

Mrs June LEONARD 67 Dorrington Rd, Rathmines Ph: 75-1504

Mrs Leonard's (then WEBBER as this is her second marriage) children attended Rathmines P.S. from 1955 to 1964

Mrs Leonard had 4 children who started and finished at Rathmines School. In 1955 her daughter Yvonne started at 5 years old. They were living on the air base then because her husband was an airman. They lived on the base from 1950 until the base closed in 1961

Kenny started in 1956; Barbara in 1958. Kenny is now an electrician at Wangi. He drives a red van with Kenny Webber on the side. Barbara is having a Caesarian Saturday week. She is on Richmond Air Base. She married an airman. Yvonne is now up at Mallabula. Her children go to Tanilba Bay School. She helps with the reading at the school.

It was a one-room school in 1955 with 40-50 students, maybe not even that. That building has now been moved to Secret Corner Road. Mr Clark was the only teacher when Yvonne started. Mrs Clark taught sewing.

The next year ('56' or '57 ?) the class moved down to the hall in the cirdet while they were building the new building. They called the hall the "Tin troc".* It went to 2 teachers with the new building. There were 2 classes with the principal's office in between. There were 2 classes right through while her children were there. There were no demountables. George Stanton had Alan.

Before they built the canteen Betty Richard's, who lives next door, mother and grandmother had a ute with the back down under the big tree. Hot mince and soup were served off the back of the truck to children. In the early '60's they built the canteen outside the Kindergarten room. They used to give her her bus fare to go into Toronto to bring back cold meat and tomato for sandwiches. What there was of Toronto! It wasn't very big in those days. Bread and pies were delivered to the school. She did this for a couple of years. It was a one-room canteen like a soccer canteen. A flap opened up to serve children. There

* Short for trocadero

was a stove and a fridge in it. It was demolished for the multi-purpose hall long after her children finished.

She couldn't remember the other teachers' names but she will find out from her children. She could remember the teacher down in the "tin truck" where Yvonne was. He was a typical bushie. He'd have his leg up on a stump and rolled his own cigarette. He was only a little chap. A typical bushie even in the way he talked. He came from the outback somewhere. It was a good little school, She was brought up in the outback of Queensland. They are the better schools.

They lived on the air base up in the married quarters. There were 1000 permanents, ^{NST's - National Service Trainees} NSD's(?) and officers were coming and going to training school. It added up to about 3000 when school was in. They were like a little community on their own with their own picture show, Post Office and canteen. She helped with the dry cleaning for a couple of years. She worked for the chap who used to come out. She washed the boys' drabs and so on.

There were 11 homes up on top which used to be the WAAF's quarters during the war. 16 pre-fabs were built which gave 27 homes all told. They were all families. They were up on this side of the guard gate. She has photos of the guard gate and hospital. She has photos of the RAAF base which she can lend to us but she'll have to gather them together.

The rec. hall was the picture show. Where you walk into it, on the left was the boy's billiard room; then you walked into the picture show. Back of where the Guides and Brownies are now she is a patroness of the Brownies because she started them in '61 was the canteen, the stores where they bought their groceries and everything.

Down the bottom, where the holiday camp is now, used to be the sergeants' mess. The fence behind there was called the South Gate. The children had to go through there to go to school. They had to put their names in with the guard and have them crossed off when they came home. The Bowling Club was the Officer's Mess. Where the memorial is now used to be the C.O.'s house.

The community hall was demolished. It was on the Circler where the park is now, near where the swimming pool was. There were no houses out here then. It didn't start growing fast until the air base closed. A lot of miners had holiday places, which they rented. A lot of people on the base lived in Toronto. A lot of business people in Toronto were in the Air Force. Most people left when it closed.

At that time grown-up children who went to High School had to go right into Broadmeadow. A truck took them in at 6 o'clock in the morning to catch a train. The truck would pick them up off the train at 6 o'clock that night. Then the high school came out to Booragul, then Toronto. Yvonne was in the first class that started at Toronto High School.

The P & C didn't do much. There was not much to do as it was only a small school. There was no fund-raising because everyone buck in and did what had to be done. They didn't need money. The RAAF helped a lot with clearing and building, renovating and repairs. A couple of chaps would go up and knock in a few nails. There was a lot of liaison between the base and the school. Over half the children at the school were from the air base. The other children's parents worked in the mines at Awaba. The school used the fields on the base. They're still there now. The bigger field was for Union and the smaller one was the Air Force soccer field. The base was opened to children for anything they wanted to do ... play cricket and so on. They could come in and go to the pictures and dances. Dances were held every second pay night and anyone could go. The Air Force was very good.

It was a community on its own. "We were Air Force property. We had our own leave pass and had to sign in and sign out." There was a lot of pride in being Air Force people.

There were no excursions then. They never went anywhere until they went to High School. It's amazing what kids do these days. Her grandson (Kenny's son) is captain of Wangi School this year. (His sister was too before she went to Morisset.) He is going to Canberra next week for 4 days. The money wasn't available to do these

things.

The present tennis courts are where the Air Force courts were. She joined the tennis club in 1950. They were let go to rack and ruin for many years after the council bought it.

Irvine Homer's son (Ivan?) was in Kenny's class. He had 2 or 3 children went to the school - the girls will remember. He used to do paintings on plates for the kids. He ended up a cripple. He was still painting then.

Another one to talk to is Stephanie Brown (maiden name) who works in the Scoop Shop. She was with Barbara.

I have lived in Rathmines since 1950. We had this place built when the air base closed down. I love the place and wouldn't leave it.

Interview 6.6.91 by Anne Britt,
Teacher Librarian, Rathmines P.S