15 A NEW CHALLENGE

For the whole of 1963 we lived in a rented upstairs apartment in Labassa Grove, North Caulfield. Head of the house, John in his 40th year of life became a post-graduate student in Melbourne. He sometimes felt, he said, like a grandpa among his peers. Typically, he gave his best shot, earning honours results in final exams, but this could not be specifically stated because he had not entered for honours. Besides study, he was heavily involved in fund raising for the new college, and seeking academic, boarding house and domestic staff and grounds personnel.

I spent a year teaching teenagers in Malvern Girls' Secondary School. In an all-female establishment, I found compatible women and as might be expected, senior hierarchy not to be ignored. (The Headmistress, Miss Calder, I learned only recently, was a foundation student at Horsham High School.) She was openly pleased with my contribution. Quite often John would collect me after school for a relaxing nine holes of golf, a welcome break for both of us.

Young John became a boarder at Geelong College, where he would spend two years, pass Matriculation, and decide on a career. John's chosen career in local government saw him soon at the Richmond City Council and able to buy a sturdy VW, his first car. He met and married Vivienne and they added Matthew and Miriam to the family. Along the way John moved around various Councils including one in Geelong and another in Camberwell, where he and a few mates graduated from Deakin with a Masters in Business Administration. John retired at 50 as CEO of the City of Ringwood.

Paul at fifteen and a half headed off alone by train to Adelaide, as a boarder at Concordia College. We, and he, had visions of his studying for the ministry, or teaching. Academically, Paul shone, and went on to get an honours Arts degree and Diploma of Education at Adelaide University. Somewhere, and not so very surprisingly, given that the 1960s and 70s were a period of great social change – he got elected to edit the Uni student newspaper "On Dit", along with a prank (outrageous for his parents) in state politics under the guise "Susie Creamcheese".

Creativity had been a strong characteristic throughout Paul's early life. Teaching in a boys' high school he found unacceptable, and eventually found his feet in a successful career in advertising. We all remember one of his very early successes, the iconic and still running Mitsubishi "not so squeezey" advertisement.

A spontaneous and loving offer came from Eric and Lila Schulze to "adopt" Kathy for the whole school year of 1963, so that she might continue as a pupil with one of their children at the relatively new St John's Lutheran School. We really

appreciated this evidence of true love and faith and I still keep in contact with Lila.

Kathy moved home to Croydon and became part of the Luther community, before training as a Mothercraft Nurse at the Presbyterian Babies' Home in Canterbury. She loved her work and the many infants in her care. She saved carefully and bought a unit in Ringwood whilst working as a live-in nanny with some of Toorak's well-known families.

But I have digressed. I found 1963 an enjoyable year, in a sense a bridge between a fulfilling past and an exciting future. As expected, it was for John pressurised as never before, but he coped magnificently by laying his needs on our Lord's gracious and unfailing help.

Toward the end of the year, I was appointed to the staff of Luther, an honour that was to be mine for the next seventeen years. John secured a team of foundation staff to steer the College through its infancy. He watched as the classrooms, office, boarding houses and catering block took shape – all of them in red brick with pristine white timbers, including two identical residences, the Headmaster's and Deputy Head's, on the campus. Beyond the campus was undulating open orchard country toward the north, and the outer suburb of Croydon to the south, all this now closely settled and developed.

## 16 LUTHER COLLEGE 1964 – 1980

I have only the vaguest recollection of an actual move, but we soon adjusted to home-making and planning. FW (Bill) Hoffmann has written a finely detailed and very readable history of the College which indicates that the school started on 11th February 1964 with forms I – III and 53 students, mostly boarders from country Victoria and interstate, a handful of teachers and ancillary staff. What a team we were! Enthusiasm, versatility, adaptability and dedication, all this and often more was readily given, and all of us knew, above all else, that we were hugely dependent on the Lord to whom this first venture into Lutheran secondary education in Victoria had been dedicated from its inception.

Our students, too, were pioneering, setting patterns for those who would follow. Of course there were teething problems as in any new community, but none that could not be solved in the end. Quite recently, an ex-student (from the 1960s) told me; “Pastor Paech was always very fair.”

As far as I am aware, there was no known precedent for a Principal in the Church schools, secondary or even primary, to have his wife on the teaching staff. Throughout our time at Luther, it was John’s avowed policy that I should not receive, nor be seen to receive, any special considerations as the wife of the Headmaster. Though I was given considerable responsibility at first in being in charge of the girl students’ uniform and general department, the term senior mistress was not conferred on me, and I certainly did not seek it. With regard to my teaching load, no quarter was given and the teacher in charge of organising the timetable was strictly charged to ensure that I shouldered a weighted share of extras during unavoidable staff absences. So all this was seen to be fair.

The early years of consolidation and growth often exceeded the College Council’s expectations; Luther soon gained a fine reputation in the local community and beyond. It was known for strict discipline, high academic achievements and its strong Christian ethic.

Naturally, with the addition of Forms IV to VI by 1967, and a consequent increase in student numbers, extensions and new buildings were required, but the original block, with its garden designed and planted by Bill Oster, remains an attractive frontage to Plymouth Road. For me it evokes poignant memories.

In 1966 on the eve of the first public exams, the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates, there occurred a most unexpected and devastating fire in the Hall and Administration Block. For some time a “fire bug” had been active in the area. The fire was begun in the early hours of the morning and the Hall had been set up the previous

day for the exams to take place. John was insistent that although the fire had a devastating effect on both staff and students, he and Bill Oster ensured that these exams and the regular routine of the school not be interrupted. As a result of the fire a building programme was initiated and a new Hall and Administrative Block were rebuilt.

Years later another disturbing incident occurred when a senior day student with access to a firearm threatened a senior teacher to express his dissatisfaction with the whole institution. In time, this was considered just a “storm in a tea cup”.

Pastor Paech’s love of music, supported by the all the academic staff, led to what has become an annual event: the staging of a student musical, the first one being “Oklahoma!” in 1970. Several teachers took part in this, I playing Aunt Eller, actually my one and only stage appearance. There followed other successful presentations, among them “Fiddler on the Roof”, “My Fair Lady” and “Godspell”.

In those early years, I was required finally to secure some appropriate teaching qualification so that I might be at least registered with State’s Department of Education. A visit by an Inspector and a short written exam secured for me this Trained Primary Teacher’s Certificate. By the time I left, I had managed to be recognised as a BA, STT. Recently a young lady working in a Church office remarked, when I told her I had had a longish teaching career in Church schools, and so was in a position to help her with the use of apostrophes, remarked in surprise, “Oh, I thought you were just a Pastor’s wife.” No comment!

Term holidays mostly saw John and me heading off for a break with caravan and car-top tinny for some R & R. Bells and timetables could be forgotten while we re-charged our batteries. We were given long-service leave of a whole winter term in 1978, and revelled in a campervan tour of Europe and a car trip in England and Scotland.

John continued running a tight ship on return from this long break, though he sometimes discussed with me his hope that, before reaching 65, he might return to Parish ministry and maybe find that less pressurised. Towards the end of 1980, he received a Call from the Lutheran Parish of Natimuk, in the Victorian Wimmera. You will know that he accepted this, and thus we finished our 17-year Luther chapter in December, 1980.

Throughout those years, with both of us working, we had been able to save with a view to purchasing a home of our own.

## 17 NATIMUK: A COUNTRY PARISH

Once again we were on the move and this time with all our possessions including countless heavy cartons and furniture. Our hearts were lightened by the prospect of what lay ahead.

En route to Natimuk, we kept a look-out for the removalists' van, stopping in Bacchus Marsh to buy the makings of an expected late-night meal for ourselves and the two-man removal crew: bread, butter, bacon, eggs and tomatoes as I recall. We would all be famished by the time the unpacking would be done.

Lights were on in the manse as we drove in somewhere near midnight. Out of the shadows emerged two Natimuk men, Cyril and Edwin, "come to give you a hand," they said. What a kind gesture from these men whom we would soon value keenly! They really did us a great and wholly unexpected service. Somewhere around 3.00 am I had managed to unpack plates and cutlery, and my sizeable frying pan, and the bulk of the cargo set down in appropriate places, the enticing aroma of a meal drew five men around the kitchen table for the first of many a meal in the Paechs' manse.

Earlier in the night, as the cartons were being carried in, Edwin was heard to say to Cyril, "My word our new Pastor does some heavy reading." At precisely that moment, one of the cartons produced a clinking of bottles. The game was up. And Pastor Paech readily admitted that, yes, some of the cartons contained a collection of vintage wines that we had purchased on caravan trips. Obviously then we were no wowsers. In fact, we were in.

John and I were woken next morning by a phone call. "Who can that be, ringing so early?" asked a sleepy John. Actually it was one of the elders, an old friend wanting to say welcome. And it wasn't so early – nearly 10 o'clock.

From the outset the parishioners welcomed us warmly. Callers came with fruit and vegetables, a billy of milk, a plate of scones, and best of all their easy friendships. John was installed in a Parish service soon after we arrived, and we had a very quiet Christmas in our new home, the first of many yet to come, and always then with our precious children.

The regular routine of Sunday services (Natimuk-Vectis and Goroke-Edenhope) had been long established and practical. I went with John to all the services, taking a vacuum flask and the makings of coffee, and always a sandwich to enjoy as we travelled on the G-E days. We enjoyed the pattern and the fellowship of the people. After all, the Church is the Family in the Faith. On numerous occasions we were invited to a mid-day meal in members' homes and learned to know them really well.

Youth Groups and Women's Guild meetings came around every month. On occasions, John might have something urgent to attend to, and I then deputised for him, taking Bible study and joining in discussions.

Several times I was study leader at Women's Retreats, and presented papers at Zone Rallies and Conventions, which I enjoyed immensely. I had the luxury of time to prepare these things. I also sang in the Natimuk Church Choir. I visited with John and also separately. Such a change from the regimented College programme.

The manse garden was big and caring for it was great therapy. John established a vegetable garden in the back paddock, fenced against rabbits. Living some 21 kilometres from Horsham's supermarkets, we were able to enjoy great fresh produce all year round. There were also established fruit trees that produced well.

For me in the early 80s, it was good to be able to drive to Dimboola to visit Mum, by then in her 90s and in hospital care. My three sisters and I were at her bedside on the day before she died. It was my privilege to share some favourite Bible verses and prayers with her at that time. She died at 95 years in 1984.

In those eight years at Natimuk John played an advisory role in the Council of the newly fledged Good Shepherd College in Hamilton, and occasionally I accompanied him (not to the monthly meetings) to ensure that he didn't fall asleep at the wheel on the way home. I declined an invitation to accept a position on the teaching staff there when the English Department had an unexpected vacancy. Logistics and separation from John said a definite no.

So the years passed at a desirable pace for us, and when John's 65th birthday neared, a strong plea came from the Parish for him to stay on for a little longer. Why not? He agreed and stayed on an extra 15 months.

## 18 RETIREMENT

We remained in Natimuk until late December 1988, retiring to a home we had purchased in Arnott Street, Horsham. After what John often referred to as “the happiest years” of his ministry we were looking forward, and sometimes indeed backward. Our eight years there had been a truly ideal conclusion to John’s outstanding career. We had together spent forty-three years of living in harness on the Lord’s business. We looked forward to living a self-directed retirement and perpetual leisure.

In Arnott Street, we redeveloped the garden, and John painted the house to near perfection. We found new interests in the Holy Trinity Congregation, new friendships, and relished our freedom. We took a trip to England in 1992, staying in Paul’s spacious apartment in Primrose Hill, London, he then working as Creative Director with an advertising firm in the adjoining suburb of Camden Town. This was another delightful holiday for us. We wandered through London and even took a car trip around the South Coast, including Land’s End with its puffins. Paul looked after us very well, and took us out to dinner at “the local” on John’s 70th birthday on the eve of our departure, the icing on the cake.

## 19 LATER YEARS

Back home in Horsham, our happiness continued as always, though at a diminished pace, and with our precious mateship and shared spirituality. It was not long before John's health was becoming a concern to both of us, and in 1994 this was diagnosed as Clinical Depression. This was very hard to deal with, especially as John had, for all his life until now, been a confident, vibrant, energetic and outgoing man, and now, it seemed the bottom had fallen out of his world. He became despondent and withdrawn. Our GP trialled a series of antidepressant medications over a period of months until he found one that lifted the black clouds. John had sat through a number of counselling sessions with a recommended psychologist. But there was only a negligible improvement during this time. I was not surprised when one day, following a counselling session, John said in an off-hand way "Oh, what does she know?". So that was the end of that.

For a couple of years, we both knew some daily peace again, albeit rather restricted. We even had a couple of caravan spells in Barwon Heads and visits to Melbourne, and in 1999 I had two total hip replacements, during which John was strong.

Before long it became obvious that John's memory was slipping. More often he misplaced the car keys, or forgot to set a timer for watering the garden. This sort of forgetfulness became more obvious and at times quite alarming.

Our Dr. Jenkinson referred John to a neurologist who consulted regularly in Horsham. In a short session this gentleman probed with relevant questions, asked John to copy a diagram or two, and pushing these aside, he folded his hands and said "Well, Mr. Paech, if I am not mistaken, I'd say you've got Alzheimer's." We were both lost for words, silent in shock. This diagnosis was totally unexpected and it stabbed deeply. We were advised to see our GP for further information.

I do not remember which of us was the more anxious, but we continued praying for calm nerves, for our Lord's support and guidance, our mutual openness and feeble understanding of what was happening to the erstwhile brilliant mind that had been for so long one of John's great strengths.

What is Alzheimer's? we asked ourselves. Ignorance was not bliss. We had never been worriers; Christians don't worry, for God knows and responds to our needs – and even our desires – and we accept: "Whatever God ordains is good, / Holy His will abideth. / I will be still whate'er He doth / And follow where He guideth."

Enter a senior psychologist, Dr. John Hurley of Ballarat. This most gracious gentleman visited our home often, all the while being able to create a relaxed mood

in John. On occasion Dr. Hurley would have with him a couple of students, and I was welcome to be present also.

As weeks merged into wearying months, John's energy diminished and his spirits seemed to be swimming awkwardly in the depths of darkest water. Bed was a safe refuge from the dingy reality of home life. Many a time I would hear the call of an umpire's whistle (a relic of Luther days) and I would go and sit on his bed and listen, pray, recite encouraging Bible verses and share our wonderful faith. Sometimes such a session would last an hour or more and extend after a pleading cry: "just a bit longer, please." How our roles had changed! Me ministering to the minister! But I was really blessed in this.

During 2006 a decision was being made. What with a biggish house and garden, and my much more demanding job of caring for ailing John, the family agreed that we should consider acquiring a new two-bedroom unit in the Sunny-side Lutheran Retirement Village in Horsham. We would sell our Arnott Street home. This all happened relatively quickly and smoothly. Johnno, Vivienne and Paul spent Christmas with us in Arnott Street, the final family event there, before John Snr and I moved into yet another new dwelling on 27/12/06.

How all the minutiae of sorting, packing and shifting actually happened, I do not recall. Sufficient to say it did happen successfully, John went with the flow and with me. Such loving, helpful kids! Such a beautiful unit for an aged couple!

Within six months John's condition worsened to the point where I could no longer manage his care. He tried respite care here in Trinity Manor, returned home briefly and then entered Lockwood Nursing Home Natimuk for permanent care in mid-2007.

I had been driving now for some time, and initially I made almost daily visits, until he was settled and accepting of the new situation. The nursing staff have proved to be top class. The family and I are tremendously thankful for this superb care that John has been receiving there.

It was my misfortune to suffer what may have been a TIA one day while visiting John. On the advice of my GP, I decided to give up driving. So now I am relying on a most generous volunteer driver, Barry Peucker, a 70-year-old bachelor who takes me out almost every week. Only rarely does John now recognize me; he sleeps deeply and I have given up trying to wake him. Most days I speak into his ear about spiritual things and pray for him, hoping that he hears and understands. Only God can answer this as he alone knows when he will call his beloved, frail, redeemed servant and us into the glory of Heaven.

I've grown accustomed to living on my own, comfortably looking after myself, and keeping up lively social contacts in the Village, and of course enjoying staying in close touch with the children and the wider family. Friends often say, "It's hard for you," but my response is genuine: "Not really. The hardest part was in the beginning when we didn't know what was happening." They seem to understand when I say that I still have a husband, yet I don't have him.

My life is filled with contentment, and gratitude for what I have had in the past, what I have now, and what my faith assures me is awaiting me when I die. Meanwhile there are so many precious memories to mull over, so very many special people close by whose company inspires me to seek them out and I am never lonely. Nor am I any longer the shy reclusive mouse I once was. I have truly learned that I am indomitable as far as that is concerned. I still have a life to live to the full.

A couple of years ago I joined a KYB [Know Your Bible] group, which I now count as one of my best-ever decisions. The weekly sessions have proved to be an ideal way really to know my Bible, to grow in knowledge and understanding and to be encouraged by the sharing of the life of faith with these Christian women. I have eventually realized that God loves all His children, regardless of their innate abilities or limitations, seeing even me as one for whom His son lived, died, rose again and ascended into Heaven, to prepare a place for all who believe in Him.





## A POSTSCRIPT: WIDOWHOOD

The bulk of this autobiography was written and printed in January 2010, but since then John has ended his earthly life, and so I want to include this in my story.

On Thursday, 23rd February, 2012, I had played cards (500) with a group of friendly women in the Community Centre, and around 4 o'clock was waiting in the library with two of these women, chatting away, to fill in an hour or so before adjourning to the dining area for the monthly community meal to be served, when, unexpectedly, Pastor Gus Schutz came in. As is his custom, he greeted us warmly. Then he said, "Edna, I'd like to talk to you." "In a quiet room?" I asked. He nodded assent, and we moved to the committee room.

I guessed his news: John had died only a short time earlier. I had no sudden shock nor flood of tears, for this was not entirely unexpected as he had, for several months, been slipping noticeably, both physically and mentally. Now, finally, our Lord had called him home, out of the twilight world he had been living in for such a long time, seemingly unaware of the daily clinical routine and social isolation of his worsening illness as Alzheimer's took its wearisome and inevitable course; almost exactly a decade since first diagnosis.

Gladly and gratefully I accepted Gus's ready and kind offer to drive me out to Natimuk straight away. There my dearest one lay in his bed, just as I had so often found him, in his last slumber, peaceful but so cold in death; looking so absolutely calm now: the end of a beautiful earthly life and the wonderful beginning of his share of eternity. I learned later, from one of the nursing team, that he had had a bath that afternoon and been tucked up in bed, "all clean and shiny". Who could wish for a better death?

John and Vivienne had set out from Croydon without delay and were here at Banksia Court by 10 o'clock. The rest of the family were let know the news as soon as possible, and all were fully accepting that the news was good: the father of the family had "fought a good fight and finished the race". I was glad of the company and of the assurance that the younger ones would handle their share of arrangements for funeral et al. So to bed, with the air-conditioner running all night.

On Wednesday we formulated plans. Using the Power of Attorney that I had given to Johnno long before, he soon got things moving. Pastor Gus seemed to

be in and out of the house throughout the day. Anticipating that some members of the wider family would want to attend the funeral, this was fixed for Tuesday the 28th, at 10.30, a time suitable for Gus and the funeral director, Bill Pitman.

During the morning, and well into the afternoon, the phone and the front door bell seemed to ring almost incessantly, and it was dear Vivienne who looked after the niceties of answering both. I was overwhelmed by the number of calls, the kind expressions of sympathy and the beautiful cards and flowers that were brought in. There was no doubting the sincerity of those people who had loved John and me.

We were assured that there would be a number of relatives and friends coming to pay respects. We were very pleased about this. Paul, Kathy, Noel and Sarah would be up on Monday night. Likewise Matthew and Leanne, and Mimz and Brent; Marie, Chris and Rose, and also Ivy, Elizabeth and Martin, and David and Betty. "We couldn't miss this, Edna," they all said. John was dearly loved by all the family.

In what seemed no time at all, necessary accommodation was booked for our visitors, not in my unit, which is tight. Not one of us felt sad, nor did we shed tears. As I said earlier, "John doesn't need our tears; he's in heaven. And if we weep now, those tears will be only for ourselves, and why should we wallow in self-pity?"

The staff in the Church office were busy attending to the printing of the Order of Service, complete with a beautiful photo of John, taken on the river bank when all the family were here for his eightieth birthday. Of course, Gus had been busy on his part. He had not really known John, having come to Horsham only after John's admission to Lockwood. But I was able to lend him my copy of the short biography I had typed up some years earlier, along with scripture readings and hymns.

John and Paul were eager to add their contributions, and somehow managed to put together their own tributes. Neither boy is short on words or lacking in the area of fine English and a sense of fitness for any occasion. What emerged was a significant departure from what has been the usual content of funeral services in Horsham, and proved to be most memorable for us and many others.

Although this screed is meant to be autobiographical, it would be remiss of me not to include here at least some snippets of what the boys had to say about their Dad. I have copies of their speeches, but only a few selected lines here.

From John:

*Dad's servant ministry in Wellington provided an ideal opportunity to begin also his servant leadership.... Dad had a special capacity to really care for people, a God-given trait that enabled him to live out the Gospel... The Geelong call provided opportunity for Dad to exhibit his selfless leadership*

*in a new setting. Richard Hauser has been researching the second wave of Lutheran schooling and includes Dad as one of the movers and shakers of this movement some hundred years or so after the initial wave which saw many such schools commenced in the Wimmera and Western Districts. St John's Lutheran School in Geelong was one of this new wave... Dad was called twice as Principal of the proposed new Lutheran secondary school in Croydon.*

*Dad always approached his work with gusto – it was always “full on” and as perfect as he could make it. His capacity to treat students and staff members alike – with great respect and always fair – is reflected in all he did. That Luther today has eight streams and 1,200 students and is highly valued as a school of academic excellence and strong Christian values is testament to the high values he instilled from the start. And may I say the commitment also of Mum who was a highly valued member of the teaching staff...*

*In his final years of ministry in Natimuk, I suspect that the pressures were vastly different and the love and care of so many members was a real tonic to Dad and Mum. He enjoyed a bit of time on the lake and swamps, and only in the last month Mum was chatting with the wife of one of his fishing mates who told her that her husband was soon to be baptized and that the decision was to a large degree down to “Paechy”...*

*Not so long ago, Pastor Bill Fry said to Mum that Dad was still undertaking his ministry by just being “there”.*

From Paul:

*Our Dad was an amazing man, and along with my brother John and my sister Katharine, and their children, Matthew, Miriam and Sarah, and their children's children, we are fortunate to have had such a marvellous father, grandfather and great-grandfather...*

*Dad was an educated man, but he always wore his learning lightly, without arrogance and never to intimidate. He was passionate about things that matter, personal things like honesty and integrity, and public things like good education and justice, and would argue vigorously for what he believed in. He often took the side of the underdog, the misunderstood, the poor, the battlers...*

*It was in individual personal relationships where Dad was happiest and where he was most comfortable... Dad could talk with anyone and make them feel valued and understood. Inevitably by the end of a conversation, they felt better about themselves. This was a remarkable gift...*

*Music was a daily joy in Dad's life: chanting the liturgy, singing hymns (often*

*in harmony with his wife), and until the very last days of his life humming along with recordings lovingly played by his nursing staff, and still conducting those imaginary orchestras and choirs...*

*Where did all this come from, this energy, this determination, this empathy? From God above, of course, from whom all blessings flow. For Dad, it came through the security and love of his parents, through the knockabout friendship of his three brothers and his one sister. Today we are very happy to have David and Marie with us. And without doubt, it came through God's rich blessing of the true deep partnership of Edna, his wife, our mother and your much loved friend in Horsham. This was the blessing of trusting God in ALL things, and in our family we felt this as nothing ever being too serious.*

*So there always seemed to be great laughter and merriment in our home... There were trips to the Grampians (we always called them Grampains just for fun), family picnics to the You Yangs or Geelong's Eastern Beach. Just yesterday, my Mum reminded me of my disappointment one Saturday when a much anticipated picnic was cancelled because Dad had been called out to console a family that had been suddenly bereaved. And I had complained: "Why did they have to go and die and spoil our picnic?"...*

*Well, John, Kathy and I (with Edna's blessing) have a special request for you all here today. We want to ask, as we kids did back then, that Dad's funeral today ought not to spoil our 'picnic', as funerals can sometimes do. Instead, we want to ask you to reflect on Dad's marvellous life, and to share again among ourselves here today, and with others who couldn't be here, all the bounteous blessings that have flowed from Dad's life...*

*Now that our beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather – and your beloved Pastor Paech – is finally at rest with his much loved Lord, we ask you all to enjoy this special service with as much happiness as you can muster and to help us celebrate this richly blessed life on earth.*

I cannot omit to mention that ten-year-old great-grandson Liam Paech read one of the lessons: Ephesians 2:8–10, during the service, and did it perfectly, too.

As we had intended, it was a joyful funeral service, and we all went straight out to the Horsham Lawn Cemetery, the casket being carried by John, Paul and Kathy, Matthew and Miriam and brother David. John's grave – to be mine, too, in time – is near the Children's Garden, which has a most attractive wall bearing a bas relief of emblematic tree branches.

Back at the church hall the Guild had prepared a light lunch for the huge crowd of friends and relatives, who soon began queuing to have a few words with me and my family. Here again Vivienne looked after me lovingly, making sure that I could cope.

There were so many kind friends, local and from distant places, and among them a great number whom I hadn't seen for donkeys' years. It was pleasing for me to meet and chat with the present Principal of Luther College, Michael Kleidon; Pastor Ray Pace, Vice-President of the Victorian District of the Church; no fewer the eight captains of the College, and a number of ex-students as well. Relatives who had shared in John's love and understanding included David and Betty and their son David, who is a highly valued member of staff at Luther; sister-in-law Ivy, her daughter Elizabeth and son-in-law Martin Schirmer; sister Marie and Chris and Rose Thiele.

A number also of my own extended family representatives: Ted and Anne Miller, Helen and Terry Emerson, Rhonda and Ken Robinson, and Gwenny and Paul Bowen (known collectively as the Seers girls, daughters of my sister Dorothy); and Margaret Dunstan, representing the Schaefer cousins, being a daughter of Uncle Bill and dear Auntie Evelyn Schaefer. Oh, the joy of it all!

I learned later of a number of others who had travelled considerable distances, but who had been waiting so long in the queue that they simply and reluctantly relinquished their spot so that they might return home. I admitted to being a little weary, but there was so much and so sincere warmth in this outpouring of shared affection and sympathy that I would cherish for a very long time, even now nearly a year later.

It would be remiss of me if I were to neglect to mention that, before John and Vivienne brought me home, I had a brief word with Clive Smith, my scrabble friend and former classmate from Horsham High School back in 1937-38, and with Marty Lieschke, a foundation student at Luther, an electronics wizard and now resident in Horsham, and shedding a few surreptitious tears for a man he had truly loved and admired.

Now the young people had to return home without undue delay, as most had taken time off from work. However, Paul stayed on with me for a few pleasant days, sensitively realizing that I would be feeling strained and needed time to wind down. In retrospect, I am finding it hard to piece together the events of those days, but I am certain that Paul and I both enjoyed the close mother-and-son conversations that ranged widely and deeply. How blessed I am to have all my precious children!

So time went by and I found solace in keeping busy, sending out thank you cards, gradually resuming social contacts, attending to necessary business affairs

such as name changes to accounts, and accustoming myself to living as a widow. Of course, I missed John, often painfully, but one learns to accept the inevitable. I am sure that the early part of John's illness, when neither of us foresaw the depth and extent of mental decay, was a form of grieving that kept me controlled after that final separation.

In March, St John's Congregation in Geelong organized a 50th anniversary celebration of the dedication of its primary school, and I was privileged to attend all of the weekend events. My good friend Barry drove me down, and I stayed with Kathy, Noel and Sarah. Late on the Saturday night, Kathy suffered a mysterious and quite concerning episode, in which she became unconscious and had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital. Vivienne and Leanne came around to Foleys', bundled me into their car and insisted on my staying with the Geelong Paechs overnight.

Next morning Kathy was perfectly well again, and stayed close to me, through the open-air Commemorative Service at the School. Here I was reminded again of the drive and enthusiasm for Lutheran education that had always marked John's ministry.

Need I mention how many people came to me that weekend and spoke warmly, even affectionately, of his ministry among them? Such was his legacy. Liam, our great-grandson, was selected to read the epistle lesson in the service: Ephesians 2:8–10, a pivotal verse in Lutheran theology, which this ten-year-old handled with aplomb. With son John chairing the School Council for a period, and his and Vivienne's children as students, the Paech family association with St John's seems permanently entrenched in its fine history. As John himself so often said "To God be the glory!"

As autumn progressed, with all its beauty and change, I had many occasions to reflect on the symbolism of the changing season as a metaphor of all life. English literature is full of higher thoughts on this, as you will know, of course, but I felt it more keenly this time around. My health continued to be good, my GP keeping a close eye on blood pressure and lesser functions.

Early in May, plans were under way for me to go to Geelong for Sarah's milestone twenty-first birthday celebrations on Saturday night, 19th May, and next morning a Memorial Service for John in Luther College Chapel; a big weekend for our family. I went down by train, was met by the Foley family at North Shore, and thoroughly enjoyed my brief stay. Sarah has blossomed into a handsome young lady; her experience of going to work has enabled her to develop her own style of maturity and independence for which she is to be commended. Her birthday party was very special indeed. John and Vivienne took me home to Raine afterwards, so

that we would be well slept and unhurried for the service next morning.

John had asked me earlier whether I might be able to respond should there be a posthumous award for Pastor John, or should he be prepared to do this. What an offer! Naturally, I accepted. How glad I was about that! My three children and I were ushered into a front pew in the Chapel, which was most beautifully decorated with flowers and candles, artistically elegant, by Janet Free, a dear friend of long standing. Brother David preached the occasional sermon, in which he outlined John's life and his considerable contribution to Lutheran schooling. In charge of the service was Mark Greenthaner, an ex-Luther student; another ex-student, Graham Lieschke, presided expertly at the organ. All very moving for me.

At the conclusion of the service, a citation from the Church on John's contribution to Lutheran schooling was handed to me, and then, surprise, a matching one handed to me by ex-student and now Chair of the College Council, Helen Suke. I was overwhelmed, speechless for once! How glad I was that my elder son could respond fittingly for John and me!

Lunch in the Chapel was another pleasure, with many friends, parents and ex-students greeting this ancient woman who had loved them in the golden years. I shall not attempt to name them here, but let me say how moving it was to be the recipient of such an outpouring of thanks, warmth and even affection! And all because my John and I had simply been doing the job that God had laid in front of us. I am reminded of these lines from Romans 12:33: "How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!"

So back to ordinary living in Banksia Court, Horsham. Kathy's health required monitoring by her GP and a neurologist, for she continued to be bothered by more of those inexplicable attacks. Eventually, after numerous tests and interviews, these two medical men reluctantly informed her: "You're a mystery." So she just has to monitor her own lifestyle.

My sister Dorothy, known more familiarly as Dot, had been suffering from dementia for several years, and in hostel care, died on 17 July 2012 in Mount Gambier. Her four daughters lovingly and loyally supported her for many years following her husband Charlie's death.

These girls and their husbands have a close relationship with me and my sisters. Then, just a week before her hundred-and-first birthday, my sister Vida had a fall in her kitchen and broke her pelvic bone in two places. Naturally, this meant a stay in hospital, and considerable pain. She has recently [September 2012] been assessed for permanent high care and is currently in the Dimboola hospital.

It is not my intention to go on writing about events in my own life as that may well necessitate prolonging this tale. However, after a recent visit to Croydon and a delightful stay with John and Vivienne, I have come home to Banksia Court armed with a laptop computer, and am now diligently making myself learn a new set of skills that should soon advance me to email, Wikipedia, etc, if I can manage to do all that John has already helped me envisage. At least I can force myself to read instructions carefully and not lose heart...

I have written all of the above in the hope that, at some time in the distant future, my great-grandchildren will find some interest in what their Oma has left for them.

*Special thanks go to Vivienne, John and Miriam who generously assisted me on the technical side of writing my story. And to Paul for design and editing of this 100th Birthday edition. A job well done!*

*January 2021*



Edna's Birthday celebrations concluded with this blessing

*May the feet of God walk with you,  
and His hand hold you tight.*

*May the eye of God rest on you,  
and his ear hear your cry.*

*May the smile of God be for you,  
and His breath give you life.*

*May the child of God grow in you,  
and his love bring you home.*