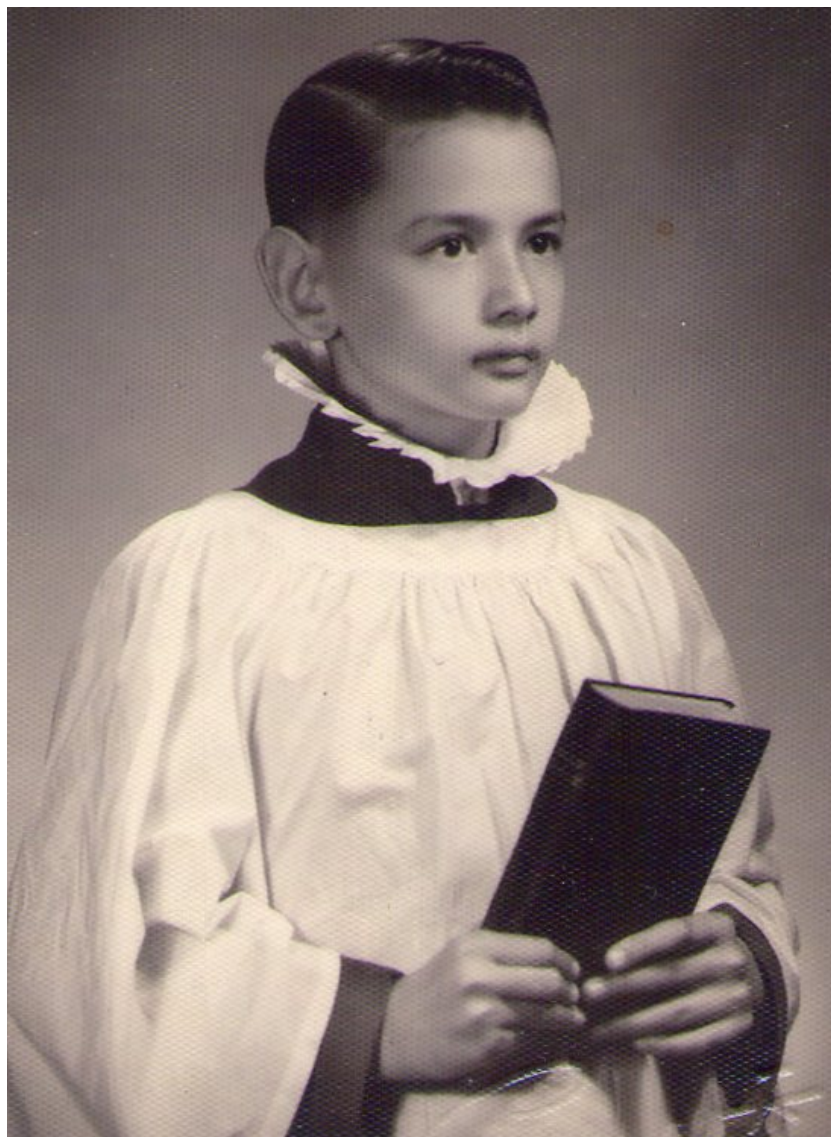


Peder Kwok

MY STORY



Me as a Choir Boy - Christmas 1955

My life story is dedicated to my grandson, William Sanders, and to any other grandchildren who may be born later after my passing. It is a gathering of my recollections in life and will hopefully provide William and others with an understanding of who I was.

A Foreword

The Biographer was privileged to spend a number of sessions with Peder, discussing and recording his story during May and June 2012.

In addition to his story, Peder has assembled a significant body of Family History and reference is made to that body of history - which is in the form of documents and electronic media - at the end of Peder's Story. To ensure that he addressed all areas of his life that he wished to, Peder had drawn up a timeline or framework to prompt himself as he made his way through his narrative. This series of prompts is included in the document under the heading of "A Framework".

In the first section of Peder's Story he provides a summary background to his life.

Peder then continues his story - telling it to the biographer in a candid and witty way with a voice which became a little weaker towards the end of each session, but with a determination and sense of humour which never faltered.

Hopefully, each reader will sense the delight and privilege which has been my experience in hearing, as well as recording and sharing Peder's own "My Story"

Keith

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A Framework

Peder Kwok

Son of Edward and Edith Kwok

Youngest brother to Paul (aged 5) and Pamela (aged 3 and a half)

DATE	EVENT
8 December 1943	I was born in Shanghai, China during the Japanese occupation.
1945	When WWII ended Mum took the 3 children to UK to meet their grandparents.
1946	Left UK and returned to Shanghai.
1949 / 50	Came to Australia to establish citizenship.
December 1956	Family left Shanghai and moved to Hong Kong. - I started High School.
1962	I commenced tertiary studies (Electrical Engineering) at Hong Kong Technical College
1964	I moved to Melbourne and worked as a trades assistant until Christmas.
February 1965	I lived at YMCA South Melbourne. Studied full-time at George Taylor and Staff for Matriculation Certificate.
1966	Commenced Diploma Course in Electrical Engineering at <i>RMIT</i> . Commenced as pool attendant at YMCA (Friday nights and Saturdays).
1968	Married Julie and lived at Richmond.
December 1968	Finished <i>RMIT</i> course in Electrical Engineering.
3 February 1969	Employed as a company cadet by Nylex Corp. (Richmond) - Travelled to many sites for training – including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Mentone – vinyl coated fabric production, plastics extrusions, . Deer Park – vinyl coated fabric, . Lilydale – cable manufacture, . Reservoir/Thomastown – Armstrong Nylex factory making floor tiles.
13 May 1971	Moved to East Bentleigh. Transferred to Adelaide by Nylex to take up the role of Site Engineer during the construction phase of a new facility. Lived at Elizabeth Park.
21 July 1972	Transferred back to Melbourne and relocated to Nylex Cables, Lilydale - Lived in North Croydon.
1974	Olympic Cables and Nylex Cables merged to form Olex Cables.
1977	Transferred to Olex, Tottenham.
December 1978	Moved to Chirnside Park.
31 August 1979	Resigned from Olex to go to Consolidated Electronics, Thornbury
10 September 1979	Commenced at Consolidated Electronics
31 March 1983	Retrenched from Consolidated Electronics.
2 May 1983	Employed by Andrew Antennas, Campbellfield.
5 May 1987	Resigned from Andrew Electronics to go to Rockwell Electronics, Lilydale
8 May 1987	Started work at Rockwell Electronics, Lilydale.
1992	Moved to Croydon Hills.
1996	Rockwell Electronics became Boeing Australia.
31 March 2000	Retrenched from Boeing.
April 2000	Employed by Tronics Pty Ltd, Thomastown.
April 2001	Resigned from Tronics to go to Akyman Financial Services, Brighton.
15 August 2002	Resigned from Akyman
20 November 2002	Employed by RFI Industries, Bayswater.
9 January 2003	Moved to Lilydale.
September 2008	Retired form RFI Industries.
2008 to present	Retired – Indulging My Hobbies.
December 2011	Diagnosed with Mesotheliom

My Grandparents Come To Australia

My background is probably quite unique, and there are a few things I would like to share with you here about my ancestry.

I was born in Shanghai on 8th December 1943, the second son and third child of Edward and Edith Kwok.

My father was full-blooded Chinese, but born in Sydney of Chinese parentage. My mother was born and raised in England. She had a Danish father and an English mother.

The village in which we lived was extremely poor. China went through a lot of civil wars and what-have-you; but in addition to that, when you're tilling the same footage of soil, year in year out for twenty-five generations, there's not much in the way of nutrients left in the soil.

So, for various reasons, dad's father and uncles – I think it was about three brothers – came to Australia. Grandpa was the youngest sibling and would have been just twelve or thirteen when he came out here. Being the youngest, he, I think, picked up the English language a lot easier than his brothers; and maybe he had more time to do it; maybe his brothers did the heavier work and so on.

Australia in those days (this was the 1890s) was known as "Dai Gum San" which translates to "Big Gold Mountain".¹

Yes, it was the gold that probably attracted most of the Chinese to Australia – but my forebears were farmers so they concentrated on the market gardening business, and, after a lot of hardship, they settled in the Ultimo area of Sydney – Haymarket – and opened a small business retailing vegetables. They used to go out in the countryside early in the morning, pick the vegetables, then cart them back, and then finally sell them at the market. They built that up into quite a strong company business, for although being farmers who weren't very educated, they were very determined.

They used to go to Fiji as well and buy bananas and peanuts and what have you and bring them back here - they had an importing business

They had to have an entry visa to get back into the country, but it was based on character references from bank managers and so on saying 'what a jolly fine fellow he is - let him back in' - that sort of thing. Today, tours of China Town in Sydney, tell how, where there are shops and restaurants now, above them used to be warming rooms and things like that for the very raw (green) bananas that used to come in. They would have them up there and they would have heating of some kind to ripen them. Now they're turned into living quarters - prime real-estate.

Also, in Little Bourke Street in Melbourne, there's a Chinese museum, and if you go in, the first area you come to there is a replica of the kind of boat the Chinese migrants came out in. It is dark and dingy and you hear all these creaking sounds, and you can just close your eyes and say, well grandpa had to endure all this for four weeks or six weeks or whatever the case maybe. What we do now is, we go out to the airport and we whinge about having to queue and all the rest of it - and eight hours later we're there. The world is different.

My grandfather went back to China in 1903 and brought my grandmother out. She was only a young sixteen or seventeen year old. They had the difficulty of the *White Australia Policy*² of course, which

¹ <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/dai-gum-san-big-gold-mountain/> Goldfields Stories: **Dai Gum San, Big Gold Mountain**.

Parsons, John. "Big Gold Mountain" Nelson Thornes Open Learning, South Melbourne, Australia. 2000 ISBN 0-7487-9803-X

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Australia_policy The term **White Australia Policy** comprises various historical policies that intentionally restricted non-white immigration to Australia. From its origins at Federation in 1901, the policies were progressively dismantled between 1949 and 1973. Competition in the goldfields, labour

came into being just on Federation, but they overcame that. They had seven children of which my dad was the youngest.

Return to Shanghai

In China, our side of the family were the “textiles” side of the family business. Long Song - one of grandpa’s brothers - was the “department store” side.

My grandfather and his brothers did well in Australia, but they were absolutely enthralled with *Hordern’s Department Store*³ - the idea that you could buy everything you needed under one roof was something they had never imagined and they wanted to be the first to open one - a store like that - in Shanghai. My grandfather and one other brother - I don’t know who it was - went to Shanghai to choose the site and, even though they were a Christian family, the *feng shui* - the wind and the water and all this business - was very important.

They chose their site and then they went back to Hong Kong - grandpa had gone back to negotiate a business opportunity. Unfortunately, he contracted typhoid while he was there and he died. So grandmother was left with seven kids.

One tradition that is characteristic within the Chinese family is that the family is the most important part of life and everything possible should be done to preserve this tradition. The Chinese way is “the family looks after the family” - very, very strong allegiances (perhaps it’s the MAIN allegiance) This is something that I have adopted wholly and solely – the family comes first.

So the family in China arranged for grandma to take the seven kids back to Hong Kong and settle there. I have a copy of the original telegram that was sent to her - obviously from other members of the family but they said it was from grandpa - “Bring the children back to Hong Kong. Very ill.”

Grandma and the children arrived in Hong Kong in the October of 1916. Grandpa passed away in the November. But the Department store went ahead.

The Department store thrived - the family eventually had five textile mills, and some of them had as many as twenty thousand workers - it was a huge complex.

My Father Edward

My father, Edward, was born in Sydney, Australia, on the 26th of February 1914. He was the seventh child born into the family and as I have said, he unfortunately lost his father who contracted typhoid and passed away in Hong Kong in 1916.

When Edward’s father passed away, the extended family in both Hong Kong and Sydney decided the best way my grandmother could cope was for the whole family to return to Hong Kong where they could be looked after. So Edward and his six siblings were brought up in Hong Kong.

The family thinking was that they wanted to extend their family interests into the textile industry and what better way to achieve this than to train their own experts in the field.

disputes and Australian nationalism created an environment of racial antagonism during the second half of the 19th century. Such factors led to the passage of the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1901, one of the first Acts of the national parliament following federation.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Hordern_%26_Sons **Anthony Hordern's** was the largest department store in Sydney, Australia. It was originally established by a free immigrant from England, Anthony Hordern, in 1823, as a drapery shop. A further large menswear store was in upper George Street, and Hordern's also operated one of the largest mail order businesses in Australia. Several Anthony Horderns succeeded their founding ancestor, and a huge six storey building was opened by them in 1905, called **The Palace Emporium**, the main entrance being completely fitted out in imported Italian marble. The massive store was located on the corner of George, Pitt, & Goulburn Streets in the southern end of the CBD. One of their advertising slogans was that they sold "anything from a needle to an anchor".

Now in those days, two principles applied in the Chinese family tradition which determined the course of my father's life:

Firstly, in education and in business, the Chinese tradition favours the boys - the argument put forward is that the girls will eventually marry and leave the family⁴ but the boys will always continue to strive for the good of the family – a bit harsh but that is the rationale!

Secondly, all male children of my father's generation were treated like pawns - the attitude was, "we're going into this or that business, so who do we have to train in particular facets of the business". On that basis, as dad grew up, the family chose him to move into the textiles side of their business. Dad actually wanted to study medicine but they said, "You can do medicine but we won't back you." So Edward was sent to study at Hong Kong University and was then sent to the UK in 1934 to study cotton textiles at Manchester University.

His elder brother had previously been sent to Massachusetts in America to study wool textiles, somebody was sent to do business management, you know, everyone was "deployed", they had no choice. So that's why dad went to Manchester - for the textiles - he became a textile engineer.

Then everyone congregated back in Shanghai.

Edward and Edith

My Mother, Edith, an only child, was born on 3rd May 1916 in London UK of a Danish father and English mother, and was eighteen when my father, Edward came to the UK to study at Manchester University.

During the course of his study dad met and courted mum. Now in the mid-'30s it was rare to see mixed race relationships developing, but theirs did. I have pictures of my dad in the UK some with mum and some on his own, or with cousins. Dad was a very keen athlete in those days. He actually went to the 1936 Olympics in Berlin not as a participant, as a spectator, but for some reason once he got married and settled down he dropped it all.

In early 1937, dad graduated and returned by boat to Hong Kong. In going from London to New York, in May of 1937 dad took the *Queen Mary*. However, his initial want was to go on the *Hindenburg*⁵ and mum said, "No, no I don't want you going on that". I don't know whether they argued or whatever it was, Mum convinced him not to go on the *Hindenburg*. How lucky were we, because (if he'd stuck to his want), I wouldn't be around today.

Mum was an only child but she couldn't wait to leave home, and, when dad graduated in Manchester and went back to Hong Kong, mum followed on another boat. The fact that arrangements had been made for mum to catch a separate boat back to Hong Kong was also quite out of keeping with the times - unheard of really - for mum to travel on her own was quite strange.

⁴ Boys were educated to tertiary level where possible. The girls were allowed to finish high school and do a commercial / secretarial course to assist in their future - for example to help them get a job as a stenographer etc. Such education also improved their marriage prospects, (or if they didn't get married they would be self-supporting, but in those days nearly everyone got married because the match-makers were always around "planning this and planning that.")

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindenberg_disaster The **Hindenburg disaster** took place on Thursday, May 6, 1937, as the German passenger airship LZ 129 Hindenburg caught fire and was destroyed during its attempt to dock with its mooring mast at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station, which is located adjacent to the borough of Lakehurst, New Jersey. Of the 97 people on board (36 passengers, 61 crew), there were 35 fatalities, including one death among the ground crew.

My Mum and Dad Marry

Mum arrived in Hong Kong on 14th October 1937 and was picked up from the pier and taken straight to St John's Cathedral and she and dad were married on that day. ^{(See [Photo 1](#))}

Inter-race marriages in those days were extremely rare and even dad's family made their feelings known that they did not approve of this union. When mum and dad left Hong Kong after their honeymoon for Shanghai (to start their married life together), my grandmother, to avoid meeting her new "foreign devil" daughter-in-law, immediately jumped onto a boat and left Shanghai for Hong Kong.

I'll tell you a quirky story ...

I was working for Rockwell - in Chirnside Park - and they sent me off to America for a two week technical transfer of data to help us with our job for a Rockwell facility. While there, I had the weekend free so I got in touch with my cousin and she took me up to meet my sole surviving aunty – she was the eldest sister - and she was quite elderly (probably about ninety at the time). We had lunch and went back to her place and we were talking (my mum and dad were both alive then) and she showed me some photo albums. In those days there weren't digital cameras but I had a very good Asahi Pentax SLR camera - and I saw one (picture) and it was a picture of the seven children - my dad and his siblings (I think Gran might have appeared in that photo too) - and I said "Would you mind if I took a snapshot of this." We didn't have scanners in those days, so I just lay the album on a pouffe with as much natural light as I could and I took a photo of it; and it came up exceptionally well - I took several shots actually.

When I came home and showed it to the family, their reactions were incredible. There was a picture of my aunty who I could have sworn was my sister at about eleven or twelve - it was the spitting image. I showed it to my Sister - 'cause she lives in Sydney too – and she says "ooh", she says, "I feel like someone's walked over my grave"; and I showed it to my mum and she said the same thing - she said "That's Pamela". I showed it to my dad and he said nonchalantly "Oh Yeah, that's sister Gladys".

The family genes are really strong – very. We're a very strong family in terms of loyalty and allegiance as well; as I said earlier, the family comes first.

And that's why, with dad trying to bring a foreigner into the family, things didn't go down well initially; but gradually barriers got broken, and now the family's spread all over the world, including America, and there's quite a lot of European blood in the stock.

Mum and Dad's First Child, Paul

These feelings towards mum as a "foreigner" in the family continued for twelve months until the birth of mum and dad's first child (my brother Paul), at which time the barriers crumbled and my mother, overnight, became the best daughter-in-law ever.

Times were tough in China in those days. In addition to a civil war in inland China, the Japanese had occupied parts of China since the early '30s. China was dominated by a number of European powers in Shanghai, demanding one-sided terms of trade and occupying suburbs of Shanghai, and treating the local Chinese like dirt. My mum and dad struggled but survived these difficult times.

Pamela Born

My sister, Pamela, was born on the [REDACTED] 1940, but World War II in the Pacific broke out on the 7th of December the following year and the Japanese simply marched into Shanghai and interned all troops and civilians of the European powers who were still at war with Germany in Europe.

My mother was extremely lucky - as she was travelling on a Danish passport, and, as Germany had already fought and defeated Denmark ⁶ earlier in the European phase of the war, my mother was classified as a non-enemy alien and was allowed to remain at home. Mind you, life was extremely hard, with food and other essentials being in short supply.

My dad had a very narrow escape during this time. He was at work when the Japanese bombed the area he was in. It took him over twenty-four hours to get home – he couldn't contact mum, so mum was stuck at home with two other children and all she could do was worry. Luckily it all worked out in the end.

My Birth

I was born on the 8th of December 1943, at the Woo Sei Hospital, and being a month premature, I was a big worry to mum and dad, especially under the difficult conditions of the time. (See [Photos 2and 3](#))

We went through the war under very harsh conditions, and about this time, mum was offered a young teenage girl of thirteen to come and live in our house in exchange for food and board. Lillian came from a large family whose father had abandoned his family, and Lillian's mum simply could not afford to feed Lillian. Lillian just about became my nanny and until her passing earlier in 2012, used to ring me up from San Francisco with the messages of love and affection – she thought of me as her foster-son / younger-brother. Life continued until the war in the Pacific ended in August 1945.

Mum Takes Us to UK

As soon as things settled down a bit, the British Government arranged to repatriate all British citizens who wanted to be returned to the UK. The evacuation was arranged by the British Government. We left on a troop ship from Shanghai. We were sharing these great big quarters, they weren't individual cabins. It was just one big compartment. There were bunks - three tiered bunks. A lot of the families had come out of concentration camps (they were more internment camps, but they called them concentration camps.) However, they were nothing compared to what was going on in Europe.

Because my mother had a Danish father they said she didn't need to go to the camps, but it was lucky, in a way, because then she was able to use her British citizenship status - because her mother was British - to get Red Cross parcels. She would send in these little parcels to friends in the camps and also little delicacies, and things like that, you know, even a few teaspoons of tea to other members of the family; so that endeared her a little bit more with my father's family. So my mother was able to play her two citizenships to her advantage.

For this reason she became quite obsessed that we all keep our documents safe - we all knew where our passports were - and up-to-date.

We've got our birth certificates, baptismal certificates, all those things. See, she kept all these things - even my baptism certificate - she had everything. It was a thing with her, mainly because of that situation. She understood the value of them and what not having them could do to you.

So in late 1945 mum and we three children got on a boat to the UK. In those days it took about a month to six weeks to get back to the UK.

Then we took a train up to Manchester and we stayed with our grandparents – being only two I don't remember much other than the fact that I fell down the stairs and broke my arm. I've always accused her of pushing me down the stairs but she disputes that.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupation_of_Denmark "Occupation of Denmark"

1946 - We Return to Shanghai

We left the UK in '46.

Between '46 and '49 we were in Shanghai and there was a bit of a boom time. However, civil war between the Communists and the Nationalist Chinese was quite fierce.

Initially, even during the Japanese occupation, the Communists were quite prepared to form allegiances with the Nationalist Chinese to fight the common enemy, Japan, but the Nationalist Chinese didn't want to play ball. At every turn they tried to knife 'em. Corruption was rife. Finally towards the late '40s, the Communist regime under Mao Zedong⁷ decided "no this is not good enough we are going to take over China" and they basically came along and just pushed the Nationalist Chinese into the sea and onto Taiwan.

In those years between the war and the Communist takeover, dad was tied up with the family business. Shanghai was a city divided - the British had a concession, the French had a concession. It was as a result of the opium wars going back to the 1800s when the European powers demanded a section of the big cities which they would administer, and then use that as a trading point for what they wanted out of China.

In those days it was a part of life there that you had a chauffeur. You had - I wouldn't call him a butler but - someone who served the food, a cook, another person who did the washing. I guess it just gave them employment because you paid them peanuts and provided a bed and board.

When I tell people about our childhood they say, "Oh, you were spoilt", but everyone was the same, we didn't think it was any different. ^(See Photos 4) I mean, I was unfortunate in that all the schools had closed when I really became of school age; but we had servants in the house; we never had to draw a bath or anything like that; our bed was turned down every day; it was made every day and that sort of thing.

Paul and Pamela were driven to school. A lot of that was because of the kidnappings - a lot of children were kidnapped and some of my father's associates' children's ears were lopped off if money wasn't forthcoming; or a finger was sent in the mail and that sort of thing - for vast amounts of money. It was kidnapping for gain - this was before the Communist Government - and children were the target. So this is why, wherever we went, we were protected - we were driven there and driven home - and when we went to Sunday school, same thing.

My father had a thriving business, he was classified as - well later on he was deemed to be - a capitalist. He had a driver, a chauffeur, and at one stage I think we had five servants. It was a privileged upbringing.

The first time I made a pot of tea was when I came to Australia. It was when mum and dad went on holidays to Japan and I rang Pamela - I think I was about seventeen - and said, "How do I make a pot of tea." You see, we didn't set foot in the kitchen - we had no need to do so. I mean, at one stage we had a cook for Chinese food and a cook for western food.

Establishing Australian Citizenship

In 1949 mum and dad went to Hong Kong. They were taking me from Shanghai for a three-week holiday. Paul and Pamela were staying in Shanghai to stay with some friends. I don't know the

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_Zedong Mao Zedong, (b. 26 December 1893 – d. September 9, 1976) (his name is frequently transliterated as **Mao Tse-tung**) is commonly referred to as "**Chairman Mao**". He was a Chinese Communist revolutionary, guerrilla warfare strategist, Marxist political philosopher, and leader of the Chinese Revolution. He was the architect and founding father of the People's Republic of China (PRC) from its establishment in 1949, and held authoritarian control over the nation until his death on 9th September 1976. His theoretical contribution to Marxism–Leninism, along with his military strategies and brand of policies, are collectively known as "Maoism".

significance, I don't really understand it, but the Communists, in their long march and everything, had crossed the Yangtze river which meant that Shanghai was going to be their next big city to be taken. So with twenty-four hours (or less than twenty-four hours) notice mum and dad got us inoculated and so on, and Paul and Pamela were brought along as well.

So we were in Hong Kong for that summer of '49 as the Communists were coming east, towards the coast, and somebody had said to mum "Get those children their Australian citizenship. They have to step foot on Australian soil before the age of sixteen." Mum wanted to protect the kids, but dad wouldn't leave at all, so mum said "I'm going to take the children to Australia to establish their citizenship".

Under the Migration Act in those days – I don't know if it's still the same today - children of an Australian citizen born overseas could apply for citizenship as soon as they put their feet on Australian soil - and dad was an Australian citizen, having been born here; and Mum was allowed to stay in Australia because she was white – Danish father English mother – she could come here and stay here because she was a "Pom" (travelling on an English passport by then), and they had no qualms about that - I mean any Englishman (or non-black American, and so forth) – were welcome to come here (on a holiday or on some sort of a visa – I'm not sure which). Actually, mum didn't get her citizenship until a lot later in life.

Initially, mum said to the Immigration people in Hong Kong, "I want to bring the kids to Australia." We were to be travelling on mum's passport. The *White Australia Policy* kicked in and the Australian Department of Immigration said to mum, "No! YOU'RE OK 'cause you're white, dad's OK 'cause he's a citizen, but the children are "half-castes", they're not allowed in. So my mother was very uptight about that. However, she finally got us in as tourists.

We arrived at Fremantle and registered at Immigration, lodged an application for citizenship, and then we gradually worked out way around Australia - partly by train, partly by boat - and ended up in Brisbane.

When the boat in Brisbane was ready to take us back to Hong Kong, Immigration comes on board and says to mother, "Have you got permission to take these Australian citizens out of the country?" Mum just about threw them (the Immigration officers) into the water.

So that's what my mother did, to ensure we were deemed to be Australian citizens. My sister's citizenship certificate is signed by Harold Holt (who was Australia's Minister for Immigration at the time) ⁸ but I've not been able to find mine.

We were actually in Australia in 1949 at the time the takeover happened, and when we all went back to Shanghai again, dad was still working to protect the family business. The family's business was the main "important thing in his life" and he concentrated on that. ⁹

I was only six at the time so I don't really remember much - but of course, once we were back in Shanghai again, mum considered we were alright - we had Australian passports.

Mum's greatest fear now was that once we kids got stuck into the Chinese education system we would never be allowed to leave. So she actually employed tutors for us. All we could have was basically English, Geography, Arithmetic, and that was about it. We had a very chequered education. Later on, in the early '50s, there were some schools still open - Shanghai British school (and a few

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Holt As Minister for Immigration (1949–1956), Holt was responsible for the relaxation of the White Australia policy

⁹ The *People's Liberation Army* took control of Shanghai on 27th May 1949, and we were in Hong Kong from the April until dad went back to Shanghai in the October 1949. In the meantime the *People's Republic of China* was declared on 1st October 1949 and the Nationalist government overthrown. That's one of the quirks of life. (cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China>)

others) - and we went to there for a brief period, but within a year the Communists had closed it down so we went to a different school. Three months later they closed that down too, so then we just had private tuition at home. (See [Photo 5](#))

A Free Spirit

We left China in 1956 when I was thirteen so between the ages of six and thirteen I was a bit of a free sort of an individual. There were no schools to go to (that I could attend) because although I spoke the local dialect and spoke a little bit of Mandarin it was nowhere near good enough to go to school.

This is where I think we missed a lot - we had a lot of gaps in our education because the Government would not allow certain text-books into the country. Even though we had the tutors, the text-books weren't allowed to be brought in. So, for instance, history - they had their version of history and they said "oh yeah, that's wrong. You can't be having that".

So we had an American lady on the one hand teaching us English language and literature - Dickens and things like that we were allowed to read because it was always about the poor people and how they were put down and so on, and Mathematics was permitted - but we were not allowed to do any science (no Chemistry for example) because we didn't have access to certain things, - or even Geography because a lot of land was disputed - for instance they said "Taiwan belongs to us".

I used to just wander the streets doing my own thing with the local kids and had a great time. I had an air rifle and I used to go around popping off sparrows and things like that. I had a great mate - who lives in America (we still correspond) - he had a big place out in the countryside that I could get to by bus, and I used to go out there - take my gun with me. We used to shoot frogs and sparrows, and we would fish - never caught anything but we had a fantastic time - we had not a care in the world.

In China in the early '50s they had a campaign on to try and eradicate the four pests - sparrows, rats, flies, and mosquitoes¹⁰ - which were affecting people's health or affecting food supply which was short. Since one of the four pests was the sparrow, the fact that I was shooting them pleased the local Communist cadre. They were very happy for me to go around and show my leather strap with all these dead birds on it. Our cook used to sit there and pluck them, clean them out and cook them for me - talk about being spoiled. (See [Photo 6](#))

While I was wandering the streets of Shanghai - no school - just a couple of hours a day private tuition - and shooting sparrows and so on that's when I first developed my love for billiards. There was a little billiard hall in an old garage down the road and next to the area was a large hospital - bear in mind this is 1953 / 54. The hospital was a military hospital full of ex-Korean War veterans and they all had TB and all sorts of horrible diseases, and I used to play snooker with them. Mum dreaded it - didn't want me to go. I used to play with these guys; they would walk out in their dressing-gowns and wander down. In those days everyone spat. They would stop playing and go into a corner somewhere and have a nice "orch". It didn't worry me, but my mother would have been petrified. (See [Photo 7](#))

I'd love to have had TB rather than mesothelioma¹¹ because TB is curable.

A Time of Oppression

Although I was a "free spirit" during these years, wandering the streets and doing things, it was also a very real situation of "big brother's watching you". We used to listen to the Australian

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Pests_Campaign - China's "Four Pests Campaign" or "Kill a Sparrow Campaign" was initiated in 1958 as a hygiene campaign. It was part of the "Great Leap Forward" (1958 to 1962) initiated by Mao Zedong. Sparrows were included on the list of pests because they ate grain seed, robbing people of the fruits of their labour.

¹¹ mesothelioma (mez-uh-thee-lee-yoh-muh): A tumor in the lining of the chest or abdomen (cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesothelioma>)

Broadcasting Commission and BBC on the overseas service. Very often it was "jammed." The Communists would do everything they could to prevent communication with the west.

Using ABC and BBC, we heard about Stalin passing away three days before it was officially announced in China, because they chose the right time, you know, to tell the people. Then because of their allegiance to Russia at the time, they had a minute's silence where, if you were on a bus, the bus would stop and you would have to get off and stand on the street to observe that - it could have been three minutes - silence. Although we knew about Stalin's death, we didn't dare say anything. You didn't dare talk about it, because then they would know that you had been listening, you know, to the overseas service and you weren't supposed to.

Dad went through hell, because it was the early days of Communism. They had this "self confession" philosophy and, as dad was a capitalist, it was claimed he "exploited the workers".

On one occasion (in Shanghai) he went away - he went to work and he didn't come back for forty-eight hours. They'd taken him away, locked him up. They'd put him in a room for hours with a whole bunch of them standing around and him in a chair and continually demanded that he "confess to this, confess to that" - what do you do? You confess after a while.

He had his own chauffeur who was forced to stand up and berate dad; and he said to dad afterwards, "I'd no choice." He was forced into doing what he did.

So it was a hard time for him, and he used to have nightmares over it, but he wouldn't talk about it - he never ever would talk about it.

Even just prior to dad passing away about ten years ago, he was still suffering from the effects of the brainwashing that he underwent.

Between about '53 to '56, mum came to the conclusion, "we can't stay in Shanghai". Initially mum applied to take the siblings and herself out, and the exit permit got rejected - several times - and then mum says, "Well blow it, we're going to apply for the whole family to go". They were quite happy for mum to go but they wanted the children to stay, and definitely dad, but we, finally, all obtained exit visas.

1956 Exiting China

Mum used to take the passports to the British Consulate in Shanghai and they had the authority to renew them for five years at a time - it was an agreement they had because of the Commonwealth. The passport was a British passport in those days - "British passport, Australian Citizen". However, the British Consulate was the one which - even though it wasn't a new book - could just stamp it. When we were given our exit visas in '56 we were given one month to vacate and leave the town; and that meant, you know, closing everything up selling what could be sold. Dad was able to sell the house. He was lucky in that.

Then the same kind of thing happened in 1956 as had occurred in 1949 when we left Shanghai because dad had an Australian passport, and, in fact, quite a few of our relatives had been born in Australia and had their last Australian passport - which probably expired in the '30s maybe, or '40s.

We were able to board the ship - and that had to be paid for in foreign currency - and sail into Hong Kong whereas other people we know were given that one month then they had to apply for visas to enter Hong Kong and that wasn't forthcoming right away.

Many people were allowed to board the vessel, because it was a British vessel registered in the UK, and then waited, hoping that, in the week it took to sail to Hong Kong, their visas would come through.

We never heard of any that didn't, but if they didn't, I think now-a-days the shipping company could be fined for bringing illegal aliens into the country. Hong Kong was still very much British in those days. So it was very 'dicey'."

In Hong Kong

So initially they let us go (we "got permission" to leave) and we went to Hong Kong. ^{(See [Photo 8](#))} We left in December - but we weren't allowed to take any of our assets except for the family furniture. We had no house in Hong Kong, of course, so when we got there, effectively we were destitute. However, in 1949 mum had put some money into a bank - the bank of New South Wales - (I don't know whether it was here or back in Hong Kong) so she had some access to some funds.

When dad got to Hong Kong he had to look for a job. Eventually, using his contacts, he landed one - which didn't pay an awful lot but enough to get by on - and mum for the first time in her life went out and got a job as well.

I went to school in Hong Kong, it's called the Diocesan Boys School, a Christian Eurasian school - Eurasian being European in Australian. All the kids were like me, but most were brought up in Hong Kong so they spoke perfect Cantonese - they could read it, write it. I could speak it but I couldn't write it. I found it extremely difficult, because my English was fine, probably my Arithmetic was fine, but the rest of it was "what's all this about"- particularly the foreign languages. You had to carry a foreign language and they only offered two - one was Cantonese, one was French. I struggled for one year with Chinese and I was hopeless so I switched over to French - and I was hopeless with that too. Again I wasn't interested in it.

So I went through to form five at the school - '56 to about '61 (that's five years) - and I graduated from the class with what was called the Hong Kong Leaving Certificate, and I was probably down the bottom of the class. ^{(See [Photo 9](#))}

I didn't know what I wanted to do. I'd always been interested in electrical things so I thought, "I'll go to the Hong Kong Technical College and do a course there". So I did. I started a three-year course in Electrical Engineering and graduated from there as well, three years later. However, again I was down the bottom of the class.

Study In Australia, *RMIT*¹²

I was not very academic in those days, I guess I didn't focus too well; and over in Hong Kong the school year finishes in June-July. So it was, "what do I want to do now?"

I'd actually applied to a number of colleges here (in Australia) - *RMIT*, Sydney Tech., probably Queensland Tech., I can't remember now - and they all looked at my results and said "Nah". So I said "Well, blow it, I'm going to go to Melbourne, go to *RMIT*, camp on their doorstep and say, 'What do I have to do to get into your course?'" Which is what I did; and they said, "The first thing you have to do is matriculate."¹³ I said, "OK". So I spent twelve months at a place called *George Taylor and Staff* in the city - that was a private college. It was exclusively set up for foreign students 'cause they charged an arm and a leg.

Anyway, I stayed at the YMCA in South Melbourne - if you remember where it was - corner of City Road and Sturt Street in South Melbourne - and I did the twelve month "Matric." course.

Some subjects I just did not like, and one of them, which was compulsory, was Chemistry. I failed it. So I went along to *RMIT* and they said, "We'll accept you but you have to complete that Matric. course in Chemistry, OK, before you graduate". So I started it the first year I started my course, and I hated it so much I dropped the Chemistry, and it was only in the third year that I said "I can complete all the requirements of the *RMIT* Fellowship Diploma course, but unless I get Chemistry I'm going to be in trouble". I had to pull my finger out and go back and do it - which I hated.

I wasn't a poor student but I was a very lazy student - for example, because I'd done the course in Electrical Engineering at the *Hong Kong Tech.*, when I started at *RMIT* the first year was just so basic that I used to sit at the back of the class with my transistor on with the cord running up to my ear and listen to the races; and when we had our first test and got the results back I remember the teacher called my name out and I stood up and he gave a look of utter surprise because I'd got a very high mark. He had wiped me off as a non-achiever. If I liked something I did it, if I didn't I left it. My sister was the same. I won two academic prizes. I won the top Engineering award at *RMIT* for the year of my graduation and top Electrical Engineer, for which I received the magnificent sums of five guineas and ten guineas. It was only after Julie and I got together that I felt I had to pull the finger out and do something.

During my *RMIT* years, while I was at the YMCA I had a part-time job there as pool attendant. They had a swimming pool and I worked there Friday nights and all day Saturday. Saturday was a programmed day for the kids - in various groups. That job went all day Saturday - I was earning all of ten dollars a day.

Also while I was studying, I got into some bad habits. I'd been smoking since I was about sixteen, but that's another story, and at "*The Y*" I got friendly with a guy who was mad keen on trotting. So every Saturday night we would go out to the trots, and during the week we'd go to the TAB and have bets and what-have-you. I've never had money to bet big time but, you know, enough to keep me poor.

Finally, after I graduated from *RMIT* in 1968, then and only then did mum and dad pack up in Hong Kong and move down here. However, my sister Pamela did not follow until the '70s.

So all our part of the family is now here in Australia. The vast part of the family of my uncle and his children all went to America.

¹² Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

¹³ Matriculate = be admitted to membership in a college or university.

In the 1950s and 60s the "Matriculation" (Matric) year was the sixth year of secondary school (now known as year 12) and successful completion of five subjects at that level was a pre-requisite for entry to tertiary study.

Everyone's done well, but I think, when my grandfather died and we went to Shanghai, it was assumed the Shanghai portion of the company was our bit. We had no claim on the Hong Kong side or anything like that.

Peder and Julie

Julie's aunt was the matron at "The Y" and Julie had come from Adelaide to Melbourne, and we met and - she claims she had to ask me but - she pretended to like the trots, so I said, "Would you like to come out one day". So she did. It was actually New Year's Eve 1967 that we had our first date together; and from that our relationship grew. (See [Photo 10](#))

I can still remember going back to Julie's flat that she shared with four other girls, having the old black-and-white TV on, and seeing the Harold Holt disaster - it was about that era.¹⁴

We got married in May of 1968 in the city at the Wesley Church in Lonsdale Street. (See [Photo 11](#)) Julie's mum and dad came over from Adelaide, and her sister and brother and his wife, and we went up to Sydney for our honeymoon - stayed at Kings Cross for a few days, at a *Temperance Hotel* as it turned out.

We came back - I was finishing off my course and Julie was working - and we moved into a flat at 203 Punt Road. The flat was quite modest 'cause that's all we could afford. We had no furniture, but we went out and bought a bed on time payment and a fridge and then we went to *The Brotherhood* and got a couple of armchairs. Tables were (remember those old tea caddies - tea boxes) two of those stacked one on top of the other with a bit of gingham around them.

It was quite a difficult time. Julie was pregnant with our eldest so she would be terribly sick in the morning before she went to work and terribly sick when she came home, and during the day.

Tim, Our First Child

Tim was born [REDACTED] 1969 at the *Queen Vic*. (See [Photo 12](#)) He was an "over-cooked baby". He was due in December born in January, so he was a big baby - he was probably about ten pounds when he was born and Julie being a little girl (quite short) found it very, very difficult. She hated the *Queen Vic*. 'cause in those days it was "you did as the nurses said and that was it - end of story". Julie came home but Tim had to stay in hospital, so she had to work her way from Punt Road to the *Queen Vic*. every day.

My Working Life

Finally Tim came home - it was only a one-bedroom apartment - and I started work in February, and I joined a company called Nylex. Their head office was in Cremorne Street, Richmond, but they had a cadetship going. They would take about ten or twelve graduates every year to train them up and, hopefully, in a year or two, find positions for them within the company. So to get you to learn the products they made, and how things were done in the business, and so forth, they moved you around.

My first assignment wasn't Richmond, it was actually Mentone, so I had to buy a car to drive to Mentone. You spent three months or so (I can't quite remember) at each location. Next time it was Lilydale, at the cable factory, and then I went to Deer Park. I also went to the Armstrong Nylex

¹⁴ **Harold Edward Holt**, CH (5 August 1908 – 17 December 1967) was an Australian politician and the 17th Prime Minister of Australia. His term as Prime Minister was brought to an early and dramatic end in December 1967 when he disappeared while swimming at Cheviot Beach near Portsea, Victoria, and was presumed drowned. (cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Holt)

factory in Settlement Road in Thomastown - Reservoir. So you got to move right round. I did that for a year and a half.

When I was based at Mentone, we decided to rent down there, so we rented 82 Blamey Street, East Bentleigh for twelve months - which was good. It was an old single-fronted-brick-veneer place typical of that era. Julie found it very difficult because she had no friends in Melbourne. I would be at work all day and come home at night tired and everything else, and barely have much to say.

She had worked in the city in Carlton and places like that, and only for short times because all-in-all she'd only worked here about twelve months - well, two years all up. She was a clerk. Julie started off learning to become a nurse but she didn't actually finish the course. She ended up her nursing days at the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital.

So what friends she had were nowhere near where we were living and, as a consequence, she pined to go back to Adelaide to be with her family, and at least be able to leave Tim with grandma while she did something with her sister or whatever.

South Australia

So I jockeyed around at work and found out that Nylex was actually going to build a factory in Salisbury in South Australia. I lobbied for a job there and they appointed me as site engineer. That was part of the engineering team so I got in with them and we moved over in May 1971 to 23 Adams Street, Elizabeth Park.

A huge factory warehouse had been built. The reason why the company wanted to do that was it was offered very favourable terms by the South Australian Housing Trust.

In those days all the cars had vinyl-coated fabric (remember that stuff where you got in and you burned your backside and your arms and everything else) and it was that sort of stuff which Nylex made at that particular factory. So they thought "Have it closest to the source."

It was a huge factory, and it was all funded by the Housing Trust. It was only towards the end that we put in our products - like the wall cladding was vinyl (Armstrong-Nylex), and the flooring. We made cables. All the cable used on the facility was ours so that's where I got involved in it all.

Before the factory actually opened, that part of the market collapsed. People didn't want VCF (vinyl-coated fabric) in their cars, they wanted, you know, proper materials and that; and they were beginning to come out. So Nylex had obviously begun to dither and carry on and the Housing Trust said, "Well it's finished, we're going to move in". It finally came out "No we're not going to move in". That created a lot of bad blood, but that was their problem, not mine.

The M.D. from Nylex came over and he said to me "We can't employ you in South Australia but if you wish to come back to Victoria we can offer you a position at one of the existing factories - whether it's at Mentone, Lilydale or Deer Park." So we chose the eastern suburbs because, one, we liked it, and two, it was cheap.

Back To Victoria

We came back here in 1972 and, again, we sailed back into the same quagmire in that Julie didn't know anyone - couldn't make friends. We were living in company-supplied accommodation, which was just on the bottom of the hill. We were on the highway just before you turn into Lilydale. They had a building there that they owned and they let us rent it off them; but no neighbours, so that was pretty tough. We were there for about six weeks, I think.

Julie hated it; so I said "Let's find our own accommodation; a house somewhere." So we moved to North Croydon. We rented an old weatherboard - very old weatherboard at 16 Kerry Anne Crescent, North Croydon. It had a briquette hot water service. Two or three briquettes in there gave us hot water for the day. Next day you'd have to fire it up again. I remember in those days you could go and

pick up a hundredweight of briquettes – a hessian bag full – for a dollar. That was the main form of heating as well as the hot water. It made a mess of the car - but it was cheap. We were there for about two or three years and Julie still felt unsettled, although she had neighbours - there were two or three neighbours who she became quite friendly with but it wasn't quite enough.

Then a house became available for sale in the same court, at 20 Kerry Anne Crescent, and I spoke to my mum and dad and they gave us the money for a deposit, so that's how we were able to afford our first house. We bought that, stayed for about three years, just about trebled our money – no doubled – which is good 'cause it enabled us to then look at somewhere else (the market had gone up) and we moved to 3 Cypress Court, Chirnside Park.

We bought this place and I can remember lying in bed the first night thinking, "this cost me forty-four thousand dollars"- my repayments were a hundred and twenty-four dollars a month - "how the hell are we going to afford this". But we did. This was about December 1978.

Ah - before that, the job that they created for me at Lilydale was a "bit of a Claytons¹⁵ job". I was defined as the electrical engineer of the site, but there was no requirement for it you know - very little capital works, mainly maintenance and stuff like that - and they had a maintenance supervisor so I'd very little to do. By then also, Nylex Cables and Olympic Cables had formed a merger and that's how you got the name Olex.

Within twelve months the new management decided "Well, Peder's not doing anything of any consequence at Lilydale; we'll move him to Tottenham". The other Tottenham factory was probably built before Noah built the Ark. They'd a diverse range of products there - more than just the plastic cables. They'd paper - high voltage paper cables - aluminium cable, and a whole bunch of other things. So they transferred me out there.

We could only afford the one car so Julie would have to pile Tim into the car in the morning, take me to the station and drive back. I'd take the old *red rattler*¹⁶ all the way to Tottenham – we were very lucky if you got one of those blue ones - and then coming home invariably they'd be running late because there'd be a line fault somewhere. We didn't have mobile phones so you couldn't contact anyone. Julie would be at the station waiting for me, Tim would be crying his eyes out for his tea and things weren't the best.

But, anyway we survived until 1979 when I actually found another job and it was only at Thornbury.

Emily Arrives

Now, in the meantime, back in the mid-'70s - or prior to the mid-'70s (73/74), the Vietnam war was quite prominent on the news, and everything else, and Julie became very keen on adoption. She wanted us to consider adopting a war orphan.

¹⁵ "Claytons" was the brand name of a non-alcoholic, non-carbonated beverage coloured and packaged to resemble bottled whiskey. It was the subject of a major marketing campaign in Australia and New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s, promoting it as "the drink you have when you're not having a drink" at a time when alcohol was being targeted as a major factor in the road toll. The term "Claytons" passed into common usage for anything which was a poor substitute for or an ineffective solution to a problem or issue - not really what it purported to be. A "Claytons job", then was not a real job at all, but one "created" to keep the person on the books.

¹⁶ The **Tait** trains, also referred to as the "**Red Rattlers**", were a wooden-bodied Electric Multiple Unit train that operated on the suburban railway network of Melbourne. They were introduced in 1910 by the Victorian Railways as steam locomotive hauled cars, and converted to electric traction from 1919 when the Melbourne electrification project was underway. The trains derived their name from Sir Thomas James Tait, the chairman of commissioners of the Victorian Railways from 1903 to 1910. The first cars were built during 1909 with the last entering service in 1951. By the 1970s they were under-maintained, very noisy, and "less preferred" by train travellers.

However, while our application was being processed, the Vietcong were coming down south and over-ran Saigon; and Gough Whitlam sent over two Boeings to bring back three hundred and thirty three war orphans.¹⁷ We had an allocation of one of those children - a baby. She arrived with a massive stomach infection and died at the North Shore Quarantine Centre.

Julie was very upset and we went and saw a social worker, and he said "Well there's a possibility that there's some unallocated children," and we got one. We got Emily, who is now thirty-seven and quite independent. So she was our first daughter - now we had Tim and Emily. (See [Photo13](#))

Alicia is Born

That was in 1975. In '77 Julie fell pregnant and our youngest was born, Alicia, [REDACTED] 1977. (See [Photo14](#))

Alicia was born in the *Lilydale Bush Nursing Hospital* - I think she was born around about seven or eight o'clock at night - and I'd gone in, 'cause Julie was in labour - I'd gone straight from work or maybe a little bit earlier - and Julie was writhing on the bed waiting for the doctor to come, and at six o'clock they brought the tea around and plonked it down; and I said to Julie, "Would you like something to eat." She said, "No, I couldn't eat anything." So I said, "Well, if you don't want to eat it, I'll eat it;" and she's never forgiven me for that. Well, you know, I didn't want to go all the way home; and grandma was looking after the other two; and take-away wasn't such a big thing then.

I remember the first take-away place that opened close to us was a *Kentucky Fried Chicken* - I think it was located on Maroondah Highway, the other side of Springvale Road. We used to go down there. Now you think about it you wouldn't cross the road to get take-away, but in those days you had no choice. Next, McDonalds was in Croydon, and gradually it burgeoned.

By the time Alicia was born we were in this three-bedroom house at 20 Kerry Anne Crescent, with three children and us in a basically ten or twelve square house - that's what houses were in those days. It was pretty difficult.

Chirnside

So that's why, in 1978, we moved to Chirnside. It was a four-bedroom place and a lot bigger. It was a "spec." home that had been built, and we had this huge slope - about a forty-five degree slope - leading up to a road on the top, and that was a devil of a job to fix up. You'd try and spread mulch and it would just roll down the hill - but we'd fun. We managed, and gradually, as we had the money, we did various things to it - concreted, (or bituminised), the drive and a few things - and we were quite happy there until Alicia was going to go to high school. (See [Photo 16](#))

By then - it was about 1992 - Emily was going to Lilydale High, but we didn't want Alicia to go to Lilydale High. We decided we'd send her to Luther (College) in Plymouth Road, Croydon. She went there and we decided "She can't travel from Chirnside to Croydon" so we bought another "spec." home in North Croydon - a two storey one - at 6 Dealbata Place in Croydon Hills. By then Tim was just about ready to leave home. Emily came with us and so did Alicia.

Academically Emily was never very strong so we knew it was senseless to try and push her into any further education, and when she eventually got her Leaving Certificate - or whatever it was called in those days - she found a job at a Vietnamese bakery in Croydon. Alicia, on the other hand, was very bright. So from where we were in North Croydon she could just walk up to Luther College, and she was there for the duration.

¹⁷ http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories_ID=244_war=VI.html "Rescue Flight Brings Orphans Out of Saigon" (Australians at War - Australian Government Website)

But Julie became ill and was diagnosed with breast cancer, and she found the stairs at the Croydon Hills place a bit difficult. She never really liked the house. We only bought it because it suited the household circumstances so we decided "OK, we'll look around for something."

A Move to East Ringwood

We were going to downsize, but then we saw this house at 110-112 Longview Road, East Ringwood. It was a smaller house but it had a bigger garden. It was a magnificent property on half an acre of English woodlands. It had about seventy (what do they call those trees) camellias - at least seventy camellias. They were all standards - you know - cut at the top - box hedges. It was all garden and meandering paths through the garden, and out the back it had a plunge pool and a barbecue area which used mains gas. It was very, very elaborate. The house itself was quite small - just the three bedrooms - but we managed; and we would have stayed except it had all these gum trees as well which dropped leaves. It was a lot of work. Every week I'd get the blower out and have to blow all the leaves. So it went on and on, that sort of thing, for about four years.

One of the strangest things is that we bought that house, moved in and I think the first night we were there my daughter came to Julie and me and said, "Mum, I can't find the bath." We said "It's in the bathroom"; and we went in and there was no bath. There was only a large shower, and the ensuite only had a shower. The previous tenants, when they re-modelled, had gotten rid of it. There was a plunge pool, but you weren't going to go and have a bath in that - that was outside. That aside, it was a beautiful house.

The thing that finally drove the nail in the coffin was - well, two things:

One, was we found white ants in the house itself. Previously we'd found evidence of prior white ant attacks but they'd been covered up. But then we found fresh ones, and we got a builder in and he fixed up the problem - again he fixed the problem, he couldn't actually treat it. The funny thing with white ants is, there's no real treatment unless you're starting from scratch - you can do the whole soil before you start building. So that was a real problem.

We had some dead gums cut down and I split all the wood and stacked it for our "coonara". When I went to use it I found it was full of white ants; but anyway ...

Then we came to the conclusion that we couldn't continue to handle the place. It had a complete automated watering system out the back and out the front; and you could set it for zone one from nine o'clock to ten o'clock and so on right around the place. But then we could see the drought was coming and we said, "Well there's no way can you hand water all this area." There were some areas which were not covered with the automated system so Julie had to hand water those anyway and that was taking forever.

By then, I think, Emily had left home and we began looking for somewhere else. Alicia had gone to University to study Financial Planning and she moved out, so there was only the two of us then - and a dog.

So I said "Right we're going to downsize this time". So we put it on the market - it wasn't an easy house to sell even though it was rather unique.

By then I'd gone from Northcote to Rockwell - I managed to get a job locally in Chirnside; and that was probably the best part of my working career. I was a materials manager - thoroughly enjoyed it. We were a company that was supplying a lot of the subcontracts to the Australian Submarine Corporation for the subs. being built in Adelaide. It started from nothing, built up, and then went to nothing. When it died away, that's when the place closed down.

I looked around and looked around - couldn't find anything until we came here - although it wasn't ideal 'cause it only had the one garage - it was in a nice area so we chose to move here, probably about nine years ago.

Lilydale Becomes Home

We finally managed to sell the East Ringwood house, and got a relatively good price; and then we said, "Well OK, we want a smaller house, smaller grounds, and it has to have a double garage." We looked and looked and looked and it got to the stage where it was becoming a little bit precarious.

So the agent said to Julie, "I do have a place up at Lilydale Lakes, would you be interested in that?"; and she said "No, Peder doesn't like 'The Lakes, it's too far away". He said "Well you can have a look at it but I've got nothing else." So we came up here and looked at this place - 4 Clearwater Drive, Lilydale.

The lady who owned it had a couple of dogs and her daughter and her son. I think the daughter had moved out by then, so only the son lived here and the dogs were kept inside all day so there were spots everywhere on the carpet where they'd left their business; and it was dark. The family room has that sliding door; but then when they built the verandah and put the cover over it, it made it darker. So, basically the house needed lights on all the time, and I didn't like it. Also, it only had a single garage.

I said "Nah", but Julie said, "I can see the potential. We can't fix the garage but we can fix the other problems", and it had only 800 square metres which was a lot smaller than half an acre that we had.

So I offered a ridiculously low price ('cause we had sold, and we knew that settlement wouldn't be a problem) and they held out for a bit more, so we threw two thousand into the pot and they accepted it. It was a good price. Hence we moved on 9th January - about nine years ago.

The first thing we did was rip up all the carpet. We put new carpet down, and we put in two skylights, which made a big difference - it put light into the family room - and we've been here ever since.

Even before I got sick, Julie found the garden a little bit too big, 'cause there was a native garden - at the time it wasn't there but we put it in - a native garden, and garden all the way around, and lawn out the front; and we revamped it all, but with Julie's bad back she found it difficult to do the maintenance. I said "Get a gardener in". So we did, and we just got by, and I did the mowing and everything else, but then when I got sick, well, the first thing that ended was me mowing the grass. I just didn't have the stamina to do so - couldn't start the lawn mower. So we got a gardener in - lawn cutting man - and a couple of weeks ago we negotiated with our neighbour and she comes in once a week and does the floors, and with that we have been able to continue to live here quite comfortably - although I've become the one who has to be looked after all the time. Julie has had to do ALL the hard work, but, you know, it's working out all right. She does get exhausted, and I get frustrated in that I can't help her. Even trying to dry dishes just takes too much out of me.

Working In Thomastown

Anyway, when Rockwell at Chirnside Park closed down in February 2000, the company offered us the opportunity of moving up to Queensland 'cause the head office was there and it was there we had some projects going. I didn't even consider it. I knew with all our children being here, and all Julie's friends were here, it just wasn't worth it.

So I left there and I went to Thomastown to a company that made conveyor-belt machines, which actually applied the labels onto bottles of product. Sometimes it was a paper label, sometimes it was an ink-jet spray - all different ways of doing it - as the product went along the conveyor-belt

They didn't have an inventory control system. So I was asked to come in for a period to recommend something that they could get. Well the thing was that the General Manager of the company was my previous boss at Rockwell. He had been retrenched about three or four years prior to my leaving, and the Manufacturing Manager was one of the junior engineers from the Industrial Engineering department and he'd actually worked for me for a while. He didn't take too kindly to me being there,

but I persevered for twelve months. I recommended a two thousand dollar system which would have got them started getting the inventory under control and being able to issue stock to various jobs and maintain stock levels, and so on and so forth. The Manufacturing Manager didn't like this "*el cheapo*" - he wanted a "you-beaut" system - so, when I heard they were going to put in this system that was worth a hundred or two-hundred thousand dollars I thought, "I'm just wasting my time here" so I finished up.

Mobile Phones Innovation at Brighton

It gets very hard to find a job when you're in your mid-50s, late 50s, early 60s. So I applied to quite a few places, and I finally got this job at a place in Brighton - strangest of all places. What they made was - they took a mobile phone, put the guts of it in the phone and down below they had a slot reader so that merchants could go to, say, a market somewhere out in the open, make a sale, dial up a number, and do the transaction wirelessly. It's quite common now, but at the time it was quite unique - and the guy who ran the company and his wife, they were offered twenty million dollars for the company a couple of years before I joined; but he thought he was the world's best business man - in fact he was the worst.

He'd sold a thousand of these machines to Hong Kong (my old home town) and they had to manufacture them and get them packed and delivered and sent over there. However, the owner of the company had no money so what he would do was say "Ok, we sign the contract on the basis you put down fifty percent deposit." Then he'd take that deposit and start buying parts and what-have-you to build the machines.

The business was on top of a shop in Brighton - corner of Church Street and some-other-street - not exactly an industrial area - and we couldn't do any manufacturing there, so he went to a mate of his in Keysborough and said, you-know, "We want to rent, or use your facilities and we'll pay you 'X' number of dollars."

So my job was to liaise between the two facilities - Keysborough and Brighton - but because they had such a poor trading record no-one would supply materials on credit. If you wanted anything you had to pay cash. So I used to have to go along with a cheque and say, "Here's the cheque, can I have the goodies?"

Once we got all the parts together we started at doing the assembly work and testing. They bought this thing from America - no from Taiwan - where the two halves of the phone were actually ultrasonically welded together. At the back of it (the phone) was a little switch so that, if anyone forced it open, it would automatically lose all its software 'cause they were very scared of proprietary information getting out.

You only had millimetres - one or two millimetres - to play with and they just couldn't get it right. They had to put little bits of packing materials under - it was so unreliable - but we finally finished the thousand machines and then it all turned "belly-up" because the Hong Kong people wanted changes made - they weren't happy about this, weren't happy about that, and they cancelled the contract. So all of a sudden we ended up with these thousand boxes of machines - and "what are we going to do with them?"

From then on - that was in the first six months I was there - for the next eighteen months I basically twiddled my thumbs waiting for things to happen. The big boss and some of the engineers - software engineers - went across to Brazil. They were hoping to break into the market there; and, same thing again - everything was rosy and then "poom", it collapsed.

Then money got so tight that we weren't being paid - not at all. I used to get two cheques - one for my pay and one for my super - 'cause I had my own super - I ran my own super fund. The first month they said "We're a bit short of money this month, do you mind waiting 'till next month." A month is

a long time. I had no choice. I said "OK." It happened the second month, and when it got close to the third month and nothing had improved I said, "Look, I'm going to have to resign, I can't maintain this sort of uncertainty."

We left on amicable terms - I think it was about June - no, August 2002 and I began applying for jobs (by then I was fifty-nine). I wasn't getting anywhere. Even the agencies don't want to know you. So I began applying for local jobs which paid half of what I was earning before. I didn't care. There was only Julie and me, we had the house paid off, we didn't really care. Whatever we got was better than nothing.

Alicia's Wedding

Alicia married her fiancé, Phil Sanders, on [REDACTED] 2001. They were married at the Oakridge Winery in the Yarra Valley in the late afternoon. It was a beautiful setting for the wedding and for the reception that came afterwards. It's hard to "give away" your children - Alicia was the first one (and so far the only one) where I had to perform the duties of the bride's father. But the occasion and the whole day was very memorable. We were very happy to welcome Phil into our family and I'm sure Phil's parents had similar feelings about our daughter Alicia.

Scheduling in Bayswater

Because we had money, we couldn't get unemployment benefits for fifteen weeks or some such. So I applied for this job in Bayswater. They made antennas. I had previously worked for *Andrew Antennas*, which made the big antennas - this one made the small ones - so I knew something about it.

They were after a scheduler to schedule the work to take the place of a girl who was going on maternity leave for twelve months. So I applied for it - I had nothing to lose - and I got called in to an interview and the boss looked at my resume and said, "Do you really want this job for twelve months?" I said, "look, I don't care. Twelve months is better than no months;" and I got the job.

It was a dead easy job. I mean I had schedulers working for me previously, so I knew basically what had to be done. I just had to learn the procedures that were applicable to that industry and that particular facility, and it all went pretty well. At the end of twelve months the girl who was on maternity leave said "I don't want to come back." She got a bit clucky with her child. Denis, the boss said, "Would you be interested in staying on?" I said, "That's fine, I've got no interest in moving on because, number one, I won't get a job" and, two, it suited me fine.

I'd go in at seven-thirty, leave at four-thirty, and things were great. But, the place was growing. It's amazing, you know, manufacturing is supposedly dead in this country - and it is - but this particular industry, or factory, was actually growing. I think when I first joined the turnover was, what, sixty million a year. When I left it a few years later, in 2008, it was a hundred million a year.

A lot of it was solar panels, which had nothing to do with me, actually. We would buy them from BP and on-sell them to whomever. We were just the distributor. Oh we made, you know, a certain amount of profit. Even though the per-unit profit was small, if you multiply it by a lot of units it wasn't bad, and that contributed a lot to the bottom line.

So that went on for 2006 and I was sixty-three. Even prior to that the job had grown so much that I said to the boss, "Look, I can't handle it all on my own, it's too big". So he hired another scheduler. With two of us there it was quite good, but then in 2006 we found that I really didn't want to be working five days a week so I said to him, "How do you feel about me working four days a week?" He thought about it and he referred it to head office in Sydney, and they agreed.

The thing was, I still had to do the five days work in four days and only get paid for four days, but I didn't worry about that. The advantage I had was that, when things got busy, and I couldn't handle it

on my own (the portion of the plant that I had) the other planner could actually take over some of that work and do it.

So I worked for four days a week until that first alternate planner got another job as a manager somewhere. He pulled the plug and they replaced him with this guy who was nice enough but he loved to talk. He lived at home with mum and dad they were both sick, so he had to look after them, therefore he'd no life outside of work. He just loved to talk to people - tell them all his problems of the world.

It was partly that and partly "do I want to go through to December 2008, when I turn sixty-five?" I said, "No". So I pulled the plug in September. Once I retired, that was it. I did go back in 2009 for a couple of weeks when the other planner went on holidays, but by the time I lost some of my pension and paid tax on the money I earned, I got fifty cents in the dollar. So I said, "No, not going to do it again."

William's Arrival

William was born on [REDACTED] 2007 at the Freemasons' Maternity Hospital in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne. Seeing our first grandchild for the first time was very, very moving - very exciting - particularly for Julie. It was great to welcome him into our family. (See [Photos 17 and 19](#))

Alicia has a fairly senior role in her company - a financial planning company named *Primestock Securities* in Toorak Road, South Yarra - on the corner of Toorak Road and Chapel Street. She is well respected in the company and we are quite happy to assist her with her desire for part-time work. So we've kept very close to William and the family over the intervening four and a half years. We look after him every Thursday - Julie usually does this at their place in East Burwood. William's more comfortable there. Most kids are more settled in their own home. With this as well as childcare and kinder, Alicia has been able to keep her job working three days a week. This year William has been attending kindergarten from nine-fifteen to quarter past twelve, so Julie picks him up from kindergarten and takes him home. It's not worth bringing him back here and then having to take him back to East Burwood afterwards.

While I was well enough, I would go to his place too. He'd insist on playing outside as much as possible. He is a great "sportsman." He loves to kick the footy and soccer ball around, and to play cricket; but he is one of those players who hasn't learned yet that it's a matter of sharing, so it was always a case of "I'll bat and you bowl," "I'll kick the ball to you", and if it goes somewhere awkward, "Grandpa, can you get the ball please."

At times his temper does get the better of him. When he loses it he will come out with, "I don't want to play any more," but I guess all kids are like that; it's part of growing up

The other day William and Julie were playing cricket - and Julie admits she is not a very good "thrower" - but William was missing the ball and in the end he threw the bat down and said "I'm not playing any more grandma, and you're not going to ever be picked for the bowling team when you grow up." Grandma, of course, was terribly disappointed. Then he ended up throwing one of his balls up on the roof in a temper tantrum. There was a time when grandpa could get up there and get it but actually I only heard about it all the following day and when I went out there it had rolled down into the front gutter so I just got a broom and flicked it off. He had thought it was lost forever. William is good kid - very loving when he is in the right frame of mind. If you leave him on his own he can play with *lego* or a similar sort of a toy for a short period of time, and then he wants you to help him again. That's why he gets on so well with Emily, his aunty, 'cause she follows him around like a slave. He'll say, "Come on aunty, let's go to my room and we'll play cubby-house," or "Come on aunty Em we'll go and play outside with the ball," and she just goes along with whatever he wants. She's the "ideal aunty" (she doesn't discipline him at all). However, by the time Alicia arrives home at East Burwood at half past six, even Emily has had enough.

Emily's day starts at five o'clock - she's normally at work by six. She works in a factory doing assembly work - I don't think she has to stand up but she is doing something all the time for eight to

ten hours depending on whether they are working overtime. So then, after going in to look after William for three hours, she gets rather exhausted, doesn't she.

Next year William will go to school at Roberts McCubbin Primary School in Box Hill South. And the issue of after school care will then need to be addressed.

Retirement

After my final stint at scheduling at Bayswater I retired altogether and just concentrated on home, family, and my hobby of snooker and billiards, which I'd been playing competitively since, probably 2000 / 2002 just in the RSLs, not professionally. I thoroughly enjoyed that. Initially, while I was working, I only played Thursday nights, but then, when I retired I began playing on Tuesday afternoons as well. It's all good fun - you travel to all the RSLs from Hampton to Frankston, to Watsonia, all the way round and, yeah, that was all very enjoyable.

We Visit Hong Kong

Julie and I had a few holidays. We went on a cruise, went back to Hong Kong. We've been twice in that period since I retired.

The first time I went back with my brother and his family as a pilgrimage to our ancestral village and that's where we met all the 'rellos' and saw the gravesites and everything else - very emotional. My great-grandfather's burial site is on top of the hill. The Chinese like to have - when they bury their dead - they like to be on the side of a hill overlooking - they like their "views". My great-grandfather was buried there and while we were in Hong Kong, a few days before we went into China, we went to where my grandfather was buried, 'cause he had gone back to Hong Kong in 1915 or thereabouts to try and establish a business that could trade with Australia - or it could have been part of the same company, I don't know the details - and he took ill and died in 1916. Well, at the time he was buried, the cemetery was very small - this particular cemetery was a Christian cemetery but now it just runs right down to the bottom of the hill, so you could never have found it in a million years.

The reason nobody knew where it was, was that about two years previously there had been a landslide during one of the typhoons - the tropical storms - and that had demolished the whole of the front entrance and destroyed quite a few rows of the graves. It had come from one side of the road and just washed down. The cemetery was on a very steep hillside and we were told that the grave had been relocated but it hadn't been. It had actually just been cleaned up. It was in its original spot, but we were given the wrong information, so we went looking for it further downhill

So, when we got there, we looked. We couldn't find it (grandfather's burial site). We made a few phone calls, and we narrowed it down - my brother walked down one path and I walked down the next path. He only walked down five or six graves and he found it.

My Brother was very emotional about it. In fact he rang Pam who was home in Sydney, and told her that we'd found it. We took photos and, you know, that was all good.

There were three parts to the village in Canton - the Kwok family occupied one which was called *Chuk Sau Yuen* and the Ma family occupied another called *Sha Chung*. For some reason these two families, through marriage and what have you, were very close together. (Refer [Plate 1](#))

In between were the Lee Family in the area called *Hei Mei*. I really have no knowledge of where the Lee family came from but they are in between. It's interesting that that's how it was.

That's the village we visited. If you go back there today it is a metropolis - twenty and thirty storey buildings. The Kwok family, through the *Wing On* company, had actually developed a lot of it to try and attract Hong Kong Chinese back to the village to live because, one, it's so much cheaper - you

can buy a beautiful unit there for probably a quarter of what you would pay in Hong Kong, and two, the cost of living is so much cheaper.

I remember my brother and I took our hosts out for lunch one day 'cause they had shouted us everywhere we went, so on this occasion we were going to pay for it. There must have been twelve to fourteen of us sitting at a round table and we had all sorts of delicacies - one of them being little pigeons (it's a local delicacy) - and chicken feet - I couldn't come at - never have - but the rest of it was very nice and there were bottles of red wine (Chinese don't drink a lot - I think my brother and I ended up drinking the red wine which was on the table) and it came to something in the order of three hundred dollars Australian to feed fourteen people. That's how cheap it is. In Hong Kong it would have been treble that and here it would have been more expensive again.

To get to the village you take a ferry trip up the Pearl river and that takes just about an hour and a quarter; and from the boat terminal to the village it's, like, an hour's bus trip. We actually hired a coach for the two or three days we were there and he took us to wherever the family representatives had lived there - they thought, well, this is what they want to see - all the historical stuff, and it was quite amazing.

The villagers themselves are - it's such a difference - you've got these multi-thirty-storey units with offices down below and, you know, it's like being in Melbourne. And right beside it is this little village with a wall around it and that was the original village. We didn't actually go into the village but skirted it and went up the mountainside. Actually, when they heard we were coming they got out there with machetes and cut the long grass because they thought we couldn't walk up.

We got up there, and the main tomb up there was my great-grandfather and the village representatives actually brought bundles of flowers for us to do the kowtowing to pay respects to the ancestors gone by. It was quite amazing. They were lovely people - it was great.

It's the sort of place I would like to have taken all our kids but it was just too expensive.

With them in mind, I actually asked the vice-mayor of the village - who was also a member of the Kwok family - I said, "Would it be possible to get a map showing where we are in relation to everything." He said, "I'll see what I can do." About half an hour later he came back with seven copies of the map and gave a copy to everyone. I've still got it, and it will go in this box (referred to in the *Family History*). So at least it will give subsequent generations a clue as to where it is.

I Become Unwell

The second time I went to Hong Kong with Julie and friends from Wesburn, near Warburton. It was only for a week so I planned an itinerary, which was fairly hectic but it was spaced out every second day so we had a rest day in between. That's when I began to feel unwell and by the time I got home I was not well at all.

I went and saw my GP. He ordered an x-ray. My right lung was just blank - the x-ray was just white - and he sent me off to a Respiratory Physician who had one look at it and said, "The first thing I'll have to do is drain it." So that same day I went in and they drained off three and a half litres of fluid, and he said, "That would have been very uncomfortable". Firstly carrying that amount of fluid and secondly, it was so bulky it was pushing the heart right across. Six days later he drained it again and got another one and a half litres. He said, "The only way to stop this is to fuse the pleura to the chest wall where it was building up and, once you seal it, it can't build up." First they thought it could have been TB which would have been a lot better because that's curable.

Then the Physician said I should be examined, and I had a biopsy and a CT scan and it was inconclusive, although the fluids that they took out suggested there was something likely to be there. So he told me, "I think it is mesothelioma".¹⁸

When I first heard it I thought (I can't even pronounce the word) I don't know what it means, so I asked him, "Well what can you do for me." The answer was "Nothing, it's a terminal disease and there is no treatment, no cure."

So they booked me in to hospital, firstly to seal, and then also to do a biopsy through a keyhole cut in the side. It came back with confirmation of the diagnosis and that was the start of it. Basically, since then, it's been the sole concern of my life, because I couldn't do much else. Gradually I've had to stop doing things like playing billiards - I find that too hard. I used to take the dogs for a walk three times a week, but I can't do that any more. Now I've got to the stage where even walking from here to the bedroom is a chore. I've got a walking stick, I've got a walker from Palliative Care, I've got a wheelchair in the car, so at least I'm not stuck at home all the time; but I know it's not going to get better, it's just going to, progressively, get worse.

I was diagnosed on 13th December 2011, quite recently. It's a very aggressive form of cancer; whereas asbestosis is, I believe, not quite as aggressive. I don't know what the difference is between the two. I've got it - I'm stuck with it. That was a marble that I pulled out of the barrel - I've just got to live with it. (See [Photo 19](#))

Now when it actually comes to Julie being on her own it's most important that she has as little to worry about as possible. In the back of my mind I worry about the fact that I may run out of time to put everything in order, so I'm going to prepare things in such a way that if I don't provide the actual information I can put pointers into a document which tells people where to look, and Alicia can then do all that. These are the important things one must do before one goes - get the financial side tidied up; get one's legal side, wills, power of attorney, clearly documented.

Our lives today centre on my condition. I hope I leave my family in a secure and comfortable position. If I've achieved that then I am relaxed about what the future brings.

¹⁸ *op. cit.* mesothelioma: A tumor in the lining of the chest or abdomen (cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesothelioma>)

Photographs

My Mum and Dad were married on Mum's arrival in Shanghai on 14th October 1937.

The local newspaper carried a picture of them with the comment: "St John's Cathedral yesterday afternoon was the setting for the wedding of Miss Edith Maren Elizabeth Spliid of Manchester,

England, and Mr Edward Kwok of Shanghai. The photograph was taken when Mr and Mrs Kwok were leaving the Cathedral—Ming Yuen.

above
taken
Mrs

Ming



**Photo 1: Mum & Dad's Wedding
14 Oct 1937**

Photo 2: I "Weigh-in" Early in 1944

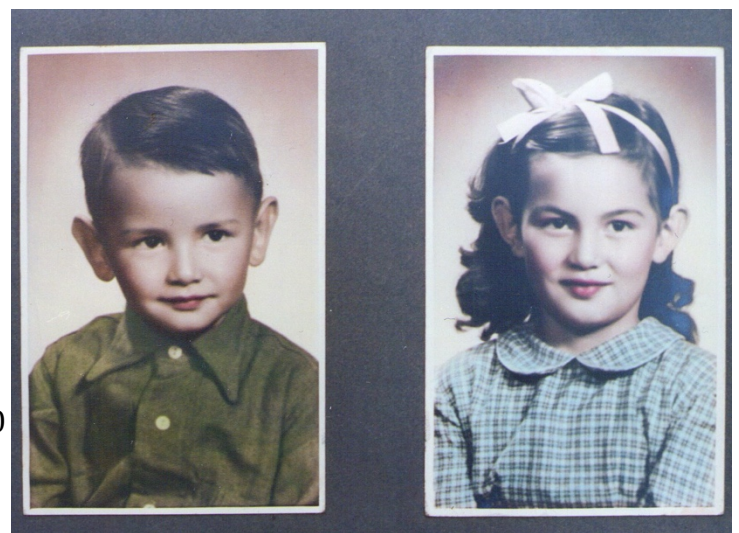


Photo 3: Me at 5 Months



Photo 5: Paul, Me (7 yrs), Pamela -
Shanghai Country Club Party 5 Jan 1951

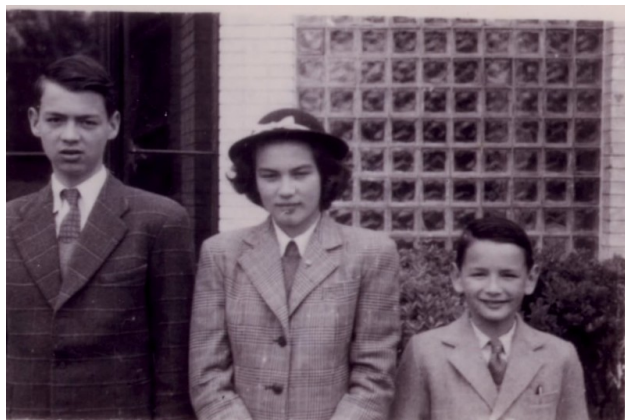


Photo 8: Paul, Pamela and Me

Photo 4: Me (5 yrs) and Pamela 8 (yrs) c.1948-49



Photo 6: Me (8 yrs) with My Rifle in 1952



Photo 7: My Snooker Practice Tools were
Rudimentary in the 50s

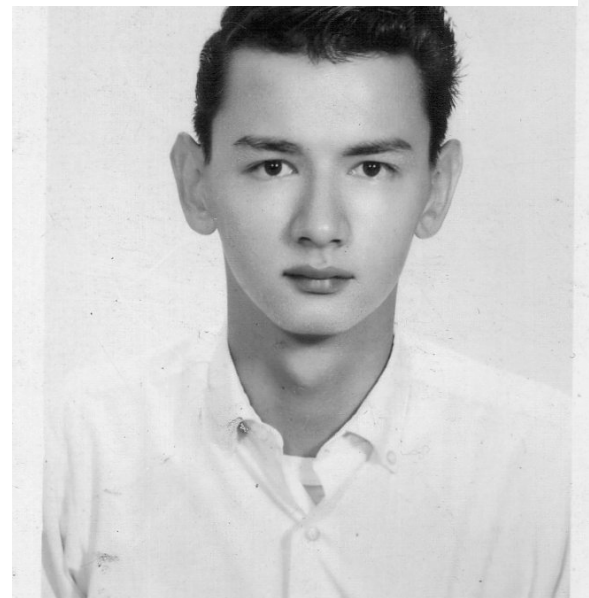




Photo 10: Julie and I - Courting Days 1967



Photo 11: Julie and I are Married - May 1968



Photo 13: Emily (Newly Arrived) and Tim - 1975



Photo 15: Emily, Tim and Alicia Holidaying at Bright in Autumn – c.1980



Photo 14: Julie, Baby Alicia, Tim and Emily – August 1977

Photo 16: Me, Mum, Dad, Julie, Emily and Alicia - c.1981



Photo 17: William and Me – 29 July 2007

Photo 18: Me with Tim, Phil, Will with Alicia, Julie, and Emily



Photo 19: Phil, Me, Tim, Alicia, Will (4 Years), Julie and Emily - Christmas 2011 - Just Following My Diagnosis

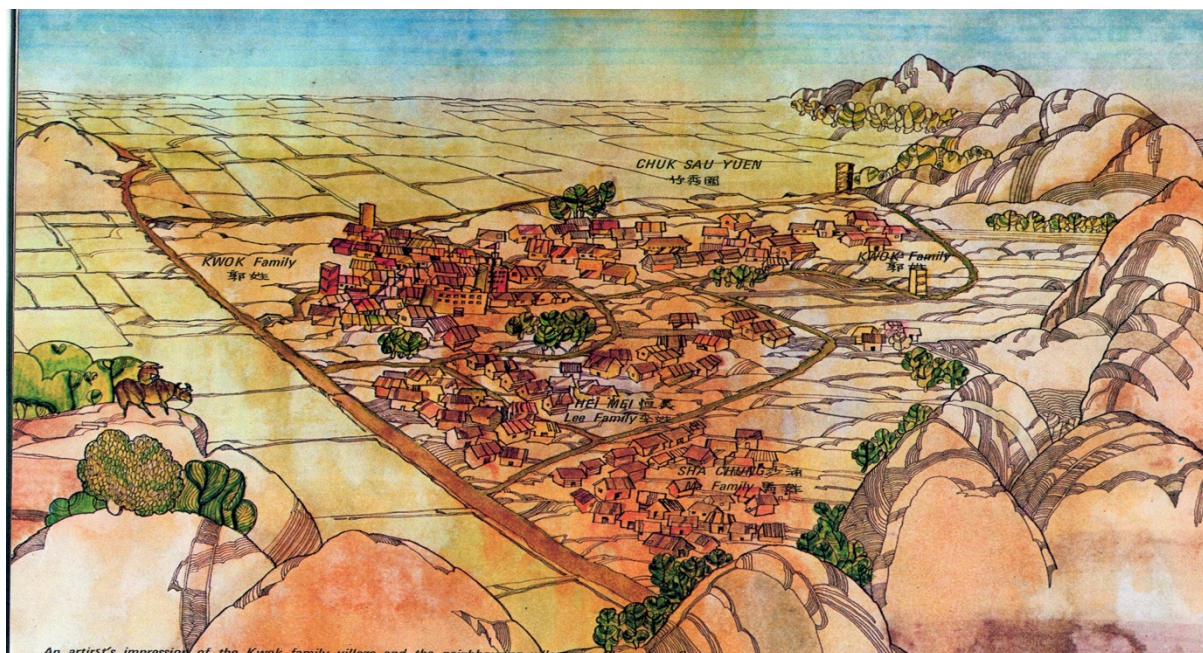


Plate 1: Chuk Sau Yuen, Hei Mei and Sha Chung in Ghungshan County. ¹⁹

¹⁹ Kaleidoscope Vol II No.XIII "The Story of Wing On" - (*Wealth increases the human harmony. Industries are benefitted when commerce flourishes*). Wing On was formed by the Kwok family. It started with the garage-fronted size building selling vegetables and rice and rose to be a multi-industry company in multi-storey buildings. (A copy of this article can be found in the box referred to in the "Family History" at the end of "My Story")

Family History Media

The Box

The box contains historical records relating to the above information, including family photographs, family-related personal and business letters, copies of ship-sailings and passenger lists, and newspaper cuttings.

The Memory Stick

The memory stick contains information I obtained from my brother's website and other material such as pictures and facsimiles of letters and other documents.

It also contains the family tree which includes the fact that I had a Danish grandfather and shows dad's family (he begat the three of us), Paul's family, my sister's family (she had twin boys) and me and my three children as well as my daughter with her son, William

There are Letters written to Immigration by father. For example there is a Letter dated 28th of February, 1910 in Sydney to the Collector of Customs and its content shows grandfather trying to bring a family member into Australia because they wanted to build up the company. They needed staff and the White Australia Policy meant that they had to work hard to get people in. For some reason my grandfather was the one who did all the writing.

I have pictures of Handprints and photographs of all the children. These were organised by grandmother who was a widow a few weeks after the picture was taken.

There is a picture of Uncle David at 12 years of age, and pictures of the girls with bows in their hair - "done up to the nines".

I have this reference to Steam Mill - this is the only reference I could find - (a map of the area) - It's now under water, of course.

Information comes out of the blue. I had an email from Pam (my sister) who said a friend of her son, David, who lives in Tasmania and is a very keen studier of ancestry, did a bit of a search for David and found out that my grandfather who had come over from Denmark to England was only naturalised in 1949. Now my mum was born in London in 1916 so grandad had to have come over from Denmark before then. So that meant that he went through, basically, one and a half world wars as an alien in the UK. Luckily Denmark didn't throw their lot in with the Germans or else he would probably have been locked up too.

That's the kind of thing which I've on the memory stick.

My Brother's Web Site

My brother has set up a website ¹⁹ - I'm 68 he's 72 - I said to him "Look Paul, you're not going to be around forever, who is going to take it over - well the son's going to take it over but I've downloaded the current version to memory stick so that at least it's current to today, and that will be in the box as well.

The web site has so much information. It includes a whole one week trip into China, including Hong Kong. It's probably a little bit long, but he detailed all that out and then got each member who went on the trip to write a little spiel on what were their feelings; and mine was I had this glitter in my eyes, that blinded me a bit, that said, "I'm going to go and find a village that looks like it was when my grandfather left it." It ain't like that any more.

Paul (my brother) has written his story, his wife has written her story - in fact his wife wrote his story too - (we get a mention as a peripheral, and that's understandable; I haven't covered Paul's family or anything like that in my story)

Paul's wife, Maunie, actually took the opportunity, before dad went senile, to quiz him on things. So she knew a lot more information than the rest of us - she has a good bit of information direct from dad which she has put into her story on the system - on the website ¹⁹

She also recorded her family there. Her dad was a master mariner who came out from England, married Maunie's (my sister-in-law's) mother (they were actually married in Shanghai), and Maunie was born in Hong Kong. So, theoretically, she could become a Hong Kong citizen if she wanted to.

In those days the Europeans didn't learn Chinese, you know, it was beneath them, so I think it's one of the regrets she has always had. She understands a lot of it - especially when you're talking about her .

Paul, Pam, and I can drop into Cantonese. Within a sentence we can actually talk in three different languages - might start off in English go to a bit of Cantonese, a bit of Mandarin - very confusing to some people especially the Chinese. My Cantonese and Mandarin are good enough to get by on. None of us can write it; we can all speak it; my sister and brother are far more fluent in Cantonese - they even still speak a bit of Shanghai dialect - but I've returned all that. I left there at twelve or thirteen so I never retained any of it because I never used it.

Every family member has a slanted view on things ...

My brother was telling me (we were discussing his website) that he got contacted by a fella with a Chinese name who said "Paul this is who I am. My dad was one of the founding members of the *Wing On* company - which is what we're talking about - and Paul did a bit of research and went back

and said to him "I don't think you were a founding member but you were a cousin". It deflated that guy.

Related Information

Dad's family, back in the village in Guangdong Province (or Canton as it used to be known) were just farmers, but they could trace their ancestry back twenty-five generations, and I actually have a list - from generation one to generation twenty-five (with a few gaps) - of dates they were born and names.

Grandpa

I've done a lot of research into grandpa's early days in Sydney - I've been to National Archives - I've paid to have certain files released, and I've actually taken copies of all the documents that were within the file and I've got them on a memory stick.

Grandfather came here in 1890 when he was 12. I've been dying to find out what boat he came on. The problem is, number one, he being Chinese, they didn't record names properly, and two, it was pre-federation and the Australian States recorded things independently. So if grandpa first arrived in Brisbane you'd have to go to a Brisbane site, and if he first arrived in Sydney it would be a Sydney site, and so on, so it becomes a bit messy.

From what I remember the eldest brother, Kwok Chun, went to the States first, to the gold there, with the intention of bringing other brothers over, but then the Americans brought in a non-Asian immigration policy; so then they had to find a new source - somewhere else to go - so that was when they came down - joined the other Chinese, or the other Asians, who came down to the gold mines in Australia."

They were lucky they came down just before Federation when the white Australia policy was introduced.

We haven't got actual names of the Chinese people on the ships' arrivals list, because, in those days, anyone who travelled steerage, their names were not itemised-listed, on the passenger manifest. You can go back and trace vessels that did arrive and they've got adults and children and all that - and livestock - but all they say is so many Asians, but that was true apparently of ALL the passengers who travelled steerage. It was just a number - a collective number - so many of this or that group or nationality or stock.

I found the National Archives records full of interesting information. The deal they've got there is you do a search on your name - our name is actually changed to the Chinese surname. My grandfather, his surname was actually two letters Kwok Quai - or was it Kwok Loq - (Kwok's son). It was the second half of that bit that changed within the family. He anglicised the name to Kwok - K-W-O-K.

My grandfather, was a Christian - They were a Christian family - so he called himself 'Paul' GOGQUAY, so they called him 'Mr Quay (kway). With the Chinese, the surname comes first. It's all part of this family thing - the family's most important and that's the name that comes first. Then the generation - some families don't have that generation bit - and then the personal name; and I think 'Quay' might have been his personal name - part of his personal name."

So I did a search on 'GOGQUAY' 'GOCQUAY' and put it into a search on National Archives, and got all these folders which had never been opened to the public and to access them you pay fifteen dollars plus GST. It took about a month for them to photocopy them and put them on the net.

So I did that with about three or four of them and found some fascinating stuff. I've got letterhead-letters from *Wing On* Company and my grandfather was the signatory at the bottom - it was Paul Gogquay - asking for permission for another cousin to come across to work in the family. Because he'd built up such a good rapport in the area with the local police and ministers, and everything else, they did very well. I told you about the dictation test - well grandfather was actually applying for exemption to the dictation test for these people.

The letters just flew backwards and forwards (and of course it was all 'snail-mail' in those days) and they were signed with that obsequious "I am sir your obedient servant" - lovely flourishes, you know.

It was a month to six weeks before they got the letter, and then the same again coming back. It made some very interesting reading.

Looking at the letter head used, there's a horse and cart in front of this building that said "*Wing On*". It had Ultimo as the primary address and another one called "Steam Mill Place" in Sydney. So I went to my Sydney street directory but I couldn't find Steam Mill Place. I went to "Google", and finally I found it. It was part of the old market gardening area in Sydney which had been condemned 'cause it was full of rats, cholera, and all those sorts of things. Eventually it became part of Darling Harbour. So that address at Steam Mill is actually somewhere in there.

I also got a separate file when after grandpa died, grandma wanted to take her seven children back to Hong Kong and she wanted to be sure - this is where they do a lot of pre-thinking, you know - 'I want my kids to be able to come back here one day, so what do we have to do.' What they had to do was have their pictures taken and the palm prints taken. I've got pictures of all seven kids and grandma, and their palm prints.

In the archives in Sydney the departure of the seven children on the *St Albans* in 1916 is listed. You can almost see the beautiful handwriting being done and all seven children are listed, because at that stage, having been born here, they were deemed to be Australian citizens.

I don't know how they got away with having a different surname when they wanted to come back here. Probably in those days they were not that 'pedantic'

Dad

Somewhere between 1916 and the '40s, dad and the rest of his family changed their surname from Gogquay to Kwok - it's the Cantonese pronunciation of the surname Kwok, so it was very difficult to trace it all but I did find, for example, a whole bunch of correspondence between mum and (might have been dad as well) communicating with the Australian Immigration Department in the early '50s. I copied all that correspondence - it's all on the memory stick - and that's where they mention that rather derogatory description of us kids being 'half-castes' and all that.

Dad lived in China from 1937 to 1956. He never learned to speak "Shanghai" - we used to kill ourselves laughing. He couldn't; He couldn't get his tongue around it.

The same was true for the people from Shanghai who escaped the Communists and went to settle in Hong Kong - they could not master Cantonese.

Although the written language for Cantonese and Mandarin is the same, the spoken language is quite different. So when you see anglicised Chinese writing - it's called "pinyin" - Mandarin is said one way, Cantonese is completely different; for example, Take the spelling of the two villages - *Chuk Sau Yuen* and *Sha Chung* - the Cantonese pronunciation is "Tsuk" (or Chuk), and then "Sau", and then "Yuen"; and for the other village - "Shek" and "Kei" - and the hospital was officially registered under "Wushi" (Wuxi)

Because there are so many dialects, the written language is the same but the pronunciation, the spoken word, is different. Cantonese, Shanghai dialect, -Mandarin, they are the same written language but each uses completely different pronunciation.

This where the Communists did one thing that was good. They realised they were a country divided by the spoken word. When Chairman Mao made his speeches they used to hand out the printed form first so people could read what he was saying while he was saying it, and he did not speak good Mandarin. His Mandarin was so poor. But then they decided that all the schools would have to be Mandarin. I mean, Mandarin is spoken with a bit of an accent but it is Mandarin which is the official language.

It's the same as in England - for instance the English have Yorkshire and all that but at least they can understand each other.

It was not uncommon when we were there that they shifted people around the country (for instance if we were talking about people in Australia, it would be like people from Darwin would come to Sydney; people from Sydney would go to Perth - to make people mix). We are talking here about the adults - and everyone walked around with a piece of chalk in their pocket. I would stop you on the street and I would write on the pavement, "how do I get to the post office" or something, and then you would write an answer with the chalk. You'd have to use sign language and your little piece of chalk.

I remember when I was at Hong Kong Tech., there was this guy from Shanghai talking to a guy from Hong Kong, and they were trying to talk to each other, and the Shanghai guy only spoke Shanghai dialect and the Cantonese only spoke Cantonese. In the end they gave up in frustration and spoke English - which was very very difficult for both of them but it was the only way they could communicate.

It's just like the numeral five. In Cantonese it's "ng" - it's a very nasal sound - up north in Beijing it's "woo" - different as chalk and cheese - but it's the same character. And the surname too - there's a surname "Ng" (you've probably seen it around town). A lot of dentists and doctors - "N G" is the spelling - if they came from Northern China it would be "Woo" - W U or W double O.

Mum

I also did a bit of work on chasing mum's birth details. She was born in a suburb called St Pancras, in London- it's the Croydon area.¹⁹ I've copied it to my brother, and one to my sister, and I kept one for myself

I've searched for information concerning mum and dad's travel between China and the UK.

Records I've found of ships leaving the UK show where my dad in 1936 left Southampton for New York on the *Queen Mary* and where mum left England in September '37 to go to Hong Kong to marry dad.

There is also a record of mum going from Liverpool to Shanghai in '46 when we had gone back after the war, and similar records of my brother and my sister travelling (I was two at the time).

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“There were three parts to the village in Canton - the Kwok family occupied one, which was called *Chuk Sau Yuen* and the Ma family occupied another called *Sha Chung*. For some reason these two families, through marriage and what have you, were very close together. (Refer [Plate 1](#))

In between were the Lee Family in the area called *Hei Mei*. The Lee family I really had no knowledge of where they came from but they are in between. It’s interesting that that’s how it was”.

The content of this story remains the property of the author Peder Kwok

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