

## Oliver Family details - finished 4/8/2022

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Thu 4/08/2022 10:15 AM

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Our parents, Norbert and Rosa, moved to Otford from Collaroy in 1936 where they lived near Norbert's parents who resided in Dee Why. Dad was very close to his parents.

### SON OF NORBERT CHARLES

Norbert Charles Godwin Oliver was known as Norm. He began school at Dee Why before the family moved to Otford in 1936 where he attended school until transferring to Crows Nest Boarding School (known as "Joey's") for his secondary education. After dad was killed Norm took it hard. His first job was an apprentice at Johnson's Garage on Bald Hill. He couldn't settle down, so he changed jobs to work at a glass factory in Sydney. Later he and a mate from "Joeys" Boarding School (Joe Morris) went backpacking up the north coast for about twelve months. He met up with some of dad's family at Ulmarra -Grafton area. He came back for a while to help mum sell up a few years after Dad's death. Mum suffered from bronchial asthma and was moving to Austral whilst waiting for a war service home built at Mainbridge Ave, Liverpool. Norm then joined the army. He served in Korea in 1951-52. He met Louise, who was also in the army, and they married in Burwood in 1962. They lived at Canada Bay and had three daughters. Maureen, Bronwin and Patricia. He worked at Burwood Bus repair depot. He passed

away at Concord Hospital after a brave battle with cancer in April 1988.

He was a loving husband, father and brother and a loving son to our father and mother. He would blow dad's bugle almost as well as dad. If we were swimming at the creek or in the village we could hear the Bugle Blow and we knew it was time to hurry home. He could play The Last Post and the Reveille just as dad had taught him. He was a good dancer and a protector to us girls.

## SATURDAY NIGHTS AT THE VILLAGE HALL.

Saturday morning tennis was for juniors, afternoon tennis was for adults.

Otford Hall would be lit up every Saturday night for dancing or concerts and everyone from babies to Oldies would go. We all learnt old time dancing. Those who played musical instruments or sang were welcome. Saturday afternoon tennis ladies would prepare supper for the dance at night.

After having a good night people would walk home, some pushing prames and carrying lanterns.

## THE OLIVER FAMILY

Norbert had served twelve years in the RAN . As a lot of time was spent away from home, he was looking forward to a life on shore to help bring up his young family.

Their milkman at the time, Tom Williams, told them about a property he knew of that was for sale at Otford. It had plenty of fruit trees on about ten acres of land. It also overlooked the sea which appealed to dad.

Mum was born at Sherbrooke where her parents, Abraham and Jessie, had a fruit orchard but the Water Board resumed the land to build the Cateract Dam. They moved to Main Rd Bulli, opposite



Farrell Road, where Bulli Shire Council was built and still stands today.

Not long after they moved Abraham was injured in a rockfall at Bulli Mine and he died a few days later. There was no compensation and no pension in those days. Mum was just four when he died (South Coast Times 2/08/06)

With Mum and Grandma's memories of Sherbrooke it didn't take Mum and Dad long to decide to go and have a look at this piece of "paradise" property. So all the family, Jessie included, hopped into the Plymouth and set off for Otford. They were so taken with the proximity of the land to the Royal National Park and the way it overlooked the sea which dad loved. There was beautiful green space for the children and lots of fruit trees. There was a primitive home on the land without electricity or town water or sewerage service. There was a shed for the car on the main road side of the house.

There was a larger shed in the top padlock, with a milking bail and farming equipment. It had also a large underground cement tank. We had three cows named Beauty, Bella and Peggy and a horse called Brownie.

With the steelworks just getting started, dad would have the prospect of suitable work. It seemed more than they could hope for.

They sold their home at Collaroy and bought Noah's Orchards- approx 8 acres on corner of Domville Road and Lady Wakehurst Drive. In his 12 year naval career dad served on the HMAS Melbourne, Success, Penguin, Australia, Sydney, and Melbourne again.

He was looking forward to a life at home with his young family and they looked forward to the prospect of an exciting change for them all.

They moved into the primitive tin shack with the big fire place, plenty of fruit trees but no electricity or water. I believe they were the happiest three years of their life.

W Granddad Oliver was a retired builder and he helped dad complete 3 rooms in no time.

Granddad would often come down from DeeWhy to help. Dad didn't start at the steelworks until he had home set up more suitably for our family.

Baby Anne was borne 22.3.38 This was the baby he was going to see grow up. He was a loving hands on father. They bought a horse for Win whose name was Silver and a Jersey calf was bought for me. I called her Topsy.

Cec Green started calling on Win. He would often help dad with whatever he was doing.

He was helping one day when dad was extracting honey from the bee hive and a couple of bees got under Cec's net. Dad was in fits of laughter but trying to help him at the same time. Cec was always quiet or shy, maybe both.

Dad liked taking us for a run in the car to Kellys Falls, Stanwell Tops, or to Lilyvale. We often called at Mrs Prior's shop at the top of Bald Hill. We loved spending time with Dad. He was great company

→ When war was declared he received a telegram at about 3.30pm which directed him to report to Garden Island the next morning as he was recalled to duty in the Navy. He said, as did many other men, that "Duty Called". The following morning the family had very quick goodbyes. I hid behind Win's Glory Box because I didn't want him to go, not realising that was the last time I would see him. We cut a long sapling and a sheet was tied to the top for a flag. We hoped dad would see it if his ship passed our way.

Rosa's sister, Poll, (Mrs Shuttleworth, (Mary Ellen ) lived on the hill above Lilyvale Railway Station. Two of Aunt Pol's children Nolene and Mark, lived there too. Occasionly Pol and Rosa would catch the train to visit each other. Another sister, Maud, lived at Pompeii below Helensburgh Station. Beryl Randyards, her mum and her Grandma, Mrs Hargreaves, lived at Lilyvale

Grandma's brother, Uncle Don (Donald McDonald ) came to live in a hut on our property, near the persimmon tree. He cultivated dad's garden and made it bigger. He grew lots of veggies.

Marcia Smith came to board at the home of Win and Cec. She came from Leichhardt to teach at the school . She had beautiful red hair and she was exceptionally pretty and had a lovely singing voice. The Blackwell family came to Otford in covered wagon and they camped where the scouts used to camp. They later moved to Hamilton's property. Doorine,

In the middle of July 1940 there was a big event at Bald Hill. We all got dressed up, mum in her good dress, coat and hat. They had built a memorial there it was all wrapped up in hessian. It was a memorial to Laurence Hargrave, and Lady Wakehurst christened it. The road past our place was then called Lady Wakehurst Drive. Bald Hill was often cold but that day it was bitterly cold. I still remember the cold.

Our cattle, along with some of Billy Green's, were stolen ,They were loaded up at the stock yards on a cattle truck and taken away. We never did find out who took them.

Dad said, in his last letter home when he heard of it, "It would do them good to be over here for a while." He was especially sad to lose Topsy.

A family called the Coolies, lived above us. Another block was sold to Arthur Austen and Bob Taylor. They were both uni students. Austin became a doctor and was on a Hospital ship. Dad sent some things home with him. They met up over there, perhaps in Aden. Bob Taylor built a Vet Hospital in Keira Street Wollongong. Mum sold the block opposite us on Domville Rd to Jack Barker who became a doctor. He was married to Kath, they had two children. Geoffrey and ? another

Kath would provide plays and coach us in performing our parts at the end of the year performance which was an annual event. The

old hall was much bigger than the one they replaced it with.

At the weekend people from Helensburgh would pop in on their way to Bulgo (a beach at the southern end of The National Park) from and Sydney people would come by train and walk up the track, popping in, before continuing to Bolga.

Margaret was friends with Gloria Johnston. Her father had the garage at Bald Hill where Norm had worked ~~there~~ for a while.

Rosie Caprine lived near Bald Hill. A cement tank is still there today but her house isn't. She would call in on her way to and from the train. She would walk on a track on the sea side of the hill.

Dr Hugget and his two maiden sisters lived in a lovely green and cream house. It was just before the National park. They later moved the house on logs to Franshaw Drive because it was in a wind tunnel Dangerous for both fires and wind.

Tom and Stella Williams later bought the Hugget's property, the same Tom Williams who had introduced us to Otford. They eventually built a new home with beautiful views looking down into the sea and out to the horizon. It was truly breathtaking. Stella was a lovely and remarkable person. I find it hard to find the right words to describe her. She had a certain elegance about her even though living conditions weren't great. She was a real lady and I loved her. They had three children, Maureen, Helen and Brian.

The Quigles lived just past Lilyvale. They lived across the creek and sometimes couldn't get out if the water was up. They were good friends to us.

We weren't allowed to wonder off our place although we often went up to "The Rocks" so we didn't see much of the local children except at school. There were two big caves where we used to play. The big rocks aren't there now because they were cut up and sold. Nick and Cathrine Grinder built a home up there. I still have an old photo where you can see "The Rocks". It was amazing how such big



boulders got there. The photo was taken from where Dad and Mum planned to build our home. Dad liked the view all the way up the coast as well out to sea.

We used to ride Silver over to Helensburgh for meat. Occasionally I rode over to Aunty Pol's at Lilyvale. It was a lovely ride. Mum was always glad when we were back home.

News of Dad's death devastated our family. It was also devastating for his parents in Dee Why as Norbert had been their only surviving son after his 2 brothers died, one from appendicitis and the other from an illness. The flag was flown at half mast as was the custom .

After dad died, Mum and Aunty Pol were walking over the hills near our property, <sup>to collect mushrooms</sup> towards Bald Hill, they found secret surveillance where Australian Army soldiers were watching the coast. This happened at the time when a submarine entered Sydney Harbour. At night there were search lights scouring the sky. Mum decided to move our family to Robertson for safety. The house in Robertson was 2 miles up past the showground, past Hindmarsh's, outside the town. We went to school in a horse and sulky. The washing had to be done in the creek and this was very hard for mum.

Sometime in 1943, when mum felt it was safer, we moved back to Otford. Grandma, who had been staying at Aunty Harriet's whilst we were at Robertson, came back home.

The Aborigines had moved in to mission from Croker Island. Grandma was about 83 and she sat in her rocking chair nearly all the time. By March 1944, her health was failing and she had taken to her bed. Mum nursed her night and day for 7 weeks and she died on 29 April 1944. Again the flag was flown at half mast in respect.

During the Spanish Flu Mum worked with a doctor nursing patients in Newtown, Redfern and Surry Hills. She nursed through the worst

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8 of the epidemics in one of the hardest hit areas of Sydney and as a consequence she made long lasting friendships for the rest of her life.

Mum lost dad in November 1941, his dad in November 1942, his mother in 1943 and now her mother in 1944. My father's name is on the memorial wall in Plymouth UK. He gave his life for this country. May we never forget the price that he and men like him paid.

Whilst everyone celebrated the end of the war we found we were so sad because dad hadn't come home. While we were glad the war was over we couldn't join in the celebrations because of our loss. Dad was musical and everyone in the area of our home could hear him play the bugle or the button accordion. Dad was well loved by the community because of his kindness. He was a very gentle man. His son, Norbert, inherited a lot of his qualities.

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