

Vonda Voytilla

I was born in Mowbray Road in Chatswood in 1936. It was a house, like Nurse Fox's house up here, that sort of place. My father was Fred Teasdell and my mother was Eileen Howard. Dad had a plumbing and drainage business and when his younger partner died, Dad had to go back to school to get his licence. Mum did house cleaning. I had an older half sister, Joan Mary Farrimond, and two older brothers, Fred and Bill, and a younger brother, Barry. We lived at Victoria Avenue, Chatswood when I was born, and moved to Willoughby when I was about four or five.



We had a good life. We used to ride bikes, have high jumps in the backyard, hit a tennis ball against the wall. We went to the beaches or just played out in the street with about seven or eight other kids. We just enjoyed life, people did in those days. You didn't need much.



Jenny Turner & Vonda.
Circa 1952

We used to come up to Oberon for holidays and stayed out at Edith with the Turners, who had bought a property out there. My mother's sister was Jean Turner. We also stayed out at Hazelgrove with Margaret and Tom Ryan. Margaret was another of Mum's sisters. Occasionally, we would get a holiday house at Narrabeen and we would stay there with the Turners. We were very close to our cousins, they were like sisters.

I went to school in Willoughby. I started when I was five and went all the way through to Year 9 at Willoughby Home Science High School. In Year 9, I moved to Oberon and finished my Intermediate at Joeys (St Joseph's Catholic School). I told Mum and Dad I was heading up to Oberon and I did. I stayed at Edith with the Turners

and came into school on the teeny, weeny green bus driven by Francis Hogan.

School was totally different from Sydney, but it was pretty easy. The nuns were pretty easy to get along with. Our schoolroom was the old tennis club and there was a lot of different classes in there. I can remember Marlene Hogan and Bill Grady and, of course, Colleen and Fay Fitzpatrick, but I'm not sure if they were in the same class as there were mixed groups in there.



Cool dare in the snow! 1952.
Vonda Teasdell, Jenny & Kath Turner

While I was at school, and after I left, I was picking peas and picking up potatoes. I was about 15 when I left school. When I was 17, I went and worked at the hospital as a nurse's aide for a couple of years. It was during the time of Dr Robey. I worked with Kath Turner and Monica Gearon, among others. We often went to dances and got home in the early hours.

After two years I went back to Sydney for a change. I worked at a grocery store and then at the Community Hospital in Victoria Avenue, Chatswood, as a nurse. While I was down there I got married. That was 1956 and I was 19. I had met John Voytilla at the dances around Oberon and we stayed in contact when I went down to Sydney.



John's father had moved to Australia in 1928 from Czechoslovakia, and when John was four his father brought the whole family out. John's father worked on the wharves for years and then bought the property up here. I think he liked the area, and the family lived in a mud hut out at Hazelgrove for a while. His father worked in the eucalyptus industry, as well as running a few sheep and growing peas. Eventually the family moved back to Sydney so the children could complete their education.

When John moved to Oberon, he was looking after the little farm at Hazelgrove for his father. After we married we moved into Burton's flat in the Main Street in Oberon. We were there for about eighteen months and we had our first child, David, while we were there. Then, the Council and Ray Buckley helped us buy our house, where I am now. All these houses were originally brought in to accommodate the dam workers. I've been here for 65 years, and I can remember that because I had my second baby, Mark, after we moved in.

At the time John had various jobs including up at Mawhoods at one of the original grocery stores, in the Imperial Stores. He also worked for Ray Cunynghame in the produce store, and on the side he was managing the farm.

At that stage we bought the other property on Lowes Mount Road. John hired a bulldozer, taught himself how to drive it, and cleared it all, while Margaret, myself and my sister did all the burning off while he pushed the heaps up. Then we had to fence it before we could run stock. We had to borrow money to get by, like people did. When John had finished clearing the land he went to work at Pyneboard. He used to work there at night and work on the property during the day.



1963 Oberon Tigers Women's Rugby League Team.

Back row: Lynne Evans, Anne McFawn, Bonnie Harvey, Janice McComby, Judy Brown, Carol Quinn (Ryan), Chris Cunynghame

Front Row: Joyce Booth (Richards), Lorraine Lansom, Wilma Artery, June Howard, Vonda Voytilla

In the end we sold that property because the big power line was going through and it was going right over the shearing shed, and John wasn't keen on that. There was a lot of opposition from people whose properties it was going through, but we were just babysitters and so it got sold to the forestry.

(Editor's note: The building of the Mount Piper to Marulan 500kv powerline caused a lot of division and protest in the community during the early 1990s, as many landholders objected to the towers and lines going over and through their properties.)

As the kids grew up a bit, I was out and about working at the RSL Club and driving a school bus. I used to bring the bus home and go to work at the Club. The bus run was around Hazelgrove and the Meadows in Slattery's bloody old bus with the crash gear box (that is, it required a double shuffle to change gears). That was fun! I can't remember how long I drove the bus, but then I gave it up and worked completely at the Club. I worked at the RSL Club for thirty years, starting with waitressing for a couple of years and then behind the bar. I loved it, I loved being with people. Cyril O'Keefe was the manager for a lot of my time there. In the early days there was no breathalyser, so people would come and have a few drinks and drive home. Also, we seemed to have dances every few weeks. It was fun. Somebody would drag you out from behind the bar and have a dance. People were so different then.

At the time I played squash. The courts were at the Club, still are. I also played tennis, which was at various places over the years. There were the Methodist courts as well as the Church of England courts. There were the Catholic School courts as well and I remember the nuns rolling up their skirts and playing there. There was a lot of night tennis going on. I remember playing at the Methodist courts and we had beanies and gloves and coats and, crikey, it was cold out and the easterly would blow through. There was a lot of nice people played tennis, a lot of good people.

They ended up building the courts in Cunynghame Street where they are today and they put a roof over them to have indoor courts. We're so lucky here, we've got a lot.

I used to play table tennis at the RSL Club but I only played socially. John was a champion table tennis player. He was pretty good at tennis, but he got a lot of trophies for table tennis.

Gosh, they were good days. The old days were really, really good. Right now for us older people the changes in IT and the passwords... oh dear, it's just too much to latch on to. It's hard, yeah.



1995 Fairbairn Shield Winners: Glennie McGrath, Vonda Voytilla, Marjorie Webb, Judy Brown, Colleen Saul

Golf started in a small way, only 9 holes, but I wasn't playing then. I didn't play until I was in my forties because I knew I wouldn't be able to play squash forever, so I thought I'd take on another sport. There were lots of players, very social and I enjoyed it. I haven't played as much lately. I've had two surgeries and I've got to get my shoulder moving for golf, but I still play tennis.

After John retired I left work at the Club. We went overseas for a few months, travelling to Ireland, England, Switzerland and other places. We had relatives in Switzerland. We went to New Zealand a couple of times, as well as travelling around Australia. In those days you could get on a Greyhound bus and away you'd go. We got it from Bathurst and went to Broken Hill. They stopped at all these different places and you could get off and catch that bus at exactly the same time the next day or two days later. That's how we went around Australia. It was fantastic. I remember stopping at the place that's got the opals - Coober Pedy. I couldn't get out of there quick enough! It was cold, it was night and we were walking over people's roofs and bumping into chimneys. Holy moley, it was terrible. We got a motel room, slept all day, and got out as soon as we could.

We had four children, David, Mark, Anne Maree and Meaghan. We lost David in 1997. Mark was an electrician and now he's a third generation farmer and also involved with motels. Anne Maree is a nurse working in dialysis at Tamworth. She started off in Bathurst and then went to Westmead. Meaghan went to Sydney after she left school and worked in a bank. She came back to Bathurst a few years ago. Now I have great grandchildren, the eldest is 16 and learning to drive. Our family is close, we get on really well. We've got a family chat session to keep in touch. If I've got problems I've got my family and I also have great friends. Friends are great. Joan Graham is a long term friend. We played golf together, along with Bev Dale. I've also made tennis friends like Flo Spence, Lynette Ireland and Jenny Cole. A couple of years ago, Lynette, Jenny and I travelled to Perth, visited Rottnest Island and travelled back across the Nullabor in a hire car. We had great fun.



Oberon's 150th Anniversary Street Parade 2013. Vonda, Wilma Artery, Joan Graham

As you get older, you haven't got the worries or the work schedules, all that sort of thing. You've raised your kids, done all that and life's pretty easy.

I just love Oberon. It has changed, but things have to change. You get more things in when there's change. A lot of people just want things like they were, but that can't happen. You have to move on in this life, yeah. I think we've got so much in Oberon. Our tennis, our golf, the clubs and the Malachi and that new sports ground - wow! I don't think I'll be playing league, but it'll be nice to have it.

I like music and did learn the piano in Sydney, and when I married the piano came up. But my daughter took it over because she's a better pianist and organist than I ever was. I was taught the

organ by a lass here in Oberon for a couple of years, but one day I just stopped playing. Now, I'm happy with the ukulele. I like the fun of the ukulele and the people.

I had a motor bike licence for a long time. John had a Yamaha ag bike on the farm and in my forties I decided to get a scooter. We went to the show room to buy a scooter and I said, "It has to be red and I have to be able to have my feet on the ground when I sit down." I could beat John going up hills when he was on his motorbike. John and I would go out for rides, sticking to the back roads. We would go down to Tarana, Bathurst, Lithgow, around Lake Lyell. Have gone as far as Taralga and Goulburn. We'd stop and have a cuppa along the way. We did it for quite a few years. Eventually I gave it up as I was worried about having a fall as I had a few health scares. Then my daughter took it over and she rides it to work.

I don't know what advice I'd give to my grandchildren. Each person has got to find their own way but these grandchildren of mine seem to be able to get on with their lives. They've all done well for themselves. They're better off than I was.

I'm a person who would always rather look forward than backwards. I don't believe in looking backwards.



2012: Bev Dale, Vonda, Joan Graham

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