

Countries so far, Stories so far, Sense so far

William Hordhausen travelled in 1859 from Copenhagen to Hamburg in German and boarded the ship Olympia, a four masted barquetine and sailed to Melbourne, Australia.

According to the Wendish History website, the Olympia carried mostly stonemasons contracted to Cornish and Bruce the company building the railway between Melbourne and Bendigo. Docked at Hobsons Bay the passengers were not allowed off, their contract was to work a ten hours day, at relatively low rates. Australian railway workers had, in the mid 1850s, achieved an eight-hour day at higher pay rates. Settled German immigrants advocated for the stonemason's release from the ship and offered accommodation until the dispute was settled.

William married Elizabeth Nixon, their first of five known children, William was born 1861, at Whroo near Rushworth in Victoria where they were goldmining. Four years later the older William applied for a publican's license for the Star Hotel at Coy's Diggings, and a year later applied for a beer license for Carr's Reef diggings.

William Junior became a miner at the Balaclava Gold Mine in Whroo, he married Margaret Perry, they had nine children of whom the second last, Julie Doris Mary, born 1903, was my grandmother.

Julie married Charles Youren in 1926, they had five daughters, my mother Judith Eileen, being the second oldest.

Charles' father, Samuel, came to Australia on a Sir Robert Sale ship in October 1868 with his mother Mary Ann Youren, Samuel was 10 years of age. Judith tells the story that Samuel was often restrained in the cells because he persisted in climbing the ship's rails.

Julie trained as a nurse as did her two eldest daughters, Valerie serving in the Women's Australian Air Force. Judith, at fifteen, was a commissioned plane spotter; when she heard a plane overhead, Judith ran to the nearest hill to identify the plane's make and model then reported to the war authorities.

Charles and Julie married in 1926 and settled at Girgarry where after service in Egypt during the first World War Charles had been given a soldier settlement. However, the young parents with two small daughters were forced to walk off their land in early 1930s due to the effects of the economic depression. My mother, Judith, tells the story that Jack McEwan walked on to their land, taking possession as they walked off with their belongings in their horse and cart.

The family went to Euroa where they lived with Julie's parents, Margaret (nee Perry) and William Nordhausen. Charles used his horse and cart to become the local milkman.

Judith remembers travelling to school on a hand-cart on the Euroa railway line. She was champion duck diver, swimming under the prize duck and grabbing its legs, and she was the first person in Australia to achieve a Swimming Bronze Medallion.

Judith graduated midwifery at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and travelled to Mount Gambier in South Australia where she

met my father, Ian Hickenbotham, he was employed by David Wynn as the first winemaker to develop their winery at Coonawarra in South Australia. Ian and his friend Wolf, picked Judith and her friends up from the nursing quarters for a night on the town.

Dad's father, Alan Robb Hickenbotham was an analytical chemist who worked in academia during the depression and established the first wine-science course at Roseworthy Agricultural College in South Australia. Alan's family arrived in Geelong from Ireland, Alan's father Robb Hickenbotham Captained Geelong football team for ten years, the last two after joining the league. Ian's mother Nell (nee Jennings) was a primary school teacher from Geelong region, her family originated in Scotland.

Ian and Jude built a house at Nuriootpa in the Barossa Valley. I had an older brother who died in 1986 in a plane accident after making wine for six years and I have a younger brother who has a winery on the Mornington Peninsula, with his partner and two sons.

My fondest memories are about my grandmother, Julie Youren (nee Nordhausen). I had 19 cousins on mum's side, we met up at Granny's. Mushroom hunting in the paddocks around Alexandra was real fun, granny insisted we cut the mushroom stalk with a knife or there will be no mushrooms next year. Granny took my hand as we walked to the chook house, she put precious eggs into her apron pockets.

I've told this story without one mention of hardship or emotional distress and without one mention of First Nations peoples. A classic history such as that taught to me in school.

Brittany Higgins talks about Political or Governmental Silencing of her sexual abuse story. Families maintain political silence related to assaulted, abused or trauma. No one wants to talk about abuse by another human being.

Our travels, our stories, our senses are based on emotional experience. Our ancestors had song, music, fireside tales, all of which inspired sensory responses, laughter, tears, jeers, guffaws. Emotions were ok if contained and expressed in the correct social context. People labelled unwell were either looked after by family or thrown into asylums or prisons, there was no allowance for difference of any expression, including homosexuality, colour, race.

I remember leaning over the kindergarten gate, watching the indigenous people who lived along the river bank in Nuriootpa. I was enthralled by their differences, the kids were naked, they ran and splashed through the small river waters, the parents sat on the bank, tended to their cooking, collecting their needs, attending to their shelters made from bark and mud.

First Nations people's advocacy has opened our minds to the abusive and traumatic effects of white oppression over the centuries. We blamed First Nations people we said they created their own problems, they were drunk, they were violent, they didn't respect possessions, their values, beliefs and attitudes got them into trouble. First Nations people are now understood to be victims of epigenetic violence and genocide, trauma and learned behaviours imposed by patriarchal powers and Governments of the past.

I was labelled, shy, sullen, withdrawn, scared, fearful, anxious. I blame myself, social systems taught that, only I could remedy the problems of my personality. I have spent my whole life researching my childhood, my mental health, my identity, writing journals, exploring thoughts and seeking solutions to my 'problem self'. Why am I this person of difference? How can I fix myself and become normal?

Emotion and associated feelings are the basis of all human relationships. Our ancestors never, never discussed their emotional lives. Emotions were believed to indicate weakness in a person. Emotions kept women out of business, government, religious systems for thousands of years.

First Nations peoples, ignored, abused, murdered through-out our narrative histories show us that story, song, dance, art and community are the keys to a quality life.

We can all be healthy contributing members of our communities when we are affirmed, respected and honoured as individuals. When people hurt, abuse, torment and steal our personal authority we collapse. This is not about resilience, this is about feelings and emotional wellbeing, about authenticity and a rich inner life-awareness`.